



SERIES: August / September Series “HE IS ENOUGH”

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Saturday, 09/04/2021

Scripture: Colossians 2:20-22

TITLE: Does Poverty Impress God?

Is self-denial the path to greater spirituality? Many people have thought so. The church father Athanasius never washed his feet or changed his vest in the name of self-denial. Simeon Stylites spent the last 36 years of his life living atop a fifty-foot pillar. But the question is will self-denial lead to greater spirituality?

Paul has the answer, and it may surprise you. Listen to Paul’s words in Colossians 2:20-23 (NLT).

“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, ‘Don’t handle! Don’t taste! Don’t touch!’? Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them. 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.”

Paul’s words should really shake us up. Paul said, “You have died with Christ.” In other words, the old nature is gone. God has brought you from spiritual death to spiritual life. So what? Paul says that Christ has freed us from the spiritual powers of this world.” That game of religion and legalism has no power over us today. We are freed from the performance trap that many people live under today.

So, Paul challenges the Colossian church by saying, “If you’ve been freed by Christ, then why are you still doing all this religious activity as a means of salvation?” Then Paul says, “these rules are manmade. They are powerless for salvation or great spirituality. So self-denial and bodily discipline, though beneficial at times, hold no special sauce for greater spirituality.

Now, there is no doubt that self-denial is helpful. Saying “no” to ourselves and “yes” to God is the way to go. But many of us do it for the wrong reasons. Our motives should be love for God!

Many of us give things up as a show to impress others or to impress God. That’s a false humility that we talked about last week. Its impact on others is temporary, and its influence on God is non-existent.

19th century Alexander Maclaren said this about the futility of self-denial, “Any asceticism is a great deal more to men’s taste than abandoning self...Ascetic religion is godless, for its practitioners essentially worship themselves.”

So, though self-discipline is a valuable pursuit, self-glorifying self-discipline is meaningless.

So here's my challenge for you today: evaluate how you're what you're doing and why you're doing it? Are you living for yourself or for God? Are you dressing a certain way to impress others? Are you driving your car to appear holy? Are you giving up your time to charities and serving for the approval of others or God?

What we do matters to God. Of course, it does. But right along with our actions are the motives behind it. So evaluate what you're doing and why you're doing it.

Now that you know what God values, right actions with right motives, go do it and win the day.