

Colossians 2:16 to 3:4

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[0 : 00] So with me to the book of Colossians, it's going to continue to make our way through the book of Colossians. We'll start out this morning in Colossians chapter 2, starting in verse 16, and we're going to read into the third chapter, going down to verse 4.

So our text this morning will be Colossians chapter 2, verse 16, through chapter 3, verse 4. If you're there and you're physically able, I'm going to ask if you'll join with me as we stand together and we read the Word of God together with one another as we see what Paul writes to the church at Colossians, starting in the second chapter, the 16th verse, and going to the fourth verse of the third chapter.

Paul says, Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day. Things which are a mere shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and worship of angels, taking his hand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees such as do not handle, do not taste, do not touch, which all refer to things destined to perish with use, in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men.

[1 : 29] These are matters which have to be sure the appearance of wisdom and self-made religion and self-abasement and the severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

Therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for this day. God, we are so thankful for the opportunity we have to gather together. Lord, we thank you for the songs which we have sung, but Lord, we thank you more for the word which we have now had the privilege and the opportunity to read and to hear. Lord, we pray now that by the power and presence of your spirit, you would speak to our hearts.

You would speak to our minds. Lord, you would draw us closer to you, and then it would bring you glory and honor.

[2 : 30] And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. As we make our way through the book of Colossians, we have been looking at and we have been focusing on the supremacy and the sufficiency of Christ.

Paul is writing to the church at Colossae, and he is attempting to correct an error which the church has deviated into, having been excited about the news of the gospel, having been excited about the realization of forgiveness in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

They immediately accepted Christ, and in that acceptance, all of a sudden, a church sprung forth. A church was grown or a church was planted, if you will, by a lay person who had heard the gospel, got excited about the gospel, and took the gospel back home.

And the believers began to gather together. Well, the danger in that gathering together is that they were living in a world that was not their home, right? They were born again but still living in the old society.

They were living in Colossae, a city that was filled with a number of people, a city that was filled with a heavy Jewish sect, a city that was filled with a very Greek-minded belief, understanding

individuals, people that were of Roman allegiance, all these temptations were coming against them. [3 : 48] And people would come to them and say, well, it's true that you can find forgiveness in Jesus Christ, but if you want to go a little further, then you need to do this, or you need to do that, and you need to not do this, and don't touch this, and be sure not to eat these foods, and be sure to obey this, and be sure to do all that.

So they were being burdened down with all of this extra stuff. Paul writes the book of Colossians in order to correct that false doctrine.

His aim in writing the book of Colossians is that the believers would see that Christ is supreme. That is, He is above all. And that Christ is sufficient.

As we make our way through the book, our aim is to see that Christ is supreme and that Christ is sufficient. That is, He is above everything else that could ever come our way, and He is all that we will ever need.

And when we come to this point in Colossians, the end of the second chapter into the third chapter, we are beginning to make a transition because of these things. Now we are going to begin to live them out.

[4 : 50] This would be what you would call the application. Paul, in much of his writing, introduces doctrine, and then he follows up that doctrine with application. That is, here are the things that are true, and since they are true, you live this way.

Because a truth that does not transform the way you live is a truth that has not done anything for you. The only thing that really brings us great benefit is that truth which changes us.

And we see that here being played out in the book of Colossians. And I want you to see this morning, since Christ is supreme and He is sufficient, I want you to see the believer's freedom.

The believer's freedom based upon the supremacy and the sufficiency of Christ. Now we need to be careful, and we need to pay attention to the whole message here because there are a number of us that say, yes, I'm free.

I'm free to do whatever I want to do. Yes, I'm free. I can act however I want to act. And by us, I don't necessarily mean us gathered in this room, right? I'm not trying to cast judgment upon you. I'm saying people use the name of Christ, as Paul would say, as a crutch to do whatever it is they want to do.

[5 : 53] So we want to take it in context in this book of Colossians. And we want to see the freedom which you have, and I believe it's a freedom which would completely transform a lot of the self-guilt and the shame which comes upon so many believers.

Number one, we see the caution that we must have to maintain that freedom. The freedom we possess comes with a caution that we must have to maintain it. He says in verse 16, Therefore, no one is to act as your judge.

At that point, a lot of people would say, Amen, you can't judge me. Nobody should judge me.

