

98-12-09a Colossians

We resume our study this evening in Colossians chapter 2, where Paul has begun his direct response to the prevailing forces, the prevailing voices that face the congregation there. We know that Paul is responding to this situation because Epaphras has come and told him about it, made him aware that there is an attack, a somewhat subtle attack on the believers in this church. So Paul says, you are complete in Christ.

That's the substance of his argument. And what that tells us is that the attack makes the point that you're not complete in Christ, that it is Christ plus something. And there are several different somethings that seem to be floating around in this environment.

There are elements of religion, elements of ritual observance, elements of philosophy, of awareness and manipulation of unseen forces. All of these things are apart from the word of God and the plan of God. All of these are appealing to other ways and means of succeeding in life.

Our goal as we study this letter is to see the application of what Paul says in our day. The nature of the distractions and the nature of the arguments has changed. The substance of it is different, but the categories are the same and the response is the same.

So when Paul, and we'll backtrack just a little bit in verse 8 of chapter 2 says, Beware lest anyone cheat you or beware lest anyone take you captive. Beware lest anyone ensnare you. These are all legitimate meanings of the word here.

Through philosophy and empty deceit according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world or the elemental spirits of the world and not according to Christ. So it's Christ on the one hand and it is the alternatives on the other hand. And these alternatives, Paul says, they're deceptive, they're empty.

They are at the same time very popular. They're traditional. You can't make a tradition out of something unless it's popular.

People try to start traditions. There's all kinds of chain mail on the internet this year trying to get people to start traditions of giving a special gift to someone in their family instead of wrapping up a watch or a tie or a pair of socks or a toy to go do a charitable act. Write down the charitable act that you did.

Put it in an envelope and stick the envelope on your Christmas tree and put somebody else's name on it and you're giving them the gift of your charity to some other thing. And this email tells a sort of tearjerker story about how someone did this for their husband shortly before he died of cancer and then so now every year as a tradition. It's an apocryphal story, but someone is trying to start a tradition.

They think, wouldn't it be nice if this were true, which it's not. But wouldn't it be nice if it were? Wouldn't it be nice if everybody had a charitable thought? Everybody went out and did a charitable thing, wrote it down, put it on the Christmas tree and so forth. So people try to start traditions.

But you can only get a tradition off the ground if it's popular. Now, in Texas and in Florida, there's a tradition that's exceedingly popular. It's called Spring Break.

Spring Break has become traditional and it is exceedingly popular. Just go down to the Gulf on Spring Break or look around in Florida and all these places. They have it on the news.

That's popular. So that becomes a tradition. Now, is it right? People go down there with the idea that the rules have been suspended.

Anything goes. It's Spring Break. It's okay to be wild.

It's okay to be immoral. It's okay to just do what feels good and so forth. Let's retrovert to the days of our parents and Woodstock mentality and so forth.

Well, it's become a tradition, but it's not right. But it's popular. These are the kinds of things that are starting to float around in the area of the Lycus Valley and the believers to whom Paul is writing.

And this kind of thing has happened today. We have reviewed, and I won't go into any great digression on the same types of things that swarm about us in our culture today. But we have to watch because we all came from somewhere.

We all have traditions that we either grew up with or were in the first churches that we attended. Believers with whom we have close fellowship are involved in these traditions, enamored with them, may promote, encourage these things. So we have a task before us of discerning, of separating out, teasing out the difference between what is truly biblical and what is right and what is healthy as a part of our life before God and what has become a hidebound, encrusted tradition.

Church buildings are taken for granted. Until recently, a lot of us didn't even really give it a second thought. Well, of course a church has a building.

Of course they have a parking lot and a front door that locks and a steeple and a bulletin and a sign out front and so forth. We just take it for granted. When you think church, you think all denominations pretty much have the same sort of a setup.

If it's a Baptist church, it's got to have a baptistry. There's got to be some glass so you can watch the people actually dip under the water. Most of them have a choir lot, generally have to have a choir, and got to have some sort of a raised place in the front where the speaker is going to stand, and generally have one instrument on each side of the sanctuary and so forth.

