



Message Transcript

Pathetic Practices

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Thanks so much for choosing to worship with us today. Today's an extra special day. There's been some preview services downtown, but today is the official launch of beacon here in downtown Denver. So can we give God some praise for that. So exciting. That's been a year in the works and also while you're clapping, would you do me a favor and continue to clap? Welcome our Broomfield Campus who's worshipping along with us. So great to have you. And as you have your Bibles out, getting ready to hear from the Lord this morning, let's prepare our hearts for his living and active word among us today. Would you pray with me?

Lord Jesus, we give you all the glory and all the honor and all the praise for who you are. And Lord, we are so grateful that we can gather as a community of people on two different campuses and celebrate your name and worship who you are and hear directly from you. And Lord, our prayer is wherever we're sitting this morning that you would speak directly to us, that we would hear you in the depth of our heart. Lord, your word is living and active. It has the ability to divide both soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and judge the attitudes and the intentions of our heart. And so we invite you to do that here right now, God. And as we pray every single week, Lord, our prayer is that when we hear your word, we believe who you say you are, we believe who you say we are. And we would put into practice by faith the very things that you show us in your word.

And now for all of people who are gathered, who are ready to do that very thing, would you please agree with me by very loudly saying the word [crosstalk 00:01:28] amen. Amen. There's no greater news on the planet than the message of the gospel of

Jesus Christ. That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. That He was buried and that He was raised according to the scriptures. There's no greater news on the planet than that. We can't do better than that. The Bible even goes so far as to say that at the name of Jesus, when He returns, that every knee will bow in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

That when everybody sees who Jesus Christ is in His fullness, every single person will bow and make a confession that Jesus Christ is indeed Lord. The question becomes how come people aren't doing that now? And there's a lot of answers to that. The devil blinds the minds of unbelievers so they can't see the light and the truth of the gospel of grace. And yet there are so many who as believers, who have trusted Jesus and have been drawn aside and practiced something other than the glory of the gospel in them that has kept them from enjoying Christ, which has also hindered the loss from seeing the fullness of the body of Christ.

And as we've been going through this book of Colossians and focusing on the person of who Jesus is and His work in and through us, Paul is continuing his instruction and it's really application to everywhere we've been going. And as you listen today, it's imperative that you understand this because there's some ways that you can practice your Christianity that are wasteful, pathetic practices that will hinder your joy and will rob others the privilege of seeing who Jesus Christ is. There's a strong likelihood that if you're a believer in Christ that one of these three practices is

something that you've been drawn into or you're engaged in presently that the Lord wants to free you from. These three practices are the reason why most non-Christians will tell you that they're not a Christian. They're not really rejecting Jesus per se because they just don't have a full picture of who He is. They're rejecting what they see in the lives of people who claim to say that they're believers who practice these unhealthy practices.

So if you have your Bible with you, I invite you to open up this morning to Colossians 2. Colossians 2. We'll start in verse 16 and we'll make our way through the end of the chapter. I'd like to read it out loud and then we'll unpack it together. Paul says, "Therefore, no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink, or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day, things which are a mere shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments grows with a growth which is from God.

If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why as if you were living in the world do you submit yourself to its decree such as do not handle, do not taste, do not touch, which all refer to things destined to perish with use in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence." Now,

as we get into this text and as we look at this, this morning, I think it's imperative for us to do just a little bit of review so you can understand what Christ has done and what Paul is telling this young church that he's never visited what is paramount importance.

And what is paramount of importance is that Jesus Christ is Lord. That God the Father send his son to be the savior of the world. That in Christ when we see Christ, we see Him who is Lord overall. All things were created by Him and for Him. He is the Lord overall things, both visible and invisible. Thrones, powers, dominions and authorities, all things were created through Him and for Him. He is the representation of the invisible God. He came and died on the cross for all the sins of the world. He took the Father's wrath and He was buried in a grave and He authenticated that He was indeed God's one and only son by rising from the dead that Sunday morning. He is alive as He is ever been. He is the way, the truth and the life. He's the only way to have a relationship with God.

