



Colossians 2:16–19

16 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. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. 18 Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up

with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. 19 They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

Reflection

In yesterday's passage Paul reminded the Colossians of the gospel of Jesus Christ that has set them free of the law of Satan, sin and death and the restraints of their former way of life. In Christ they are a new creation, the old is gone, the new is here. They're saved by grace, through faith, not by works, so that no-one can boast. They've been chosen by God, they're his handiwork, united with Christ, created in Christ to do the good works that he alone

has prepared in advance for them to do. The same Christ by whom, and through whom and for whom all things were created and in whom all things right now hold together. The one who in everything has the supremacy. So why ever would they regress into their former pagan ways of life? Their mystery cults, their Gnostic philosophies, the blending of Judaism with Roman and Greek religious practice? Their worship of diverse and sundry little ‘g’ gods who are really no gods at all, but who, if they really do exist are in fact demons who are doomed to destruction because they were defeated on the cross? That’s the compelling logic of Paul’s argument that ends in today’s passage from Col 2:16–19,

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you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. 18 Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. 19 They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

Verse 16 provides us with yet another window into the cultural life in Colossae. Clean

and unclean foods, religious festivals, harvest festivals, and Jewish Sabbath observances; and a young church under pressure to conform to their old way of life. To the extent that these practices were Jewish, or in some pagan way were attempts to seek God, Paul says of them,

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

If these practices had any role, Paul says, then that role was to point forward to Christ, the image of the invisible God, the one in whom all the fullness of God dwells bodily. All this other religiosity that prevails in your pagan culture, don't be enticed by it. Paul then lists some examples no doubt given to him by Epaphras or

Philemon or some other correspondence he's received from Colosse.

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Don't be enticed by those delighting in shows of false humility, or those who profess to be worshipping angels, or those who go into great detail about visions they

have supposedly seen, carried to and fro and puffed up by the idle notions of undisciplined and unspiritual minds. Stay the course! Don't lose connection with the head, like they have done. The head of the body, the church, is Christ. Remain in him. Grow up into him who is our head. In him, and him alone are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, not in the hollow and deceptive philosophies of your pagan past.

Think & Pray

We all have a past. We all live in the swirling culture of our times. And we all experience pressure to conform and regress back into the behaviours of our culture and the behaviours of our former lives. And so it is not difficult to relate to what is

going on in Colossae. Be open with God this morning and share with him the areas in which you are most feeling the pressure. Perhaps it's in the area of your sexual purity and the lifestyles of your friends compared to God's design for human sexuality. Sometimes it feels like we're fighting a war on every front; internally, physical temptation in a relationship or the struggle with pornography, and a mind so ready to rationalise sin – everyone's doing it, I'm not perfect, God will forgive me later – that's the war on the inside; then from without, the open ridicule or barely concealed incredulity from our non-Christians friends who can't understand such a restrictive lifestyle. Resisting temptation can feel like we're fighting a war on every front.

If you're feeling worn down today, or feeling judged, or feeling at risk of regressing into patterns that are out of step with your Christian faith pour your heart out to God in prayer. Ask for his help and his strength. And then think and pray over verse 19 of today's passage because this is key.

19 They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

Our connection to Jesus Christ and his church is the key. The more we are relying on Jesus, trusting in him, getting to know him better and growing up into him who is are head, the easy it is to resist temptation and to grow in holiness. Jesus is the

key, and so is the church of which he is head. Christian community, Christian relationships, Christian close friends, Christian boyfriends and girlfriends, husbands and wives also provide us with the crucial support we need. In a community like this, in a network of friendships like these, Jesus Christ is everywhere as the whole church grows increasingly to resemble him and he is seen in every face and friendship.

How is your connection to Jesus Christ? How's your prayer life, Bible reading and your personal relationship with him that grows out of both of these? And how is your connection with your church, his body? Are you being fed and nurtured by your church community? Are you serving others, being Jesus to them so that they may grow in their faith and bless you by

enabling you to serve them so that you can grow in yours? Or have you lost these two crucial connections and are suffering because of it? If so, reconnect today. It's as simple as praying to Jesus right now and turning up these next few Sundays with the intention to love and serve those around you and grow in deliberate and meaningful relationship with them.

Thank God today for Jesus Christ and his church and pray that no matter what life throws at you, you would never lose connection with him who is our head, and his body, our family and our church.