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The Counterfeit Soils

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Colossians 2:6-23



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I hope that you have had a really good week. If you're new with us, a guest, we're thrilled that you've joined us, whether you're here in the room or at home, and we're glad that you're here. And I pray this time will be really encouraging to you. If you have a phone or a real Bible, if you want to look with me at the second chapter of the book of Colossians, we're in a series, just verse by verse. And we're up to Chapter 2 and Verse 6. And so if you want to turn there, that would be great.

All of us know that there are times in life when we are able to see danger that other people simply cannot see. Sometimes it's actually in reverse, where somebody else can see danger that we can't see. And so let's just say you're in the woods with a friend, and you see a snake and your friend does not. Well, it's nice to have a friend who can see danger that you can't see. And sometimes it's not so much a physical danger that's out there, like a snake. Sometimes it's a life path that we are actually on. Or perhaps we see a friend of ours, or a child of ours, where you just look at their life and you think if they continue to walk down that path, I just know that that ends in peril.

And that's why what we find within the Bible is that it's really wise to have people in our life who love us. Who love us enough, either one, to physically move us out of harm's way, or two, if that's impossible, who love us enough to appeal to us to move ourselves out of harm's way. Of course, this is the art of being a parent. When they're little and you see a danger, if you're in the woods with your little child and you see a snake and they don't see it, you don't talk to them, you pick the child up and you move them out of harm's way. But we all know that as a child grows up and they become a man or a woman, it's a little bit more awkward to go and to pick up a grown man and move him out of harm's way. And so instead what we do is we rely on our words, our appeal.

It's interesting. So we have three sons, and they're all older now. And so I don't spend a lot of time physically picking them up and moving them out of harm's way. But there are times where either I see a danger, and sometimes I see a danger perhaps even in the way that they're thinking or moving, perhaps following an example that I even laid for them, that ended poorly for myself, that I feel this urgency to want to call to them.

And so what inevitably happens in these conversations that are marked by concern is normally they begin with connection, where we're trying to just establish why are you thinking this way, and what's leading to this, and how are you doing? But inevitably there comes a time, and all three of my sons, they know when it's happening because they can see it on my face, when they know that now we're no longer connecting. Dad is now appealing, and he's appealing intentionally. And we know that because the look in his eyes, it's more serious. His tone and his meter of speech is, there's more resolution. And maybe his words are even a little bit more precise. The fact is, is that when we love people, love demands no less. If there's danger in front of people, we want people in our life who would speak to us in loving ways.

But when we come to this chapter, what's happening here is this, is Paul, the author, he sees the danger that the church cannot see. You see what's happening in the church is like it's happening here in Raleigh, is that a lot of people were moving into this town with all different ideas about life, different virtues and values and faith systems and religions and beliefs about where we came from and what's our purpose and where are we going after we die.

And so what was happening was the church started looking around, and so they speak to their leader, his name is Epaphras. And he says, look, Epaphras, here's the deal. Jesus is our guy. Like we are Jesus people. We believe that he died on a cross. We believe he rose from the dead. We believe he's the son of God. Our lives are rooted, they're planted in Jesus. And yet we have all these neighbors around us, who not only do they look at us and think us so narrow-minded, but we also look at their lives and they're not a train wreck. Some of their faith systems, some of their ideas, it seems like that they're planted in different soil, but it doesn't all end in tragedy.

And so what we're thinking is, we want to stay planted in Jesus, but we want to supplement the soil of the gospel with some of these other soils that other people were planted in, in order to create a super soil that would help us to really grow. And Paul recognized the sufficiency of the soil of Christ, and to add anything to it would be to defile it. And so he's so concerned for the church that he writes them a letter, it's Colossians.

And in that letter, it's interesting. He begins just like a father to a child, and he's establishing a connection. He's saying, I've heard about you. I've heard about your faith and your hope and your love. I know you grow when we... I've heard these things about you, and this is our savior, and this is Jesus. And I want you to know what I've been up to. I've been suffering, and this is why I've been suffering. He's establishing connection. And we get to our text today and suddenly his eyes become serious, his tone is resolved, his words are precise, because now it's time to make an appeal, because he sees the danger they don't see.

