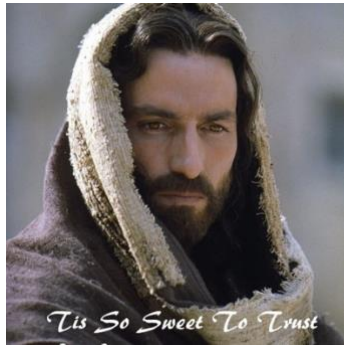




Last Sunday, we discussed the Jesus movement of the 1960's and 1970's. We also discussed how those young people coming to Christ said He was all that they had and needed. On Wednesday, we studied verses 6-10 and discussed what it means to "walk in Christ." It was lovely to hear some of you in this congregation explaining how you spend the day with Him. Most included the idea of conversing with the Lord throughout the day. The text reminded us that we are "complete in Christ." Now, Paul will turn his attention to the heart of the Christian faith. There is so much doctrine in these verses that it is hard to try to discuss them in one sermon. Let's begin now at verse 11.

¹¹In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹²buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. (Colossians 2:11-15, NKJV).

We learn that in Jesus, we are circumcised not in our flesh but our hearts. Paul reminds the Church in Colossae that the old rites and rituals of their Jewish past had ended. We studied circumcision on a prior occasion. We learned that one way to think of it is that when we came to Christ, the insensitive scar tissue of our souls had been cut away. What was left was sensitive to the nudging and direction of the Holy Spirit.

In Romans chapter 2, Paul discusses this concept at length. He argues that Jewish circumcision is merely an outward sign of being set apart in covenant with God. But, if the heart remains sinful, circumcision has no effect. Paul focuses on the condition of the heart. He explains that when a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit brings about a new creation with a heart filled with the Holy Spirit, giving the believer the push towards holiness and the power to experience victory over sin. A person's heart must change, and Paul calls that change "circumcision of the heart."



Verses 12 & 13 – Paul explains what happens when we give our hearts to Christ. As I say, when I perform a baptism, we are "buried with Him in our baptism." We are "raised with Him through faith in the working of God" who "raised Him from the dead." So we identify with His death, burial, and resurrection. And what are we raised to do? We are raised with Him to "walk in newness of life." We are now spiritually alive and empowered by the Holy Spirit of God to walk no longer as slaves to sin but as conquerors (victors). So what about those that believe in the Lord but go on in habitual sin? Paul discusses that in Romans chapter 6.



Verses 16 & 17 – ¹⁶So let no one judge you in food or drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. ¹⁸Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit

together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God. (Colossians 2:16-19, NKJV).

Paul addresses the Kosher dietary laws and the various festivals, new moons, and sabbaths that made of the practice of "godly living." All of the world's religions put men and women into bondage. There are often rules and regulations. Some groups prohibit meat from being eaten on certain days. These prohibitions are not found in scripture. Paul is warning that we should avoid rules and regulations that are somehow tied to "righteous living." Men make them.

It might be an excellent way to reflect on how much we need the Lord, but Lenten fasts are a manufactured construct. Mormons require members to refrain from drinking tea and coffee. One denomination I can think of says that if you obey God and please Him, you must have Church services on Saturday. There is no righteousness apportioned to anyone for not drinking alcohol, not playing cards, and not smoking. These may ruin your health or pocketbook if you're a poor poker player, but they don't send you to hell or affect whether you're righteous before God. There is one thing that makes you righteous, and this is Christ.

Verses 18 & 19 – These are sort of weird verses. What is this business about "false humility and worship of angels"? No one knows for sure, but some scholars think it might have been that the Gnostics acted super spiritual. They pretended to have insider knowledge, as though they knew things others didn't know. I think we sort of have that today. Some Christians act super spiritual, making you feel like you've missed out on something special, something big. Remember what we read on Wednesday night? In Christ, you are COMPLETE. You don't need to fast. (But fasting when led by the Holy Spirit is good for certain situations.) You don't need to pray a certain way. You don't need to do certain rites and rituals. SO WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO? YOU NEED TO TRUST JESUS AND WALK WITH HIM!

