



COLOSSIANS

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Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in *false* humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,
Colossians 2:18

Paul begins verse 18 in a manner similar to verse 16 – “So let no one judge you...” / “Let no one cheat you...” The two thoughts combine as stern warnings against troublemakers whose only intent is holding sway over others. The word “cheat” used by Paul is found only here in the New Testament. It refers to the act of discouraging or misleading believers by diverting them from their full potential in Christ. It is a word which would be used of a judge who makes a wrong call, and which in turn would deprive a person of their rightful prize.

Paul then explains how someone could so deprive a believer. He first says that it would be through “taking delight in false humility.” The word “false” is inserted here, but it gives the correct sense. Humility is thought of as a strong Christian trait, but false humility is something which is loathsome. The way that this false humility is made manifest is through “the worship of angels.” The two thoughts are tied together in a person who would claim that they were so humble as that they would never approach God directly, but would rather come through a mediator. Such false humility would then deprive the believer of their true right, which is to approach the throne of grace boldly (see Hebrews 4:16).

Because of Christ Jesus, we have full right to the throne of God, and we have full access to Him in our time of need. But those who would take delight in false humility would petition dead saints, Mary, or angels such as Michael or Gabriel, claiming that their prayers to such beings would be properly handled by them. It is the trap which Roman Catholicism teaches quite clearly, and those who follow in such teachings are deprived of their rightful use of God's throne of grace. Jesus Christ is clearly shown to be greater than all angels in the book of Hebrews, and He is noted as the One and only Mediator between God and man in the book of 1 Timothy.

Paul continues to speak of such a person by saying that he is “intruding into those things which he has not seen.” The word “intruding” is another word unique to the New Testament. Paul's

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use of it is probably referring to someone who claims to see heavenly visions, and then goes on to explain what their heavenly vision means. In turn, others will then be willing to follow them in their supposedly superior access to divine mysteries. This would cover countless supposed visions of the church age. The RCC is caught up in the visions of Fatima. The Seventh Day Adventists hold fast to the visions of Ellen G. White. The list of such people goes on and on.

They have, and continue to make to this day, claims of divine visions. Some claim to have been to heaven; some to hell; some have had angels stop by their office for coffee. Type in a search on You Tube, and a thousand false claims will come up. Charismatic churches make a million claims a year about divine dreams, visions, and prophecies. Countless books have been written about such things, and yet the Bible tells us that these things are false. All such claims are without merit. With the completion of Scripture, these things have passed away, and the Bible is our sole source of divine inspiration. The book is complete? What more could we use for our life's doctrine and practice?

Paul warns that anyone who says they have had such a vision is “vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.” The idea of true humility is to make less of oneself. In essence, it is to shrink in size before another. But such a person is actually making himself larger. He is puffed up like a kernel of corn which pops from heat. The vanity of the person characterizes their false humility. It shows that they have been negatively affected in their minds. They are quacks who speak without any true substance. This is why Paul finishes by noting such a person's “fleshly mind.” The flesh is that which is carnal, not spiritual. They claim that which is divine, but their claims are actually earthly and sensual. They are to be rejected.

Life application: No matter how true a claim sounds about a heavenly vision, an angelic vision, a trip to hell and back, or whatever else someone claims they have seen, it is always better to keep your money in your wallet, and to not listen to such a person. If their claim is true (which it is not) you haven't lost anything by ignoring them. If their claim is not true, you have saved yourself from getting sucked in by someone the Bible has warned you about in the first place. Instead of watching their stupid hour-long video, try reading your Bible for an hour. Instead of buying and reading their book, try going to a decent Bible study. In the end, it all comes down to priorities. Don't waste yours on such nonsense.