And that's where we're at today in the book of Colossians. It's wordy because he has a lot to say, but it takes a tremendous amount of energy and effort not only to teach a text like this, but to follow a text like this. And so I'm going to ask that God, now we're going to pray. I'm going to ask that he helps us, because we all need it. Okay. Father in heaven, we love you. And we confess that we need you. We need this. You have put this in the Bible. And so therefore we know we need it. And I pray, father, that according to your mercy, that you would open up our eyes and help us to see amazing things within your word. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

So how I want to do this, because it is complex, is instead of reading it all at one time, I want to read it in sections, in three different sections. And just tell you one dominant thing that God is doing in that section. Not only for the Colossians, but for us.

So let's start in Verse 6. He says, "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus, the Lord. So walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith just as you were taught abounding in thanksgiving." And what's he doing here? I believe God is calling us to walk with Christ as we received him. Now, this becomes incredibly important. And you notice Verse 6, it begins with the word, "Therefore." So I want to do just a little bit of work, if you're new here, to unpack what he's building on. That's what the word therefore means. Meaning because of what has happened, because of what I've said, because what we've already acknowledged, therefore, do this.

In Chapter 1, he has unpacked this reality that there is this mystery that has been hidden for ages and generations, that has been made known. Now fortunately not only does this book explain what the mystery is, but because Paul wrote so many different books in the New Testament, he speaks of similar ideas to different people, and he calls it something a little bit different, and it allows us to add more color to our picture. And so in First Timothy, Chapter 3, Verse 16, this is how Paul says it there. He says, "Great, indeed we confess is the mystery Of godliness." The mystery of godliness. And what we learn here, and what we learn in Colossians is this, is this mystery is actually answering the question that everybody wants to know. And that is, what do I have to do to get to heaven?

What do I have to do to not be absolutely crushed by debilitating shame on the earth? Because I'm living in such a way there's a measure of godliness in my life that not only am I not under the weight of my own guilt and shame, but I also possess a kind of godliness that actually as a sinner allows me to enter into the presence of God, and stay there in heaven.

This becomes critically important, you see, because every culture in every generation of time has asked the same question: What do we have to do in order to earn favor with God? Anytime we ask that question, this mystery that literally you go anywhere in the world and people will come up with something that we as humanity must do in order to appease or merit or become something in order to get enough credit to our account in order to get to be with God.

It's always what must we do, or what must we not do? But notice what Paul does. He says, Oh, it has nothing to do with you. He says, this is the mystery unraveled, is that he, Christ, was manifested in the flesh. That means he took on flesh. If you can go back to that last slide, that would be great.

I'll read it to you. I got it here. "He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, and taken up in glory." He gives six characteristics that have nothing to do with you and me, and have everything and only to do with Jesus Christ. And he says, this is the mystery. You want to know what it takes for you not to live in shame. You want to know what it takes in order for you as a sinful human being to actually stand before God, and for God to say, sufficient, innocent, come into heaven. He says, the answer is wrapped up not in you, but in Jesus. It's about Jesus.

You see, throughout the old Testament, we know that God was over us and around us. And that's why when you read the Old Testament, God is there. And yet he's very intimidating. Everybody is trying to do something in order to please him. And this is what happens. It's amazing, there's an enormous change. God, who was above us and over us in the gospels, he takes on flesh and he comes, and he's with us.

And then Jesus, while he's with us on the earth, he takes our sin to the cross. He dies for it, and he is buried in a grave and he rises from the dead. And what that means is that he's for us, he's not just over us. And he became with us. He's for us, but then what we are told is that he ascended into heaven, he sent his spirit. And the mystery that's unraveled in the book of Colossians is this, is that he's not just over us, he's not just with us, he's not just for us, but he is in us.

He says in Verse 27, this is the mystery unraveled. It is Christ in you. The hope of glory. That God in his commitment to be near us, he was above us, with us, it's he keeps moving closer, all the way to the place that he now lives within us. I know this sounds amazing, but let me tell you something. You have more spiritual capacity than the 12 disciples did when they camped with Jesus for three years, because they were with Jesus. But now Jesus is in us.

It's a stunning reality that was also true those disciples when they put their faith and trust in Jesus, once he rose from the dead. You see, this idea of Christ being in us, it's so powerful. By the way, I'm only talking about the word therefore, okay? We're only on therefore in Verse 6. But there's some of these who like to fish, and if you fish and you like to fish, you like to know that there's fish near your boat, or near your hook, right? Like it's encouraging to know that fish are near. But isn't it better even more so than fish being near is fish in your boat. And you know why? Because fish in your boat is fish for you. And so it is with Christ. It's wonderful to know that Christ is near, but do you know what is far better than Christ being near? It's Christ being in, because Christ in his Christ for us.