And if you get big enough, you can have an education building and an extra parking lot and so forth, crossing guards on Sunday morning if you've got your parking across the street. But we look at this as normal. We don't give it a second thought.

Yet you search the scriptures in vain to find any model for this other than the Jewish synagogue, and the Jewish synagogue itself had no biblical support. Where in the Old Testament law of Moses do you find anything about a synagogue? It's not in there. You have the tabernacle followed by the temple, the central place of worship in Jerusalem for all Israel.

You don't have anything about synagogues until the time of the exile and the return from exile and so forth. Not to say there's anything intrinsically wrong with it. Not to say there's anything intrinsically wrong with traditions and with some of the things that have come about.

There's nothing intrinsically wrong with having a building, a steeple, pews, choir lot, baptistry. Well, baptistry is a separate subject. But education building and so forth, piano and organ up in the front.

There's nothing intrinsically wrong with those. We are fortunate to live in the age where God has not prescribed how we worship. He hasn't said you will have one pastor, six elders, twelve deacons, a director of this, that and the other ministry and so forth.

We are free to choose the form, the setting and the organizational model that best meets the time and the place in which we worship. And it's a wonderful freedom. But with that freedom comes responsibility.

And what has happened is people advocate responsibility by clinging to tradition. You don't have to think and you don't have to be personally accountable if you say, well, we've always done it this way. We've done it this way in this church for 40 years.

That's an advocacy of responsibility. If you appeal to tradition for tradition's sake alone, you're advocating your responsibility to be spiritually responsible. And that's one of the things that is coming back as a backlash in the Lycus Valley.

There are people who have worshiped in other ways. They've either been Jews in the Jewish tradition or they've been Greeks in their pagan culture and so forth. They have come to Christ.

They've learned Christ under Paul. They've learned Christ under Epaphus most immediately in this situation. But now that the new has worn off, some of this old is starting to creep back in.

Well, this isn't a new thing. We've got hundreds of years of history of worshiping God in the traditions of Judaism. We've got decades of worshiping the gods in the Greek culture.

And here you're coming in with this new thing that came from down south someplace. Supposedly some Jewish rabbi walked around and taught good things and got killed for his

trouble, and now you're following him. Do you really think that everything, all your answers in life and your purpose in life, is all defined by this tiny little Jewish sect thing that has come up and caught your fancy? There are some other things you need to be aware of.

And so these attacks are starting to come back in, to pull them back into the ways of the world from which they came, to pull them back into the traditional time-honored, well, this is what your whole family believes, kind of thing. Well, does anything like that happen today? Christianity has now become a tradition itself. It's been around for a couple of thousand years.

And we find ourselves in the position of the Jews, where we have to try to get back to the reality and the biblical foundation of our Christianity and try to discern the difference between what is tradition and what is truth, and what traditions we have that do substantiate and bring out the truth, and what traditions are just traditions for their own sake. So when Paul says, Beware lest anyone ensnare you, take you captive through philosophy and empty deceit. According to the tradition of men, this is what we're talking about.

Now we have an analogy to this today, and we've spoken about it recently, but there is a wonderful advance that has been made in our understanding of the word of God, just in the last couple of hundred years. And in the earlier part of this century, great advances were made in the understanding of prophecy, in the unfolding of God's plan for the ages, the fulfillment of the 70 weeks of Daniel, the role of Israel and the role of the church, understanding of dispensations, the careful scholarship has revealed the nature of God's dealing with humankind and different parts of human history. And these things were not able to be tackled because there were more fundamental things that needed ironing out, like the Reformation, the difference between the traditions that had built up through six or seven hundred years of Catholic church history that had steered the church gradually further and further away from scriptural truth about forgiveness, about God's relationship with man through Christ that doesn't need an intermediary and so forth.

These things had gradually left the teaching and the practice of the church, the formal church at least, and so you had the Reformation and you had to go back and recover a lot of the great apostolic teaching and the fundamental truths. Well, now we've had another several hundred years of building and some parts of the church have gone back and swayed away in tradition, but in the best parts of the church we've made progress and we've understood a lot of things. Well, now we're starting to fall away from that.