Nobody can judge me. Well, again, let's take things in context, right? Paul, in other parts of his writing, now we don't want to be controversial, but we want to be biblical.

There's a big difference there, right? If the Bible offends, then our problem is with God. If the Bible upsets us, then our problem is with God. It is not with man. Paul says, Who am I to judge those who are outside of the church?

I'm not to judge the world, because Christ judges the world. He says, But rather, I am to judge those who name the name of Christ. So we're not talking about the judgment where a believer in love and concern, now we want to say in love and concern, would come to correct us, or to rebuke us, or to discipline us, and to say, Brother, I'm concerned about your life.

[7 : 14] I'm concerned about some things you're doing. That's not the type of judgment that Paul is speaking of here. Because a number of believers would say, Nobody can judge me. And while that is true, it is also the believer's responsibility to hold one another accountable, to build up one another.

Because, listen, we are a part of one another. And if all of a sudden, a part of my body has a problem, the rest of my body has to pay attention to that. And if a part of my body starts messing up, I remember, some of you know, and most of you know, I had back surgery, let me count it up now, probably four or five years ago.

And I had a ruptured disc in my back, and that was fine. But the kids used to make fun of me. By the kids, I mean my kids, and then the teenagers that Carrie and I worked with at that time. And they

would always say, Daddy, you walk around looking like an S.

Anybody that's ever had back problems, you know when that back hurts, you just want to kind of get it however you can, where it doesn't hurt. So I always had this S shape. And I walked around because I put off surgery, and I put off surgery. Well, the reality is, is there was one part of my body that had a problem, but it affected the rest of my body.

This is why as believers, we are to hold one another accountable, right? Because listen, my faults, they affect you. Your faults, they affect me. We are a body. You see this here.

[8 : 26] But the caution we must maintain, that we see here, is therefore no one is acting as your judge, in regard to food, or drink, or in respect to a festival, or a new moon, or a Sabbath day.

Things which are a mere shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Here is the caution. The caution is this. The believer who has accepted Jesus Christ, needs to be careful not to let anyone, add to the work of Christ, and tell them there are other things they must do.

What was going on at the church of Colossae, is the Jews that were there, would say, well, Jesus is good, but be sure to eat only kosher foods. Be sure to practice circumcision.

Be sure to keep all of the festivals, and be sure to maintain the Sabbath, and be sure to do all of these legalistic things. But Paul says here in verse 17, that these things are a mere shadow.

Those of you that have been with us on Sunday nights, I know the last two Sunday nights, we have not been able to meet, and we're making our way to the Old Testament. We're in that great book of the Old Testament, the book of Numbers.

[9 : 35] You know the book that many of us scratch our heads, and go, I would just like to skim over the top of it, but it's a great book, because it is in here in the book of Leviticus, where you see all the rules and regulations. And if you remember, as we went through the book of Leviticus, and even the book of Exodus, that when we looked at the Ten Commandments, and we started looking at all the walls, we weren't so much focused on what the law was to do, we were more focused on what the law was pointing to, or more specifically, who the law was pointing to.

Do you know when you open up your Old Testament, and I hope you do, what you are reading is a shadow of the one to come. You are reading of things that are pointing to. A shadow is always a reflection of the reality, of the true, right?

It is always an abstract outline of something that is completely true. And the one that is true is Jesus Christ. The law is what points to Him, but Jesus is the fulfillment.

He is the substance. So the caution the believer must have to maintain their freedom, is we must be sure that we are not letting anyone impose legalistic standards upon us that would falsely assure us that we are okay with Jesus.

Friend, listen, the reality is this. Whatever you do, whatever work you accomplish, however good you are, none of those things make you more acceptable in the sight of a holy God than you already are in Jesus Christ.

[11 : 15] Now that's true. And the reason we must be cautious is because if I had to guess, and we would take a survey, the first survey I would take is, isn't everyone else in here hot besides me?

I know some of you say it's cold in here, and I am kind of that squirrel guy, but I am sweating. But that's okay. The other survey I would take is, I would just assume that many of us struggle in our walk of faith because we don't feel good enough and we don't do good enough.

And the sooner we could get over that by saying, you know what, you're right, but it really, because of Jesus Christ, that doesn't matter.

