

Colossians 2:16-19

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.

The Ten Commandments are no cinch. Would that they were! And that is a large part of the struggle of the Christian life. My new man does not want to do the same things as my old man, and the Ten Commandments are the last thing my old man wants anything to do with, unless he can somehow finagle some benefit from them or get credit in other's eyes for something done according to them. The Ten Commandments are enough to keep us busy, as we strive to bring glory to God and benefit to our neighbor in our Christian walk in their light, with them as our guide, showing us how to live, not in order to be saved, but as those already saved in Christ and being transformed accordingly through the very same Word and Spirit that brought us salvation.

Because the Ten Commandments are no walk in the park for those with the sinful nature still gnawing away at them, many have tried to come up with other commandments, easier commandments. They've considered these new commandments—commandments of men—holier than God's own simple commands. They've made these commands part of what they consider the Christian life, and often even held them to be necessary for salvation. Many times, these laws have been dietary—don't eat pork, for instance, or don't eat certain foods on certain days, or countless other such instructions. And our old Adam loves these commands. You see, the old Adam thinks that this is his opening to maintain the appearance of piety while getting you to lower your defenses on what God has actually said. If the devil and our flesh can get us to where we think we can balance our score sheets—balance a sin against God's commandments by keeping man's commandments—then they've won a good part of the battle in deluding us.

And that is what was happening in Colosse. Judaizers were urging new Christians to keep the old laws meant to point to Christ and no longer applicable. Others were urging them to keep new laws, intended to bring them deeper into some fictional mysteries that had nothing to do with Christ and His revealed Word, or wantonly mixing theology with philosophy, and thus making a mess of both. Hold fast to the Head, to Christ, that is what St. Paul urged, and still urges us today. It is in Him, in our Lord, that we are nourished (that we grow up) and knit together (that we grow together). For all the other supposed growth the Colossians were hearing about, and for all the growth we still hear about today, only this growth—growth in Christ, through Christ in Word and Sacrament, and for Christ—was growth that is from God. May God grant us such growth, rooted in and guided by our Head, who has given us the Ten Commandments to drive us to Him and guide us in Him, and who has given Himself to bring us to heaven and make us His own. And may He teach us daily the sufficiency of both for accomplishing the tasks allotted to them. Amen.