

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

What is Your Relationship to God Based Upon?

Colossians 2:8-19

1 God wants a close personal relationship with you. He created Adam and Eve and gave them a free will to make choices. They could choose to love and obey God or live selfishly leaving God out of their lives.

For awhile they chose to love and obey God. They routinely walked with God in the cool of the day. They seemed to enjoy that encounter. We know God did because when they didn't show up one day He called out, **Where are you? ¹**

Then, one day they approached the forbidden tree and ate the forbidden fruit. ² They broke that close relationship with God He created for them to have. You and I have followed after their example ³ and,

¹ Genesis 3: 8-9 - Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

² Genesis 3:6 - When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

³ Romans 3:10-12 & 23 - There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one . . . for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God . . .

consequently, inherit the same penalty they did. God had to expel them from His presence. ⁴

But, at the perfect time, God provided a way for us to return to that close personal relationship with Him. He provided Lord Jesus Who made that renewed relationship possible. ⁵

When you respond to the Lord by faith, He has promised to restore that relationship. ⁶ Once you are restored, you can begin the process of building that close personal relationship again. Being involved with a church helps that process by discipling you.

Colossians, chapter 2, verses 8 through 19, help us to understand what to base this relationship process on as well as give us some warnings on what to avoid. ₂

⁴ Genesis 3:23 - So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.

⁵ John 3:16-17 - For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

⁶ Colossians 1:22 - But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation . . .

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.⁷₃

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.⁸₄

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed

⁷ v8.

⁸ v9-12.

the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

⁹ 5

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. ¹⁰ 6

Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow. ¹¹ 7

First, this scripture points out the . . .

⁹ v13-15.

¹⁰ v16-17.

¹¹ v18-19.

I. Extremes on Which Not to Base Your Relationship – v8 & 16-18

Extremes on which not to base your relationship. 8

Today we call these extremes **modernism or liberalism**. Notice again verse 8. **See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.** 9

In that day it was seen in some socially minded Gentile (non-Jewish background) Christians. Most of the church people were Gentiles came out of a culture based on philosophy and traditions steeped in astrology. Educated Gentiles were always seeking new and interesting knowledge to add to what they knew. An illustration of this is how the Athenians questioned the Apostle Paul about his faith. ¹² There

¹² Acts 17:21 - All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.

was a constant desire to dive into the philosophical implications of each idea. ¹⁰

In our day there is such an emphasis on helping needy people that you focus less on knowing the Word of God. ¹¹

Church modernists and liberals usually teach that only some of the Bible contains the Word of God in contrast to teaching that the total Bible is the Word of God. Therefore much of the Bible is simply gravy, human enhancements. ¹²

They teach that a concept must be logical and fit in with scientific thinking to be true. ¹³

They teach that all scripture must be interpreted in the light of current scholarly thinking. ¹⁴

They teach that if you believe any religion strong enough you will get to heaven. Most religious roads lead there. ¹⁵

They teach that what is really important in the Christian faith is social action. We need to help

mankind better himself. ¹⁶ Your relationship to God is based upon what you do; not necessarily what you believe!

This idea is a half truth based upon James, chapter 2, that emphasizes that faith needs to be demonstrated in action in order to be real. ¹³ Faith does need to be expressed to be valid but not at the expense of commitment to what you believe. ¹⁷

What is the warning for those who might base their relationship to God on modernism or liberalism? ¹⁸

¹³ James 2:14-27 - What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. ²⁰ You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ²¹ Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³ And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. ²⁴ You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

Verse 8 states that philosophy, the principles of this world, is “hollow and deceptive”.¹⁹

The phrase **take you captive**¹⁴ means to “carry you off as spoil”. This refers to the practice the Roman Army used. They would capture the enemy, bring them to Rome and parade them through the streets before the Roman public. That’s what modernism does; it captures you and gets you off track.²⁰

Next, verses 16 through 18, talk about another extreme: **legalism**.²¹

In that day, legalism was a problem for Jewish believers. They were raised believing the basis for their relationship with God was strict obedience to the Law of Moses. Not only was this their religion, it was their culture. It resulted in a strong judgmental attitude towards anyone who did not interpret the Bible their way.²²

¹⁴ συλαγωγέω.

