

ESCAPING BONDAGE TO PRESENT-DAY PHARISAISM
"Part III: Liberated Personal Fellowship With God"
(Colossians 2:13-14, 20-22; Matthew 15:1-3, 9; 23:4)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

There are any number of "regulations" that are promoted in Christian circles today to provide for a holy *personal* walk with God:

(1) Some of us have felt impelled to have "daily devotions", to attend all of the Church's meetings or to keep a "journal" of God's dealings with us. Some of us were brought up or still feel pushed to observe the "disciplines" of Lent, to make ourselves feel sorry for our sins in order to get God to forgive us during the Easter season. (Broderick, ed., The Catholic Encyclopedia, p. 346, 466-468).

Are all of these practices necessary to commune with God? (2) Years ago a Christian shared with me how blessed he had become because of his involvement in **fasting!** He happily expressed how sure he was sure that it had brought him into a level of communion with God that he had never before known!

Should a Christian fast to commune closely with God? Should the Pastor practice and teach fasting for today?!

(3) On several occasions, people have tried to get me to read books or to teach on the Mosaic Law diet that restricts certain meats as "unclean". I have a relative who is now leaning toward the Law's diet!

Must I do a series of sermons on the Law's promotion of eating beef instead of pork, of ingesting salmon and not lobster?

(4) In 1994, Richard Ross of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board arranged for thousands of young men and women to pound pledge cards into the U.S. Capitol's front lawn, vowing to remain abstinent until marriage. Since then another group has promoted the idea of wearing a "chastity ring" with the same pledge!

Will making such a pledge work? Is that what GOD wants us to do to offset committing premarital sexual sins?

(5) Since last Sunday, three ladies in our Church have spoken to me regarding concerns of how they are supposed to submit to their husbands. Their anxiety stems from reading Genevieve M. White's book, Daughters of Sarah, a work that is making the rounds and is promoted on the back cover by famed author, Elizabeth Eliot.

Well, as Mrs. White implies on p. 43, must a woman obey her husband by lying to risk getting herself into a bigamous union as Sarah did, all within God's will as a submissive wife?! (We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "It has been implied to me that, to please God, I must daily read my Bible and pray, attend all of the Church's meetings, keep a 'journal', observe Lent disciplines, fast, avoid certain foods, wear a 'chastity ring', promising to abstain from immorality and obey a husband in ALL he orders! Yet, I note that these things are NOT stated in our Church Bylaws or preached from the pulpit! WHY?!"

- I. **Christ and Paul opposed our heeding the rules of man that are independent of Scripture's authority, Matt. 15:1-3, 9; Col. 2:20-22.**
- II. **Paul said we are no longer subject to the Mosaic Law, Col. 2:13-17.**
- III. **Applying these truths to today's views on PERSONAL fellowship with GOD, we can contrast true with false fellowship as follows:**
 - A. We contrast false and true "personal devotions" practices as follows:
 1. False devotions rules subject a believer to feeling that he must read his Bible and pray **each day** for a **set time** to please God.
 2. However, (a) though Israel's kings were to read Scripture daily (Dt. 17:18-19), and pastors are to "exist" in them (1 Tim. 4:13, 15), no verse commands **Church** era believers to **read** the Bible **daily**. (b) Once Paul floated in the ocean for 24 hours when he could **not** read his Bible, 2 Cor. 11:25c! (c) God wants us to apply what truths we know and **He** will lead us into more truth, Mk. 4:20-25!
 - B. We contrast false and true Church attendance as follows:
 1. False rules on attendance set an arbitrary number of attendances.
 2. Hebrews 10:24-25 tells us **not** to **abandon** Church services **without** clarifying how **often** to **attend**, for God's concern is that we value the meeting's edifying **affects**, **not** the **fact** of our **attending**.
 - C. We contrast false and true views on keeping a journal as follows:
 1. False rules tell us to keep a journal of God's interactions with us.
 2. However, Scripture tells us not to forget God's workings, but leaves us free to remember them in our **own** ways, cf. Psalm 103:2.
 - D. We contrast false and true views on Lent observances as follows:
 1. False views of Lent urge one to "discipline" himself (Protestants) **or** to feel sorry for his sins before Easter so as to impress God to forgive him (Catholic), Broderick, ed., Cath. Enc., p. 346, 466-468.