And so as Paul was telling them this, he was telling them that in Jesus and in Jesus alone you have everything that you will ever need. Don't look outside of it. The other thing he goes on to tell us if that's not good enough, he tells us this, that our hope is not just in the fact that we're going to heaven, that our hope and the glory of the gospel is the mystery of the old Testament that has now been revealed. And what hadn't been revealed in the Old Testament that's now revealed is when believers believe now in the resurrected Christ. He himself through the Holy Spirit comes to live in and through us. It's Christ in you, the hope of glory. So when you trust Christ it's not just that you accepted Christ so you can go to heaven. When you trusted Christ, His

very life comes to live in and through you.

And if that's not good enough news, which is the best news on the planet, he goes on to say that through Christ's death on the cross, He made a public display of all of His enemies, and He has disarmed all authority other than His own, which means while you have an enemy, he has no power over you. Okay? Now imagine this. I mean, if you were at a shopping mall today and somebody came and pulled a gun on you, that would be a terrifying moment unless you understood the gun wasn't loaded, right? All the bullets were emptied at the cross. The devil has no weapon that can form against you that can prosper. So think about this, in Christ through the gospel you have life with God forever. The life is not outside of you. His very life comes to live in you and with Him in you, your enemy has no power over you. That's the hope of the gospel.

You would think the chapter would end there. What more could we possibly hear? But he's going to give us application because even knowing those things, there are pathetic or worthless practices that we can do as believers that hinder us from enjoying the fullness of who God is. And that's what we just read about. And in Colossians 2, if you see that first part in Colossians 2 starting in verse 16, notice what he says. He says, "Therefore, no one is to act as your judge." Now, when he says no one, we see this all over the place. He tells us in verse 4, "Let no one delude you," which means to deceive you or trick you. In verse 8 he says, "Let no one take you captive," which we talked about, meant to drag you away and put you in a spiritual prison.

Here we see let no one be your judge or pass judgment over you in verse 18. We'll get there today. Let no one keep defrauding you. Defrauding you means they're being your spiritual referee, right? He says let no one judge you in regards to what? Let no one be your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day, things which are a mere shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Now here's the first one that you need to avoid the temptation of, okay? Here's [inaudible 00:09:04]. Avoid the temptation of hyper-religious stuff. Okay? Now you might choose a different word for stuff here in a minute. This is your notes, you can use whatever you want. Hyper-religious stuff.

Now, when it comes to religion, all of us practice some form of religion. I mean, we could say we're religious because we came to church today or we religiously do something like we read our Bible. So in some sense we're religious. I'm talking about hyper-religious stuff. And here's what he's talking about. He's talking about religious practices that you either have the expectation of others to keep, or you think they have the expectation of you. These are not religious practices between you and God that you're doing to honor Him. These are hyper-religious practices. I do this or I don't do this because of what you're going to think of me, or I have expectations of what you should do or don't do and that's my expectation of you. That's hyper-religious stuff that goes over the top. And Paul says, "Let no one judge you when it comes to those things."

Christian, listen to me, listen to me. Your Christianity is not based upon what other Christians think of you. Not only is it not performance for God as we've been

talking about. You're not called to perform for anybody else. Some of you came, you can leave now. Some of you just needed to hear that this morning, right? Because so many Christians get involved in hyper-religious stuff. "Well, they expect this in me and my mom and dad expect this in me and my pastor expects this in me and my church expects this in me and those people in my small group, they expect me to do this or don't do. So I'm living as a people pleaser as a Christian." There's total bondage in that. You are not called to live with hyper-religious stuff. Okay? Here's what Paul says about it. When you have a performance mentality, you tend to think even after you come to Christ that what you do or don't do, or what you have done or haven't done is really valuable.

In the book of Philippians, if you go one book back to Philippians 3 where Paul talks about his own walk with Christ, he says, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again to you is no trouble to me, and it's a safeguard to you." And then he says this, "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision for we are of the true circumcision who worship in the spirit of God and in the glory of Christ Jesus and put what? No confidence in the flesh." Last week we spent a lot of time talking about spiritual circumcision and how at the moment of conversion God removes the heart of stone and he places in you a heart that can worship Him and love Him. And every man, woman, boy, or girl has been spiritually circumcised who has placed their faith and trust in Jesus and puts what? No confidence in the flesh. Flesh is who I am and what I think I can do that makes God happy with me.

