

Women's Bible Study – Fall 2018
Colossians: Because of Christ
Angie Pankratz – October 24, 2018



So what is the first word in what we read for today? (Therefore!)

Ever since I was a young girl attending Awana's I've known when you read a "therefore" you must look back and see what it's "therefore!"

So the verses right before this stress how when we were dead in our sins in our uncircumcised flesh God made us alive in Christ and "cut away at our sinful nature."

He forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of charges against us... So (not to beat a dead horse) but it would be like a cop who has pulled me over for speeding ripping up my speeding ticket, paying my large fine, and removing that or any other violation from my record forever. Then to top it off he declared me a good driver! (It's actually way bigger than that but you catch my drift...)

So that is right where Paul left us. As Svea stressed two weeks ago, whether you feel worthy or not, when we trusted in the mighty power of Jesus Christ - though once dead - we became a new creation full alive in Christ.

THEREFORE...

"Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day." Col. 16:1

When I look at that I think it's a little underwhelming. I have no problem ignoring judgments on what I eat or drink. It doesn't seem like this should be the first thing listed after that big proclamation... However to the Church of Colossae in their culture this was a really big deal.

"The false teachers in Colossae had a system of rules which they imposed on their followers. They said, "If you keep these rules, you will have victory over fleshly desires." They took some of the Old Testament regulations concerning ceremonial cleanliness and diet and added to them, much as the Pharisees had done. Paul admits (Col. 2:23) that these rules had "the appearance of wisdom," but, he adds, they "are of no value against fleshly indulgence." Rather, Paul argues that ... Godliness is not achieved through asceticism but through our identification with Christ." Steven Cole (<https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-14-how-not-be-godly-colossians-220-23>)

Asceticism was part of the philosophy during this time. Webster (merriam-webster.com) defines this belief as a "relating to or having a strict and simple way of living that avoids physical pleasure."

This belief thought of the body as evil and that all material things were evil. It also viewed joy and pleasure as wrong. It aimed at obeying manmade commands that were often unattainable. Yes, we as Christians are called to live a life of self-discipline but we do not practice self-discipline in our lives to earn God's favor. We already have that assurance that stems from that "therefore" of God's gift of salvation to us. God has made us alive and desires us to enjoy all of His gracious gifts and blessings! (<https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-14-how-not-be-godly-colossians-220-23>)

Not only was the church of Colossae dealing with Asceticism but also food restrictions forced on them from Jews still following the Mosaic Law. They were ready to condemn any man as immoral or in a state of damnation if they did not keep the Law of Moses. The religious festivals or New Moon celebrations were meant to prepare Jewish believers for the coming Messiah. Look again at verse 17...

"These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ." Col. 2:17

There was no reason for any believer to celebrate the New Moon or other religious festivals since Christ fulfilled what they were waiting for.

Over 18 years ago Tom and I were expecting our first child, Lydia. We were so excited. Before I gave birth to her, we read books about childbirth and parenting. We attended Lamaze classes together. (Do they even do that anymore!?) We drove the route to the hospital several times just so we would know where to go once labor pains began. We bought a crib, decorated a nursery, came up with a birthing plan with my OB and got the necessary supplies so that we would be prepared for the birth of our child.

Now how ridiculous would it be if Tom and I after four kids and a very long gap... (and precautions taken so that we won't ever have another child...need I say more!?) What if we decided to go to a Lamaze class this weekend? What if we went and met with our OB to discuss a birth plan? What if we set up a crib and brought home a package of newborn diapers? Our kids would think we were ridiculous and you would think we were out of our minds... and rightly so!

These celebrations and religious festivals were meant to prepare and bring about an anticipation with Jewish believers for their coming Messiah. However at the time of this New Testament church there was no obligation for them to continue under these Old Testament practices because the New Testament - Jesus - was here! Just as it would be silly for Tom and me to do those pointless activities, there was no reason for this church to do these practices except for the fact that they were feeling peer pressure from those around them.

Paul goes on to talk about false humility and the worship of angels. Those type of people go on and on about what they have seen. He says that these individuals are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. He says that they have lost connection with the Head of the Church - Jesus Christ! He is the one who hold all things together.

I think this happens in our culture today. So many people are intrigued by spiritual things but they are not drawn to the Spirit of God. There are so many books out there about what others experience in the spiritual realm or even after death experiences. If listening, watching or reading those stories do not draw you closer to your Savior than don't take them in. I think we, women, especially like mysterious and spiritual stories but we must be careful what we expose our eyes, minds and hearts to because it's possible that those spiritual forces are not of God.

It's interesting that Paul is saying this when he has what could be considered the most miraculous and extreme faith story ever. Yet he does not boast about it or ever use it to make himself great. We are told of a few occasions where he mentions it and his purpose is to make much of God. He wants those around him to know that if the God of the Universe could save him than He could save anyone!

Paul closes this section with discussing again manmade rules. Let's look at it starting with verse 20...

“Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.” Col. 2:20-23

There are many rules in the Bible. But these rules were never intended to make you look good. These rules were never designed to make one group of people look better than another group of people. The purpose of every single rule in this book was to draw us closer to the Heart of God. However in Colossae they were creating rules and even still following some OT rules that they were hoping would make themselves look better, wiser and even more humble but they were not drawing them any closer to Jesus so it was just false humility.

So my question is...

What man made rules are you feeling pressure to follow? What religious traditions do you observe not because they draw you closer to God but because of family or peer pressure? Traditions can be helpful to prepare our hearts but they can also hinder us as we may feel bound to these traditions even if they do not deepen our walk with God.

If we're honest, we will admit that a lot of what we do is to please others because we fear their judgement over God's. How should we handle judgment here on earth? Should we as Christians ever judge others? If so, who, why and how...

Should Christians ever judge!?

Matthew 7:1 says, do not judge, or you too will be judged. You will find in your Study Bible notes that this was a comment directed towards Pharisees who thrived on judging others in an effort to make themselves look better.

As that passage goes on it really says first exam your own heart (or log in your eye) before you address the speck in someone else's eye. Most commentators believe that Jesus exhorted Pharisees not to judge because they did so in an excessive, hurtful way. It was not beneficial.

This would be similar to me as a parent exhausted by those long winter days when my kids would be bickering instead of playing together in basement. Some of those days went well but then there would be those days when it didn't go so well. It seemed like nothing I could say would help them play in harmony. They would play for a few minutes but then they would get in a rut of coming up every 2 minutes to give me a full report to tell me what minor offense their sibling had done to them. After this happening time and time again I might just finally say, "No more tattling. Work it out on your own!"

Now do I really mean "No more tattling ever, ever again!?" Of course not. If a sibling hits another sibling I want to know about it. If the sibling uses fierce words that we do not use in our home, I want to know about it. If one of my kids is climbing on the bookshelf, I want to know about it. But I wanted my kids to overcome this need to tattle because they were not doing it out of concern for the other but rather they were eager to see the other one get punished.

Now did God really mean, "Do not ever, ever judge again?" I don't think so. It is impossible to get through this life without some judgments. God calls us to choose wisely with our friends, to find a spouse who loves the Lord, to appoint godly leaders in the church and to discipline our children. This all involves judgment on our part. You can call it discernment but really we are making judgements all the time.

John 7:24 says, "Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment."

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them..." Matthew 7:15

(Sounds like judgment to me...) No human community cannot exist without some type of judgement otherwise criminals would run rampant and chaos would result.

Ok, so there are times when we as Christians must be discerning... or should we say judging!?

So who are we to judge?

It is clear that it is our job to judge those inside the church - fellow believers.

What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. 1 Cor. 5:12

Just as we read in Colossians that we should ignore judgements that the world makes of us... In the same respect we should not judge the world. We are each playing to a different set of rules.

How are we to judge?

Again, let's go back to Matthew 7...

"For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." Matthew 7:2-5

We should be very careful (almost hesitant) to judge others. We should spend most of our time judging our own actions before judging other people's sinful actions. If you are eager to confront someone, there's a good chance your heart is not right. You should be prayerfully considering if this is really what you need to do.

There have been times when I've needed to be confronted, corrected or should I say judged. I do not receive it well if I sense someone is coming to me with a prideful, arrogant or even eager heart. If you are going to confront me, I want you to be merciful only doing it because you are most concerned with my spiritual walk.

"Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently." Galatians 6:1

Why do we need to confront other believers?

1. Obedience -

God has called us to judge fruit and confront sin. We read many verses that show this is God's design - As iron sharpens iron we are called to sharpen each other.

2. Because of love...

We love our fellow believers so much and do not want anything to hinder their relationship with the Lord. There is nothing sweeter than all of us gathering together to study God's Word. We do this because we enjoy each other and because we enjoy encouraging each other. One other benefit is that there is accountability here. We know that as we get to know each other will be able to "sharpen" each other.

3. God loves us but he loves us so much he does not want to keep us in our original state. We must occasionally hold up the Bible (our spiritual mirror) to others to show them what may need to change in their lives. (Kale in teeth story ;-)

Final Takeaways

1. Evaluate your life and see if there are any senseless rules you are following. These rules may make you look good and get that approval from others... yet they may not draw you closer to God.

2. Surround yourself with a few godly sisters who will be able to lovingly and gently confront you when you are going off the wrong path. (Hopefully this happens in your WBS small group.)

3. If you feel the need to confront a fellow sister in Christ, first spend time in prayer searching your heart and only confront lovingly and gently.

4. If someone confronts you, though it may not be your first response, receive it humbly. In 2 Samuel 12 Nathan confronts David. His response was that he said, "I have sinned against the Lord." Though he did not escape the consequence, he continued to walk with the Lord and the Lord blessed him because of his humility.

5. Lastly, let us remember that only God can change us. Through the sacrifice of his Son, God saved us from eternal judgement.

- Receiving this gift of Jesus and continuing firm in our faith means that we should never fear death or judgement.
- The Word of God is our mirror. Reading it, studying it or memorizing will not change us by itself. No one or nothing else can change us but Christ.
- **We do not need to feel a burden to follow the world's rules but rather to continue in our relationship with our Savior.**