2. However, Lent practices (a) are not commanded in the Bible, so doing them errantly subjects us to man-made rules, Col. 2:20-22. (b) Also, Christians are not subject to holy day observances, Col. 2:16-17. (c) Further, the Catholic view of Lent fosters chastening one's self to seek God's forgiveness when **Scripture** declares God stands *ready* to forgive all men by faith through Christ *apart from man's work* of penance (Rom. 3:21-25; 2 Cor. 5:19-21; 1 Jn. 1:9).
3. Thus, observing Lenten rituals opposes God's Word and His grace!
- E. We contrast false and true views on **religious** (non-medical) fasting:
 1. False views urge one to *fast* to get close to God.
 2. However, religious fasting is **not commanded** in Scripture!
- F. We contrast false and true views on **religious** (non-medical) diets:
 1. Many false dietary restrictions heed the Mosaic Law's regulations.
 2. Yet, God **Himself** told Peter **three times** in **one** vision to eat what the **Law** had formerly **not** allowed, Acts 10:9-16! This because today's believers are **no longer** subject to the Law, Col. 2:13-17.
 3. **Religious** (non-medical) diets **today** are **demonic**, 1 Tim. 4:1-3.
- G. We contrast false and true efforts to retain moral purity as follows:
 1. False views promote wearing a chastity ring or pounding a pledge card in the U.S. Capital lawn to equip one to avoid fornication.
 2. However, the Bible denies the value of such "disciplines" to **keep** one's self holy as such efforts fail apart from the Spirit's control, Rom. 7:15-25; 8:2-4. Israel had the first promise-keeping gathering at Sinai in Ex. 19:8, and could not keep her promise to do God's Law (Acts 15:8-10); thus, it is futile to pledge to keep the Law or other extrabiblical promises by means of "discipline" (Rom. 8:3a)!
- H. We contrast false and true spousal submission to a husband as follows:
 1. There is a false submission to husbands: as Peter tells wives to submit to their husbands like Sarah (1 Pet. 3:6), and as she obeyed Abraham by **lying** to risk getting into an **adulterous** union (Gen. 12:11-20), Genevieve M. White, in Daughters of Sarah, p. 43 infers that God wants a wife even to **sin** at her husband's request!
 2. However, Rom. 6:1-2 KJV directly counters such teaching, saying: "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? **God forbid**. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"
 3. Besides, wives are to obey God **above** their husbands, Acts 5:29!
 4. Though Sarah was **usually** a good example of submission, in Gen. 12:11-20 she **should** have **refused** to obey Abraham's idea to **SIN**!

Lesson Application: *To enjoy personal communion with God, (1) ABANDON all personal efforts to be holy and (2) accept Christ as Savior by faith, Jn. 3:16; Rom. 8:1. (3) God will give us His indwelling Holy Spirit to LIVE THROUGH us so we can easily obey Scripture, Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:3-4. (4) As such, to fellowship with God, REFUSE to obey MAN'S rules and obey Scripture INSTEAD!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

Genevieve M. White's book, Daughters of Sarah contains **some** helpful Biblical insight on a wife's submitting properly to her husband. However, along with the truth is **serious error** that, if followed, will harm a wife's welfare and fellowship with God.

A notable example is the book's approval of a wife's trying to save her marriage by submitting to her husband "to the point of driving her husband to the subway so he could go to visit his girlfriend." (p. 10)

This suggestion is legalistically erroneous on two major counts:

(1) The fact that such a husband is rendezvousing with a mistress in front of his wife means he is emotionally abusing her. Such **abusive** people are those from whom godly believers are to **withdraw**, 2 Timothy 3:1-5 NIV! Since a wife is bound to obey God **over** her husband (Acts 5:29), a wife should dutifully avoid driving a husband to such a rendezvous in order to escape abuse. If the husband gets more abusive because of her refusal to heed him, she can leave the house to obey God's "withdraw" order! True, Scripture tells believers **never** to **initiate a divorce**, but geographically **withdrawing** from an **abusive** spouse for one's own protection (middle voice, 2 Tim. 3:5b) is **ordered** by **GOD**! **If we can't do BOTH, we must obey God above getting along with our spouse, compare 1 Samuel 15:22!**

(2) Besides, Jesus complained that the Pharisees bound heavy burdens on the shoulders of others without trying to help them bear those burdens, Mtt. 23:4. When an author thus promotes a reader's submission to emotional abuse by her husband contrary to the command of 2 Timothy 3:1-5, that author practices the burdening of the Pharisees that **Jesus opposed** in Matthew 23:4!

God has called us to union with CHRIST -- not to bondage to the non-biblical jurisdictions of any other entity, Col. 2:20-22. If we obey ANY other authority, it is ONLY because we are directed to do so under CHRIST'S jurisdiction, and ONLY so FAR as that other authority's orders fit within CHRIST'S Biblical rules directed personally to us, Acts 5:29!

To quote Galatians 5:1 NIV: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery", especially the yoke of slavery to the non-biblical rules of mortal man!