

A Flea in the Ear
Colossians 2:16-19

INTRO: “A flea in the ear” is an old colloquialism that means to listen to a warning. Possibly the saying “to put a bug in your ear” came from this old saying.

My friend, warnings are very important to each of us. Many folks do not heed warnings, and they get themselves in big trouble. At the railroad crossing, we have flashing red signals that cry out, “Warning! A train is coming!” On poisons, we often find the familiar skull and crossbones. To ignore the warnings can be fatal! We warn little children that the stove is hot; we do this because we love them.

Paul loved the Colossian Christians, so he cranked up the sirens and flashing red lights to warn them against spiritual dangers.

In Colossians 2:16-19, Paul warns the Colossians not to adopt the Gnostic practices of asceticism and mysticism.

I. VSS 16-17, WARNING AGAINST ASCETICISM

A. Vs 16, Here Paul warns the Colossians against Gnostic asceticism. Asceticism is exceedingly rigid exercise of religious duties and the mortification of worldly desires to be saved and spiritual.

1. Asceticism is the religion of human achievement.
 - a. Like legalism, asceticism argues that spirituality is based on Christ plus human works.
 - b. Asceticism makes conformity to man made rules the measure of spirituality.
 - c. We are to follow God’s commandments, not for salvation for salvation is all of grace, but because God says to and what God commands is ultimately for our good. Some call those who follow the Bible in matters of dress and conduct legalists. Following God’s Word in these matters is not legalism.
2. Believers do not need to add anything to what Christ has done to gain complete salvation. Christ has provided complete salvation to the believer (Col 2:10). Christ has provided complete forgiveness to all who simply believe (Col 2:13). Christ has also provided complete victory (Col 2:15).
3. “Let no man therefore judge you.....” The key here is

- “therefore.” This shows it is related to the previous verses.
- a. Believers are free from the man made rules that promise freedom but actually lead to slavery.
 - b. Paul is saying: “Don’t sacrifice your freedom in Christ for a set of man made rules.”
 - c. We do not need man to act as our judge! It is not keeping the law that saves anyhow.
4. The scripture is clear; the Law never has and never will save anyone.
 - a. Romans 3:19-26.
 - b. Romans 10:4, “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”
 - c. As we have seen in Col 2:14, Christ canceled the debt and dominion of the Law on the cross.
 5. It is senseless to become entangled again in a legalistic system and be lead away from our liberty and privileges in Christ.
 - a. The Galatians, who were caught in legalism, were reminded by Paul to: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free....” (Gal 5:1).
 - b. Paul told Titus to pay no attention to the myths and commandments of men (Titus 1:13-15).
 6. Live by the Word of God; stand by its standards; and do not be intimidated by man made rules an rituals. Diets an days cannot change the heart. The false teachers told the Colossian saints that believing in Christ was not enough to be save. They needed to keep the Jewish ceremonial laws.
 - a. “In meat.... in drink.”
 - 1- Rn 14:17, Paul reminds the Romans that the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking.
 - 2- Jesus made it clear that under the new covenant food is neutral (Mk 7:4-23).
 - 3- Peter was plainly shown that the dietary laws of the Old Testament are no longer in force (Acts 10:9-16).
 - b. “In respect of an holyday [feast day], “or of the new moon.”
 - 1- Jewish celebrations like Passover, Pentecost, Feast of Tabernacle, etc. were no longer

followed the rules). The player is disqualified from the prize but does not lose his citizenship in the land. A Christian who fails to obey God's directions does not lose his salvation, but he does lose the Lord's approval and rewards (I Cor 3:8, 14-15).

1. "Voluntary humility" means self-abasement. Here in Colossians 2:18, the negative use of the term is emphasized.
 - a. The humility of the false teachers was a false humility.
 - b. They were delighting in their supposed humility. This is no more than ugly pride: "I am so proud I am humble." Uriah Heep, a character in Charles Dickens's David Copperfield said: "I am well aware that I am the humblest person going."
2. More serious than false humility was the "worshiping of angels" practiced by the errorists.
 - a. We do not need an angel or any celestial being or any human being to approach unto God, save the Lord Jesus Christ. Christians enter the throne of God directly through our Savior, Jesus Christ (Heb 4:14-16; 10:19-20). Our mediator is Christ; there is "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Tim 2:5).
 - b. Angel worship is forbidden in scripture. Matthew 4:10 says: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Remember angels themselves worship God (Isa 6:1-4).
3. Added to practicing false humility and worshiping angels, the false teachers were basing their doctrine and practices on visions they had supposedly seen.
 - a. John MacArthur says: "Some of the worst excesses in the modern-day charismatic movement are derived from such visions" (121). Anything that takes the glory from God and gives it to man or angels is to be shunned. There is but one Gospel, and there will never be another (Gal 1:8-9).
 - b. Friends, we do not need visions; we have the Word of God which speaks of the Son (Heb 1:1-2).
4. Paul told the Colossians not to be beguiled (intimidated) by the errorists claims. For:
 - a. They were "puffed up" – inflated by their fleshly

minds.

b. They were not the spiritually elite; they were full of self.

B. Vs 19, This verse tells us about real spiritual growth. Spiritual growth comes from a real relationship with Christ and His church. We do not need intermediaries for we are to hold fast “the head” – Jesus Christ. To look to others means of salvation and spiritual growth is disloyalty to Christ the Lord.

1. We are to get our spiritual nourishment from Christ, the head of the body, the local church.
2. Warren Wiersbe says: “The New Testament says nothing of ‘isolated saints’ outside the local church” (92).

CONCLUSION: We do not need asceticism or mysticism. We have all we need in Christ. If you have Him, lay aside your ritual!

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