He says that we need to hold fast to the HEAD. That means you hold fast to Jesus. And, if we're all doing that, He will take care of the increase in our Church. I hope here at Union Grove, we will always make HIM the focus of our attention and that we will always be a ministry and never become an institution. If we keep our eyes and hearts on Him, then we will always be just what He means for us to be.



Recently I've had a few people tell me, "Wow, you've really made that Church grow." In as loving a way as I know how I immediately correct them and let them know we are growing because we continue to be "knit together by joints and ligaments," and we follow the head that is JESUS. IT IS HE THAT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL OF OUR GROWTH AND INCREASE.

Verses 19-22 - Paul then reminds them again that faith-walking begins with understanding that Jesus + Nothing = Everything

²⁰ Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— ²¹ "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," ²² which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? ²³ These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. (Colossians 2:20-23, NKJV).

Paul reminds the Colossians (and us) that when we were made alive in Christ, we were dead to the basic philosophies and values of the world. Not only that, he says that ALL FORMS OF LEGALISM ARE POWERLESS. The Church in Colossae was being assaulted by people with all kinds of philosophies, saying that the Christian life was something beyond Jesus.



Cory Ten Boom said, "You never learn that Christ is all you need until Christ is all you have." When the Flower Children came to Jesus, they said "Jesus is all we have, and He is all we need." Pastor Michael has said it again and again, "You can't come to Jesus until you come to the end of yourself." I want all reading and hearing this sermon to know

and understand that being free in Christ is the most liberating freedom you'll ever experience. As I explained on Wednesday night, OUR FAITH IS NOT A WHITE KNUCKLE FAITH! It is a FAITH-WALKING KIND OF FAITH.

Paul tells us in verses 20-23 that all of these lists about how to be a better Christian may look good, but there is no power in them. They will not help you win the battle against your flesh. As you received Christ Jesus, so walk in Him. Walking with Jesus is the sweetest, most powerful thing you can do as a Christian. Have a conversation with Him as you begin your day. Pick up your Bible in the morning, NOT BECAUSE YOU HAVE TO, BUT BECAUSE YOU GET TO!

When I graduated from Texas A&M, I moved to Raleigh, North Carolina. The first Wednesday I was there, I found a Baptist Church close to my little apartment. I had attended Wellborn Baptist Church my last year at A&M., so I knew I would find people who loved God's Word and wanted to walk with the Lord. It probably wasn't the first time I heard the hymn "Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus," but I can tell you that it was the first time I ever LISTENED TO THE WORDS. I thought, "This is the greatest hymn I have ever heard. Where has it been my whole life?"

Born in Dover, England, Lousia Stead came to a saving knowledge of Jesus when she was nine years old. When she was 21, she moved to Ohio, where she married a musician, and they had a little girl named Lily. One day when Lily was four, they took a trip to Long Island Beach. Her husband Kenneth saw a young boy in the water crying for help. He dove in, and the boy pulled him under, where he drowned. Out of her asking "why," Louisa wrote the song "Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus." Shortly after, she moved to South Africa and dedicated her life to the mission field. She married a Methodist pastor 15 years later. They moved back to the United States in time, but Lily stayed behind and dedicated her life to missions.

Louisa describes beautifully how sweet it is and what it means to "walk with Jesus." Please join me as we sing,

1 'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,
and to take him at his word;
just to rest upon his promise,
and to know, "Thus saith the Lord."

2 O how sweet to trust in Jesus,
just to trust his cleansing blood;
and in simple faith to plunge me
neath the healing, cleansing flood! [Refrain]

Refrain:

Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him!
How I've proved him o'er and o'er!
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!
O for grace to trust him more!

3 Yes, 'tis sweet to trust in Jesus,
just from sin and self to cease;
just from Jesus simply taking
life and rest, and joy and peace. [Refrain]²

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.

² <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-tis-so-sweet-to-trust-in-jesus>