

How Not to Be Godly

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Colossians 2:20-23

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Truth: Godliness is NOT achieved through asceticism
but through our identification with Christ!

Paul tells us how not to be Godly 16-23

1. Godliness is not achieved through asceticism

- asceticism - the religious doctrine that one can reach a higher spiritual state by rigorous self-discipline and self-denial.
- a. Asceticism sees the body as evil, needing to be suppressed
Self-discipline sees the body as good, but needing control
 - Our bodies created by God as very good Gen 1:31
 - Bodies of believers are the temple of the Holy Spirit 1 Cor 6:19-20
- b. Asceticism is submitting the body to my will
Self-discipline is submitting my whole life to God's will
 - 1 Cor 6:19-20; 1 Cor 10:31; 1 Ths 4:3; 5:18; 1 Pet 2:15; 4:2
- c. Asceticism say all material things are evil;
Self-discipline properly uses & enjoys material things
 - 1 Tim 4:4; 6:17; Jn 15:11; Psa 5:11; Heb 13:4
- d. Asceticism is restrictive;
Self-discipline leads to greater freedom
 - Do Nots Col 2:21 -vs.- whatsoever glorifies God 1 Cor 10:31; 1 Ths 2:12
 - Illustrated: great athletes practice hard to have great freedom in play
- e. Asceticism aimed at obeying manmade commands;
Self-discipline aimed at obeying God's commands (pleasing Him)
 - Col 2:22; Mk 7:6-9
- f. Asceticism comes from the flesh & often leads to sin;
Self-discipline from the Holy Spirit & is a means to godliness
 - Col 2:18, 23; Mt 23:25-28
 - Gal 5:22-24 - self-discipline is a fruit of the Spirit
- g. Asceticism is usually motivated by gaining acceptance from God
Self-discipline motivated by assurance of being accepted by God
 - ascetics follows rules to gain acceptance
 - self-discipline is a result of knowing I a fully accepted in Christ Eph 1:5-6
 - believers know: Rom 5:8; Col 1:10; Eph 5:10

2. Dangers of Ascetic rules

- ascetic rules deal with externals, not with the heart Col 2:21; Mk 7:20-23; Rm 6:17-18
- ascetic rules are the ideas of men, not the principles of God's Word Col 2:22-23
- ascetic rules appear to lead to godliness, but only feed pride & self-indulgence Lk 18:11-12

Paul tells us how to be Godly 2:20-3:4

3. Godliness achieved by our identification with Christ 2:20; 3:1-4

- Believers are NOT under the rules of the world (asceticism, mysticism, etc.)
- Believers died with Christ; also raised with Christ - NO longer under law
- Believers are free to live for glory of God Rom 8:1-4; Rom 7:6; Gal 2:19-20

Discuss & Apply:

- Have you ever tried ascetic practices? Why do ascetics often try to recruit others to their practices? If you've tried ascetic practices, did they help you? Why or why not?
- Self-discipline is a godly virtue, but asceticism is not. How would you explain the difference? How do we know when we cross the line?
- How would you guide a young man who is fighting a losing battle with lust? Would it be wrong for him to make rules about his use of the internet or his cell phone? Why or why not? What does Jesus teach in Mat 5:30 and Mat 18:8?
- I've heard believers say, "In Christ I may be dead to sin, but I sure don't feel dead to sin!" How would you counsel them? Consider Colossians 3:1-17...