And people are saying that your understanding of dispensations and your belief in the difference between the rapture and the second coming and your understanding of the distinction between Israel and the church, that's a new thing. Nobody's ever heard of this before. We want to go back and only believe the things that somebody back in the earliest days of the church believed.

So we have a handful of surviving writings from the early days of the church. It may be that there were people in the early days that understood these things and it just was lost to history because

like us, our little church here doesn't have a body of writing that's going to go out and be preserved for decades to come. Many of the wonderful, small, faithful churches down through history have no record other than God's of what they studied, what they learned, that they have the same Bible we have, they have the same Holy Spirit we have, they have the same promises of God that we have, and they live in the same age that we do.

There's no reason not to believe that in unpublished parts of the world and in forgotten times and places there have been faithful students and pastors and teachers and congregations who have made progress and come to understand these things, and it just didn't get passed down in written form. I say all of that to say that we have to watch because these same arguments are not going to be used. If you believe in the rapture and you think it's different than the second coming and you think that there's a seven-year period between, you will be challenged because the church at large, and evangelical Christianity specifically, is falling away from that understanding.

The seminaries are not teaching that distinction anymore. Churches and pastors are repudiating that understanding and saying, well, this was just something that was put out by the Schofield Reference Bible and it's only because that Bible was so darn popular that's why everybody believed this faulty understanding of Scripture, and it's just not so. The reason it caught on is it was truth, and we had a great upsurge of biblical scholarship in this century.

So the same arguments that Paul is answering here, this is where you and I will find the answers, not so much to try to convince the person that is challenging you, but to substantiate and to document your own faith. If someone comes up and says, well, why do you believe that Daniel's 70th week stands between the rapture and the second coming? Well, a lot of us as just people who love the study of the Word of God but are not professional students and are not seminary trained and haven't gone in and documented a lot of things, you don't necessarily have two or three scriptures off the top of your head where you can say, well, this is why, here's the reason. So rather than proof texts, almost anybody can proof text anything.

It's like the old saw that you can prove anything with statistics. You can take statistics and prove almost anything. They have these things where 85% of the people who have cancer eat bacon.

So bacon causes cancer. Well, no. There are all kinds of different factors because if you look at other factors involved, you find out that, well, in this country, this is only one part of a larger diet.

This is a certain kind of cancer. It was done in a certain kind of study, and all of these statistics came from a certain place. It sounds real convincing when it rolls off the tongue until you find out more detail.

And there's a lot of examples of that in our culture where someone will come out on the news report. Tabloid television does this a lot, make a real strong case and make you think, well, this person's just guilty of murdering their family and they ought to be strung up and shot and hanged and poisoned and gassed and electrified all at the same time. Then after the commercial, they

come back and they say, oh, but here's the other side of the story.

And you find out, oh, well, here they are on video someplace else and they couldn't have been home at the time. Well, they didn't tell you that. So people will make a case.

People will use proof texting and scripture, and they'll come up and challenge you. I have some dear friends who have people in their family who have been led into Reformed theology because they didn't have proof texts off the top of their head to substantiate the accurate understanding of scripture. What's the point? When we study the last half of Colossians chapter 2, this is what we're going to learn.

We're going to learn the principle. We're going to learn the substance of God's plan that makes all of that unnecessary. You don't have to get down to brass tacks and the bark on the trees and what exactly is the tense and voice and mood of the Greek verb that's used in Thessalonians to talk about the rapture and how can you prove that, yes, one thing is true and another is not.

Paul says you don't have to get into all of that. All you have to do is look at the big picture, and that's what he's going to present. That's, in fact, what he has presented to us thus far in chapter 1. You remember Christ in heaven looking earthward, Christ on earth looking heavenward.

He's going to appeal to that now. He's going to say, look, I'm not going to get into all of the specifics. People have come to Colossians.

They always want to know, well, what was the Colossian heresy? What was it Paul was arguing against? It doesn't really matter because the picture that he paints here substantiates true faith no matter what the heresy is, no matter what the philosophy or the tradition or the attack is because this truth transcends. It's just like the way we operate everywhere else in the church today. We don't go to the Bible and say, your church is wrong because you have elder rule.