Paul says, "We put no confidence in the flesh." "I put no confidence in the flesh," Paul says. Although he says in verse 4, "I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I have more." As a matter of fact here's what Paul's saying, "I put no confidence in the flesh. The flesh counts for nothing, but sometimes I'm thinking I should put some confidence in the flesh. And if there's anybody who could put confidence in the flesh, it's me, because let me give you my resume and let me tell you why I could put confidence in the flesh if the flesh counted for anything." He says, "I have far more, circumcised on the eighth day, which means my parents took me to the temple on day eight, which was the law written and I got circumcised just the way I was supposed to. I'm of the nation of Israel."

If there's one nation under God, it's the nation of Israel. It always has been, it always will be. God has a special plan for Israel. Paul was saying, "I was born in the right nation." He goes, "I was a Hebrew of Hebrews, which means I excelled in the things that God wanted me to excel in and as to the law of Pharisee, which means when it came to what the scriptures taught, I did everything I was supposed to do. I didn't waiver like the [inaudible 00:12:52] and stop believing in the resurrection. I believed the scriptures." He says, "I was of the tribe of Benjamin." Well, what's that? Well, the tribe of Benjamin produced the first king of Israel. "So I was even in the right tribe, in the right nation doing the right thing as to zeal a persecutor of the church. As to the righteousness which is found in the law, I was found blameless."

Now this is what he doesn't say. He doesn't say I was found sinless, because

he's going to go on to say he's full of sin. He was found blameless according to keeping all the things he was supposed to keep. He's the guy that would've said, "I've kept all the 10 commandments. I've gone to church every Sunday. I've done all these things. I'm an American, I've done..." I mean, Paul saying all this stuff. Now notice what he says about all that. "But whatever things were gained to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be in loss of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them, but..." Here's the word, ready? "Rubbish, so that I may gain Christ." Rubbish.

That's the Greek word [foreign language 00:14:00]. It means rubbish, it means dung, it means excrement and it means something a lot stronger than that, that English translators won't put into your Bible. Okay. That's what it means. So when we talk about hyper-religious stuff, that's the word I'm using. It's garbage. It doesn't fulfill. Anytime you are living your Christian life based upon what others might think of you or you're living your life for expectations of what others should be for Jesus, you've missed the whole point of the gospel. The gospel is Christ in you, the hope of glory. It's Christ being formed in you. It's not you living based upon the expectations of others or having others live upon the expectations of you. That's hyper religious garbage and it hinders your walk with Christ.

And when non-believers see it, here's what they see, "You talk about your freedom in Christ, you're the most bound up person I've ever seen. Why would I ever want to be like you? If I became a Christian, I have to stop this and I have to start this

and I have to stop this. It's just a bunch of rules. Where do the people get all this stuff?" From your hyper-religious stuff. That's where they get it. They don't don't get it from the gospel because the gospel doesn't tell you to live that way. It's Christians that aren't living for God that teach these manmade rules and religious regulations. Okay? So here's what Paul's saying, "Avoid the temptation," because there's something in our flesh, there's something in us that wants to make sure that I'm doing what you want me to do. I didn't engage in that behavior because you don't engage in that behavior and I'm doing... We're good, right? We're good.

Well, I did it because you guys do it. And so we're together, right? We're cool, right? So I become this spiritual people pleaser with everybody I'm around so that you think that I'm walking with Christ. The one thing I'm not doing when I'm doing that is focusing on who? Jesus and Christ in me, the hope of glory. Hyper religious stuff keeps us from the best that God has. So Paul says, "Hey, listen, let no one be your judge when it comes to these things." Well, what things, Paul? In regard to food or drink or in respect to festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day? Well, what does that mean? He said, "Well, let's talk about this. How about in regard to food or drink? What can Christians eat or drink?"

Do you realize in the first century there was a debate over that stuff? I mean, do you know that in the 21st century there's still a debate over that stuff? As a Christian, what can you drink and what can't you drink? Can you drink alcohol or not? Can you drink caffeine or not? It just depends on what hyper-religious circle that you're in that will tell you. And here's what Paul says, "Let no one judge you over any of that stuff." I

mean, when Jesus was teaching His disciples about true spirituality in Mark 7, He called His disciples together and he told a really short parable. Mark 7:14, He says, "Listen to me all of you and understand this, there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him. But the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man.

