

(Colossians) Staying Connected to the Head

by Brian Brodersen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of staying connected to Jesus Christ and not being led off into other things, highlighting the significance of circumcision and baptism as symbols of our spiritual transformation and commitment to following Jesus Christ.

Duration: 56:21

Scripture: Exodus 20:16, Matthew 5:17-19, Colossians 2:8-19, Hebrews 4:10

Topics: "Spiritual Freedom", "Victorious Living"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of staying connected to God and not getting caught up in man-made regulations. He references verses 20-23 from the Bible, which question why people subject themselves to worldly regulations when they have died with Christ. The speaker emphasizes that religious entities with lists of rules and regulations are not of the Lord, but rather the mark of man. He encourages listeners to walk in the Spirit, stay in the Word, and do what God tells them to do in order to conquer the flesh and live a victorious life.

Transcript

Let's pray, then we're going to pick up in Colossians chapter 2. Lord, we pray today, first of all, Lord, for the offering that was received. We pray You'd bless it. We pray, Lord, that You would multiply it.

We pray that You would give wisdom as we disperse it. And, Lord, that it would go to furthering the kingdom of God. And, Lord, as we open Your Word now and as we study once again in this epistle that was written to the Colossians, we pray, Lord, that You would speak to us today.

We pray that You would remind us of how vital it is to stay directly connected to You, Jesus, and not to be led off into any other thing. So, Lord, speak to us to that end. Strengthen us.

Fill our hearts with joy, Lord, as we talk about the things that You've done for us. In Your name we pray, amen. Colossians chapter 2, pick up reading in verse 8 and then we'll pick up our exposition in verse 11.

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. Now, we have taken a thorough look at these verses.

We've seen Paul's warning to us about the danger of philosophy. We've talked about the more contemporary manifestation of that in America, being psychology. And so we want to move on now to the further admonition that's given to us.

For there were several false teachings that were seeking to make their way into the church in Colossae, and Paul is dealing with them in this second chapter. There are several false teachings that will try to make their way into this fellowship and into our lives personally. And so we need to be on our guard, and the best way to be protected is to know what God's Word says and to understand it, and then, of course, to submit to it.

So in verse 11, he said, In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God who raised Him from the dead. Circumcision was the Old Testament symbol of the covenant that the people had with God. Circumcision was actually a statement of their being set apart to the life of the Spirit.

The Old Testament speaks of not only circumcision in the literal physical sense, but it speaks of circumcision in a spiritual sense, the circumcision of the ear, of the lips, of the heart. And the whole idea behind circumcision was the cutting away of the dead flesh. And so Paul says to the Colossians and to us, In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of sin.

So that dead flesh that was cut away under the Mosaic ritual was symbolic of the body of sin. So as we have come to Christ, we have been circumcised in the spiritual sense. The body of sin, that old life that we were living, has been put off.

If we are still living the old life, then it's questionable whether or not we've actually come to Christ. You see, there has to be that putting off. It's something the Lord does.

When we come to Him, He circumcises us spiritually. He deals with that sinful nature. And through His dealings, we then put off the body of sin.

We're no longer living according to our passions and desires, but we're now living according to the new passion, that passion for God that the Holy Spirit has placed in our heart. Now, baptism is to the Christian what circumcision was to the Jew. Circumcision was the outward symbol of the covenant.

Baptism is really the outward symbol of our faith in Jesus Christ. You see, back in the biblical times, they did not do what we call public invitations or altar calls. In some ways, in modern American evangelicalism, baptism has to some degree been replaced by this altar call.

That's the public statement of faith. You know, you hear people say, now come forward and make a public confession of Christ. And yet, in the New Testament period, it was your baptism that was your public confession of Christ.

That's why I think it's so important to hold baptisms publicly. I don't really agree with a baptismal in the church because I think that baptism is to be a testimony to the world that you're following Christ. And so I think it's important to do that outside in public.

And that's what happened in New Testament times. If a person was going to receive Christ, they publicly stated that by being baptized. So baptism was a public statement.

And this is, in effect, what the statement was. We are putting off the old life and we're going to live now in the newness of life. And so Paul says here, buried with him in baptism, in which you also were raised with him.