So the caution we must maintain is not to let anyone put upon us a false sense of guilt because of our lack of works.

Now I said listen to the whole message, right? Because some of us would love to sit right there and go see, I'm good enough in Jesus Christ, and I'm gone. But to enjoy our freedom. Freedom is not found in rules and regulations and don't do this and do do that, right?

[12 : 31] Freedom is not found there. So the first thing we must do is we must be cautious that those things which we are doing, we are not doing because someone else has told us we should do them.

because we are not doing it because we want to, and let's just bring this even to our own world, right? We must be sure that whatever we're doing in serving the Lord, we're not doing it to earn His favor or to make ourselves look better.

because the reality is, listen to me, and I don't want to say this, if you don't hear anything else, I just want you to hear this. There's nothing you can do for Jesus to make Him love you more.

And there's nothing you can do against Him to make you love you less. Because everything else is legalism. Those are just a shadow pointing to Jesus Christ.

So we must have caution in our life. We must be careful that no one is imposing upon us a set of rules and standards which Christ has not pointed us to. And we must be careful that we are not trying to earn His favor or earn His pleasure or earn His forgiveness.

[13 : 50] So we must be careful from our motivation on the inside and we must be careful from the motivation on the outside. Secondly, we see the confidence that comes because of it. The confidence that comes because of it.

When we understand we are free, true freedom breeds great confidence. When the believer knows these truths, when the believer knows these realities, the believer walks around with a new confidence.

But just to be honest with you, it is a confidence that scares the pits of hell. It is a confidence that makes Satan get upset. It is a confidence that makes our greatest enemy and the powers and principalities of the air shake a little bit.

It is the confidence which makes us known in other realms and in other worlds much as when we read of the seven sons of Steva in the book of Acts when they go to the demoniac and they try to cast out the demons of the demoniac and they say, we adjure you in the name of Jesus and Paul to lead.

And the demons responded back and said, Jesus we know and Paul we know but we do not know you. And remember the man which had the demons jumped upon those seven sons and stripped them of all their clothes and then ran out shamed and naked because the demon had overpowered them.

[15 : 09] But one of the great truths is that they knew of Jesus but they also knew of Paul because Paul was a believer with confidence. We would all long I think to live a confident life of faith because confidence gives us the ability to ask things in prayer which we would not ask otherwise.

Confidence gives us the ability to step out in faith which we would not otherwise. Where this confidence comes from the understanding of our freedom. Verse 18 says, let no one keep defrauding you of your prize.

Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize. That means someone could come in and steal away that which is rightfully yours. And that which is rightfully yours is you are free in Christ.

I mean you are absolutely free. You are forgiven. You are redeemed. You are absolutely secure. You belong to Jesus Christ. No one can take that from you.

No power can ever remove you from his hand. Romans 8. But someone could steal that from you because it would give you great confidence and the reason we must be careful. Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind and not boating fast at the head from whom the entire body being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments grow with the growth which is from God.

[16 : 34] Here is where we gain confidence. It's when we understand. Let's just stop right here, okay? I want to make sure this sounds right. There are those who seem to be supremely spiritual and they make us feel bad about our walk of faith.

I mean, they do all these things. They have all this work that they do. They can point to all this maybe monastic lifestyle and they've separated themselves and they're completely removed from the world and it seems like they're on a higher level of a spiritual plane.

And we begin to feel bad about where we're at. Friend, what's happened is someone has stole our freedom from us. Because again, let's go back to this. Any form of self-abasement or denial of food or self-sacrifice does not make one more spiritual.

It is Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone. Which means if you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you are just as much an heir to his inheritance as anyone else.

And when we begin to understand that, we gain confidence because we have just as much right to the throne room of God as anyone else. We have just as much right to cry out, Abba, Father, as anyone else.

[17 : 58] We have just as much right to ask anything in Jesus' name and see it granted as anyone else. We have just as much freedom to step out in faith as anyone else.

And we have confidence because we realize that it does not matter what we look at on the inside, it does not matter who's living on the inside. Our freedom brings us confidence because we are no longer about this whole thing of spiritual comparison.

Now, I know people who I would say are great saints. But the reality is most of the great saints I know. I mean, the people that I really think they have a ear with the Father, a people that I think can do amazing things.