And when we look in Chapter 1 and he's the image of the invisible God, what that means is the image of the invisible God is in us. He goes on, and he's talking about this dramatic display, the characteristics of Jesus, that he's the creator over all things. The sustainer of all things, that he's preeminent, he's the head is the authority of all things. And Christ is in us.

Therefore, now we're finally back to Verse 6, okay? Therefore, because that's true, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him. And this becomes so important, because a lot of us, we think, okay, we trust in Jesus Christ, but then we have to white knuckle it in order to grow. It's all about his discipline and his performance. And now it's about my discipline and my performance. And Paul says, Oh no, no, no. He says, you got to dance with the one who brought you. The way you walk in him is the exact same manner, that's what "as" means, is how you received him.

Each one of us, if we have trusted in Jesus Christ, the way that we received Christ and came to him is that we repented of self-reliance, and we trusted in his words and his deeds. And this is how we walk in him. This is how we grow in him. It's true that the applications are different, but the principles are the same. So let me show you the principles. They're all on one slide.

This is how it starts. How is the mystery unraveled? It doesn't begin with you. It begins with Christ. He speaks through his word. And then if you're going to have a spiritual life, the next step is that we believe his word. This is the most important thing you can do. When you have the Bible read to you, or you read the Bible yourself, the first question you should ask when you finish whatever you're reading is not, what should I do, or what I think about it? Do I believe what I just read? Do I believe?

And that leads us to the next step of growth, and that is we act on his word. And what happens is this, is that when we hear his word, believe it and act upon it, is that then Christ begins to either form or deepen roots. For when we come to faith in Christ, deepen when we are already in Christ.

So let me show how this works. You say, wait a minute, but we're supposed to serve to grow, but we don't serve to come to faith in Christ. You're right. The principle is the same, though. If you are here and you've never trusted Christ, Jesus comes to you in his word. And he says, "I want you to know I'm the way, the truth, and the life. And no one comes to the father except through me. You can believe in me. I died and rose again." For those who believe, what happens, he says, "Now this is what you then do to act on that belief. You call upon me and you do three things. You admit that you need a savior. You believe in me as the Christ. And you confess me Lord of your life." ABC, admit, believe, confess. That's what you do to act on his word.

And if you do that, what happens is Christ forms the roots. You don't form any roots in your life. None of us do. That's something that he does. But then now we're in Christ. So how do we grow in Christ? Well, now we white knuckle it. No we don't. Christ speaks through his word. And then we believe his word. And then we act on his word. And we start reading in the scriptures things that we believe about how to grow. And he says, you know what? You need to assemble together with other believers and encourage one another, and remind one another of what's available. That's one way we grow. You serve one another. You use your gifts to care for each other. You pray, you read the scriptures, you grow a knowledge of who God is.

You see, the applications may look a little bit different, but the principle is the same. He's speaks, we believe, we act. And he does all the roots. He's the one who builds them, forms them, establishes them, grows them. And how do we know this? Look at Verse 7. Verse 7 says, "As you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up and established." These three words are all passive tense. That means that something happening to us, not something we are doing. And it is God who is doing this. It is his work. And now here's the cool thing. At the very end, he goes, Oh, and by the way, there is something for you to do in all of this. Just say thank you. Because abounding and thanksgiving is an active tense. This is something that we participate.

In other words, do you know how you grow? This is how you grow. You read this book, and then you believe, and you act upon it. And when he establishes those roots, you keep saying thank you. This is how we grow. You see, God's plan is to make us like a tree that bears fruit and produces shade, even during storms and seasons of drought, because we're rooted in Christ.

So let me encourage us as a church family, application. Let's keep our eyes on Jesus by reading his word. For those of you who've been here for any length of time, you know that I encourage you to read the Bible on your own. And as you read the Bible on your own, let me just remind you of something. I know you've heard this so many times, let me just say it again because our inclination is always to open up this book and say, God, what do I do? We always have a problem, we always have a need, there's always some need of a solution, something that we're supposed to be doing. The Bible is actually not written primarily as a book of instruction. It's a book of adoration. You will become like who you admire. And so the Bible is written so that you ask the question, God, who should I be admiring right now?