When he had left the crowd and entered the home, His disciples questioned Him about the parable and he said to them, are you still so lacking in understanding? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach and is eliminated, thus He was declaring all foods clean. And He was saying that which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man." He's saying this, what you eat or what you drink, it goes into your body and comes out. That doesn't make you clean or unclean. Well, I never drink alcohol, great. I drink it sometimes, great. It doesn't make you any more spiritual either way. I don't drink caffeine, brother, great. I drink it every morning. Can't get along without it, great. It doesn't make you any lesser or more spiritual.

I only eat vegan, I only eat meat, great. It doesn't make you any more spiritual. It goes into the body. It gets eliminated and it comes out. Here's what Jesus said the problem is, it's not what's outside going in. It's from what's inside that's going out. And He says from within, out of the heart of men proceed the evil thoughts. Fornication, thefts, murders, adultery, deeds of coveting and wickedness as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness, all of these things proceed from within and defile the man. See, hyper religious stuff tries to fix all the externals so that you'll

know that I'm doing what I'm supposed to do and I'll think that you're doing what you're supposed to do, but it doesn't deal with the heart. And in the heart is where all sin emerges from. And yet Christians we make so many external rules about what it means to be a Christian that amount to nothing. It's excrement, it's garbage and it doesn't help you grow spiritually.

And yet we get all riled up about these things, don't we? I mean, we have real strong opinions on these things, don't we? And that Jesus says that's not important. Paul says it's not important. So here's what he says, "Don't let anyone judge you by outside external things." That means this, you don't have to people please anybody else. We talk about the A in BRAVE being authentic. You can be who you are in Christ, right? You don't have to cater or cower because you engage in certain behaviors that other people don't or you don't engage in certain behaviors that they do. It doesn't matter. Be who God wants you to be. The right kind of religion, the right kind of walk with Christ is listening to what He wants you to be and then you do that. That brings Him the greatest glory through you.

That's what it looks like. And it's super important because there's this temptation and I've felt it for the last 30 years. I feel it even more as a pastor that I need to act or be a certain way so that you'll think that I'm walking with Christ well. And none of it means anything. What matters is what Jesus thinks about how well I'm walking. Even when Paul writes to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 4, starting in verse 3, he says this, "But it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you or by any human court in

fact. I do not even examine myself." Here's what Paul says, "I know you all have opinions about me and I love you. And I really don't care what you think because it doesn't really matter to me how you view me about my life."

Here's what he says matters in verse 4, "For I'm conscious of nothing against myself. I mean, I'm not aware I'm doing anything wrong, yet I am not by this acquitted, but the Lord is the one who examines me. Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes, who will bring both to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men hearts then each man's praise will come to him from God." Here's what he's saying, "I don't care if you judge me. I'm not even saying I'm right. I have accountability in my life, but my accountability's with the Lord. And guess what He's going to do on judgment day? He's going to not only expose my behaviors in what I did or didn't do, he's going to expose all my motives in my heart for why I did it, which I'm far more concerned with than my external behaviors."

God's concerned with what? The heart. Why or why not are you doing or not doing what you're doing? That's what true spirituality looks like. Your motives from the heart, that God has your heart, that you're living with your heart, not that you're living with all these external behaviors and I got to act this way because when I go to BRAVE they expect this of me and when I go to that church over there, they expect that of me. And I got to do this. And my parents when I'm around them, I got to do it this way. And when I get around my pastor, I got to do it this way. My neighbors, they expect this. That's crazy. There's no freedom in that. It's complete bondage. Let no

one be your judge when it comes to those things.

And Paul talks about food or drink. He talks about festivals, which for Israel would've been annual festivals like the Passover or the feast of Tabernacles or Pentecost. He talks about the new moon, the Hebrews function on the lunar calendar. So the new moon was the first day of the month. When the moon came out, it would be announced that, "Hey, the moon is out," and so there were offerings that needed to be made. You can read about this in Numbers 28:11, which is the first new moon you can read about in the Bible. And then how about the Sabbath? That even has ways it makes its way into our day. See, here's what he is talking about, all of the religious festivals and things were simply a shadowing or a foreshadowing of what was to come. They were representative of all that Christ was going to do.