So when we go to be baptized and we're immersed under the water, it is though we are being buried. Jesus Christ was buried, literally, in a grave. The water becomes our grave.

And so we've died to sin and we're being buried. And then just as Christ rose from the dead, as we rise up from that submerged state, we are now rising up to a new life, to live a new life. So when you are baptized, this is the statement that you're making.

You're making a statement that I have died to the old life, to the life of sin, the life of the flesh, the life of being controlled by my passions. And I'm now, by the grace of God and through the power of his Holy Spirit, I'm going to live a new life. And so Paul says to the Colossians, you were both circumcised and baptized.

Christ has done this for you, putting off the body of sin and you being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh. He is made alive together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses. So this is what happens when a person becomes a Christian, they are made alive.

That old nature that once controlled them, that old nature died with Christ on the cross. We come to Christ and we realize and understand that that's what happened. And so now by the grace of God and through his power, we are called to live a new life.

And so we have this new life that he's talking about, made alive together with Christ. So now we're to be living the kind of life that Christ wants us to live. Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us, and he has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

Now, the handwriting of requirements that was against us is the law. The law of Moses and more specifically the 10 commandments, but the law in its entirety. Actually, the law is contrary to us.

And when Paul says that Jesus wiped out the handwriting of requirements, he means that Jesus dealt with the law as far as its continual condemnation of us. It's amazing to me that to this very day, some Christian people think that the law is a means for them to be right with God. And you hear people talk about keeping the law, keeping the commandments.

You hear people say that they're confident that they're going to go to heaven someday because they've kept the 10 commandments. That is a strong indicator that they've never really read, or maybe they've read it, but they've never studied the New Testament because the New Testament teaches that the law is contrary to us. It's not something that you can keep and obtain the favor of God.

It's something that actually condemns us. It's something that had to be wiped out if we were going to be able to be right with God. Jesus, when he died on the cross, he died for our violations of the law.

You see, he lived a perfect life. He kept the law, and then he was able to die in the place of those who didn't. And so dying for us and for our transgressions of the law, he then wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us.

So now that is no longer the standard by which we are judged. The standard is now by Christ. You see, the law was against me.

It was a standard that I could never live up to. But now Jesus Christ has done away with the law, and he's given me a new way to approach God, and that's through faith in him. And Paul deals with this extensively in his epistle to the Romans.

He talks about his own misunderstanding of the law before he was a Christian, back when he was a Jew, back when he was a rabbi. He thought that the law was the means of obtaining God's favor. But one day he came to the realization that the law could not save him.

And he put it in these words. He said, that which I thought would bring life, the law, he thought that if he could just keep the law, that would win him God's favor. That which I thought would bring life actually brought death.

You see, the law is against us. It's the handwriting of requirements that was against us. It is contrary to us because we're not able to obey it.

And Paul said it there again in Romans 7, he said, I am carnal sold under sin. The law is spiritual, but I'm carnal. And therefore the law doesn't profit me in bringing me to God.

It only shows me all the reasons why God cannot accept me. So the law had to be dealt with. Jesus came and lived it, and then died for those who couldn't live it, and offers now for us a new way to approach God.

We approach God not through the law, but we approach God through Jesus Christ and the righteousness that he will provide. Now he says in verse 15, having disarmed principalities and powers, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in the cross. You see, the law was Satan's point of leverage against us.

Satan, according to scripture, is the accuser of the brethren. And as long as the law was the standard, Satan had that leverage against us. He could always point to our failure to keep the law.

But when Jesus died, Satan lost that advantage point. And so now, even though he still seeks to accuse us, we have an advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is there before God. And although Satan would point to our failure, Jesus stands as our righteousness.

And God sees us in Christ. No longer does God see us falling short of the law. God sees us now in Christ.

What a glorious thing. So the advantage that Satan had over us, that he would use to condemn us, has been taken away from him. And Jesus spoiled those principalities and powers.

He disarmed them. He took away, again, that leverage point that Satan had, that leverage that he had against us through the law. So let no one judge you.

Now, in this part of Colossians here, Paul is dealing with the different heresies that are trying to make their way into the church. And having dealt with philosophy, he now moves on to deal with this religious legalism. And what would happen is, quite often, people would follow in Paul's steps, going into the churches that he established and seeking to undermine his ministry.