So when you come to the scriptures and instead of saying, God, what must I do today? If you say, God, would you help me to see your son? Some element, some aspect, some facet of his character, the fact that he makes promises, the fact that he keeps promises. The fact that he's trustworthy or loving, things that he said, things that he's done, all of a sudden what happens is our heart begins to admire him all the more. And why this is so important as this, is the glory of Christ that you're going to see within the scriptures is the glory of Christ that is in you. And therefore you need nothing more.

And so let's read Verse 8 to 15. He says, "See to it then, that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him, the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him who is the head of all rule and authority. In him also, you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him having forgiven all our trespasses by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him."

I believe what God is doing in this section of verse is he's warning us not to exchange treasure for chains. And when I'm talking about chains, I'm not talking about jewelry. I'm talking about chains that would bind our hands and feet, our heart and soul. You see, if Christ in us is the hope of glory, then exchanging him for absolutely anything is a trade down. And that's why he says in Verse 8, "See to it that no one takes you captive." The word, "Captive" can also be translated, "kidnapped," or "taken hostage." We all know that when somebody is taken hostage, it's a horrible reality, but physically speaking, what happens is they are bound. They're bound by something, with something. And not only are they bound, but then denied the very rights

and they have as a citizen.

Well, Paul sees a similar denial of rights and privileges and a binding that is absolutely possible if we are taken captive by two specific things that he says in Verse 8, philosophy and empty deceit. Now, the word, "Philosophy," literally means the love of wisdom. The love of wisdom. Proverbs tells us to love wisdom. And so philosophy in and of itself is not a bad thing. In fact, there are very positive forms of philosophy. If you love wisdom and God's word, well, that's a facet of philosophy. But then there's also a very, very bad road of philosophy. And he talks about it here. He distinguishes it by saying it's marked by emptiness deceit, hollow deception, or lies.

Hollow deception about where we came from. What's the purpose of humanity, where we're going when we die, why are we different from animals? Why are we different from other created things? How to live? What is family? What is sexuality? In this world today, there has always been, and there still is a philosophy that's based on empty deceit that has the potential to hold you captive. And so we have to be careful.

And he tells us what this empty deceit, these lies, where they come from. He says they're, "According first of all to human tradition." What that means is, they're heirs that are passed from generation to generation. And because they're passed from generation to generation with the assumption that they're true, is that every new generation says, well, I heard it from my teacher. I heard it from my parents. I heard it from my grandparents. I heard it from the news. And so it must be true. And so we just keep perpetuating lies, generation by generation by generation about things that are hollow and deceptive.

But then he also says, but there's another reason he says, or where they come from. He says, "According to the elemental spirits of the world." That's a weird way to say something. And he doesn't necessarily explain here, but he does. He uses the same form of words in First Timothy 4. And there, he says this. He goes, what I'm talking about now, this is going to sound weird. He goes, it's the doctrine of demons that come out of the mouth of false teachers that takes adults and puts them in elementary school. In other words, it takes people that should be very mature, and it causes them to be childish in their attitudes and behaviors, so much so they have to learn the the alphabets of how to live. He goes, this is not according to Christ.

And what he does next, to me is pretty remarkable. We don't have many examples of this. And what Paul knows is there is this expulsive power of a superior pleasure. What that means is that for many of us, whether it's, we're wrapped up in greed or pornography or whatever it is, that when we are under that shame and under the grip, effort isn't what's going to pull you out. There must be a superior pleasure, a superior joy. And when you find a superior joy, suddenly you lose the motivation to do the things that once crushed you.

In other words, what Paul's going to do here is this. You would think if in fact, if this was like, I don't know, like a presidential debate, you would just attack one another, right? Well, let me just attack this philosophy, and attack this empty deceit. But instead what he does is he says, you know what I'm going to do instead of

that, is I'm going to show you the superior pleasures that we have in Jesus Christ. Because if you see what you already have, then there will be an expulsive power that leads you away from this captivity.

And so what are those things that he wants us to see? Well, in verse nine, he says this. "For in him, the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him who is the head of all rule and authority." Now this is amazing. The word fullness and filled, they're actually the same root word. What he's saying is this, when Christ almighty is in you, then we are also filled with the fullness of God.

That all his power, all of his wisdom, all of his compassion, his conviction, everything that he is, he's in the boat. And therefore he's for us. He says, why would you thinking you need more, when you already have the fullness of God living in your heart? Why do you think you need to supplement this soil with additives, from other ideas that are foreign, when you have the fullness of Christ living in your heart?

