

Spy the Lies - Recognize False Teaching

by Francis Chan

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing and avoiding false teaching, and keeping the focus on Jesus Christ.

Duration: 25:43

Scripture: Colossians 2:13

Topics: "False Teaching", "Christ Centered"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of keeping the focus on Jesus in the church, highlighting how distractions and unnecessary rules can take away from the central message of Christ's sacrifice and forgiveness. It addresses the tendency to judge others based on non-biblical issues and the need to prioritize Jesus above all else, reminding believers of the freedom and forgiveness found in Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

Transcript

You know, there's this passage that we're looking at today. It's really talking about that. It talks about how sometimes in church, we can make issues of things that really weren't meant to be issues.

And sometimes, church can go such a direction and go off on this tangent and we become something that God never intended it to be. See, in the Colossian church, there were these people that brought their baggage, just like us, we all have baggage, right? We all have the way we grew up, the way we thought church ought to be and everything else. And all these people brought this baggage in with them.

In the Colossian church, there were these people who were called the Essenes. They were this real, it's a Jewish sect, but they were the Essenes, which means the purest. In fact, they had this idea that they wanted to be so far from anything sinful, anything gluttonous, anything like that, that they made these new rules up.

Like they would never eat anything that tasted good. Like, isn't that crazy? But they thought, no, we don't wanna be gluttonous, we don't wanna be all about pleasure, we don't wanna be hedonists. So they would find the most old, dry, coarse piece of bread and eat that.

They would never drink juice, they would only drink water. Many of them, they wouldn't eat during the daytime. They said, you know what? We only really need that one meal, you know? And so we're gonna

do that and we're gonna force ourselves and we're gonna make our bodies this way.

We're doing this for God. And then they were judging other people in the church, going, hey, I saw you put jelly on your toast. You know, that type of thing where it was, suddenly it became this judgmental thing of, okay, it's one thing if you really believe that you wanna do that for yourself and you believe that's what God wants you to do, but to enforce that on someone else.

And biblically, where do you find this anyways? And can you really support some of these things biblically? And they started questioning, wait, you guys worship on Saturday? You worship on, and they started arguing of what day you ought to worship on. What day is the Sabbath? What are you allowed to do on the Sabbath? And they started creating all these different rules and there were philosophers in the church. There were all these different people bringing in this different teaching.

And what Paul writes to them is saying, you guys are missing it. Church should be all about Jesus and that's it. Church should be a time where you are blown away by what Jesus did.

And what are all these other things that you're bringing in and judging each other? See, because in Colossians chapter two, he had just finished saying, and this is what Joshua was preaching a few weeks ago, in Colossians two, in verse 13, he says, when you were dead in your sins, you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code with its regulations that stood against us and stood opposed to us. He took it away, nailing it to the cross.

So Paul writes, he goes, do you understand what's happened to you? You were dead in your sins. That means you were gonna face God because of this book, because of all these commands in here. You were gonna face God and you got an answer to all the commands, all the written code you had broken.

That's a scary thought. Can you imagine you standing before the creator, this amazing, holy being, then you realize, could you imagine standing before him knowing that you're guilty and there's no hope for you? You've just broken all these commands and now you get to stand before God. And I think about the trial you're talking about, you know, for this kid to go, man, I'm gonna stand before a judge.

Well, that's nothing compared to standing before God one day. You go, look at what I've done. He goes, you understand that was you and that's all of us.

We're not good. No one in this room is good. You may say, well, but all my friends tell me I'm good, you know, and I feel so good when I'm around them.

Yeah, but what about at night when you're by yourself, do you really believe that you're a good person when no one else is around? And you know, it's so funny because I'll hear people say, no, but my grandma, my grandma is such a sweet lady and she'll go to heaven because she was such a good person. And it's so funny because it's weird how in my mind I start believing that and thinking, wow, yeah, look at that little old lady over there. I mean, she couldn't hurt anyone.

