

You Have Died with Christ

Colossians 2:19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

Colossians 2:19 is one of the most phenomenal verses in the Bible. First of all, it sets up an analogy between the anatomy of the human body and the body of Christ thereby setting up the relationship of Jesus Christ and the Church, that is relating you to Jesus Christ.

It is also an interesting verse referring to the religious crowd, and their subtle refusal to see the preeminence of Jesus Christ. And then believers who are striving to live according to a life that is pleasing to God by the power and leading of the Holy Spirit.

The first phrase of this verse continues a description of those religious people who would cheat you out of rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

And not holding fast to the head

This one little phrase introduces three questions:

1. Who is not holding fast?
2. What does it mean to hold fast?
3. Who or what is the head?

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First, those not holding fast refers to those who would defraud believers out of rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ, the religious crowd who are arrogant about their lives. And be sure you understand that this includes both believers and unbelievers. Often it is believers who interfere with the spiritual growth of other believers and who interfere with the spreading of the gospel.

Be sure you are not one of those!

They are **not holding fast**. Pay close attention to this phrase, because while it describes what they are not doing, it also describes what we should be doing. The present tense and active voice means this should be practiced daily. The Greek verb means just that, to take hold of, to grasp, to hold on to everyday of your life. Here it is an idiom meaning to be occupied with someone or something that is so valuable to you that you do not want to lose it. When you meet that one whom God has designed for you in marriage—you want to hold on to that one, everyday, not lose even for a day. Well, this should be our thinking in regard to Jesus Christ.

Here it is the negative meaning they are not occupied with the head.

To the head: to the absolute authority. The Greek word not only refers to the head of the human body but in the Greek it is used for the chief, the ruler.

Not holding fast accompanies the phrase **taking his stand** in verse 18: taking his stand on *visions* he has seen.

Here is a description of their problem and a warning to all of us. When you get your eyes, your thinking, off Jesus Christ and on self, your

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dreams, visions, or on others or on other things, you are losing out on your rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ

Keep your eyes upon Jesus.

Set your mind on things above where Jesus is.

Take hold of Jesus Christ everyday of your life.

Regardless of the dispensation, Jesus Christ is the only Preeminent One. He must therefore be our full measure of Spiritual Life and concentration and reason for living.

Answer this question: ‘What am I living for?’ If your answer is not Jesus Christ then you need to re-think your value system; reevaluate your purpose for living. It is so wonderful a blessing from God to be married to someone who shares this priority in life.

The only way for Jesus Christ to be preeminent in your life is through the filling of the Holy Spirit and intake of the Word of God in your life – growing in the Knowledge of Jesus Christ your Savior-friend. If you ever have to recover from the entrapment of sins, or recover from living for something or someone else, this is where it begins and continues. Get back to walking by faith in the Holy Spirit and growing in the knowledge of the Word of God and growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18)

**and not holding fast to the head from whom
the entire body**

This refers to all believers in Jesus Christ. The body is in the process of being constructed. The Death, Burial, Resurrection, Ascension and

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Session of Jesus Christ demanded a change in dispensations because once Jesus Christ ascended to the Third Heaven, the Right hand of God, He was appointed High Priest. So, He was in need of a kingdom of priests. In the age of Israel priesthood was based on physical birth but now in the new dispensation, the Church Age priesthood is dependent on spiritual birth.

From whom

This prepositional phrase indicates ‘source.’ It introduces the beginning of our understanding of just how important Jesus Christ is to our daily lives individually and jointly with one another.

Jesus Christ, as the head is the source of support, and the holding together of the body and therefore of the growth of the body.

And as to the gender of this relative pronoun, **whom**, it can be either neuter or masculine. Here it is masculine, referring to the person, the preeminent person, Jesus the Christ.

being supplied

In the original manuscripts, this comes at the end of the phrase:

**from whom all the body by means of the joints
and ligaments being supplied**

I pray I can relate to you the richness of this phrase:

being supplied

First, this declares how really wonderful our Savior-friend Jesus Christ is to each one of us. Then it is a description of what is crucial between you and Jesus Christ.

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It is the Present Passive Participle of a compound Greek word which means *to furnish abundantly*. The compound verb adds the idea of not just supply or furnish or give but the Greek compound is used to emphasize the generous nature of Jesus Christ. He supplies abundantly! And the Passive voice means we receive this by grace. The secret to just how we receive this generous supply from Him is given in:

Gal. 3:5 So then does He who abundantly supplies you with the Spirit even working power in you do it by the works of the Law or by the hearing by faith?

