

98-12-16b Colossians

As we resume our study in Colossians this evening, in chapter 2, we've seen that really, depending on how you want to look at this, three types of attack that have been leveled against the believers in the Lycus Valley, specifically in the church in Colossae, are answered by Paul with the Word of Truth, with principles related to God's plan and God's purpose. If people are using a sense of guilt against believers, Paul says you shouldn't allow guilt to infiltrate your thinking because Jesus Christ has solved that problem. And we reviewed the ways in which he has done that in verses 10 and 11 and 12.

If people are saying that your actions are inadequate, that your participation in the worship life or the ritual life or the religious life of the church are inadequate, there is an answer for that in Christ. Christ has superseded any paltry human efforts by including us in his work on the cross, granting to us the circumcision made without hands that is higher and greater than any sort of obedience. Again, a lot of these are unconscious.

A lot of times we deceive our own selves with these things. And there are many believers, nobody goes out consciously and says, I think I'll deceive myself. I think I'll just go completely in the wrong direction.

Everyone thinks they're doing the right thing, likes to believe they're doing the right thing. And if we're not alert, if we're not watchful, and if we're not knowledgeable, if we don't steep ourselves in the knowledge of God's Word, we too can be led astray. And so that second category of, well, this is what the church is doing, this is the tradition, this is the history, this is the culture of the church.

There's a very attractive culture today in the church also that draws people in, and it can be a wonderful thing. I always have to find myself backtracking and qualifying these things. We're not coming out against things for their own sake.

It is their abuse, it is their misuse that is making them, standing them up in the place of Christ, standing them up in the place of firsthand direct relationship with God through His Spirit, through His Word. If you interpose something and let it be the standard instead of God's Word being the standard, if you say this is where your fullness and your completeness and your value and your worth and your acceptance is going to come from in the church, this thing, instead of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have been led astray and if we continue and allow that to persist, we will forfeit our reward, we lose our opportunity, we miss the chance to bear fruit and to reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. He died on the cross to deliver us out of this present evil age.

He included us, we are co-heirs with Him. Remember in Romans 8, 28 and 29, whom He foreknew, them He pre-designated to be conformed to the image of His Son. Conformity to the image of Christ is the goal.

If someone starts coming up and saying, well, I don't find you to be conformed to my image of what a Christian should be or what a Christian should do or how a Christian should worship or how a Christian should look or how a Christian should talk or whatever, just remember Romans 8, 29. God pre-designated us in Christ to be conformed to the image of His Son and Jesus Christ suffered every single one of those same slings and arrows in spades. The religious accepted tradition and culture and the leaders of the day threw the very same rocks at Him that they're going to throw at us.

You're non-traditional, you're not conforming, you're not following the scriptures and the Pharisees tried to throw scriptures at the Lord Jesus Christ who was the author of the scriptures, the embodiment of the scriptures and they had the audacity and the self-image, they thought themselves to be experts in the law and Jesus said, you are blind guides. So this is the second area that will trip us up, that will divert us. It can be unconscious, it can be subtle, it appeals to us subliminally.

I was chatting with Jennifer during the break because in her high school psychology class they covered Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and this is a valid piece of observation on the part of science that there are certain fundamental drives in the human soul. The need for physical necessities, food, clothing and shelter and the urge to reproduce are all in there. We have the need for security, everyone craves a sense of stability and permanence and structure and you can go through the whole thing, I won't digress into that but this is valid.

These things exist in our soul. The interesting thing is that God in his plan and his provision for us meets every one of those areas of need and it's fascinating to go ahead and look at what man has observed about himself and what the fundamental needs are and then to go to the word of God and see that in every case when it says my God shall supply all your needs, if you want to take that out of context a little bit, he really does. Our provision, he says, look at the flowers, look at the birds, if God has provided for them, he'll provide for you.

Don't worry about what you will eat or what you will drink. Your heavenly father is not going to let you starve. The need for security, we have security in Christ.