They would go in and they would say that Paul is a renegade apostle. He's gone way too far with this grace thing, and he's not telling you the whole truth. If you're going to really be right with God, you need to become a Jew.

That's what they were teaching. They were going to the Gentiles, telling them that if they were really going to be right with God, they needed more than Christ. They needed to become Jews also.

Paul, right here, is showing the Colossians that that is not necessary. The law, he shows them, can't make you right with God. It only condemns you.

But Jesus dealt with that. And so he says, now let no one judge you concerning the law. And he goes on to make reference to various aspects of the law.

You know, the devil is a relentless foe. And he has a multitude of things that he will use to try to trip us up. And I have seen this over and over and over again.

I think, for the most part, with most people, the first thing that Satan tries to trip us up with is getting us back into sinful behavior. He tries to get us back into our old way of life. He tries to get us back into carnality.

He tries to get us back involved in sexual immorality or covetousness or to get us back involved in lying or cheating or hating or whatever. You know, he tries to get us back involved in those things immediately after becoming Christians. He's, you know, throwing those temptations before us.

And he succeeds with some people. Some people get sucked right back into that. But, you know, there are other people that don't fall for that.

They realize that God has called them away from those things and they've repented and they come out of it and they have a victory. But at that moment, Satan changes or adopts a new strategy. And what he'll try to get you caught up in then is some sort of false teaching, some sort of false teaching, whether it be getting off into philosophy or getting off into some sort of religious legalism.

Paul contended earnestly against legalism because he understood that getting involved once again in Judaism and in this legal kind of an approach to God, Satan would nullify the work of Christ in the lives of these new believers. We have to be careful and we have to be aware of what Satan will do. If he can't trip you up with the sins of the flesh, he'll try to get you to be spiritually proud and caught up in some super religious kind of a doctrine.

That's what he was seeking to do here. So we have to be aware that that happens today also, maybe not in Judaism, actually, but there are many other forms of religious pride that are out there and legalism and so forth. We have to be on our guard against those things.

So he lists various aspects of the Mosaic Law. Let no one judge you in food or in drink or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths. So food or drink, those, of course, were part of the Old Testament system.

There was a dietary code that was given and you were required by the law to abstain from certain foods and you were allowed to eat other foods and drink was included in that. Then, of course, there were festivals that the Jews were committed to that were part of their whole system and they were obligated to

keep those festivals. The new moon was the monthly celebration that involved sacrifices and so forth.

And then, of course, there was the Sabbath. And so Paul is warning them against getting caught up in these things, these old things that are no longer applicable, that actually want to come in and take away the preeminence of Christ. You see, that's what happens in every case.

When a person gets caught up into false teaching, Christ is always de-emphasized, but Christ is to be the preeminent one. That's been Paul's whole point. Christ is to be the focus, not these other things.

He's warning them against getting dragged into these other things, getting deceived into following after these other things. Now, the Sabbath is one that we need to talk about for a moment because that's the one that has had the most impact, even down to modern times. There are those today who teach that unless you worship on the Sabbath, which is Saturday, your worship of God is unacceptable.

They teach that for those who worship on Sunday, you're actually worshiping Satan. Now, this is clearly contrary to the teaching of the New Testament. But yet, there are many, many people who are caught up in this form of belief.

They are known as Seventh-day Adventists. They're Christian people who have put the law before Christ, and they judge themselves and everyone else by their keeping of the various aspects of the law, particularly the dietary aspect and then primarily the Sabbath. But you see, Paul says right here, let no one judge you concerning the Sabbath.

Now, the Seventh-day Adventists believe that you should worship on Saturday. That's the right day, and if you don't, then you cannot possibly be a true believer. In the history of the church, certain people who rejected the Saturday Sabbath, they changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and they would bring forth just as strong a condemnation for those who did not worship on Sunday, who failed to worship on Sunday.

That teaching had far-reaching effects into society. Sunday became known as the Sabbath day, and it was mandatory that one attend worship on Sunday, and if not, that was a violation of the Sabbath. But the Sunday is not the Sabbath.

