

DO NOT HANDLE, DO NOT TASTE,
DO NOT TOUCH

COLOSSIANS 2:16-23



SOCIAL PRESSURE WITHIN AND WITHOUT



- There are social pressures outside the church. (i.e. eating)
- And there are religious pressures inside the church. (i.e. dress)
- Many would argue those things are “essential.” (health/growth)
- Most of these cultural pressures, either from the church or from the world, may be very good on their own, but are these things essential? Should we focus on them? How shall we deal with these pressures?

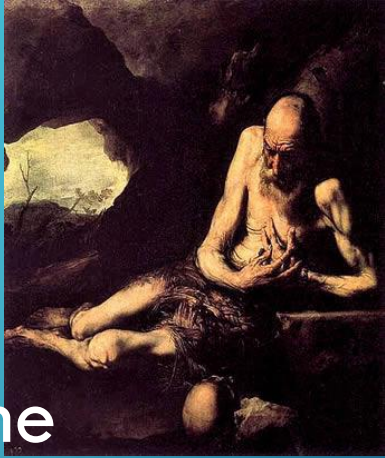
SHADOW VS. SUBSTANCE



- (v.16-17) **Shadow** is referring to a shape of the real thing.
- (Heb. 10:1) Many OT practices serve a purpose in introducing or illustrating the truth; they are not the truth itself, but point to a future truth that is fulfilled by Christ. (i.e. sacrifice)
- Jesus is the actual “substance.” (Col. 2:3, 9)
- Note: **Sabbath** in v.16 is referring to the cultural practice of the day, not the biblical principle of **rest** itself.

DISTRACTION IS THE ENEMY

- **Asceticism**—may refer to **cynicism** of that day, and the early form of **monasticism** (i.e. extreme form of self-denial)
- Notice **none** of the things in v.18 have to do with loving God, loving others, sharing our faith, or becoming more like Jesus.
- Do we do the same thing? Do we also focus on the “outward shows” and forget about our main calling of changing lives? Sadly many people do not know what to **focus** on.



BE AWARE OF DISTRACTIONS



- First, these are things that have the “**appearance** of godliness” (2 Tim. 3:5) but not toward actual faith in God or relying on God in our daily lives.
- Second, none of these things are anywhere close to the main **calling** of the church or the calling for us as believers (the great commission and the greatest commandment).
- But why are people drawn to these distractions?

PEOPLE FIND COMFORT IN A SYSTEM



- (v.21) These distractions provide a clear structure of do's and don'ts, and many people find much **comfort** in such a world for these reasons:
 - So much easier to form **opinions** or to judge others (ill. smoking)
 - So much easier to **presume** right or wrong from ignorance
 - So much easier to **regulate** or govern others (ill. school prayer)
 - Sadly, the real world is a lot messier than that...

CONCLUSION: JESUS IS THE SUBSTANCE

- First, Jesus **nourishes** (v.19) us as the Head of the church with His word.
- Second, Jesus **knit** us together (v.19; 2:2) with His love for us.
- Note: the result is **growth** (1:9-11). All along the desire of God and the prayer of Paul is that we grow to be like Jesus (Eph. 5:1). If we want to be like Jesus, we have to look at Him instead of these distractions & opinions of others.



CONCLUSION



- Finally, we need to recognize that most of these do's and don'ts are the opinions of others (v.22 precepts, or imposed convictions). We need to treat other's opinions with respect, but as opinions...nothing more (smile and nod).
- Note: we must learn the difference between **doctrines**, **principles**, **convictions** (spiritual opinions) and **preferences** (just plain old opinion) and respond accordingly.