We memorized in Psalm 91, when you abide in the shadow of the almighty there, when you abide in the secret place of the most high, the shadow of the almighty, that's a perfect place of security. But these answers from God, these provisions from God depend on faith. We have to claim them by faith, we receive them by faith, we exploit them by faith, we have to believe that they're there, we have to treat them as real.

And that's a concrete process that goes on in our soul. So that's the second crowbar that is used to pry us off center, to whack us off of the narrow road leading through the straight gate and to get us into somebody's program or somebody's vision of what, this is one of the terrible things, all over the place you hear people quoting the Old Testament where it says, where there is no vision

the people perish and so they say, I have got a vision, here's my vision, my vision is to evangelize everybody by the year 2000 or my vision is to take our neighborhood and live it for Christ or to impact our neighborhood or to do one thing or another. And the only place people perish is not just where there is no vision.

You can also have a faulty vision or a goofy vision or a human vision and perish just as much as people that have no vision. It's not like any vision will do, it has to be God's plan and God's purpose and I don't know how we've managed to miss that. But that's the second thing.

People can either use our sins as a lever and however kindly and nice they may be, if you come away, if you want to go back and review, if you've got any of the Experiencing God materials, just read through that and watch how the little subliminal guilt thing, how can you sit still when God is at work, here's the perishing and the sick and round about you and you've got to get up and join God in his work. If you don't, you're deficient in some way and it's a combination of these first two categories. The idea that well, God has done for you, you should do for him and the idea that well, the active church is out engaged in the work of the Great Commission and so should you and if you can't think of the last time you gave the gospel to somebody, you're a real bad Christian.

Well, that isn't even anywhere close to the measure and if somebody does bring that up, we have to guard our souls and not let someone judge us, not let someone cheat us of our reward by making an issue out of these things in our own minds. The third area that we have come to is mentioned in verse 10 and again in verse 15 and it seems at first to be a little strange. We think well, they had some really goofball ideas floating around in this day because they were trying to worship angels.

Paul answers this by saying any intermediary you want to look at is subordinate to the Lord Jesus Christ. Why do you want to accept a substitute, a lower level, lower ranking, deficient, everybody that's been in the military knows that if you want to get anything done, you've got to go to the top. You can't deal with the last corporal at the front desk.

You've got to raise cane until he goes and gets the sergeant. You raise cane with the sergeant until he goes and gets the lieutenant. If you don't get satisfaction that way, you just keep driving up the chain.

The lieutenant goes and gets the captain. The captain gets the major. The major gets the colonel.

You just keep going up until you get justice or you get told to go away before you get in a poor substitute. And so Paul says all these people that are trying to get you interested in angels and get you worried about demons and trying to get you interested in the messenger that brings the message to make you a follower of a particular pastor or a particular denomination or a particular theology, oh, I'm a something-ist. I'm a Catholic or I'm a Calvinist or I'm a Baptist or I'm a Methodist or I'm a Presbyterian or I'm an Episcopalian or I'm a this or I'm a that.

Why do we have all these? Every single one of those labels you want to name is an intermediate. It's an interposed entity. It's something between you and the Lord.

Anybody that comes up to you and you start talking about spiritual things, they say, oh, well, I'm a something-ist. If it's anything other than Christian, if it's anything other than a believer in Christ, be warned. Beware.

Hopefully when we, somebody asks us, well, what makes you, Peter says, be ready always to give an answer to anyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you. God forbid if we get that opportunity and somebody comes up and questions us because they see that we have a hope and see that we have purpose and meaning and definition in our lives, that we come up and say, oh, well, I'm a something-ist. That's why I'm a member of this denomination or I subscribe to this theology or I listen to this pastor or I get tapes and books and stuff from this particular source.

That's what makes me special. That's what defines who I am. We have forfeited our reward because we've chosen a different Lord and Master.

We've accepted a substitute, an intermediate rather than the real thing. So Paul says, don't let somebody get you off track wondering about, well, is my guardian angel wrestling with a demon right now? Is my soul being oppressed with a demon of boredom? If there's any kind of a demon that my soul wrestles with, it's the demon of frustration with the church that gets so preoccupied with demons. It's frustrating to see how easily we're misled and how easily we're distracted with sensational type of things.