One thing that I have read in church history, most of the people that you would say that are great saints on the outside of the rest of the world just look like the average, ordinary individuals. I mean, the demons knew about Paul, but let's not forget Paul had an anger issue too, right?

Paul would get mad every now and then. Paul got so mad and he told them he wasn't taking John Mark with him anymore. Mark made him mad. He didn't want to eat for success. He left us. He's not coming back.

[19:07] So I'm going to take silence with me instead. Later on, he says, you know what, Mark, it's okay. You can come with me. It's fine. He kind of reconciled that. Mark was like, I think Mark needs to come along. Paul's like, no, I'm not going to do that. I mean, Paul had an issue.

I read the book of Nehemiah recently. How many of you read the book of Nehemiah recently? Nehemiah was a man who prayed all the time to the book of Nehemiah. He was a man who had the hand of God in all of his work.

He was a great lay individual. But you know what I found at the end of the book of Nehemiah? He got so mad he plucked people's hair out. Nehemiah kind of had an anger issue. But God used him. They began to desecrate the temple so he said, so I plucked their hair out and threw their stuff in the street and kicked them out of the temple. I love that. Peter cut a man's ear off. He walked on water but he also cut a man's ear off.

Right? The sons of thunder James and John. We think of John as some kind of a saintly little young man who's kind of with a feminine face. Some of you have seen the painting of the Last Supper and John is this young individual leaning upon the chest of Jesus and he looks like he's just so feminine like the reality is they were called the sons of thunder.

[20:13] Okay? Thunder is not a soft thing. Right? And the reason they're called the sons of thunder is because when they were walking through a region of the Israeli land and the people didn't want Jesus to come through James and John.

You know John who his favorite word was love. Right? When he wrote all of his writings he spoke of love all the time. James and John said shall we call down the thunder of God and strike this city? I love that.

Because the reality is we begin to see people as humanity. And what we see is that God is not using super saints to do amazing things. God is taking ordinary people with problems and putting Jesus Christ inside of them and doing amazing things.

And when we understand that friend listen we gain confidence because all throughout this building are individuals that God wants to do amazing things with. And we are free to be used by him.

We are those tools in his hand. And we gain confidence because of that. Spiritual growth comes from holding fast to the head. Because look at what it says. These people who love to talk about how spiritual they are.

[21:21] They love to display their spirituality by their actions. And they talk about all these things. I was speaking to an individual just yesterday. And he talked to me about buying something from someone off Craigslist.

I'm not going to go into what it was he was buying. But he said I went to go pick it up and it was a heavy object. And I asked him do you have help to help me load it? Because it was just one man who was going to pick it up. And the guy said yeah we've got plenty of help.

Just show up. So he said I went there and it was up in the mountains and I'm going to tell you where. It wasn't too far from here. Right? He said so I get up there and it's this gentleman who meets me is an older gentleman and he said I was kind of asking him well where's your help? He said oh we practice communal living here. He said so I kind of stepped back a little bit and I just walked into a community. He said what do you mean oh we follow the prophet? Oh what prophet do you follow?

He said Bob sitting over there on the front porch or who is it that you follow? He said we follow the 12 tribes and we follow the prophet. Jesus said I just let him help me load my object and I got out of there. Right? These people who had separated themselves who were giving this false sense of

spirituality and this false sense of being close to God look at what it says in verse 18 they are inflated without cause by his fleshly mind.

[22 : 32] That means if you think you're better than everybody else because of what it is you're doing you are inflated without cause. You've puffed yourself up. You've puffed yourself up without anything to back it up.

But how does spiritual growth come? Verse 19 not holding fast to the head from whom the entire body being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments grows to the growth which is from God.

Friend listen to me you have confidence because spiritual growth comes through this hold on to Jesus and be connected to his body. His body is the church.

church. Now I'm a pastor and I believe in the place and the position of the church. I believe in the importance of the church. I've read enough letters and read enough writings of other pastors during this season and seen the detriment that's come because of what's going on in a lot of our churches and I understand that I get the I get the concern and I get that but friend we need to understand as well.

This true spiritual growth comes from holding on to Christ and being united to his body. He is the head of the church. People say well I can hold on to Jesus and not be connected to the body. You would have a hard time holding on to my head if you didn't get the rest of my body.