But then you remember, wait, that little old lady was 18 at one point, okay? And you know, she's had a lifetime of things that she's done. And you know, we sometimes look at certain people and think, okay, but not that person, not that person, not that person. I guarantee you, when we're alone and it's us and God, we know what we've done.

I don't really believe there are people in this room that are so much better than me and live such good lives and you really have that much peace about what you've done in your lifetime. You know what you've done. I know what I've done.

And it's a scary thought to think that one day we would stand before God and he would punish us for that. And from what the Bible says, that punishment's pretty severe, pretty severe. It's hell.

And I know we don't like to talk about that. I know, you know, hey, you know, let's just get rid of hell. You know, let's just black out those parts in the Bible.

Let's rip it out. Let's pretend it's not there, but that's the reality. And the Bible calls hell the undiluted wrath of God.

Undiluted. That's not, you know, remember a few weeks ago when I talked about those missionaries and how they were tortured for those three hours? And we all just sat there grieving with them, thinking, oh, what would it be like to be tortured for three hours for your faith and just holding on and all these disgusting things they were doing to them before they slit their throats. And we're thinking, oh man, could I do it? Could I do it? Could I do it? Well, picture more than three hours.

Picture eternity. Why? Because we've offended this God and we've done things that are offensive to Him. And so here I am as this human being, I'm about to face this and then God, in His great love for me, has His Son.

Jesus Christ comes down and says He took all of that and He nailed it to the cross. All that eternity of punishment, He took on that cross. You talk about a few hours of suffering for my sake.

And so now because of that, because I believe that and because I embrace that, the Bible says, so then I've been forgiven. He forgave us all our sins. Having canceled the written code with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us, He took it away, nailing it to the cross.

So this one person just took all of that eternity of wrath away from me and nailed it to the cross. And Paul's saying, so why are you making issues of anything else? That should be all that matters to you. And that's why he says in verse 16, he goes, therefore, because Jesus did all that, he says in verse 16, therefore, don't let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink or in regard to religious festival, a new moon celebration or a Sabbath day.

These are all a shadow of the things that were to come. The reality, however, is in Christ. He goes, don't come to church and allow other people to judge you.

Like the Essenes are going, wait a second, why did you eat raisin bread? Why did you drink coffee? Why did you do that? I don't know what they ate back then, but why did you do that? And Paul's saying, don't let them make that the issue. Don't ever let anyone take the focus off of Jesus Christ. You've been forgiven because of what Jesus did on that cross.

Don't let anyone take away any of that. Don't let them judge you. Don't let them discourage you.

This ought to be a time where we come together and we rejoice, we celebrate what Jesus did in our lives. Just don't let someone come and tell you, well, you need Jesus and this ritual. You need Jesus and this, and I don't know if you're doing that well enough and have you lose your joy, lose your focus on Jesus

Christ and turn it to something else.

And I thought, you know what, we do that. We do that in church sometimes. And we can judge people based upon things that aren't even biblical.

You ever done that? I was thinking through all the ways I used to judge people and I still do, I'm sure. I'm trying to figure out all the ways and trying to get rid of them. I used to wear a tie every weekend and I used to judge people for the way they dressed going to church.

Obviously, I got over that. But you know, no, I used to think, man, you guys don't have the respect, you know, to wear your best on the weekend, you know, for a holy God. And someone said, well, where do you get your clothes? You know, like there's a certain, like, where do you get ties? Where do you get this formal wear to worship God? And someone said, you know, I try to spend my time getting my heart right to come to church and I feel like God doesn't care what I wear.

And I thought, wow, that makes sense. And so now I judge people who wear ties. No, I'm kidding.

No, it's just one of those things where you go, wait, you know, it just, it really isn't the issue. If one person feels like he should dress up in order to honor God, praise God. If another person feels like, you know, I should just wear what I wear every day and that'd be more honor to God, then praise God.