You don't have a senior pastor. You have four or five elders, and you don't call anybody a pastor. And you look at another church, and they've got six pastors and twelve deacons and no elders.

And people try to parse and dissect the scripture and say, well, see, you should have pastor and you should have this, that, and the other. We look at the essence and the substance of things in this age. We're not bound by rules and regulations.

Paul's going to say in this passage, God took the handwriting of ordinances and nailed them to the cross. You don't need them anymore. So here's the point.

You are going to be challenged, if you have not been already, about your faith. People who think that your faith is nontraditional, who think the way that you worship is nontraditional, the holidays are a great time for getting around family and friends and comparing notes. Oh, well, where are you going to church? I heard the church you used to go to isn't there anymore.

Now you're going somewhere else. Well, what's it like? How many people go there? Do you have a youth group? Do you have a singles ministry? Do you have this? Do you have that? Do you have the other? You're going to come up against it. Well, this is exactly what Paul is talking about in Colossians.

Beware. Be careful. Don't be caught off guard.

Don't be blindsided. When somebody comes to you and sometimes they hit you over the head with it and sometimes they just slip it between your ribs when you're not looking. One way or another, you're going to get attacked and you're going to get challenged about your faith.

Well, challenge can be a good thing. Sometimes it's necessary to examine ourselves and see if we are in the faith. Sometimes it may be a better speaking the truth in love.

We don't have to be defensive and we don't have to be high bound and say, Well, this is what I've always thought. I'm never going to think any different. We just cup our hands around our eyes and think, I'm not going to look at anything else.

I've decided this is right and nothing is ever going to change my mind. Paul is going to give us in the last half of this chapter how to substantiate the value and the virtue of our faith and our understanding of how to worship and function in God's plan. And it's the greatest thing because he does it in less than a chapter.

It's a universal, you can come back to this no matter what you face. So what does he say? Remember in verse 8 when he said, Beware lest anyone cheat you. Then in verse 18, he says, Let no one cheat you of your reward.

He tells us in verse 8 how they're going to do it. They're going to do it through philosophy. They'll do it through deceptive things.

They're going to do it through tradition. They're going to do it by appealing to fundamental principles of the world, the things that everybody seems to acknowledge as being true. And what is the result? That's verse 18.

Let no one cheat you of your reward. If you fall for this, what is the cost? What is the price you pay if you are deceived, if you're captured by tradition and philosophy? What's the price? It's your reward. It's not your salvation.

It's your reward. Your reward is on the line. Your inheritance is on the line.

It's like Esau who for a mess of pottage sold his birthright. This is what's at stake. We think, well, you know, does it really matter a whole lot if you're a thisist or a thatist, if you're this denomination, that denomination, if you believe you're a pre-tribulational rapture, if you're a mid-tribulational rapture, if you're a post-tribulational rapture, if you're a pre-, mid-, or post-, or

amillennialist, or you're an inferlapsarian, or a superlapsarian, or a sublapsarian, and all these other little fine technical distinctions about, well, how exactly do you understand the scriptures? Well, our understanding of the scriptures makes a difference.

Because Paul says, you can be cheated of your reward. And the substitute for your reward is going to be the delight that you get from humility. There are people who delight themselves in humility.

Now, you'll notice, if you have a New King James, that the word false is there in italics, and the reason it's in italics is it's not there. But they were trying to figure out, well, now what can Paul be talking about when he says you can be cheated of your reward by taking delight in humility? It must be a false, you're not really humble, you're just playing like you're humble. This is people who are genuinely going for the groveling act, who are genuinely anxious to be humble, and think that humility is the goal.

This is one of the big drawing cards of Reformed theology, because in Reformed thinking, your hopelessness, helplessness, and uselessness is at the fore. If you think about it, almost any distortion, any tradition, any deceit, any philosophy, is going to have elements of truth, but it's going to have them distorted or out of balance. So, for example, in Catholicism, you have an emphasis on, well, look at the crucifix.

Christ is still on the cross, and it's the blood, it's the thorny crown, it's the heart with the wound in it, it's Mary weeping for her son. These things are all true. Was Christ crucified on a cross? Yes.