People get all caught up and want to read books about demon activity in South America or in deepest, darkest Africa or someplace. These things, I believe, are genuine and true. I think that where the light of the gospel is not shining or is very dim, you have darkness and you have powerful forms of darkness.

I think God still does miraculous things in those areas just like he did in the early days of the church. There isn't anything wrong with understanding that, being aware of it, reading about it. You can get that book about Joshua Sonnier called One Bright Shining Path.

It's fascinating to read and see what's going on in some of these other areas. But we don't fall out of the cart and get all distracted. They've got people on television.

They've got this doctor that's about 80 years old now. He's a heart doctor and he garners all of these after-death experiences or near-death experiences or I-wish-I-was-dead experiences and whatever. And put them on TV.

We watched an hour and a half or so of different people interviewed describing the tunnel and the light and the little beings. I saw myself being clawed by it. I was falling into hell.

I felt flames. Just getting all wrapped around the axle on this stuff that puffs people up about what they have seen. Now for the rest of their lives, they're the person that had the near-death experience.

They're the person that saw the angels or saw the loved ones or saw the demons or saw the light in the tunnel or whatever. We're not defined by that. These things exist, but that's not biblical knowledge.

That's not a place for the exercise of faith. It's fantasy. And in most cases, it's just an oxygen-starved brain.

Any of us can think about the dreams we've had at night. And you wake up the next morning or you wake up in the middle of the night and it just seems palpably real. You think, how could my brain have dreamed up such detail? The tiny details, the texture of things and the color of things.

I've had dreams that were as vivid as reality and were obviously not reality. There was a period when I was a little boy where probably once or twice a week, I had dreams of falling. All different kinds of falling.

Falling off of cliffs, falling off of swing sets, being at the top of a slide and falling off, just finding myself floating through the air, heading for the ground. All of this nonsense about, well, if you dream you hit the ground, you die in real life is nonsense because I did it dozens and dozens of times and I never died. But they were very real.

And blades of grass and rust spots on the slide and the tiniest details. And all of us have had dreams like that. Well, when you're on your death bed, you can go into this transitory state between consciousness and unconsciousness.

And if there's any flotsam and jetsam in your subconscious mind that's going to come up, the odd thing is that people see certain things that are patently not in the word of God. They see the devil with a red epidermis and a tail and horns and fangs and so forth. Well, that's not even biblical.

They have all sorts of experiences going up the tunnel and down the slope that are totally not even in the same county, much less the same ballpark with what scripture teaches. But people can become preoccupied with this and preoccupied with angels, preoccupied with demons. Let's bind them.

Let's drive them off. It gets into their prayer life. It gets into their view of problems.

Well, don't fall for this, Paul says. What's more applicable to us, I don't think any of us, at least in this room, I don't think are particularly worried about demon oppression and Satan is after me and so forth. None of us are ever going to rise to the level where Satan, who is not omniscient, who is not omnipresent, who can only be in one place at a time and only pay attention to one thing at a

time, because he's a creature.

He's not a god. He's not an opposite of God, yin and yang like the Chinese. He's a creature.

He's infinitesimally small compared to God. He's powerful compared to us, but he can only be in one place at one time. And he's off pestering Yeltsin or the president or somebody else.

He's not going to come down to Garland and come down Fieldcrest Street and walk in the front door of my house and break my computer or do something to frustrate me. I mean, what's that going to accomplish? He's got some 15th level lance corporal demon that might be lurking around, but I don't have to worry about that. I didn't quite hear that or I would repeat it.

But if we have any sort of demon activity directed against us, it doesn't really matter. What would you do differently? This is kind of like the question, well, if you knew Jesus was coming tomorrow, what would you do differently? Well, shame on you if you would do anything differently. You ought to be living that way every single day.