You know, let's just try not to make each other stumble, whatever else, it's just, you know, let's all be modest, especially as the weather gets, you know, warmer, please. And you know, it's just, but the issue is, you know, let's keep everything on Christ and not judge each other. I used to judge, I used to judge the way people would parent, the way they would raise their kids.

I used to totally be judgmental before I was a parent. And, you know, like you just, and I remember, you know, when we first had, when Rachel was first born, there was this big old controversy of different parenting styles, you know, growing kids God's way or shepherding your child's heart or just love them and hug them, never hit them, you know, just whatever, you know. And it was like, oh, you must do it this way.

You must do it that way. And it's like, you know, nowadays the most popular thing to fight about is how to school your kids. Homeschooling, Christian school, public school.

What are you doing? You know, homeschoolers unite and let's fight against those sinful public school, you know, parents or, you know, how dare you. I mean, how many times have I been told my kids are in public school and that's the right way to go. No, I'm kidding.

You know, and you know, one parent goes, you know what, I wanna be in charge of raising my kid. I feel like I should raise my kid. I believe this is the best way to raise my child is if I teach them and I believe homeschooling.

Praise God. Another person says, well, I believe that they should be in a Christian school with other Christian friends, you know, and then that they create kind of like a Christian family there and be like, good, good. You know, others believe, no, I'm gonna let my kid go into the public school and try to be a light in that campus and I wanna walk him or her through, you know, the struggles they go through in standing up for their faith.

Good, good. Whatever you wanna do, as long as you're doing it by faith and that's where we as a church, okay, let's not fight about these things. You know, others say, well, you know what, you should never go on birth control.

You know, you should just have, you should just multiply and multiply the heck out of this place, you know, and I'm like, all right, you know, and great, you know, because you believe that's the way you raise up an army, the next generation, everything else. You do that for the sake of the Lord. You feel like, well, you know, I believe this is the way God wants to do it.

Good, good. Others go, you know, we stopped having kids so that we could adopt, you know, kids from different places. I mean, Cornerstone's becoming known as the place for foster parenting.

I mean, so many of you are taking in these orphans and kids that don't have parents and it's just so, so stinking cool. And I go, great, great, you know, and some said, you know, I decided to stop having kids because I think God wanted me to just adopt tons of them. I'm like, write off whatever you think's gonna honor God, but I don't want these to become the main issue.

Paul said, don't let anyone judge you. You have this freedom in Christ and it's all about Christ and church should be about Christ and not about people judging each other for the way that they do things. And he says in verse 18, he goes, don't let anyone who delights in false humility and worship of angels disqualify you from the prize.

See, there were people back then that were saying, you know what, hey, I don't feel worthy to speak to God, so I just speak to these angels, all right? You know, and then the angels talk to Jesus and then Jesus talks to the Father. We've got this whole thing going. And but, you know, it's just arrogant to think that I could approach God.

Well, he says, don't let someone with that type of false humility, because that's not real humility. Because first of all, God says, there's only one mediator between God and man and that's Jesus Christ. So you don't need to talk to a person who will talk to an angel, who will talk to, you know, someone else who will then get to Jesus.

Jesus says, there's only one mediator and he tells us, commands us. Talk, talk to the Father through me. He says, when you pray, say our Daddy, our Father.

You have the right to have this connection with him, to speak to him. You can approach that throne with confidence. He goes, so don't let other people tell you by their false humility that somehow you can't talk directly to God.

That's your freedom. He says, don't let them disqualify you from the prize. That's a reward that you should get.

As a son of God, as a daughter of God, as a child of God, you get to talk to your Father. He goes, so don't let these people with their false humility distract you from that. And I love the way it says in verse 19, he has lost connection with the head.

You know, it's just this whole idea. He just lost it. Christ is the head.