Did he wear a crown of thorns? Yes. Was he virgin born from Mary? Yes. But if you take these things and set them at the centerpiece of your theology, and wind up trying to tie everything else to it, you're going to distort and bend and warp everything, and get it out of balance, out of context, and eventually you're going to lead to outright error.

Well, humility is a good thing. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. But humility is not the goal.

The goal of your life is not humility. And some people make it the goal. Well, I don't want to be seen as proud, and I don't want to be proud, I'm just going to sort of hunker a little bit, and try not to take credit for anything, and try to just be humble.

If I can just be known as humble, that's the way to please God, that's the way to please man, is just be humble about everything. Humility is a wonderful attribute, but humility, genuine humility, is based on a recognition of where you stand in God's plan, right? You were bought with a price, therefore you glorify God in your body. There's been a lot said on this subject, as far as under the category, or under the label that people have put on it, of spiritual self-esteem, and this, that, and the other, how should you think of yourself, how highly should you think of yourself? Well, this whole issue, and if you want to talk about spiritual self-esteem, if you make that an issue, you're

out of balance.

If you make humility an issue, you're out of balance. Because what is this? It's your view of yourself, and how you think you are viewed by others. It's subjectivity.

Eyes on self, eyes on people. Two-thirds of the great subjectivity swamp is here, in this taking delight in humility. I just saw a thing last night, on one of the Christian TV stations, where a lady and her husband, and it is the lady and her husband, she has come out with his help, with a book on, they've resurrected this old thing from the 70s, about, it used to be called, spirit-controlled temperament.

I think Tim LaHaye, I believe he's the one that came out with the phragmatic, and the choleric, and the melancholy, and the sanguine. Remember that? There's four, and you're either one of those, or a mix of them. Well, they've resurrected this now, and it's got a new name, I forget what it is, mercifully so.

But this whole program was around this, and making an issue of your personality, of your, how prone are you to anger, how prone are you to this, that, and the other. Not to say that some of these observations cannot be helpful, but you don't take your delight in it. You don't run around, and as soon as you shake hands with another believer, say, hi there, I'm a sanguine, what are you? You might as well just get into astrology, and say, what's your sign? It's the same kind of thing.

So, Paul says, if you fall for this, these trendy things that sweep through the church, like temperament analysis, that's what this humility is, taking delight in humility. Taking delight in the worship of angels. Now, we have on the one hand, all of this stuff about angels, I think that tide is starting to ebb a little bit, thank goodness.

But, what were angels viewed as, in this generation? If you took delight in the worship of angels, what are you doing? Rather than focusing on yourself, and well, how humble am I, what kind of personality am I, how do I relate to others, what are my people skills, and so forth, you focus on the messengers, the intermediaries between yourself and God, and you see the angels as, in the same way that the Catholic Church sees Mary and the saints. Well, I mean, that's what this is talking about. You can just stick the Catholic Church with Mary and the saints in there, that's what this is talking about.

Worship of angels. Not just that the saints and Mary are not angels, but they're intermediaries. They are viewed as someone who's got a better footing with God than you do.

I'm going to hang a Saint Christopher on my rear view mirror, because old Saint Chris has got an in with God, and if I get an in with Saint Chris, Saint Chris will put in a good word for me with God, and I won't have a wreck. I'm going to put a plastic Saint Francis of Assisi back here for some reason, or any one of these other saints. The artillery, for heaven's sake, has a patron saint, a

patron saint of artillery, Saint Barbara.

And she got that wonderful and lofty distinction by getting locked in the tower by her father, and then her father was struck by lightning. And so she's the patron saint of sudden destruction. So the artilleryman said, hey, we're in the business of sudden destruction, so Barbara's our gal.

So then you've got the honorable order of Saint Barbara and this and that. This is the worship of angels. I've got the ribbon and the medal for it.

What is this? It's an imbalance, and it's an actual error. None of these people are up there lobbying with God. This is like spiritual lobbies.

It's spiritual PAC money. You're going to have an influence group that's going to put in a word for you. Does this happen today? Yes, it does.

You have your Catholic church and those who pray and try to make contact with the saints or pray and make contact with the dead. Oh, I know, there are old grannies up there watching over me, old granny. There are believers who really think that their relatives are up there actively watching.