And if you knew for sure, if you could have that gal on the wopper room have the little mirror she could hold up and then she could suddenly see through your TV and could see you sitting there watching her. I see Bobby and she never said my name. I don't think it worked in my living room.

But if you had some kind of a magic mirror and you could suddenly see, well, there's my guardian angel and here's a demon and here's a demon and so forth. Big deal. What would you do differently? Would you suddenly act differently? Would you put faith in different promises or principles or doctrines? Shame on you if you would.

You ought to already be accessing and relying on the power of God for every single detail of life. From the smallest to the greatest. And so what if there's unseen forces? Our struggle is against principalities and powers and rulers in high places and so forth according to Ephesians 6. But we ought to already be practicing the life that they've been stripped of their power.

Look at what Paul says. He is the head of all principality and power. He doesn't say he's the head of the elect angels but the fallen ones are totally out of control and he can't reign them in.

They can't make a peep. They can't go anywhere. They can't do anything without checking with the Lord first.

Go back and read Job chapter 1 and 2. Satan could not lift a finger without the Lord's permission. And if Satan himself can't, you know that these little PFC demons can't get out there and do things against God's will. So there's no temptation that befalls us.

There's no situation that befalls us that isn't foreseen and planned for, provided for in God's plan. What would you do different if you could see demons all around you? You should do nothing different. You don't have to pray.

You don't have to bind. You don't have to do all these ridiculous things. Demon influence is not solved by prayer.

What is the shield of faith that quenches the fiery darts of the wicked one? What is the shield that quenches those darts? It's faith. And it doesn't matter if you can see or not see. So this is what Paul is talking about.

This third area of distraction. And we think, well, I'm not susceptible to that. It is equally distracting to look at the other side of that word, angelos, messenger, someone who brings truth that you can't see for yourself.

These are unseen things. We're grateful. All of us have studied under wonderful teachers of the Word of God who have been given insight by God to bring together and clarify, hopefully, things in the Word of God that feed our soul.

And we're grateful for that. But if you focus on the messenger instead of the message. Now see, this happens when people get together at the holidays and they bring out the nice china and the good glasses and all that kind of thing.

Ladies especially that are interested in these things. You can be having a wonderful meal, but they're looking at the pattern on the plates and the crystal glasses and one thing or another. Well, you're not nourished by the shape of the glass and you're not fed by the design on the plate.

You can look at it and appreciate it and it can enhance your enjoyment of the meal, but it doesn't feed you. It doesn't nourish and sustain you. It's a wonderful associated pleasure, but the meal is the thing that counts.

And whether you get your roast beef on a paper plate or on fine china, it's eating the roast beef that counts. So in the same way, we can have an appreciation and our enjoyment of our spiritual meal can be enhanced by the messenger, by the teacher or pastor or whoever, but we don't leave the meal cold on the plate admiring the glasses and the designs and the napkins and so forth. So this is another area and this is one that it is easy to fall victim to, especially in those cases where you have prominent teachers, prominent pastors who have a very powerful personality, whose personality is attractive to people for its own sake, whose style of delivery or whose style of leadership in a church, whose presence on a national or international level, whose publishing of books or whose radio programs or whatever else give them a prestige that people are drawn to.

There are a lot of people, a lot of believers who have been deflected and who no longer think critically about the word of God because they have latched onto the glass from which they drink and they figure anything that comes out of this glass is great. Rather than checking the scriptures and having their own personal faith, their own personal relationship, they have unconsciously started to broker their spiritual life and their relationship through the messenger. We don't want to

do that.

Messengers come and go. The word of God lives and abides forever. Our relationship with God is forever.

We can appreciate and be thankful and our enjoyment can be enhanced, but we don't let it flip-flop. We don't let that become more important than the substance and the content of our understanding of God's truth. So this is what Paul is warning against and he says, look, if somebody tries to make an issue out of a communicator, if somebody tries to make an issue out of unseen forces, just remember, Jesus Christ is the head of all of those.

Jesus Christ is the head shepherd. He's the first shepherd. He's the over-shepherd and any other shepherds are just little underlings.

