

Spiritual Barriers to Spiritual Freedom

"The Time Is Now" Series- Part 03

Share/Connect time: What is the one food item that you have never tasted, and...never will? Why?

A true, but common story:

I once had a friend, who was a good, compassionate man, but who was an unbeliever. Well, I should qualify that statement...He believed that Salvation was found in Christ, but he could not accept that Christ would forgive him. Early in his adulthood, his brother, who was a minister, had told him that after he had divorced his first wife, he was forever excluded from the mercies of God. My friend's divorce was presented as an impossible barrier to salvation.

What would you have said to my friend to convince him that his sin was not unpardonable?

What other barriers are often presented to people who seek the forgiveness of sin?

In our recent sermon series, "*The Time Is Now*", Pastor Brandon shared with us several common bondages that Christians find themselves struggling against. Today we will continue that discussion by looking at several "spiritual barriers" that the Apostle Paul writes about in his letter to the Colossians. Like my dear friend, many in the early church were presented with "spiritual reasons" that would deny them true spiritual freedom.

Book: Colossians 2:13-23

Col 2:13 You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for He forgave all our sins.

Col 2:14 He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.

Col 2:15 In this way, He disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by His victory over them on the cross.

Col 2:16 **So** don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths.

Col 2:17 For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ Himself is that reality.

Col 2:18 Don't let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels, saying they have had visions about these things. Their sinful minds have made them proud,

Col 2:19 and they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For He holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it.

Col 2:20 You have died with Christ, and He has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as,

Col 2:21 "Don't handle! Don't taste! Don't touch!"?

Col 2:22 Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them.

Col 2:23 These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person's evil desires.

Let's get into the Word:

The word translated “condemned” means to declare unfit, to disqualify, or to call into question. What were the standards listed in verse 16 that determined a person’s spirituality?

From where did these standards come?

How did Paul classify these standards?

In what ways today do we see the standards of Old Testament law being imposed upon the followers of Christ?

In verses 2:18–19, what is the problem Paul is warning the Colossians against?
(Consider Galatians 1:8-9 and 1 Tim.6:20)

Discuss how the following “spiritual claims” **may be** used to hinder finding spiritual freedom:

-Spiritual experiences-

-Spiritual knowledge-

-Spiritual intercessors-

The third barrier that Paul speaks to is “Legalism”...read verses 20-23 again. Many scholars see these rules or regulations as an attempt to “*discipline the body so as to please God*”.

Give an example of legalistic teachings that TODAY fall into the following categories:

Don't touch-

Don't taste-

Don't handle-

Paul states that these many rules are “man-made” and “of the world”. Why should we not place value on these kinds of instructions/teachings?

What this means to me:

Of the three barriers (Obedience to OT Law, Authority of Spiritual Experiences, or Legalism to Man-made Rules) which one do you struggle with the most?

Which Scriptures in Colossians 2:13-23 speaks to your struggle?

What action or next step do you need to take to overcome this barrier and find spiritual freedom?