Here in Col. 2:19 Jesus Christ abundantly supplies by grace through faith.

And held together by joints and ligaments

Remember this is just the first century and God the Holy Spirit teaches of what is going on inside the human body. The next 2,000 years will make great progress in the study of human anatomy. But here, God the Holy Spirit teaches some depth into anatomy in teaching of the relationship of the Church, the Body of Christ and Christ Himself.

And held together by joints and ligaments

First, the phrase **held together** is not in the original manuscripts.

**from whom all the body by means of the joints
and ligaments being supplied**

Joints and ligaments

Joints comes from the Greek word meaning to connect, adjoin, to fasten, “a joint by which other members of the body are connected or fastened

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together.” **Ligaments** comes from the compound Greek word *sundesmos* where the prefix *sun* means together and the root *desomos* means to bond or join; to join together. The study of ligaments is known as “desmology” from this Greek word.

A ligament is a fibrous connective tissue which attaches bone to bone, and usually serves to hold structures together and keep them stable.

A joint is where two or more bones come together, and join parts of the body to form the structure of the body like the knee, hip, elbow, or shoulder.

Question: Why this reference to Jesus Christ and the body?

1. Joints and Ligaments connect and hold the members of the body providing structure to the body. They keep the body stable for mobility of movement. They also give the human body symmetry. Now by way of analogy this is what Jesus Christ as the Head of the body gives to the body of the Church and to each individual member of the Body or of the Church. We studied this in 1 Cor. 12.

2. Pay close attention to this verse – what this verse is teaching: The body of Christ, the Church, individuals in the Church are supplied and held together from it’s head, that is from Jesus Christ. So, as you grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18) as you increase your occupation with Jesus Christ, as Jesus Christ becomes preeminent in your daily life, your life becomes structured. This also gives you stability in your life. One of the problems in America, in marriages and in churches is the absence of sound structure and stability. And the reason for this is that we have moved away from Jesus Christ.

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3. Question: How does Jesus Christ as the head supply this joining and fastening of the Body?

First, through and by His Spirit whom He has sent to each one of us— John 14 and Gal. 3.

Secondly, through or by His Word:

Heb.4:12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Thirdly: by loving as Jesus Christ loved...Spiritual Love coming to us as a fruit of the Holy Spirit by faith in the Holy Spirit.

Col. 3:14 Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

Note that word ‘bond.’ This is the same word we have for ‘ligaments’ in Col. 2:19 which you will recall holds structures together and keeps them stable. And here in Col. 3:14 it is said that Spiritual Love, that is, loving as Jesus Christ loves, is the perfect bond or the perfect fabric to hold the body together and keep it stable. Throughout Church history people have been far more concerned about their denomination or even their particular doctrines rather than Jesus Christ Himself.

4. This point of the holding the body together is magnified by Paul in Eph. 4:16, but we will gain by reading the entire sentence.

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Eph. 4:14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

Over and over in Paul's writings the Holy Spirit makes sure that he warns of the dangers in the Christian life. We are seeing this over and over just in Col. 2.

Eph. 4:15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,

Now in verse 15 we have to guard against being carried away by false teaching. **15 but speaking-teaching the truth in love**, (Spiritual Love) **we are to grow up**. Sound teaching of sound doctrine causes the believer to grow **in all aspects into Him who is the head, *even Christ***. It is very important that we constantly bear in mind that Jesus Christ is the head, the authority, over the church and therefore over our lives.

Eph. 4:16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

(even Christ) from whom this is the same Greek construction as in Col. 2:19...*from whom*

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the whole body, being fitted Present Passive Participle meaning we graciously receive being fitted and the Greek word itself gives us a clue as to how Jesus Christ as the head, fits the body together. So, lets take an academic look at the word: **fitted** *sunarmologeō* prefix *sun* –together; plus *harmos* which means joined properly together and then *logos* – Word. This is a Christian word only, not found in classical Greek, so the Holy Spirit gave this make up to Paul; **to fit properly together by the Word of God.**

and held together

KJ-- compacted

Wuest – “constantly being knit together” attempts to translate the Present Passive Participle of the Greek word which simply means cause to come together or be knitted.

by what every joint same word as in Col. 2:19

supplies, this is the noun of the verb form used in Col. 2:19, which you will recall reveals to us the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and His wisdom as to what is needed and supplying that in abundance.

According to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body universally, locally and individually for the building up of itself in love. That is in Spiritual Love.