[23 : 49] And if you ever have my head without the rest of my body call somebody. Something has happened. As Tony Evans said we call that a decapitation and that's not healthy.

Spiritual growth does not come by anything you do. It comes by who you hold on to and who you're connected to. Holding fast to the head all of Jesus and being united to the body which is his church. Here is the confidence we have. Now this caution and confidence must be united with this third thing that is the conscious awareness that is needed.

If the believer has true freedom and we do if the believer is free from all rules and regulation and legalism and if the believer is free from all the don't do this and don't do that then we need to be aware we need to be at least consciously aware of this one truth.

And we see it here starting in verse 20. If you have died with Christ there is the truth. If you have died with Christ where do we get that?

[24 : 58] We get that back just a couple more a couple verses back up that in him verse 9 says for in him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form and in him you have been made complete and he is the head over our rule and authority and in him you are also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands and the removal of the body of the flesh and circumcision having been buried with him you don't bury it alive man right having been buried with him in baptism you were also raised up that is you were brought to life in him or with him through faith in the working of God so here we see here's the truth here's what we must be aware of if you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world wise if you were living in the world do you submit yourself to decrees such as do not handle, do not taste, do not touch so here's what we must be aware of even though we can see one another we are alive friend listen to me in Christ the old man is dead and the reason we are free is because that which was bound by all that is the flesh the old man has died and in Christ has been made alive again and we need to be aware of this follow me if you will because the flesh longs to tell you if we would put the flesh in subjection and we would bring the flesh into correction through all this legalism then the flesh would be redeemed and we would be okay but the reality is verse 23 says these are matters which have to be sure the appearance of wisdom and self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body that is if I just deny myself enough or if I do enough good or if I keep myself away from bad company then I'll be okay but look at what it says but are of no value against fleshly indulgence now here let's just bring it down to this there are many people who think if they deny themselves that which they long for the most then they will be okay

Paul says this has no value because Jesus did not say it was the act of doing the things it was the intention in the heart and self-abasement and the removal of all these things if I'm going to remove all temptation from me but the matter of the heart is the problem and the only way that is going to be corrected is being consciously aware of the fact that we are no longer alive in this world because now let's go to chapter 3 look at what it says therefore if you have died in Christ why do you seek to live like the world therefore if you have been raised up with Christ keep seeking the things above where Christ is at seated at the right hand of God set your mind on the things above not on the

things that are on the earth for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God when Christ who is our life is revealed then you also will be revealed with him in glory the believer possesses a great freedom a freedom that must be cautious not to be bound by any legalism or not to be bound by any thought of trying to make oneself improved a freedom that can stand in confidence but friend it's a freedom that realizes the old

Billy Joe is no longer alive I have died with Christ and now I am alive together with him so here it is I'm going to wrap it up with this we'll be through a little bit early here's the reality the believer possesses an unbelievable amount of freedom I'll put it in one nutshell we are free to live here we are free to do here as we live our life there that means we are free to practice here we are free to live out and to practice and to behave however we want to here on earth with the understanding that we are at the same time living there with cross in the presence of God now that's a freedom because here's the reality you say well pastor does that mean I can't do this or I can't do this or I shouldn't do this now we're getting listed here's the answer always give if you can do that in the presence of

God then go ahead whatever that is if you can do that in the presence of a holy God you're free to do it because in Christ you have died and the life you now live you live with him where he's at you say wait wait a minute I'm still here in the flesh right but in God's economy in God's mindset you're already there in the throne room you can do whatever you want to here as long as you live there there's the freedom that believer has that's what we must be aware of at all times because I'm already in the presence of God in Christ I'm already in the presence of the courtroom of heaven in Christ and whatever I do here must be dictated by the reality that I live there and whatever it is I'm free to do it there's only one on the throne and that is Jesus cross and he alone gets to dictate how I live my life but he alone will dictate how I live my life the believer is free under his lordship under his let's pray and we thank you so much for this day god we're so thankful to have the opportunity to gather together so thankful to have the opportunity to worship lord we rejoice in all that you are doing and we rejoice in all that you are may your name be glorified and may you be honored among those we come into contact with based on how we live for your Lord we ask it all in Jesus name amen so

[32 : 03] Thank you.

Thank you.