The reason why we worship on Sunday is because the early church worshipped on the first day of the week in commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus on the first day of the week. But in the New Testament, we are told not to judge others concerning the Sabbath, and we're never told to change the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. As a matter of fact, in the New Testament, we're given liberty to worship on whatever day we want.

Paul said, one man esteems one day above another, another esteems every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. We can even get caught up in judging people who don't worship on the day that we think is the best day to worship, or we can live in condemnation because maybe we failed to worship on that day.

I've had many people come to me and say, oh, Pastor Brian, I missed church on Sunday. And I think they've been shocked at my response. So, come Wednesday.

You know, I grew up being taught, I think the Catholic church has changed since then, but I was taught that if you missed mass on Sunday, that was a mortal sin. No, mortal sin will send you to hell. I mean, talk about a distortion.

Missing church, you go to hell if you don't get to confession before the next week is over. But this is all an overthrow of this legalism and all contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture. We're not to judge anyone concerning the Sabbath.

The Jews blew the Sabbath way out of proportion. God simply said that you were to rest on the seventh day. The Jews were so zealous to keep the Sabbath that they wrote volumes on what constituted a violation of the Sabbath day.

And they were always accusing the followers of Jesus of breaking the Sabbath. They accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath. He's a Sabbath breaker, they said.

He can't be from God. He broke the Sabbath. What did he do? Oh, he healed somebody on the Sabbath day.

To them, that was wrong. And they would come to the Lord and they would make accusation against his followers and they would accuse him. And Jesus said to him at one point, he said, you know, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

And then he said, but I am Lord of the Sabbath. As they would accuse the disciples, Jesus said, leave them alone. I'm the Lord of the Sabbath.

If I tell them to work on the Sabbath, they can do it because I'm the one who instituted the whole thing. That was his point. The Sabbath, although one of the 10 commandments, is no longer binding under the new covenant.

All the other commandments of the 10 are binding because they're reiterated in the New Testament. They're restated as binding. In the New Testament, we're told that we're to love God supremely.

We're not to have any images. We are not to take the name in vain, but we're to hallow the name of the Lord. We're to honor our parents.

We're told that clearly in the New Testament. We're not to murder, steal, covet, and so on. We're not to bear false witness.

All of that is reiterated in the New Testament, but the Sabbath is not binding. And this is the reason. Listen, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

You see, the Sabbath, as well as those other festivals, be it Passover or the Day of Atonement or whatever other festival you want to talk about, all of these things were foreshadowing Christ and the work that He would accomplish. You see, the Sabbath was a shadow of the rest that Jesus Christ would bring to us. So this is what the New Testament teaches.

For the person who's received Christ, you have entered into a perpetual Sabbath. For he that has entered into his rest has ceased from his own works. You see, the Sabbath is no longer binding because I'm in the Sabbath.

I'm constantly in the Sabbath. I'm resting in the Lord. I'm trusting in His finished work.

And the Sabbath was merely a shadow of the work that Christ would accomplish the substance is of Christ. So these things are no longer binding upon us. So therefore, we're not to allow others to judge us

according to that, nor are we to judge people by this kind of a standard.

Now, if you choose to worship on the Sabbath, some people do. Some people with a Jewish background that have become Christians, they choose to worship on the Sabbath in keeping with the Judaic principle there. And that's fine.

They can do that as long as they don't judge those who don't worship on the Sabbath. And as long as they do not think that worshiping on the Sabbath commends them to God any more than worshiping on another day would commend one to God. See, you're free to worship any day of the week.

You ought to worship every day. And if you choose to worship on Saturday, great. Sunday, wonderful.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, glorious. You ought to do it. You see, we're not to judge others concerning these kinds of things.

And yet, it's a very real danger and we have to guard against it. Legalism is always lurking about, especially for the person who's serious about the Lord. You know, when you're serious about the Lord, you want to be committed, man, that's the person that Satan is going to try to get caught up in legalism.

And it's good. You're supposed to be that way, but you've got to be careful. You have to be on your guard.

Don't go beyond what the Scriptures say. And that's where we get into trouble. Whenever we go beyond what the Scriptures say, that's where we get into trouble.