Col. 2:19 Not holding fast to the head, (Jesus Christ) from whom all the body by means of the joints and ligaments being supplied

The last phrase: grows with a growth which is from God

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Again this refers to the body of Christ and to each individual part of that body, meaning each one of us.

Please understand that every aspect of the Christian life is by the grace and love of God and His Provision, not from any works of man –be that work overt –as in do and do or in words as in repentance or confession. If God acts on the basis of our confession—then He is acting on the basis of our works, that we do something for Him. Eph. 2:8-9 not only refers to our initial restoration from the penalty of sin but also from the power of sin in our lives and in receiving all blessings from God

**Eph. 2:8 For by grace you have been saved
through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is*
the gift of God;
9 not as a result of works, so that no one may
boast.**

And this includes our Spiritual growth.

Jesus Christ as the head of the Church cares so much about the spiritual growth of each individual member of His body.

Here in Col. 2:19 God is the one who causes growth.

Compare this with **2 Cor. 3:6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.** Then in the following verse:

7 So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. God the Holy Spirit causes the growth.

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In Eph. 4:16 it is the entire process that causes the growth. It is Jesus Christ who furnishes every part of the body.

Col. 2:20 If (since) you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 21 “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” (Legalism)

If you have died with Christ this is a 1st class condition in the Greek, and therefore should be translated “since you have died with Christ.” But before we study this, look at **Col. 3:1** Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ and this is also a 1st class condition.

since you have died with Christ
since you have been raised up with Christ.

In these two phrases is the dynamics of being a Christian: being saved forever, being a member of the body of Christ. Here is who and what you are—you have died with Christ and you have been raised up to New Life with Christ.

I hope you are seeing the preeminence of Jesus Christ in you, and why He should be preeminent in your life, in every decision you make.

2:20 since you have died with Christ

What in the world does this mean? This is an Aorist Active Indicative of the Greek word for death: *apothnesko* this compound Greek word is the most intensive and strongest of all the verbs for death. For example,

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thnesko is to die of a natural death and refers to both humans and animals.

Most people, including a number of Christians are only concerned with their own physical death, but we should be most concerned about a few other deaths that directly effect us.

Pertinent Deaths

First: Spiritual death of Adam and Eve. In Gen. 2:17 is the phrase from God in reference to their eating of the forbidden tree: **dying, you shall die - two** deaths are involved here. First, *dying* refers to how they died immediately –that is they died spiritually. That is they lost their human spirit and therefore lost the ability of fellowship with God. Then it says **you shall die**. This refers to physical death. Physical death is a result of sin. Now, as to the spiritual death of Adam—we are imputed the spiritual death of Adam. That is when we are born into the human race, we are born physically alive but we are born spiritually dead. We have an Inherited Sin Nature from Adam’s Original Sin.

Second: We are all born spiritually dead.

Third: The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23) This is not referring to physical death but to spiritual death as in Gen 2:17. Now, as we grow in our natural life we commit personal sins: Sins of the Tongue, Overt Sins and Mental Attitude Sins. And the wages that is the payment for our personal sins is just as it was for Adam, spiritual death! But we are already spiritually dead so none of us can pay this debt.

Fourth: Christ paid this debt for the entire human race. On the cross Jesus Christ first died spiritually—paying the debt for our sins that we could not pay. Then on the cross, Jesus Christ said ‘It is finished’; that is

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the payment for sins was now paid in full for all the human race. Then Jesus Christ gave up His soul and revived Spirit to God the Father. His body went into the grave and His soul and Spirit went to be with the Father.

Fifth: since you died with Christ Now when an unbeliever, believes in Jesus Christ as his/her personal Savior, God identifies him/her with the death of Jesus Christ. Your payment is now made in full in Christ. This is your position in Christ, before God. The debt for your personal sins was paid by being joined with Jesus Christ in His Spiritual death.

Sixth: Second Death (Rev. 2:11; 19:20; 20:6, 11-15) This death is separation from God for all eternity, alive, and conscious, yet tormented in darkness and fire. This will be experienced by everyone who refuses to believe in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. That is all those who reject the love of God and the love of Christ. People, the gospel is a most serious message.

Seventh: raised with Christ this is escaping the Second Death and living with Jesus Christ for all eternity.

2:20 since you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world.

The preposition *apo* plus the genitive case should be translated **from the principles of the world**. In ancient Greek this was a rich word. It means elements, fundamental principles. “Among the ancient Greek philosophers, it designated the four basic and essential elements of which the universe consisted, namely earth, water, air and fire.” Basically, it refers to basic elements of thought. In Heb. 5:12 it refers to the first principles of Christian doctrine or teaching.

