

Applying Colossians to the Problem of Addiction, Part 2

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I. Introduction

Many people struggle with addiction, including Christians. The addict has two choices when it comes to a solution: man's or God's. Man's solution is temporary because it cannot eliminate the addiction since it views the addiction as a disease similar to cancer, which is not the individual's fault. God's solution sees addiction for what it is: sin. Thus, it deals with the root of the problem: the addict's sinfulness. God is the only One who can offer a permanent solution. This doesn't mean that God doesn't understand that the addict *feels* like he has a disease. But if we're to have any hope of eradicating addiction, we must treat the sinful virus at its core.

II. What's the Solution to Addiction?

A. Man's Solution

What hope does man give the addict? The best man can do is give the addict *temporary* hope. *Why?* Because man defines addiction as a disease and as such it can never be eradicated; at best it can only be kept at bay. This also means that you cannot blame the addict, just like you cannot blame the cancer patient for his cancer.

However, though man may not blame the addict for his disease, he does hold him accountable for the cure, i.e., the addict must abstain from the addictive substance, which shows that man realizes that it's a sin problem. If abstinence stops the disease, doesn't it prove that it's not a disease? That is, the Leukemia patient can't stop his disease through abstinence, however, the alcoholic can.

One might argue, "But the addict's craving is still be there." Yes, it is, the question, however, is, "Where does the desire to take drugs come from, a gene (similar to cancer cells in Leukemia) or the addict's own sinfulness?"

Though abstinence is part of the solution, the Bible goes much further. It tells the addict, "Stop drinking," but it also tells him that he needs to deal with the real problem behind his addiction: his own sinfulness.

B. God's Solution for the Colossians

Were the Colossians addicted? They were habitual fornicators who mistreated one another, 3:5–9, and their sinful desires were still present like an addict's craving for more drugs. Thus, Paul exhorts them to kill these sins, 3:5.

God's solution showed them the truth about themselves, their habitual behavior, and God. God showed the Colossians who they really were. They were God's enemies through their habitual sin, 1:21; 3:5–7. But God didn't want them to remain enemies; He wanted to deliver them from their habitual sin. So He revealed the truth behind the world of sin that enslaved them. It operated according to man's philosophy, which was an empty lie that enslaved those who lived it, 2:8. Then God revealed the truth about Himself. He wanted the Colossians to know that He'd freed them from man's empty lie when He killed it on the Cross, 2:14. And having killed it, God wanted them to see how it had morphed into a philosophy on how to live a life of abstinence, 2:21, and how utterly foolish it would be to go back to it, 2:20, because it was useless, 2:23.

God's solution was not temporary, it was permanent. God stripped them of the world's "body of sins," 2:11, and permanently united them with the Body of His Son, 2:12–13. When this happened God also set them free from man's empty lie (which once enslaved them to sin) when He killed it on the Cross, 2:14–15. But the world's body of sins and its tendencies was not going to go away quietly. Thus, God tells the Colossians to kill its sins, 3:5, because they're no longer part of this body; they are now part of Christ's Body (1:18) which lives and grows *according to the image of Him who created Him*, 3:9–10.

Did the Colossians overcome their "addictions"? Yes, they no longer mistreated one another nor continued their sinful habits. Instead they were loving towards one another and produced righteous fruit for God, 1:4, 6.

What was the solution ultimately? Christ. He was the end of the Colossians' struggle with habitual sin. His death stripped them of who they were and gave them a new identity. He gave them the power to truly say "no" and mean it.

C. God's Solution for You

God's solution begins by seeing the truth about yourself, your addiction, and ultimately the truth about God. The problem with the addict is not the drug he's addicted to, but the truth or lie he believes about himself, the drug he's addicted to, and ultimately the truth he believes about God.

How do you see yourself? Do you see yourself as a victim of a disease who is powerless against it? How does God see you? We are all sinners who rebel against God, whether it's periodic or habitual, 1:21. But God redeems us from our sinfulness and wants to see us stand blameless before Him, 1:21–22. This will happen for the Body of Christ as a whole, 3:4, but to what extent it happens for you individually is up to you, 1:23. Will you see yourself as God sees you or as the world sees you as a victim of a disease? God wants to free you from the world of sin, from your addiction, 2:11–14.

How do you see your addiction, is it sin or an invincible disease? Is the drug or thing you're addicted to an invincible force that you will never overcome no matter how many treatment programs you attend? How does God see it? Though it may not feel like it to you, it's a sin that starts with a choice and it's NOT invincible. God gives you the power to say "no" and mean it.

How do you see God? Is God an unidentified higher power or nonexistent? God is the Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe, 1:15–17. He has power over everything including your addiction. And this God bled and died for you in order to overcome your wicked addiction, 1:21, make you part of Himself, 2:11–13, and one day see you stand blameless before Him, 1:22, 3:4. God is personal and He personally died for you. This is who God is.

God's solution is permanent not temporary. The moment you were identified with Christ's death, God freed you from the power of your addiction. It cannot control you unless you let it, Rom. 6:1–7, 12–14. If you try to defeat addiction with your own will power, you will fall prey to it, Rom. 7:13–24. There is only One through whom you will be able to defeat it: Christ, Rom. 7:25– 8:13.

What is the solution ultimately? Christ is the end of your journey. He provides your forgiveness, cleansing, restoration, and the power to defeat your addiction.

God's solution will not be easy, but in the end He will deliver you. It won't be easy because it means looking at your sinfulness square in the face, something none of us like to do. And it will mean dealing with every facet of our addiction from God's viewpoint, which looks deep down into the problem's core.

Final thoughts: None of this is meant to encourage you to drop out of your current drug treatment program. In fact, **you must not drop out of your program** because AA and such programs have two things that are crucial to overcoming your addiction, both of which are biblical: fellowship and accountability.

If you want to drop out of your current program, you must first enroll in a Bible-based program. Ask your pastor for guidance on finding such a program. To get a more thorough understanding of addiction and what God's Word has to say I suggest you read *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave* by Edward T. Welch.

III. CONCLUSION

The problem with the addict is not the drug he's addicted to, but the truth he believes about himself, his addiction, and God. God wants the addict to know that he's a sinner in need of redemption and that His Son bled and died to redeem him in order to one day see him standing blameless before Him. Thus, the solution God offers the addict is permanent.