And so in verse 15, when Jesus Christ died on the cross and when the law was nailed to the cross, what else happened? When he took that out of the way, he disarmed principalities and powers. Now the question is, what were they armed with that they no longer have? What was taken away from the principalities and powers of the cross? Have you ever wondered about that? You look at verse 15. All of these, by the way, this is a wonderful example of the principle in Greek that the aorist participle precedes the action of the main verb.

We have been made alive because he has already wiped out the handwriting of ordinances. He has already nailed it to the cross. He has already disarmed the principalities and powers.

All of these things took place ahead of time so that we could live. These were things that interfered or were an attack on our ability to grow and bear fruit and be productive in God's plan. So the law is gone.

The weight and the power of trespasses is gone. And the weaponry used against us by principalities and powers is gone. Now we have two sides of this.

Where did the fiery darts come from? We are still blocking things with our shield of faith. But what does it say here? The principalities and powers have been disarmed. Fascinating little Greek problem there because it is in the middle voice.

Three things happened to the principalities and powers when Jesus Christ accomplished his work on the cross. They were disarmed, they were made a spectacle, and they were triumphed over. Why does Paul bring this up in the middle of talking about what happened to us through Christ? Circumcision, life, trespasses gone away, the law gone away.

Then suddenly this angel thing comes in with two reasons. First of all, this is one of the attacks. This is the third crowbar that people are using to try to pry the Colossian believers out of their security and their growth and faith in Christ.

They are being told that because you are disabled, you are corrupted, you've got these trespasses and things working against you, you don't have the standing to go directly to God. This is what has happened by the way in the Catholic Church and even in some of our Protestant denominations that have a real strong clergy presence. The idea is you don't really have any pull.

You don't have any presence. You bring nothing to the table trying to go to God yourself. God is going to listen to somebody who has more to bring to the table than you do.

God will listen to Mary or God will listen to a saint. God will listen to somebody who has some horsepower. You are nothing.

So don't even try to go to God directly. He's not going to have time to listen to your paltry little prayers and your insignificant needs. Who are you? You are nothing.

People take pride in this. Oh, I'm just so abnegated and decrepit and small and wallowing in sin and guilt and so forth. I don't even dare.

I durst not go before the Father. All I can do is maybe talk to a saint or talk to another believer who I think has influence. Oh, pray for me.

I dare not pray for myself. But if you will pray for me, I think God will listen to your prayer kind of a thing. This is that bad form of humility.

This is a wrong humility. It's forgetting that Jesus Christ has picked us up and has caused us to stand. We are who we are in Christ.

When you grovel and when you negate yourself and when you belittle yourself in that sense, you are negating and belittling the work of Jesus Christ. You are saying, well, you were so bad that Jesus just couldn't fix you. He could fix these other believers, but he couldn't fix you.

You were just too bad. You were too far gone. You couldn't be rehabilitated.

You couldn't be restored. That's blasphemy to say that God isn't powerful enough. My ability to sin and fail is too great for God to fix.

It's nonsense. It's arrogance of a sense. It's arrogance dressed up as humility.

We don't want to fall into that. Paul is going to directly address that in the coming verses. But he says, look, don't fall for this idea that you're so pitiful that you've got to use an intermediary.

You've got to attach yourself to a pastor. You've got to be aware of the angels and work through the angels and operate at that level. He says, Jesus Christ has taken that just as far out of the way as he took the law.

He's disarmed the principalities. In fact, he made a spectacle of them. You know how they made

a spectacle? The original idea of spectacle was when a Roman army conquered some heathen, pagan, barbarian group and brought them back in chains.

They would take chains and affix them to the back of their chariots. And they would have these manacled, long-haired goths or somebody in chains, traipsing behind the chariots. And they would be riding there in their fine Roman leather breastplate and their shiny armor and their big red plumes and their beautiful horses pulling these gleaming chariots coming forward in all their majesty.