In our day, the legalistic concentration on what the Word of God means may focus us less on ministry to people in need. Remember, the second greatest commandment is to **love your neighbor as yourself! ¹⁵**

When you get so caught up in whose interpretation of a Bible concept is the right one, you can lose what's really important in your Christian lives. ²³

This base teaches that, since the Bible is inspired, every principle in it is to be obeyed or you lose your salvation. It ignores the concept of biblical grace implying that your relationship with God is dependent on how well you keep the rules. ²⁴

It teaches that their interpretation of a Bible passage is always the correct one. If you see it differently, you're wrong! ²⁵

It teaches a judgmental emphasis on little things. They major in minors a lot. ²⁶

¹⁵ Matthew 22:37-40 - Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

They teach that faith is what you believe intellectually, not what you do. This is a half truth; a misunderstanding of the James, chapter 2 passage we referred to above. Real faith does believe what the Bible says but needs to be demonstrated in practical ministry to others. ²⁷

Our scripture today from verses 16 through 18 gives us warnings about this way of thinking. ²⁸ Verse 16 and 17 tell us that the commands of the Law of Moses were only a shadow leading us up to Christ. ¹⁶ ²⁹ Lord Jesus **cancelled the written code, with it's regulations, that was against us and that stood apposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross.** ¹⁷ ³⁰

Verse 18 ¹⁸ says judgmentalism is a **disqualifier**, ¹⁹ literally, “an empire who is against the players of the

¹⁶ vs 16-17 - Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

¹⁷ v14.

¹⁸ v18 - Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions.

game”.³¹ It also states that you can be **puffed up**,²⁰ literally “inflated with air” when you become engrossed with this attitude.³²

Romans, chapter 12, verse 3, gives us the remedy for this type of thinking, **For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.**³³

Now that we have seen the extremes for not to base your relation to God, what is . . .

II. The Reality on Which to Base Your Relationship – v9-15 & 19

The reality on which to base your relationship with God?³⁴

The first base is in verses 9 and 10, **For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you**

¹⁹ καταβραβεύω.

²⁰ φυσióω.

have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. Lord Jesus is God! ³⁵ In fact, the word **fullness** ²¹ here, a similar concept to “puffed up” above, means “to cram full”. God was crammed into Jesus’ physical body! ³⁶ And then, in verse 10, God has also crammed into you (the same word) His Holy Spirit! ³⁷ This promise is found in Acts, chapter 2, verse 38, **Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

The second reality to base our relationship on is found as we continue in our passage today; the importance and the meaning of Christian baptism. ³⁸ Baptism was for the Christian like circumcision was for the Jew! ³⁹

Circumcision was the sign of God’s covenant relationship with the Jewish people. Circumcision initiated a Jewish male into the Jewish faith. ⁴⁰

²¹ πλήρωμα.

In verse 11, ²² baptism is called **a putting off of the sinful nature**. The King James Version translates this more accurately as **a putting off of the flesh**; a direct reference to the act of circumcision. ⁴¹ This was not done **by the hands of men**, however, but **by Christ!** ⁴²

The result of baptism is like the result of circumcision. ⁴³ Verse 12 states ²³ where circumcision officially identified a person with the Law, the act of baptism officially identifies you with the Lord Jesus and His redemptive story. ⁴⁴

In verse 13, ²⁴ before your baptism, you were considered uncircumcised, dead in sins and unforgiven. ⁴⁵ But, verse 14 states ²⁵ that when God

²² v11 - In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ.

²³ vs11-12 - In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

²⁴ v13 - When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature . . .

²⁵ v14 - God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

circumcised you through your baptism, He made you alive and forgave your sins! ⁴⁶

So as circumcision officially identifies a person with the written code (the law), it is nailed to the cross in relationship to you after you are baptized. ⁴⁷

Baptism is your circumcision! It gives you a new relationship with God. ⁴⁸ Before your baptism you were a body of flesh, “sinful nature”, (verse 11); ⁴⁹ dead in your sins, (verse 13) ⁵⁰ and in bondage to the legal demands of the written code (verse 14). ⁵¹

When you were buried with Christ (verse 12), ⁵² you experienced a circumcision made without hands, ⁵³ a putting off of the body of flesh ⁵⁴ and you experienced the circumcision of Christ (verse 11). ⁵⁵

The legal demands of the written code were nailed to the cross (verse 14) ⁵⁶ and the spiritual principalities and authorities, which were against you, were disarmed (verse 15). ⁵⁷

When you were raised with Him by faith (verse 12), Jesus made you alive with Him ⁵⁸ and your sins were forgiven (verse 13). ⁵⁹

Your relationship with God is based upon who the Lord Jesus is and what He did for you on the cross. Identifying with Him in baptism, like the Jews identified with the Law in circumcision, through your faith, makes you a new child of God!

Base your relationship to God on that!

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