And then what he's going to do, he's going to say, there's five things that he's done in your life. There's five different things that he's done in your life. The first, he says, "In him, you were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands." Now, if you're new to all this, you're like, all right, I'm out of here. This is not like circumcision. What does that mean? Well, in the Old Testament, God, he chose this people called Israel. And part of what he called them to do was to set themselves apart physically as an expression of what should have been true spiritually, for them to be set apart as God's people on the earth. And so he's the one who installed circumcision. And so when Jesus Christ rose from the dead, they were people within the churches who were running around, who had been so steeped in the Old Testament that when they came, they said, okay, Jesus rose from the dead. So how do we merge these two worlds? And so they said, I know, it's got to be both. You have to know Jesus Christ as savior and be circumcised.

It's both. And so in particular, what was happening in this city was there was a bunch of Gentile believers in the church mixed with Jewish believers, and so there was teachers that were saying, now all you Gentiles, I know you believe in Jesus Christ, but unless you also get circumcised, you're out.

And so Paul comes and he goes, in Christ, you were already circumcised with a circumcision made without hands. Meaning this is not a physical thing, it's done spiritually. He goes, and not only that, but you are united in Christ, he says, through baptism. What does that mean? It means this, is that when you bore witness of your faith in Jesus Christ through that symbolic gesture of baptism, where you go under, and then you come back out, it's a symbol of the cross and then the burial, and then the resurrection of Jesus Christ, where you were united with him. And so what Paul is saying is, don't you understand that those that would cut in on you and force you to do the things, that Christ has already set you apart and he's already united you with him.

Then he goes on and he says, and not only that, but he's freed you from three of the most deadly, terrible enemies that you have. Notice what he says, starting in Verse 13. He says, "And you who were dead in your trespasses, God made alive together with him." You know how you know when somebody's dead, right?

You poke them and they don't do anything. At least that's one way, right? They become unresponsive. Now this becomes a terrible reality when it comes to spiritual death, because what he's saying is this, is the God almighty can poke you. People can poke you. They can share the gospel with you. And yet you're absolutely unresponsive, because you're spiritually dead.

That's a big problem for people. You're like, can't you see Jesus? And I'm like, no, I just don't see it. Can't you just see just how important it is to trust Jesus, and [inaudible 00:28:41] No, I just don't. But don't you see what he's done? He says that he's caused us to be born again to a living hope in First Peter. He has made us alive. And not only that, the second problem we had is there's this thing called the law. And the law is waiting for you to stand before God almighty in judgment. And the law is waiting there as a witness for you and for me. And when we stand before God, the law is going to go, Hey, by the way, let me talk. Guilty. Guilty.

That's why it says it stood against us with its legal demands. The law knows that we violated it. And so what's the solution? Well, this is the solution. It says that Jesus Christ, what he did, when he went to the cross, he not only took our guilt, but he also took the law, put it in his hand, and that nail went through it and his hand, and his blood filled and canceled out that record of death, allowing us to be forgiven of our sin.

And then not only that, but we had this third threat, and that was the Satan we're told is the accuser of Christians. He loves to stand before God and says, you see that person down there, look how terrible they are. And we feel that weight of accusation, and what Jesus did is this. He disarmed the rulers and authorities, and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him. In other words, Jesus Christ disarmed Satan. He justified us by giving us his righteousness. And now Romans 8 says he refuses to listen to even a single accusation against us in heaven.

What more could we need or want? Providence, we hear it so much. And so let me give you this application before we look at the last section real quick, and it's this. Let's not allow the commonness of the gospel to numb us to its value. There's many of us in the room right now who hear the gospel frequently. If you come every week, somebody stands up here every single week and talks about Jesus dying on a cross and rising from the dead for us.

And any time you get something in abundance, human nature takes it for granted. You remember the people of Israel for 40 years, they had to walk around the wilderness, and God fed them with miracle bread. Like literally miracle bread. It would just show up in the morning, and they'd just go gather it. Feed them for 40 years, miracle bread. But after 40 years of this, we're told in Numbers 21, Verse 5, this is what they said to the Lord. "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt? We loathe this worthless bread." And one of my fears for us as a people is that we hear the gospel so frequently around here, that we begin to think that it's a stale old story instead of the greatest old story.