And somehow when we get off on these tangents, it's just not right. In verse 20, he says, since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why as though you still belong to it, do you submit to its rules? Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch. Because these are all destined to perish with you because they're based on human commands and teaching.

So such regulations have an appearance of wisdom with their self-imposed worship, their false humility, and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence. He's just saying, don't let anyone distract you from Jesus. You know, people who say, well, you must suffer this way.

You must do this. You must do that. No, Jesus did everything on the cross for me.

He totally forgave me. And I need to just enjoy that and bask in that. He's canceled the written code.

So don't tell me that I need Jesus plus something else. I'm gonna be in love with Jesus. I'm gonna talk to Jesus.

Jesus saved me. And to enjoy that, don't let someone else's judgmental attitude ever take that away from you. Because Satan's always trying to take the focus off of Jesus.

That's why every false religion, what do they do with Jesus? They belittle him, right? Somehow. They don't necessarily oust him. They just belittle him.

Jehovah's Witnesses will say, well, he's just an archangel. Mormons will say, well, he's a God, but you can work your way to that too. And you can be a God also, just like him.

You got the Muslims who will say that, you know, he was a good prophet. Pretty good prophet. He's a good prophet.

You know, you've got AA that'll say, you know, he's a higher power. And so is that music stand. You know, whatever your higher power is, you know, they're all higher powers.

And you know, fine. You know, and there's different people teach, hey, Jesus, but let's not say that he's God. Let's not say like Paul did in Colossians 2, verse nine, just a few verses earlier, that all the fullness of deity dwells in Jesus in bodily form.

Let's just, we'll take a little bit of Jesus. Sure, he's a good prophet. Sure, he's a God.

Sure, he's a higher power, superpower, whatever you want to call him. And yet the truth is, is the Bible is saying, man, don't let people take the focus off of Jesus. And yet, I didn't want this morning to talk about other people and what they believe.

My concern was with our own church. My concern is that within evangelical Christianity, we often take the focus off of Jesus Christ. I leave churches and conferences all the time.

And what are people talking about? They're talking about the author, the speaker, the musician. They're not talking about Jesus. They're talking about how someone delivers Jesus, or how someone talks about Jesus, and how he talks about Jesus better than that guy talks about Jesus.

He sings about Jesus better than she sings about Jesus. It's like, guys, who cares? There's one person that saved you from the pit of hell. And that's the name we ought to be lifting up, not these other people.

And I thought, man, let's not judge everyone else. Let's look at our own church. Let's look at Christianity.

Let's look at the modern evangelical Christianity, Cornerstone Church, even. Let's talk about how we'll fight and divide over things that have nothing to do with Jesus, that have to do with musical style, or the way people dress, where we school our kids, the different freedoms we have that aren't even biblical issues. Why would we ever fight about that? For a bunch of people who've been snatched out of the pit of hell, we should just be thrilled, and we should just say, you know what, I'll put all my other differences aside with everyone else in this room, and go, man, life's pretty good because of Jesus.

I think about how we, in the Christian church, we belittle Jesus by wanting to hear sermons about how to have a happy marriage, and jolly children, and how to grow my business, and that stuff's all fine, but don't you want to just hear about Jesus, and what he did for you, and just bask in that? Sometimes we'll talk about our failure in sin more than we'll talk about Jesus. We'll get in accountability groups. How'd you sin this week? Oh, I did this, I did this, I did.

Let's just talk about Jesus, and what he did for us. You know a big one, I think? Sometimes when people say, what are you thankful for? First thing out of our mouths, oh, my kids, my wife, guys, that's not okay. Man, on the forefront of our minds, we should be thinking about Jesus.

I mean, think about you were going to hell, and then Jesus, okay? Kids seem kind of trivial after that. So is your wife, your husband, family, whatever. Everything else is trivial compared to Jesus.

I think about how we would make a big deal, like growing up, growing up for me, church, I mean, you just, like swearing was the worst thing in the world. And so I reduced Christianity to, okay, Christianity, Christians don't drink, they don't smoke, they don't swear, they don't have sex before marriage. And what a shame.