And behind them would be these sad-looking, defeated, broken down enemies, manacled and drawn in chains behind the victorious legions. That's what spectacle means. That's what Jesus Christ did to the principalities and powers.

Why do you waste your time? Why does the church waste its time trying to bind Satan and worrying about, well, the demon of oppression did this and the demon of drink or drugs or whatever did that. It's nonsense. They're in chains being pulled behind the victorious chariot of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They are not to be worried about. It's nonsense. Don't let anybody pull us aside into that.

So what is this conclusion in verse 16? Let no one judge you in food or drink. This is another reference to the ritual ideas. How do you act? You can just write that in the margin.

Don't let anybody judge you about how you act. Don't let anyone judge you regarding a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. This is your mode of worship.

It's not how you act. It's not how you worship. These things at best, even if you get the right ones, which is rare, were a shadow of good things to come.

And this obviously tells us that this was syncretism. This is when you take lots of elements and you mix up some pagan ideas with some religious ideas and you come up with this monstrous, hideous, Siamese sort of an animal that someone is trying to pass off as true religion. And the fact that this was a shadow of things to come, of which the substance is Christ, tells us that these were elements of Judaism that were being pushed at the church.

Elements of Old Testament worship, valid Old Testament teaching that was being wrongly applied to the church still happens today. Look on the front of the Experiencing God book. What do you see? Big picture of Moses because it's just symbolic.

I am astonished that it's such an irony. The very problem with those materials and that whole Experiencing God program by Brackebey is that it's works-based Christianity and you've got the man who brought the law down from the mountain right on the front of the book and it speaks for itself. The substance of these things is Christ.

Don't go back to a substitute. Don't go back to a has-been phased out part of God's plan. Get with the present and the present is Jesus Christ.

Don't let anybody get in the way. Don't let a pastor get in the way. Don't let a denomination get in the way.

Don't let a theology or an ism get in the way. It's you and Christ. Jake sings that song, You and Me, Jesus, and that's what it is.

We have a relationship with God through Christ and don't let anybody stand and block the light of the presence of Jesus Christ. That's the substance of Paul's argument here. Don't let anyone cheat you of your reward, he says in verse 18, taking delight in humility.

This is what we were talking about earlier. Oh, I just dare not come shuffling before the throne of grace with my head down on my toe in the dirt. You'd be little to look at Christ if you fall for that.

Jesus Christ has raised us up. He has cleansed us. He has nailed trespasses and rules that define those trespasses to the cross.

You don't have any of that baggage. You have no excuse for not holding your head up and standing, coming before the throne of grace. Read Hebrews chapter 10.

Let us approach with full assurance, our hearts having been sprinkled from an evil conscience, and so forth. We don't come crawling in. We don't say, I dare not even go in.

I'll send somebody else. It's nonsense. Taking delight in humility and the worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen.

Vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind. Now, this is an area, and this may be a little touchy or somebody might find it controversial, but I'm just going to tell you what this is talking about. Talking about things which he has not seen is what it says in verse 18.

But the better text in verse 18 says, making an issue of things which he has seen. The word not is not in the best text there. Making an issue of these things that he has seen.

A secret knowledge or a knowledge that this person has that we don't. A special insight. A knowledge of unseen things that has come.

This could be, people say, I've seen a vision. It's so prevalent today, you cannot turn on channel 58 here in town and watch it for 15 minutes and somebody is going to say, well, God told me. God laid this on my heart.

God spoke to me the other day and this is what he said. People say they have a knowledge about what God's plan is or what God's purpose is. God is speaking to them.

He's not speaking to you. He's speaking to them so that they can tell you. What does that do? Somebody is blocking my light when they do that.

I'm trying to look at the light of God. They're blocking my light and they're saying, oh, I've got the answer. God spoke to me.

The light shined on me. Now, I'm going to turn around and tell you what it was. Well, I'm sorry, but that is not even close to right.

Talking about things that they have seen. Making an issue of what they have seen. This also goes in the area of other kinds of knowledge.

