**The Past is Passed**

***16****Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.****17****These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.****18****Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind,****19****and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.*

***20****If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—****21****“Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch”****22****(referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings?****23****These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.*

***1****If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.****2****Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.****3****For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.****4****When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Colossians 2:16-3:4, ESV)*

The Old Testament is the shadow of Christ, who is the Truth and the Only Means of Salvation. Greetings dearly beloved on this AEUNA and Pastor’s Appreciation Sunday, at least here in the United States. Today we are continuing our study of the Epistle to the Colossians, to see what it means that the Old Testament is the shadow of Jesus. I do not say that the Old Testament is the shadow of the New Testament, but directly of Jesus Himself. Therefore, today we’re going to talk about not only the religious issues of that day, but also the similar wrong approaches and mindsets of today. Let’s go into a bit more detail about the above…

Being a Christian is based on following Christ and not giving way to Old Testament mindsets. The greatest debate during Paul the Apostle’s years of ministry was the idea hinted at in this last sentence. As a Christian, what was the relationship of the believer to Jews or Judaism? How is one to understand and express Christ, when some say that one only belongs to God by following Jewish customs and traditions? The Apostle’s words just a few verses before our passage in question were very clear. “*As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.”* In other words, just as you believed in Jesus, continue in that faith.

Our passage in question takes that latter and explains that walk in more detail. The Apostle says, in effect, “Don’t you dare let anyone disqualify you or count your faith incomplete because of dietary laws or festivals that you do not follow.” He is trying to say that if there are those who think so in the church, that they are already not living as Christians because they are not connected to Christ.

Believers have died to Christ, says, Paul the Apostle. In other words, laws that are based on the Old Testament Scriptures, if they do not lead one to Christ, are not helpful for the Christian. Jewish laws or customs do not prove the identity of the people of God (not since Christ). Rather, it is faith in Christ that identifies a child of God. Those Old Testament-based laws and commands are not worthy of honor, because they have to do with worldly realities, such as satisfying bodily hunger.

A Christian is to seek the things above, the spiritual things, the Christian things. The believer is called to live a life connected to the things of Christ. As such, the Old Testament-based Jewish traditions are simply a shadow, now that Christ has come on the scene – and those laws and customs do not pressure or require anything from a believer in Christ.

This is like having a car that is so far damaged that it cannot be repaired anymore: the body has rusted, the engine doesn’t work properly, it is leaking fluids everywhere, and the car is just ready to be junked. It no longer fulfills the purpose for which it was intended. In that case, whether we like it or not, we need a different car to continue the same life routines.

The Old Testament and the customs and Laws based on it have fulfilled their purpose. It was clear that those Laws and the customs based on them later showed that mankind was completely unable to life the perfect, pure life that God required. Whatever Law was piled on the consciences of the Israelites, it could not change their hearts or make them into the holy people of God. This is why Christ came in the first place, and by his arrival, the adherence to those laws no longer has meaning.

We also, dear brothers and sisters, often have an Old Testament mindset. Yes, we probably don’t follow Old Testament dietary laws or the festivals spelled out in it. However, we sometimes base our customs and habits on human or worldly traditions, which have no connection to Christ. Sometimes we believers become so fixated on external details during worship, that we forget the meaning of the main sermon or teaching or prayer. There are times when customs become more important than the mission of Christ, or obedience to God’s Word.

The issue is one of mindsets or mentalities, dear ones. Whether customs, traditions or rules, they are only helpful when they serve the ultimate purpose of Christ. When our minds are working in an Old Testament-based mindset, new believers can become alienated and flee – whether here in church or even in our own circles outside of church. On the other hand, when we are focused on living for Christ, we are connected with the True Source of Life, and all of our traditions, and customs do not become a hindrance to the faith-growth of those around us. Being a Christian is based on following Christ and not giving way to Old Testament mindsets.

May God give us to realize each of our own personal Old-Testament mindsets, which are obstacles both for us and newcomers to our spiritual growth in the Lord. May we engage in self-examination, to review and or remove unhelpful traditions and unthinking customs from our lives and church. The Old Testament is the shadow of Christ, who is the Truth and the Only Means of Salvation. The Lord bless you all. Amen.