It's like if you're running in sunlight, people can see your shadow. It's somewhat of a representation of you, but it's not you. You're you, it's just a shadow. All religious activities are a shadow of what is to come. The most important part about the shadow is who is it shadowing? It's shadowing Jesus. You have Jesus, you don't need the shadow. So what about the Sabbath? I mean, there's a lot of people that are Christians like, "We got to keep all the Old Testament laws and all the Old Testament rules. We got to keep the Sabbath. They worshiped on Saturday. We got to worship on Saturday." I mean, I didn't have to tell our congregation last night because they already got it because they were here on Saturday. So they were cool with it, right? But there's some people that think, "Well..."

I mean, they're making a good case for this and maybe I do need to eat that

way. Maybe I do need to follow the ceremonial laws and the dietary laws and all these things. Here's what I would say, Romans 10:4 says that the law ended with Christ. It was fulfilled. And you say, "Well, Pastor Jeff, you're saying the law is gone?" I'm saying no, that the law's not gone. I'm saying Christ fulfilled the law. Well, where is He at now? He's in me. So the law is already fulfilled in me so I don't have to perform anymore. I don't have to read my Old Testament to keep all the old rules because Christ in me, the hope of glory's already fulfilled them all. It's done. It's finished. He's risen. He's in me. Quit following all the religious hyper-religious stuff when you already have the fullness of what the shadow was telling you was coming. Amen.

Amen.

Give me about 30 seconds to take a deep breath so I don't pass out. All right. And this is why it gets so important because if we drive it down, religious expectations drive people away and they're rubbish, pastoral expectations drive people away and they're rubbish. Because when you have religious expectations, you will feel a need to defend yourself or excuse things that you're doing for other well-meaning Christians. So let's just talk about some of them, can we? I mean, let's just have a little fun this morning. I mean, I don't know. Let's just talk about one, I mean, that may have come up this... I don't know. Halloween. Can Christians celebrate Halloween? I mean, my goodness gracious. There are so many people that have so many different opinions on this. If we took a vote today, we would have different opinions here.

There are people that would say, "There's absolutely no way. That was birth an

evil, that was birth of the evil one. It's all about demonic spirits. If you're a Christian and you celebrate Halloween, I would have to break fellowship with you." There are other Christians that would say this, "There's no greater time in the year. It's the one time I get to meet all my neighbors. And it means one thing for me, candy and I get to eat and I get to laugh. I get to dress up. What a better way to show the love of Christ to my neighbors?" Who's right? They both are. If you have the belief that you cannot by faith act with a good conscience to celebrate Halloween, don't celebrate it. If by faith you can celebrate Halloween that brings glory to God, celebrate it. What's hyper-religious stuff? Hyper-religious stuff is when you tell me I can't celebrate it, when you tell me you must celebrate it.

Now I'm putting my faith into you telling you what you can and can't do. That's wrong every time. So if you didn't enjoy Halloween this week and you huddled down your house and had a prayer meeting, fantastic. If you did what we did and went out and had a great time, fantastic. It doesn't matter. I'm not putting mine on you. You don't need to put yours on me. I answer to God for how I handled that. You get it? Brothers and sisters, we are just getting warmed up here this morning. All right? Because this stuff fires me up. How about drinking? I mean, alcohol, can we drink alcohol? How about caffeine? I mean, where do we get? Because there's some that would say, "No, no, no, you don't understand. Pastor Jeff, you're a Christian. You can never drink. If you drink even a drop, you're not really a Christian."

And others would say there's nothing in the Bible that teaches that you can't drink so you can drink. It's okay. I do it socially all the time. Who's right? They both are.

See, here's what's wrong. What's wrong is when you tell me that because of your convictions, which are great convictions that you don't drink, that therefore I can't. That's wrong. What's also wrong is if I have the liberty of doing that, but for the sake of you, I won't because of your lack of faith. So it would be wrong for me to invite you to drink when you don't have the liberty to drink, right? So there's tension all the time, but the tension should be my walk with Christ.