Whenever we neglect a certain portion of Scripture, whenever we ignore. Now, of course, those who are committed to the Sabbath will say it's their understanding of Scripture that's brought them to that conviction. But when you point this passage out to them, quite often they'll say, I've never seen that one.

You see, they're not looking at the whole counsel of God. So beware against legalism, religious legalism, getting caught up in a religious works trip. That's what Paul is warning the Colossians against, and that warning is applicable to us today also.

We have to watch out for it. Not getting sucked back into these kinds of things, which were good for the time. They were wonderful back at the time that they applied, but they no longer apply.

And Paul said to the Galatians, in desiring to go back to these, you're going back to the elementary things. And he actually, you know, illustrated it like this, and this is my paraphrase of it, but he said to the Galatians, having graduated from college, are you going to go now back to preschool? That would be the equivalent of what Paul was saying. You've become sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

You want to go back to your previous condition of being servants under the law? It's an inferior place. The ironic thing is that those who are under the law, they feel themselves superior. But Paul says, no, you're actually inferior.

The law is inferior to the gospel and the new covenant. So when you go back under the old covenant, you're putting yourself in an inferior position. Many of the churches that are founded on a ritualistic foundation are so bound up in the law.

You know, a priesthood, for example. Any church that has a priesthood, apart from the priesthood of every believer, is a church that is out of sync with New Testament doctrine, caught up in Old Testament theology

and far short of what the New Testament offers for us. So any church with an existing priesthood is a church that's inconsistent with New Testament revelation.

It's wrong. You can know that from the onset, you see, because the priesthood was part of the old system. And so likewise, when you get into the keeping of festivals and all kinds of different rules and regulations, you're reverting back, you're going backward.

The Lord wants us to be free in the Spirit, to love Him and to just live according to the leading and the guiding of the Spirit through His word. The Lord wants us to be enjoying that kind of a relationship. Legalism will quench the Spirit of God in your life.

And again, going back to Paul's epistle to the Galatians, he said to them, having begun in the Spirit, will you be made perfect in the flesh? And you see, I have seen that happen to people in the church, beginning in the Spirit. They just, they come to Christ. They put simple faith and trust in Christ.

Jesus does a wonderful work in their life. They're filled with the joy of the Lord. They're reading their Bibles.

They're just communing with God in prayer. They're sharing their faith. It's just a wonderful thing.

And somebody comes along and lays a trip on them. Says, hey, you're way too happy. You must be sinning.

And then they start laying down a list of rules and regulations. You know, if you really want to be right with the Lord, then you got to do this and you ought to believe that and you better. And pretty soon that person who was once filled with the joy of the Lord is suddenly quenched.

And yet they're thinking, okay, man, I got to please the Lord and I got to do it right. And what they're doing is they're trying to be made perfect in the flesh. They began in the Spirit, but now they're trying to be made perfect in the flesh.

Oh, I've seen it happen so many times. I'll tell you honestly, as time goes on, there are certain books that I am beginning to believe are probably detrimental to some extent to Christian people instead of helpful. Some of the books on the deeper spiritual life and, you know, how to really know God in the deepest, fullest sense and things like that, titles, full and complete surrender and things like that.

Now, the authors were surely well-intended and I'm not saying that there's not some good material in there and some stuff to think about, surely, but so often what happens is a very subtle form of legalism develops. And I know this because it happened to me as a young Christian. I remember clearly the conviction of the Holy Spirit on my heart to just remain steadfast in my Bible.

And I had well-meaning Christians coming to me with their little paperback book saying, hey, you ought to read this. And I said, no, I don't want to. And then another one would come, hey, you ought to read this.

Oh, this book will really tell you how to be deep with God, tell you how to really love God. No, I'm not interested. And, you know, honestly, I had enough people bring me those kinds of books.

Finally, one day I said, okay, these guys, they're older than me and the Lord, they must know. And I remember the day I picked up one of those books and opened it. My Bible was sitting on my desk in front of me.

And I felt the Lord say, as clear as I'm speaking to you, do not read that book. But I said to the Lord, Lord, these guys told me I should. And I want to be really spiritual, Lord.

And so I started reading these books. And pretty soon I was so depressed. I doubted that I was even a Christian.