Heb. 5:12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

Col. 2:20 since you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world. The phrase of **the world** refers to Satan's teaching and organization after he took over after the fall in the garden.

Why as if you were living—functioning referring to how you live day in and day out. The lack of a definite article for **world** should be translated **why as if you were functioning in a world.** Why is this important? The absence of the definite article emphasizes quality, not identity. So, this is calling attention to the quality of the kingdom into which we were born. We should know the world or kingdom into which we were physically born. We were born into the Devil's world, the Devil's kingdom. Some time ago we studied about Jesus Christ coming into Satan's kingdom and taking out of his kingdom, those who believed in Him.

**why as if you were functioning in a world
(where Satan rules)
do you submit yourselves**

This is an interesting word. You can pick up a little from the Greek word *dogmatizo* –dogma, decree, ordinance and in the middle voice as we have it here, it means to let yourself fall into a certain order or dogmas that are totally contrary to those of the Lord.

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Here it means to submit to Legalism.

Now Paul uses some illustrations of legalism at that time and all through Church history. **to decrees such as, do not handle, do not taste do not touch.** Paul is getting ready to move into our living our lives in Christ, in Chapter 3.

When a believer does not want to grow in verse by verse teaching of the Word of God there are generally one of two ways he can go. One is in lasciviousness –a life of sin; which Paul will describe in Colossians 3:5-8, or into Legalism which makes that believer feel like he/she is close to God and is doing what God would have them do. This is what Paul is speaking of here in Col. 2:20-23.

I am not that sure as to why the NASV has **not handle and not touch** in reverse order in translation except for the subtle differences in the Greek words *to touch and to handle*. But, we will stay with the NASV.

Do not handle this is an active subjunctive, used as an imperative but emphasizes individual responsibility. It is interesting in that this Greek word is used 3 times in the New Testament. In Heb. 11:28 and 12:20 the NASV translates this verb as ‘touch.’ The KJ translates this ‘touch’ in all three passages, including Col 2:21. Lexical definition of this Greek word: “to touch so that one can exert a modifying influence on it.” Look at:

Gen. 32:25 When he (preincarnate Jesus Christ) saw that he had not prevailed against him (Jacob), he touched the socket of his thigh; so that the socket of Jacob’s thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him.

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Do not handle means do not handle anything that is set apart to God. It is a legalism taken not only from Judaism but also from other heathen religions, with varying objects that are so forbidden.

Do not taste This of course is a taboo against eating certain foods and drinking specified drinks. There are people who think that if you eat meat, you are not spiritual for you are eating something that was killed. Forget the fact that God says this is why he put certain animals on earth. Then there are people who think and even teach that if you drink wine or any alcohol that you are sinning. Again, this is not supported in Scripture. Then there are legalists who condemn any kind of smoking. This passage makes it clear that a Spirit Filled Christian should not cater to any system of legalism. If a person chooses not to eat meat or drink or smoke, that is perfectly fine as long as they do not make it a system of spirituality.

Do not touch This of course stems from not touching an unclean thing, which in the Old Testament meant have no dealings with a heathen; in 1 Cor. 7:1 **touch not a woman...**which of course means no sexual activity until marriage. But there are people who believe that any sex is taboo and come up with all sorts of ways of sexual intercourse without seeing or even really touching the other person.

22 (which all *refer to* things destined to perish with use) (using these in practice will destroy your spiritual life, remember, a little legalism will not hurt you, it will kill you) —in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?

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(Not in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ)

23 These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion

Remember, Christianity is not a religion. Religion is what man does for God, like these three systems of handle not, taste not and touch not while Christianity is all that God does for man.

and self-abasement Religious legalism finds self praise in any form of self sacrifice, any denying of self of something—tasting or touching!)

and severe treatment of the body, (asceticism) *but are of no value against fleshly indulgence*. The KJ is much closer to the original here: **not in any honor** (of no value) **to the satisfying of the flesh**. Denying the flesh of anything ordained by God is of no value in the spiritual realm.

People, if you have believed in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, you died with Him. And this means you have died to the desires of your Inherited Sin Nature. And this means you have died to the demands of religious legalism. The first part of 3:1 is the counter and direction of how we should live...**since you have been raised up with Christ**. Dying with Christ reveals how you are not to live now and being raised up with Christ directs on how we are to live.

Gal. 2: 20 “I have been crucified with Christ; (you have died with Christ) and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; (you have been

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raised up with Christ) **and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.**