

## What Does It NOT Take to Become Spiritual?

### Colossians 2:20-23

- BGT** <sup>20</sup> Εἰ ἀπεθάνετε σὺν Χριστῷ ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου, τί ὡς ζῶντες ἐν κόσμῳ δογματίζεσθε; <sup>21</sup> μὴ ἄψη μηδὲ γεύση μηδὲ θίγης, <sup>22</sup> ἃ ἐστὶν πάντα εἰς φθορὰν τῇ ἀποχρήσει, κατὰ τὰ ἐντάλματα καὶ διδασκαλίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων, <sup>23</sup> ἅτινά ἐστιν λόγον μὲν ἔχοντα σοφίας ἐν ἐβελοθηρσικίᾳ καὶ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ [καὶ] ἀφειδίᾳ σώματος, οὐκ ἐν τιμῇ τινι πρὸς πλησμονὴν τῆς σαρκός.
- NKJ** <sup>20</sup> 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 -- <sup>21</sup> "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," <sup>22</sup> which all concern things which perish with the using -- according to the commandments and doctrines of men? <sup>23</sup> These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, *false* humility, and neglect of the body, *but are* of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

Christ is supreme and His work is sufficient...

- External Standard Based Upon OT Diet and Days (2:16-17) – False Spirituality of **Legalism**
- External Standard Based Upon Individual Experience (2:18-19) – False Spirituality of **Experience**
- External Standard Based Upon Man-Made Rules (2:20-23) – False Spirituality of **Aceticism**

### I. Our Position as Believers (20a)

#### A. What Is True – We Have Already Died

(Εἰ ἀπεθάνετε – "If you died")

1. "If" (assuming it to be true) and thus "since"
2. Aorist plural – completed action – it is already true – it has already happened

#### B. Why It Is True – We Have Already Died with Christ (σὺν Χριστῷ - with {sun} Christ)

1. **Rom 6:1-4** – <sup>1</sup> What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? <sup>3</sup> Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? <sup>4</sup> Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
2. **Col 3:3** – For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
3. **Gal 2:20** – I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

#### C. What It Accomplished – We Have Already Died with Christ to the Principles of the World

(ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου – from the basic principles of the cosmos)

1. **Rom 6:5-10** – <sup>5</sup> For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, <sup>6</sup> knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. <sup>7</sup> For he who has died has been freed from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, <sup>9</sup> knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. <sup>10</sup> For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God.
2. **Rom 7:6** – But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not *in* the oldness of the letter.
3. **Gal 4:3** – Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.
4. **Col 2:6-10** – <sup>6</sup> As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, <sup>7</sup> rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. <sup>8</sup> Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. <sup>9</sup> For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; <sup>10</sup> and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

### II. Our Confusion with Externals (20b–23)

#### A. A Wrong Perspective (20b – τί ὡς ζῶντες ἐν κόσμῳ - why as living in the cosmos)

1. **Eph 2:1-3** – <sup>1</sup> And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, <sup>3</sup> among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.
2. **Col 3:1-5** – <sup>1</sup> If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. <sup>3</sup> For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. <sup>5</sup> Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.
3. **Rom 6:12-14** – <sup>12</sup> Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. <sup>13</sup> And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. <sup>14</sup> For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

4. **James 4:4** – Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

**B. A Wrong Practice (20b–23)** (δογματίζεσθε – do you obligate yourself {pres pl – “being dogmatized”}?)

1. **External Rules** (21) – *a made-up list of prohibitions supposedly equate to spirituality*  
(μη άψη μηδε γεύση μηδε θίγης, – You may not handle (not marrying?), neither may you taste, neither may you touch)
  - a. **Gal 6:12-14** – <sup>12</sup> As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these *would* compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. <sup>13</sup> For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. <sup>14</sup> But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.
  - b. **1 Tim 4:1-4** – <sup>1</sup> Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, <sup>2</sup> speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, <sup>3</sup> forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. <sup>4</sup> For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving;
2. **Temporary Nature** (22a) – *they deal with things that have no eternal emphasis (things that perish)*  
(ά εστιν πάντα εις φθοράν τη άποχρήσει – which is all unto decay in the using)
  - a. **1 Tim 6:7** – For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out.
  - b. **2 Pet 3:10-12** – <sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. <sup>11</sup> Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, <sup>12</sup> looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?
  - c. **1 John 2:15-17** – <sup>15</sup> Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that *is* in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.
3. **Improper Basis** (22b) – *they are built on man’s commands and ideas*  
(κατά τα εντάλματα και διδασκαλίας των ανθρώπων – according to the commandments and teachings of the men)
  - a. **Matt 15:1-9** – <sup>1</sup> Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, <sup>2</sup> "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread." <sup>3</sup> He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? <sup>4</sup> For God commanded, saying, '*Honor your father and your mother*'; and, '*He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death*.' <sup>5</sup> But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me *is a gift to God*"-- <sup>6</sup> then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. <sup>7</sup> Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: <sup>8</sup> '*These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me*.' <sup>9</sup> *And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*' "
  - b. **Col 2:8** – Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.
4. **False Appearance** (23a) – *they appear to be built upon wisdom – it looks right on the outside*  
(άτινά εστιν λόγον μὲν έχοντα σοφίας – which (things) is a message (word) indeed while having wisdom)
  - a. **Matt 23:27-28** – <sup>27</sup> Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness. <sup>28</sup> Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.
  - b. **2 Cor 11:12-15** – <sup>12</sup> But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast. <sup>13</sup> For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup> And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. <sup>15</sup> Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.
5. **Visible Focuses** (23b) – *they focus on individual ascetic practices – self-defined religion, humility, neglect*  
(έν έθελοθησκία και ταπεινοφροσύνη [και] άφειδία σώματος – in self-willed religion and humility [and] neglecting of body)
6. **Ineffective Value** (23d) – *though labeled as spiritual efforts, they don't have any true impact at all*  
(ούκ έν τιμη τιμι προς πλησμοιήν της σαρκός – not in value {honor} any toward indulgence of the flesh)
  - a. **1 Tim 4:6-8** – <sup>6</sup> If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. <sup>7</sup> But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. <sup>8</sup> For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

*Godliness/spirituality does not come through some man-devised or defined religious rituals or denial of externals. Godliness comes through walking by faith (Col 2:6-7), having died with Christ, and thus freed from sin, and now, being raised with Christ, being able to live by God's truth and commandments by His grace, empowered by the Holy Spirit.*