...and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is from God*. Colossians 2:19

This verse is rather similar to what he said to the Ephesians –

“ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head— Christ— ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint

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supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” Ephesians 4:15, 16

Paul is now bringing an indictment against such a person as mentioned in the preceding verse. It is the one who, as he stated, “is puffed up by his fleshly mind.” This person, as already described, is “not holding fast to the Head.” Christ is the Head, and this person intentionally severs himself from Him by observing things from an obsolete law, and then claiming that his directions came from angelic visions or some other sort of supposed authority.

But Paul notes that it is Christ “from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is* from God.” There is one body which is attached to Christ, and that body is wholly interconnected. It is “nourished and knit together,” and everything works seamlessly because the Head directs it. If someone does not hold fast to Christ, then there is no interconnection, and thus there is no nourishment. And as there is no nourishment, there can be no “growth with the increase *that is* from God.”

Paul doesn’t say there is no growth at all, but the growth of someone who is not connected to Christ does not come from God. Anything not of God is of the devil. This is the warning that Paul makes in following such a person. He claims spiritual enlightenment, but there is rather spiritual darkness. He claims life and viability, but there is instead only a path which leads to sickness and death.

As a logical connection to what Paul is saying, we need to realize that Christ Jesus is not physically here with us, and neither are the apostles (meaning those who saw and learned directly from Jesus). As this is so, then the Bible – by default – must be our one source of staying connected to the Head. This is why there are no true visions today. This is why we don’t “have a word from the Lord” today. The word from the Lord is the word of the Lord, meaning the Bible. Instead of believing people who make claims about extra-biblical revelation, just think the matter through. What more do we need than what God has supplied us in Scripture?

As the wording used by Paul here is very close to that of Ephesians 4:15, 16, referring to that commentary will provide additional insights into his thoughts of this verse. In the end, the result of not being properly connected to the Head is to follow a sad path which leads to loss.

Life application: How many times, and in how many different ways, does the Bible need to warn us about following false teachers? And yet, countless numbers of people do just that. They may or may not be saved, but even if they are, their doctrine has them in bondage, and the people they follow will only continue to lead them down unhappy trails without any true connection to the Head of the faith.

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Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as *though* living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— Colossians 2:20

The word “Therefore” is given to sum up his thoughts of the previous verses. However, it is lacking in many ancient manuscripts. Whether it belongs or not, the question he will ask still stands. And so he asks, “...if you died with Christ.” This is a rhetorical question which carries the intent of, “Because you died with Christ.” The idea of dying with Christ was explained in verses 11 and 12, but it finds a full explanation in Romans 6 (see verses 1-11).

Paul then notes that they have “died with Christ from the basic principles of the world.” This is speaking of the traditions and doctrines of men. It speaks of such principles which are earthly and not of Christ. Christ has fulfilled the law, therefore any ordinance of the law which He fulfilled would be included in this. And those things which were not even of the law, taught by supposed wise men of other cultures, don’t even have a starting point like the law did. If the law, which was once binding but is now annulled in Christ, is a part of what Paul is speaking of, how much more the things which were never even a part of the law!

Because of this, he asks, “Why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—” The single word translated as “submit yourselves to regulations” is unique to the Bible. It is more appropriately to be translated in the passive voice, and so it should read, “Why do you submit yourself to being dictated to?” In other words, these people are allowing someone else to come in among them and tell them what they should be doing when they are already freed from the very things they are being told to do because they are in Christ.

It would be like a person who had served his time in the military and had been honorably discharged, but then whenever an old superior that he served under comes to visit, he allows himself to get bullied around by that person. He has served, he has been discharged, and he is free from the constraints of his service, but he allows himself to be brought back under unauthorized authority. In this, he allows this person, without any true authority over him, to affect his relationship with his current employer. Who is being neglected then? The rightful, current employer! This is what happens when one places a principle of this world over the freedom found in Christ. Paul will give examples of this in the coming verse.

Life application: In having died with Christ, we are free from the bondage of the law, and from any other supposed spiritual principles of the world. We are to live in Christ, and for Christ. We are to trust in His grace which came at such a high cost.

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