This is why many people are hungering after novelty and something original and something sensational. Dissatisfied with Christ, even though he is the bread who came from heaven. Providence, I want you to know something. We may need to know more clearly what we have in Christ, but we do not need more than we have in Christ.

The last thing, let's read it, starting at Verse 16. "Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food or drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Let No one disqualify you insisting on asceticism and the worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, not holding fast to the head from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with the growth that is from God. If with Christ who died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations? Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch, referring to things that all perish as they are used, according to human precepts and teachings. These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh."

I think what God is doing here is he's seeking to alert us to the failures of counterfeit soils. I know that we are nearly out of time, but what he does here is he highlights three counterfeit soils, the roots of which are still seen today. The first one is ritualism. Doing something and not even knowing why, having a heart far from what we're doing, and yet thinking that simply by ritualistic adherence, that it's going to help us. He says, "Let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food or drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ." In the Old Testament, God clearly prescribed a set of diets and special holy days for the people of Israel, all of which pointed one day to the Christ who would come and fulfill them all.

And Jesus did come. He fulfilled everything. And yet some in the church were insisting on ritualistic adherence. Now what's the danger in all this? This is the danger. It's a really hard to plant seeds in shadows. You got to have soil, and the soil is substance, is Christ. The shadows were only meant to point us to Christ, instead of force people to cast judgment on people who won't obey the shadows. It's absolute futility, and let me just say this, you cannot stop somebody from judging you. I mean, he says, "Let no one pass judgment." In some sense, you can't do that, right? I mean, if someone's going to judge you, they're going to judge you, but this is what you can do. You can refuse to allow their judgment to be the prison of your soul. Ritualism is a dead end. It's a counterfeit soil.

The second one that he gives is mysticism. He says, let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism, that self denial and the worship of angels. Going on in detail about visions puffed up without reason by his sensuous, mind, not holding to the head. That heresy that was specifically being taught here by the Greeks was called Gnosticism. It was the idea that fullness spiritually could be had by acquiring a secret knowledge that was made possible, that was aided by self denial and even the worship of angels. I want you to know though, that

this, we don't call it Gnosticism any more today, we call it the New Age movement. And along with it is the occult counterparts of psychics and soothsayers and tarot cards and astrology. You say, Well, what's the danger in all of it? This is the danger. It can actually disqualify you from down here, a growth that is from God. The thing about mysticism is it will capture you with fascination, but never satisfy your soul.

And the third counterfeit soil is legalism. And he talks about this one in Verse 20 through verse 22. He says, if with Christ, you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to its rules, its regulations? Don't handle, taste or touch. You see, legalism does two things. Not only does it try to earn favor with God by keeping rules, it then tells other people that they have to adhere to our rules in order to be welcome in our fellowship. So the thing about legalism is it makes you a moral slave to God, but then it also makes the rest of humanity a moral slave to you. This is a dead end.

What's the danger? Well, this is the danger. It's Verse 23, last verse. These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism. Meaning, they look serious. Severity of the Bible, of the body, not the Bible. Meaning, you could really look religious. People could look at you if you're a legalist, and be like, man, that person right there, that person, I mean severe dedicated discipline. But notice there have no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. This is why Jesus called the Pharisees exceptionally dedicated, but tombs of dead men's bones. They looked religious, but they had absolutely no power in themselves to stop a single sinful impulse.

So let me encourage us as a church family to trust in the sufficiency of Christ. There's no need to supplement the gospel soil with additives. Our job is to believe the gospel, is to protect the gospel, not to provide for the gospel. It is sufficient by itself. We're about to take the Lord's supper, and when we do, what we're doing is we are proclaiming we believe in the sufficiency of Christ. So if you've never trusted Christ, I welcome you right now to trust him. You can just pray to him directly right now. You talk to me, you say, you admit. You admit need a savior. You believe. You put your belief in Jesus Christ as the son of God who died and rose again. You confess him as Lord of all. Lord of all is what you call the person that conquered the grave for all.

You can pray to him now, but if you're not quite ready, as we take the Lord's supper, I want to just ask you whether you're in the room or at home, not to take it. Because the Bible says that these are symbols of realities. And to take the symbols is to say that you treasure and believe in the reality. And so just use this time to be thinking about maybe what you've heard. For those of us who do know Christ, he tells us never to take this unless we first confess our sins. So why don't you take a moment right now where you're sitting in this room or at home, pray to the Lord and confess your sin.



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