I doubted that most people that I thought were Christians were Christians. The gospel became so complicated. It used to be very easy to tell someone Jesus loved them, what he did for them on the cross and how they could come to know him.

But now it was so difficult. I had to make sure I took them, you know, in one session from Genesis to Revelation covering every point and, you know, and then hopefully they could be saved, but could never give them any assurance that they would be. And it just became this heavy, heavy thing.

And I went from having a joyous Christian life to carrying around the burden of the Lord. And I thought my duty was to let everybody know how much God hated them, was displeased with them in their sinful ways, and how they needed to repent thoroughly. Aren't you glad I wasn't your pastor then? God broke me of that before he sent me here.

But it was miserable. But you know what? I thought I was spiritual. I remember talking to Pastor Chuck one day.

And there was a certain man that I really had come to admire because this was a mighty man of God. This guy could preach it. He'd make you feel like the scum of the earth.

And I thought that was right. You know, the more miserable you feel, the more powerful the preaching was. And I remember one day I was driving along with Chuck and I said, Chuck, have you ever thought of having so-and-so come and speak at Calvary? And he kind of looked at me and he said, no.

And I said, oh, Chuck, we need him. It's a lot of sin in the church, Chuck. We need this guy to come and really give us the word.

And he just kind of smiled and nodded and didn't say anything else. Now I know he thought I was an absolute idiot. But he'd probably been through the same thing when he was young too, so he gave me a lot of grace.

But I think back on that now and I think what a dope I was. But, you know, I was caught up in this legalistic thing, but it was all, it all seemed so right. All right, because, man, I was going for the deeper life.

I was going to have the best relationship with God. I was going to be the most spiritual. And, you know, it was quite the contrary.

The joy of the Lord was gone. Judging, condemning, criticizing everybody. I remember how God began to break me of that.

I had become such a pain to my wife because I'd come home every day. Did you read your Bible today? How many chapters? How much time did you spend in prayer? You watch TV? Oh, God have mercy on her soul. You know, I was just so bad.

And one day she said to me, she said, you are so prideful. And this was my response. I said, oh, honey, you don't know.

I am actually one of the most humble people in the world. I told her that. Those are my exact words.

And she just said, oh, you are hopeless. I thought I was truly humble. I thought I was truly humble.

And then I remember one night we were sitting there and we were in a conflict with each other. And she looked at me and she said, you have done more to discourage me from walking with God than anyone I've ever known in my life. I don't even want to read my Bible because you're telling me to do it.

And I don't want to read my Bible for you. I want to read it for the Lord. And, you know, when she said that to me, the Lord convicted me and I knew she was right.

And that was kind of the beginning of, you know, God breaking me of that whole thing. But you see, it's a very real thing and it's very subtle because it has a show of spirituality, but it's not true spirituality. It's legalism.

And we have to watch out for it. We have to be on our guard against it. And that's why, you know, I encourage you to stay in the word.

And more and more as time goes on, I'm seeing that, you know, really, we ought to be in the Bible. Ninety five percent of the time in any other literature, you know, there's five percent. I mean, there's stuff that can, you know, be beneficial at times and so forth.

But, you know, stick in the word. Somebody was talking to me recently and they were talking about all kinds of different books that they felt like they had to read. And they said, but, you know, I just I just keep getting this feeling that maybe I should just read my Bible.

What do you think I should do? I said, read your Bible by all means here. Give me those books. I'll throw them away for you.

You don't need those things. Because what I find is that inevitably they can bring an imbalance into our lives. And, you know, I'm talking about a certain kind of book.

I'm not just talking about any book. There are books that are very helpful commentaries and things like that, helping us maybe understand the word better. But there's a there's a certain there's there's a certain group of authors.

And there are certain kind of books that, you know, will leave you with this impression. Know this. If you've been reading a book and you've lost your joy as a result of it, you started to get critical as a result of it.

You're beginning to wonder if anybody but you is really saved as a result of it. You want to put that book down and pick up your Bible because you've lost the balance. So be careful.

Legalism is lurking about. And so Paul continues to deal with it here. And we have to hurry up.

So let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind. So now he he's dealing with this Judaic heresy that's trying to come in. He moves on now to deal with more of a mystical kind of a doctrine

that was coming in.

Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in humility. And the translators have inserted the word false. And that's accurate.

It's a false humility, worshiping of angels. You remember that was the. That was what was happening in Colossae.

They were saying that Christ was one of many beings in this long ladder leading to God. So they were reducing Christ to an angel rather than to God himself. And they were then advocating the worship of angels.

And they did this under the guise of humility. And there have been others who have done it since then, particularly the Roman Catholic Church. They claim to be seeking the help of the saints and of Mary.

In coming to God because of their unworthiness to come to God directly. And so their statement is essentially that it's out of humility that they do this. I've had Catholic people tell me that.

That it's an act of humility to approach God through Mary instead of directly because they are unworthy. Well, to put anyone in the place of the one mediator that God has set up, Jesus Christ is far from an act of humility. It's an act of pride and violation of the scriptures.

So you see, it's a false humility. It's not a true humility. To be doing something directly against the way God says it should be done is an act of pride.

But you see, it's a false humility. Oh, we're not worthy to come to God in this manner. So we choose to come in this other way.

You see, you can't get to God that way. There is no other way. There's but one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

So if you start seeking to set up others to mediate for you, whether it be saints or Mary or angels, at best, you'll get nowhere. At worst, you'll encounter demons and get into greater trouble. So Paul says, let no one cheat you.

Again, don't get ripped off. Don't be led astray. These things sound good, but they're false.

It's a false humility. And in each case, it all boils down to one thing. Verse 19, not holding fast to the head from whom the whole body nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments grows with the increase that is from God.

You see, in every case of an embracing of false teaching, getting off into some weird doctrine, it's always a result of the same thing, not holding fast to the head, not staying connected to Jesus. And so going back to Paul's first warning, philosophy, what were they doing? They were emphasizing philosophy, de-emphasizing Jesus. The Judaizers were emphasizing the law, de-emphasizing Jesus.

These mystics were emphasizing angels, de-emphasizing Jesus. You see, Jesus is the head. And whenever you get disconnected from the head, you're in trouble.

If your body gets disconnected from your head, you are in trouble. If you spiritually get disconnected from the head, Jesus Christ, that can only result in chaos, confusion. It can only result in trouble.

So what's the remedy? Hold fast to the head. Hold fast to Christ. He is to be the preeminent one.

He is to be the one that we focus upon. But, you know, when you look at whether it be false religion or, you know, distorted views of Christianity or the cults, in each case you find that something else has taken the place of Christ. Obviously, in the false religions, their gods have taken the place of Christ.

They usually have a place for Christ, but he doesn't have preeminence. But in the distorted views of Christianity, Roman Catholicism is a good example of that. Jesus Christ is lost in Roman Catholicism.

He's just, you know, one figure in a group of many. He's lost with, you know, Mary out in front in some cases, the angels out in front in other cases, the priest out in front, the pope, the church. Where's Jesus in all of it? He's lost in it.

You see, that right there is living proof that it's wrong because Jesus Christ is to have the preeminence. And so whatever, you know, whether it's Roman Catholicism or some other Protestant denomination where their ideas and theories have taken the place of Christ, it's all wrong. It's all a departure.

The cults, of course, have fallen into this. The teaching of their founder has taken the place of the scriptures, and the place of their founder has often usurped the place of Christ. It all goes back to not holding fast to the head.

Hold on to the Lord. Stay connected to Him. Verses 20 through 23 read quickly.

Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why as though living in the world do you subject yourselves to regulations? Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle, which all concern things which perish with the using according to the commandments and doctrines of men. Men's religion, man's religion is rife with regulations. Whenever you come across, you know, any religious entity that has a list of rules and regulations, you can know right off the bat it's not the Lord.

This is the mark of man. And again, you look all the way through at the various religions, the cults, rules, and regulations. Can't touch this.

Don't taste that. Do not handle. It just reminded me of something.

You remember that song a few years ago, Can't Touch It or something, and they, you know, they were doing like a basketball thing, you know, Michael Jordan or somebody, you know, couldn't touch this. There was a guy, a comedian, who took that song, he was a Jew, and he dressed up as a rabbi, and he took that song, and he was singing that, and he was going through the rules and regulations of Judaism. You can't touch this, you can't do that, you know.