I know the Lord's not too impressed with me, but my granny was a dear old saint, and maybe for her sake, God will help me out here. Granny, if you're watching, boy, I could sure use some help. There are people that think this way.

This is the idea. This is the category, worship of angels. Now, what other kind of angel do we have in this day and age? What is an angel? What is angelos? It's a messenger, someone who brings the word, someone who communicates the truth of God.

Do we have messenger idolization? Do we have people who follow the pastor, who follow the spiritual figure, who read every book by this and that author or this and that couple who come out with word from the mountain about how the Christian life is to be lived? We do. We have people who fall into the Corinthian error. I am of Paul.

I am of Apollos. Anybody who comes up to you and shakes your hand and says, I'm a somethingist, I'll pick on the Baptist. I'm a Baptist.

I'm a hard-shelled Baptist. I'm a southern Baptist. I'm a conservative Baptist.

I'm a dyed-in-the-wool, four-square Baptist. I'm a primitive Baptist. I figure the primitive Baptist, that name just makes me think of guys carrying a club and wearing a bear skin.

I'm a primitive Baptist. We baptize you by clubbing you over the head and dragging you through the water kind of thing. I don't know exactly how they got that name.

But anybody that identifies themselves with their denomination before they identify themselves

with their Savior, this is angel worship. This is under that category of making an issue of the intermediary. It's my denomination.

It's my church. Anybody who comes up and says, makes more of an issue out of the church they go to than the Savior they serve, there's something wrong. Oh, I go to the umpteen, whatchamacallit, Bible church down here and this is all the things we do.

I'm sure you've seen our impressive building as you drove by with its gigantic steeple and its huge parking lot. I'm sure you've heard of our ministries and our radio program and our books and tapes and our bus going by and this, that, and the other. If someone makes an issue out of that, if they take delight in that, and that's where they find their credibility, that's what they're hanging their self-worth on in spiritual terms, this is what is being talked about.

Intruding into those things which he has not seen. Do we have this going on today? Bind Satan. Bind that demon of apathy.

Bind that demon of greed. Bind that demon of poverty. Keeps dogging me.

Taking away all my money. That demon of poverty. Preying off the devil.

The devil is after me. Let's all get together. If we agree, let's all agree together and we'll bind this and bind that.

If you want to talk about intruding into things that you haven't seen, you wait until believers who fall into these practices get into the realm of what is not seen. It is going to go far beyond embarrassment. It is going to go into judgment.

There is judgment coming on the house of God in the same way that judgment came to the house of Israel. John the Baptist said, Look, Israel, I'm coming to tell you that the king is on his way. The axe is laid at the root of the tree.

And that tree was the olive tree of Israel. And it will get chopped down just like it did when you had the root shoot from the stump of Jesse. That tree has been chopped down several times.

Those dead branches have been broken off in every generation of the age of Israel. And God has to do the same thing in the church. And we've got our dead branches and we've got our tree that's getting chopped down generation after generation after generation when we don't heed these words.

And we think, oh, well, back in those days, those poor primitive souls, they didn't know what we know about angels and they didn't know what we know. We've got this vast, sophisticated scriptural knowledge. These categories are running rampant today.

And the church is sitting there with the Bible that has the answer in its lap, unaware, uninformed,

uninterested in finding out the truth of their error. And we don't want to fall in that category. We don't want to find ourselves misled.

The thing about a deception is it looks like the truth. If a lie was not deceptive, I mean, there's a lie that doesn't fool anybody. We've got examples all over the place.

We've had lies told on national television by great national leaders that don't fool anybody. It's just a bald-faced, outright, in-your-face lie. Nobody believes for a moment.

That's not a deception. Deception is when you take something for truth. There's a lot of people who have been deceived by people they voted for.

They thought, here's somebody that's intelligent and hardworking and is going to do good things and means what they say and so forth, and they were deceived. Something looks like it's genuine, looks like it's worthwhile, and it's not. So, these things are deceptive.

We don't want to be deceived. So, here are the categories. Taking delight in humility.

This is taking delight in some form of subjectivity. This is the category. Don't get sucked into the spirit-controlled temperament crowd.