That's Christianity? That's it? And yet, I almost went to the liquor store this morning, and I was just gonna bring a beer to each service and drink one, just because I knew it was bug the heck out of some of you. And I chickened out, you know? Just so rare for me, you know? It's like, if I don't have to do the boob thing, I better just, I better take it easy for a few weeks. But I wanted to, just to make a point, that some of you, that's Christianity to you.

And it was for me at one point. Like, man, don't you ever touch alcohol. And yet, where's that in the Bible? Bible talks about not getting drunk.

Absolutely, don't let, you'd be intoxicated, don't let it affect your mind. And at the same time, I also am very careful. If I do take a drink, and I drink occasionally.

Ooh. I do, I get a drink every once in a while, and I'm very careful. I think that, okay, who am I with? Who's seeing me right now? And I wanna make sure, because I don't want to cause someone else to stumble.

I don't want any of you in this room today, and that's why I didn't bring the beer, you know, at the end to go, well, Francis drank, ooh, here I go. You know, because I'm careful. I go, man, if I drink, and someone sees me, that may give them license to drink, and maybe they struggle with drinking.

And so, I don't ever wanna make someone stumble, yet at the same time, I also don't wanna become this legalist that makes a law out of something that's not in Scripture. My brother, one time, my brother, he pastors up in the Bay Area, and he works with inner city kids, and he says, he goes, man, I don't know if he was wrong, but the other night, I felt like I needed to drop an F-bomb in the middle of my talk to some of these kids, and I felt like it was the most honoring thing to do before the Lord, and I thought, all right. You know, I mean, the Bible says not to let in any wholesome word, but if you really believed you could use that word in a wholesome way in that context, all right, you know, I don't know, I don't know, but I'm not gonna judge, I mean, just get your heart and try to figure it out, and don't worry, I'm not gonna throw anything out right now, you know, but it's just this whole, it's so weird how we in the Christian world, we emphasize certain things to such a high degree, to where that almost becomes Christianity to us, when Christianity is just about Jesus.

And that's why Paul's saying, don't let other people judge you if you're really doing things for the Lord, great, but let's not impose rules that aren't in scripture, let's really think through biblically, what is in the Bible, what does God really honor, and are we lifting certain things higher than Jesus himself, because at the end of the day, we should always leave this room just thinking about Jesus, thinking about what he's done for us, thinking about the fact that, wow, I was headed for a world of hurt, and then came Jesus, and that's what God wants to see of us, is people that walk away thinking about Jesus every day, not thinking about rules, not thinking about things that aren't even biblical issues, not talking about political issues or whatever else, and making that the, I'm not saying that any of these things are wrong, you understand that? I'm just saying that Jesus has to be at the forefront of everything, or we're missing it. And so as the worship team comes up, we're gonna just sing a song of worship to Jesus. I want you to think about him and everything he means to you, and I want you to sing this to him.

Some of you, maybe you need some prayer, maybe you wanna get baptized, maybe you have some questions about what we're talking about, because some of it's pretty heavy. You start talking about hell, and that's not something anyone talks about anymore, and yet to me, according to Jesus, it's a very real place, and that's why I don't want us ever to be anything but a place where we lift up Jesus, and we walk out these doors and tell people about how great Jesus is, and how he can save them from the wrath of God. And so if we get caught up in a lot of these tangents, it's just gonna kill us.

And that's why Paul says, don't let anyone judge you by what you eat, what you drink, what you consider to be Sabbath. He goes, those things were all shadows. The reality is in Christ.

Okay, don't let people judge you by how you raise your kids, how you discipline your children, who you marry, and you know, just a lot of these things. As long as it's, you know, just study this book and make sure you're going by this, and not what other people teach, and just the baggage that we all bring into this place from the way we were raised.

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