There was an article in the Kindred Spirit magazine, which is the seminary's magazine they send out to keep interest and information about the seminary. They send it to alumni and send it to other people who are interested in what the seminary is doing. A two-page article in there about, well, what's the deal with psychology and Christianity? There's been this debate for the last 20 years especially where some people say it's a life in the pit of hell and other people say, well, all truth is God's truth.

Well, as soon as you hear that phrase, you've probably heard me go off a time or two in the past about all truth is God's truth. But this article tries to, it just assumes that, states it at the beginning and says, well, since all truth is God's truth and since this is truth that's been discovered by secular people, but it's still true and so all truth is God's truth, therefore, there's nothing wrong with incorporating it into our Christian understanding, our Christian practice and so forth. The same thing applies here as what we've been talking about all evening.

There's nothing intrinsically wrong with making an observation. I think Maslow's hierarchy of needs is great and that's an observation and a worthy one from psychology. There are lots of insights, there are lots of observations that are true.

It is when we make that an object of faith, I am going to rely on this insight. I think this is going to fix me. Going back and regressing myself into childhood and getting a primal scream or whatever else may, that's one of the more extreme ones.

I'm going to go investigate the sins of the parents. Do your parents' failures have some influence on you? Probably. Is that a part of God's rehabilitation plan? No.

It is a truth, but it is not a divine truth. It is not truth that God has put out there to be the object of faith. We've talked about this before, but the idea that all truth is God's truth blurs and overlaps a very important distinction.

It is true that if you cheat on your taxes, you will have more money than if you don't. That's true. All truth is God's truth.

We see the fallacy there. It is true that if you buy enough lotto tickets, you'll increase your chance of winning the big Texas lotto jackpot. That's true.

All truth is God's truth. It is true that you can go down to the liquor store, shoot the proprietor, rob the cash register, and you will have money in your pocket. You will be more prosperous than you now are.

All truth is God's truth. Obviously, these are not truths that we want to live by or place our faith in or have as a means of living from day to day and solving our problems. The Bible does not claim to be a textbook on science, doesn't lay any claim to being a textbook on technology, no claim to being a textbook on health or medicine.

It does lay claim to being the means of rehabilitating the human soul. That is its province. That is its purpose.

It will transform us by the renewing of our mind. It is a critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The mind and the heart, the soul, this is the realm in which the truth of God, contained in His word, functions.

And faith in that truth implements divine power for change and transformation. It is the only legitimate change and transformation agent in the human soul. There is nothing wrong with insight.

There is nothing wrong with observation. Many times these things can be helpful. However, they are not to be the object of our faith.

We don't go to them and depend on them for transformation in ourselves or others. And this is where Christian counseling has gone off the mark. And you can see it in the literature.

If you want to read that article, you can see it in the article. There is no distinction made between what truth is valid as an object of faith and what the priority of that truth needs to be. There is a token nod given to it in one sentence and the rest of the time it is all talking about, oh, we can do so much good in the plan of God.

God is not glorified by the reliance upon and implementation of secular, psychological procedures any more than He is glorified when somebody removes your millstone. You may feel better, but it is not inherently or intrinsically glorifying to God. So this has been lost.

So when someone makes an issue of what they have seen, they have got an insight, they have got an understanding, they have got a body of truth, quote unquote, that they are the possessors of and they are going to broker to you, beware. This is a good way to be deceived. It is a good way to be cheated.

It is a good way to lose your inheritance. Don't let anyone or anything stand between you and

God and block His light. And the inevitable result of this is the vain puffing up of the mind.

Remember back in 1 Corinthians 6, knowledge puffs up, love builds up. People inevitably start putting their names on the counseling center or on the book or on the radio program or on the front of the Bible or whatever else they are going to do, making an issue of themselves, not holding fast to the head. This is our truth teller.

This is our leaf point. This is our telltale, if you want to use nautical terms. This is what tells us the way the wind is really blowing.