Don't get sucked into the discipleship crowd. Let's look at each other. Don't get sucked into the accountability crowd.

We need each other to walk a holy walk, to live a life that pleases God. We're all halt and lame and blind, but if we all gather together into one big gaggle of halt, lame, and blind, we'll all kind of make a nice army marching down the road to Zion. It's just not so.

Worship of angels. Don't attach yourself and base your faith and your hope and your entire Christian operation on one communicator or on one denomination or on one church or on one strand of theological tradition. You don't need it.

Anybody that tries to put something between you and the Lord is cheating you of your reward because your reward comes when you have a face-to-face relationship with God through Christ. Anything that gets inserted in between is going to cheat you. It's going to deceive you.

It is going to take away your fruitfulness and therefore your reward. Each of these things, if you think about it, puts something between you and God. False humility.

Humility is eyes on people. What do they think of me? Am I humble enough? I hope they don't think I'm arrogant. You're looking to them for your validation.

You're looking to them for your approval. And you figure, well, if they think I'm humble or they think I'm this or the other, then I'm good to go. Same thing with angel worship.

And the same thing when you go intruding into things that you have not seen. Trying to manipulate and do battle in some weird way with the unseen forces. What is the result? The end of verse 18.

Being vainly puffed up by a fleshly mind. Are there unseen things? Do we wage battle against principalities and powers? We do. But we don't do it with a fleshly mind.

We don't get vainly puffed up. We don't get distracted with our eyes on people, eyes on self, eyes on circumstances. Something intruding itself and interposed between us and God.

Verse 19 is where Paul talks about what we should have been doing that we're not when we get into this mode. Not holding fast to the head. You don't hold fast to the angel.

You don't hold fast to the messenger. See, this was Jacob's big deal. Remember Jacob wrestling with the quote-unquote angel? The Bible says it was a man.

We'll come to it in Genesis. But here's a messenger coming to him with the word of God. He's trying to grab the messenger and literally squeeze a blessing out of the messenger.

Well, this has been Israel's problem all along. And it's a great example for us. It was written down for our instruction.

We try to squeeze a blessing out of the messenger, out of the denomination, out of the church, out of whatever the structure is. We feel comfortable having it between us and God. And that's where we get our validation.

We say, this is a good thing. I'm going to attach myself to this good thing. This good thing is attached to God.

It's intermediate. You don't need it. Get it out of the way.

You don't hold fast to the angel. You don't hold fast to humility as your goal. You don't hold fast to things that you haven't seen.

You hold fast to the head. You hold fast to Christ. That's why people have said, and the old saw is true, Christianity is not a religion.

It's a relationship. And you and I have to hold fast to the Savior. When you're looking for your value in the eyes of God, when you're looking for direction and purpose and the meaning of what you do each day, it's in Christ.

That's why Paul gave that great doxology in the last chapter. Christ is the reason. You know, they have that thing at Christmas time we're getting into.

Christ is the reason for the season and so forth. Christ is the reason for life. Every single thing.

We should be embarrassed if we ever find ourselves wanting to come up and try to justify ourselves. If we feel embarrassed because we don't go to a traditional church or we don't worship in a traditional way or we can't sort of mingle with the crowd, don't let anyone shame you or make you feel embarrassed. Because anybody that has that mindset, they're attaching you to your church.

They're saying, well, your worth as a Christian is defined by what church you go to and how you worship. Not holding fast to the head. You know why you're valuable and why you can hold your head up in any group of believers with any subject of discussion? Because you're holding fast to Christ.

Jesus Christ is your Savior and there's nothing between. It's you and Him. Don't let anybody embarrass you.

Don't let anybody shame you. Don't let anybody make you feel small with any of these tools, with any of these deceptions. You have Jesus Christ.

And Jesus Christ is the fullness of deity. He is the ultimate, acceptable person in God's sight. And when you claim to Him, you don't have to say boo to anybody.

You don't have to kick your toe in the dirt or hang your head. You're clinging to Jesus Christ. Now, if you're establishing your worth on some other basis, then maybe you do.

Let's pause here and take a break. When we come back, we'll continue.