I remember seeing that, it was just hysterical. He was there in his little rabbinic outfit, you know. Don't do this, you can't do that, you know.

That is not a statement against the Jews, I'm sorry. It's just, you know, the Catholic priest could have done it, the local Baptist, the Pentecostal, the Calvary, whoever. You get caught in the legalism, and that's it.

You know, can't do this, can't touch that. That's not the Lord. It's not the Lord.

And of course, here we're talking about religious things. We're not talking going out and living in sin, we can do anything we want, no. But this is the sign of man's religion.

All of these kinds of rules and regulations, restrictions on what you can eat and what you can't eat, and, you know, certain days you must do this, and you can't do that on other days, and all of that. That's all, it's, the Old Testament had those things as part of it. But that's all done away with, and anything that remains of that today is wrong.

Even God's own law is wrong today in relation to those things, and therefore, everything else, of course, is radically wrong, if God's own law is wrong in relation to these particular things. Now, here's the thing, and we'll close here. These things, indeed, have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body.

See, this is the thing. They appear. This is the problem.

It just appears to be so right. You know, wouldn't it appear that, you know, let's say, for example, you have two Christian men, and let's just take, you know, a Saturday morning. One man on Saturday morning is going to go out, and he's going to play basketball with his friends.

The other man is going to spend several hours on his knees and reading his Bible. Now, it's possible that the man on his knees and reading his Bible is right and the other guy is wrong, but you know what? It's also possible that it's the other way around. See, it all depends on the motive.

It all depends on the thinking process of the individual. If the man is staying home and reading his Bible and praying because this is what you do to really be spiritual, and I'm not going to be like that guy over there, you know, he's so carnal, well, then you might as well forget it because it's this false spirituality. If it's simply something that God's called you to do, you know what? You're going to do it, enjoy it, and you're not even going to think about the guy out playing basketball.

You see, that critical spirit is always an indicator that you're in the flesh, no matter how religious you might appear to be. That's the thing. There is an appearance, self-imposed religion.

Oh, it just people seem so spiritual that deny their body. You know, some people say, oh, I don't eat meat. You know, that's unspiritual.

There's nothing spiritual about not eating meat. If you choose to not do that, that's fine, but it doesn't give you a closeness to God more so than anyone else. You see, in these things, ultimately, they have no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

It's an interesting thing. The people that are the most legalistic are at the same time the most carnal. You see, because those things have no value against the indulgence of the flesh, there are churches where there are people who they dress in a certain manner.

They will only eat certain things. They will not, you know, be seen at certain places, and they judge everybody else who's not like them, and yet they gossip, they slander, they hate, they're envious. See, all of their attempts are to no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

The monks discovered this, not all of them, but some of them discovered that no matter how much they denied the body, the flesh still ruled. They would go live in caves away from everybody. And put on

sackcloth and ashes, or, you know, camel hair suits, or whatever, and wear them inside out, and, you know, just try to make life as miserable as possible, just trying to get away from the world and away from temptation and sin.

And they would find that they would battle with corrupt thoughts and all of that. It's inside of you. It's the flesh.

And the only thing that can help you deal with the flesh is the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. You see, it's not a matter of coming into conformity to all these rules and regulations. It's a matter of letting the Holy Spirit rule your life.

And that's what Paul is admonishing these Colossians to do, not to get caught up in these things. It appears wise and religious, but don't get caught up in it because it will not give you a victory over the flesh. It's really the flesh fighting against the flesh, and you're a loser two times over.

The only way to conquer the flesh is by the Spirit. Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. It's as simple as that.

Stay in the Word. Stay in prayer. Love God and do what He tells you to do.

You'll walk in victory. Let's pray. Father, we thank You for the clear instruction from the Scriptures.

We thank You, Lord, that You have given us this safeguard against false teaching that is so subtle but yet so damaging. God, protect us. Lord, help us to avoid being caught up in philosophy, being caught up in religious legalism, being caught up in any weird mystical thing or into the deeper life mentality, Lord, that just results in criticalness on our part and judgmentalness toward others.

Lord, help us to just enjoy Your grace. Having begun in the Spirit, let us continue in the Spirit. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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