Does it glorify Christ? Does it uplift and focus our attention on Jesus Christ or do we start finding a lot of baggage and a lot of issue being made of other things? Holding fast to the head, from whom all the body nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments grows. When we hold fast to the head, we grow. We will see the results in our soul and it is measured by the fruit of the spirit.

Just look for love, joy, peace, patience, endurance, long-suffering, gentleness, bearing with others, temperance, self-control. I don't fly off the handle. I don't lose my nerve.

I don't lose my grip. I don't lose my composure. I don't unravel and fall apart under pressure.

I'm calm. I'm cool. I'm collected.

I am recognizing at any given point, be the pressure great or small, that this is God's plan. I stand before Him in Christ and the gates of hell, the demons, philosophies, anything else that comes against it isn't going to stand. I am secure and complete in Christ.

That's what we cling to. That's the mast to which we lash ourselves and we grow with the increase that is from God. And God has told us the ways that He distributes His grace to us.

It's through His word and through His spirit. Each of us has a spiritual gift through which we minister to each other. So in verse 20, if you died with Christ from the basic elements of the world, why as they're living in the world do you subject yourselves to regulations? Very similar argument to what Paul made in Romans.

Remember back in chapter 5 and 6 of Romans, he says, if you have died to sin, why would you any longer live in it? If you've died to it, why do you make it an issue? Why do you persist in it or participate in it? You've died to it. It's gone. Forget about it.

Move forward. Same thing. If you died from these old principles and old elements, don't get tangled up in it again.

It's a dead horse. It's gone and finished. Don't subject yourself to regulations.

Do not touch. Do not taste. Do not handle.

This again, measuring by actions. What equivalence do we have today? What standards of behavior does the church at large, the traditional church, put out? Well, where do you go to church? What building do you go attend? What ministry are you involved in? Have you shared the gospel with anyone lately? Have you visited anyone? Have you performed any sort of good deeds? Are you down in picketing a clinic or working in the urban slums? Where is your impact? Are you making an impact? Are you making a difference? Are you being salt and light in the world, according to my definition of what that is and so forth? Wrong. Wrong.

Wrong. That's not the measure. It's do not touch, do not taste, do not handle.

It's all the things you don't do or all the things you do do. Whatever your behavior is, these are all concerned things which perish with the using. It's temporary things.

The eternal things and the permanent things are unseen. They're in your soul. They're measured by God himself, and they're measured in that realm of the fruit of the Spirit.

That fruit oftentimes is not visible. It will work itself out in actions, but they're not going to be trumpeted out. They're not going to be put up on a plaque at the front of a building someplace.

These are the commandments and doctrines of men. This goes back to something Jesus said. Remember when he was talking back over in Matthew, and he talks about the fact that he's talking to the Pharisees in Matthew chapter 15.

Turn back with me to Matthew 15. When I attempt to move forward, I haven't had you go to a lot of passages, but this is one we need to look at really quickly. Matthew 15 and verse 6, you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.

You have nullified the commandment of God. This is when they're failing to support their parents because they say they're supporting the church, basically supporting the synagogue. Oh, I've dedicated all my things to the temple or to the synagogue so I don't have any left over.

This is form and tradition over love and faithfulness in an area that counts, honoring father and mother, desecrating the spirit of the law for the sake of what they perceive to be the letter of the law. Same thing further down in verse 17. Jesus says, Do you not understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? This is just what Paul is saying.

These things perish with the using. You do them, they're temporary and it's over with. Those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart and they defile a man for out of the heart proceeds these evil and sinful things.

It's the heart that counts, not what you see on the outside. You can keep a perfect Deuteronomic or Levitical diet and your heart can be dead men's bones. That's just what the Pharisees did.

Same thing in verse 9 of this chapter. In vain they worship me teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. Very same thing that Paul says here.

The commandments and doctrines of men. Verse 23. These things have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, humility and neglect of the body.

They are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. They have no value. They don't give you any power over sin.

You don't grow, you don't produce fruit. It's all a waste. It's a distraction and the end result is God is not glorified in our lives and we lose our reward.

We lose the opportunity.