Colossians chap. 2

A show of wisdom in will worship

1 For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; 2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; 3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. 5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ. 6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: 7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. 8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. 9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. 10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: 11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: 12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. 13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; 14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; 15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. 16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: 17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. 18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. 20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, 21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not; 22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? 23 Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

Paul in verses 4-8 warns the Colossians and also those in Laodicea not be deceived by enticing words and vain philosophy. In the 1st century there were three sects of Jews. The Sadducees were the upper priestly cast who were charged with maintaining the temple. They denied the resurrection of the body and any belief in angels or spirits but were strict followers of the ritual law. The Pharisees were also strict followers of the ritual law but understood that times change and the law had to adapt to remain relevant. They accepted an oral law as a revelation from God whereas the Sadducees rejected it. The Essenes were the third sect who went above and beyond the requirements of the ritual law. They were fewer in number than the Sadducees and Pharisees and congregated in communal or ascetic groups that abstained from meat, wine and marriage. The typical diet of the Essene was bread, water and vegetables. When someone was admitted into their society they had to swear an oath to protect their secret books that contained the names of angels including Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. It does appear that the Judaizers who harassed the Galatian churches were of the Pharisees and the Judaizers who harassed the Colossians were of the Essenes which fits with verse 18.

In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Circumcision which we have discussed at length was a cutting of the male flesh that marked someone as a Jew. This was only a symbol of the real circumcision of the heart that was made by Christ at conversion. Being baptized with the Holy Spirit of promise where the old man goes into the watery grave and rises as the new man delivered from the body of sin. Having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; Whenever this teaching is presented the chorus of boos from the law keepers will ascend and say well it must be alright to murder, steal and commit adultery if the law has been blotted out. The circumcision of Christ cleanses the heart of hate so believers don't murder; it cleanses the heart of lust so believers don't commit adultery and it cleanses the heart of greed so believers don't steal. All the commandments have a root cause as to why they are transgressed. Lying is usually out of fear of men and coveting is usually out of envy. Christ has delivered us from hate, lust, greed, fear and envy so the law has been blotted out for believers who live by the new motive of love.

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. All the rites, ceremonies and external purifications of Judaism could not cleanse from even one single sin. They were just shadows and types of the reality in Christ. The sabbath day in particular was a shadow of the rest that can only be found in Christ. Jesus said come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon

you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light - Matt. 11:28-30. Sabbath keeping is becoming more and more popular in Christian circles thanks to the efforts of SDA, Hebrew roots, messianic Jews and a host of other anti-christian groups who have never received the circumcision of Christ and feel they have to keep the law the old fashioned way and earn their forgiveness. The sabbath day truly is a 'mark' of the old covenant. Jesus could have easily rose triumphant from the grave on the sabbath but he passed over that day and rose instead on the 1st day or the Lord's day signifying that the sabbath with the first covenant had waxed old and was left in the tomb to decay and vanish away.

Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? One of the hallmark traits of the carnal Christian and unconverted is the externalization of sin. It's always the meat is sin or the alcohol is sin or the day is sin. They never come to the point where they see themselves as sinners and even their best deeds as corrupted and defiled by sin. As long as they stay away from the perceived 'bad things' they feel safe and secure in their self-righteousness. The health aspect of the gospel is so popular today that nearly all Christians across the board advocate the healthy lifestyle. The very first step on the path to self-justification is believing that one type of food is inherently better than another type of food. When we ask for God's blessing over our food we need to trust and believe that he does make it nourishing to our bodies, no matter what type of food it is. The strict vegetarian who trusts in their organic vegetables and healthy lifestyle is much worse off than the pregnant teenager in the trailer park who eats her TV dinner with thanksgiving and praise to God.

At the end of the chapter Paul concludes that the commandments and doctrines of men have a show of wisdom in will worship but are powerless to overcome human passion and appetite. This endless conflict that was first introduced in Romans and then in Galatians and now in Colossians between Jewish good works and Christian good works is difficult to understand for those who have never been in an oppressive legalistic environment. Free will under the law based religion is powerless to do good but free will under the grace based religion can do all things in Christ. God will often call believers to good works and when we step forward in faith his grace is there to accomplish the command but when we go backwards in unbelief, grace is thwarted and we often fall flat on our face. A good analogy for understanding free will is that God is in control of everything but he controls no man. God will guide, lead and direct all of our paths but he will not force us to drink of the water of life. And the Spirit and the BRIDE say,

Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely - Rev. 22:17.

One of the great mysteries of the gospel is how can free will and election both be part of the gospel? Free will is the study of man's choice and election is the study of God's choice. God's choice always trumps man's choice but human beings do have free will. We are not robots as the Calvinist Christians might suppose. When we first come to Christ our will is at variance with God's will and this is where the worst struggles in the Christian walk take place. But as we grow closer to Christ our will grows closer to his and the struggles become less severe. The goal for every Christian is to have our will merged into God's will so that when we do the things we want we are really doing the things that God wants. And when we refrain from certain things they are things that God wants us to refrain from. Our will always has to bend to God's will. God's will never bends to ours which is the hardest lesson to learn. A loving son will always obey his mother in all things and never want to offend her in the slightest. O holy mother of Grace, grant us faith and Divine love that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.