How about this? Can I have cable? Can I watch rated R movies? I mean, we can go down the list and split the church all day long because when you have hyper-religious stuff, it means we all have to land in the same place. No, when we have Christ on the inside, we get to make decisions by faith for what Jesus wants us to do in that season of our life that brings Him the greatest glory. And when we're acting in a way that brings Jesus Christ the greatest glory, I don't need to convince you how to behave like me. I need to be telling you whatever you do, whether you eat or drink or in all that you do, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So if you celebrated Halloween, celebrate it for Jesus. And if people ask you, "Do you really celebrate Halloween?" Say, "Yes and I love it." And if you don't celebrate Halloween and people say, "Well, why don't you?" "Because by faith I think it's wrong," then tell people that. It's okay. Just don't make your decisions other people's decisions. Amen. That's hyper-religious stuff. Feeling free this morning? Okay. I mean, we can go one further. Got a couple more. How about possessions? How about money? How much money can a Christian really have and still be a Christian? What kind of house should a Christian live in? What kind of car should a Christian

drive? How much should Christians really give when it comes to the offering?

See, I mean, if we're going to have uniformity on that, we'll make everybody in here mad before we leave here this morning, except for the person that got their way, right? See, that's religion. See, what you really need to understand is that everything you have is from the Lord and how do you best steward what God has given to you in a way that you know that you'll be able to give an answer to the Lord for all that you have.

Amen.

That's why Paul said. I know what it is to be poor. I know what it is to live in prosperity. I know what it is to be poor. I know what it is to have things. I never felt more righteous when I was poor. I've never felt more righteous when I had things. It's not about what you have or what you don't have. It's how you steward what you do have to the glory of God. And hyper-religious people want people to have an idea of what they should have, what they shouldn't have, how they should live, how they should spend, because I have an expectation for you to be my friend for how you need to do that, and also you have an expectation for me. And once we find the two or three people that think just exactly like us, then we hang out for the next 30 years and we call that this discipleship. That's not discipleship. That's religion.

You see what I'm saying? Could go one more. You guys having fun yet? Hey, how about pastors? How should pastors live? Look, what should they be doing? I mean, how often should they read their Bible every day? How often should they pray?

How often should they study? What should their wife be like? What's the expectation you have of her? How should she live? What should the kids be like? How should they act? What kind of possession should they have? How should they steward it? What should they do? How much should a pastor actually make? What should a salary look like? What should it be? That's called hyper-religious garbage. It means you have an expectation on me that you won't let me have of you. That by the way, I don't want to have a view. I don't care, right? I'll care that you steward the best that you have for the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I've seen it. And I can tell you story upon story, upon story. I remember my little girl was five or six years old and she was downstairs in children's ministry. And she came home crying one day and we were asking her why and she's bawling and she said, "Well, daddy, one of the teachers told me that since you were the pastor, I should have known the answer." And so I quickly put a restraining order on my wife and we prayed about it and it's okay, but you understand what I'm saying? You are this. So whatever you would put on other people, here's what I would do first, just go stand in front of the mirror and say would you be comfortable if everybody used the same for you? Would you? "No, but he's a pastor." No, it doesn't matter. Put it in front of you and if you'd be comfortable with everybody doing that for you with their own opinion of you, which may or may not be completely scriptural, then you can do it for others. And you'll find that you can't do that.

So Paul says avoid the temptation of hyper-religious stuff. The gospel is this, it's Jesus Christ plus nothing. It's Christ in you. Well, you say, "But Pastor Jeff, I struggled

with alcohol and I used to drink it a bunch and now the Lord shown me that I shouldn't drink anymore. So I'm in this camp where I don't drink." And I would say, "That's the right choice. It's absolutely the right choice because Jesus showed you what he wanted you to be. And by faith, you need to be that." What I'm telling you not to do is don't make everybody else that you come into contact with have to do what you do. That's the point. "Well, God told me to get rid of TV." Then get rid of TV, but He didn't tell the whole church to get rid of their TV. So don't make it a rule.

"Hey, well, God told me that we needed to give away 35% of our income this year," then give away 35% of your income this year, but God didn't tell the whole church to give away 35% of their income this year. You see how we take what God shows us and we make it corporate when God's making it personal? So avoid the hyper-religious stuff where you put expectations on others. You say, "Well, Pastor Jeff, I come every week, you preach the gospel. You show us what to do." Yeah, that's for people that love Jesus that have Christ on the inside that really want to apply what He says. It's for those that really want to grow. There's no rules. It's relationship. It's Christ in you, the hope of glory. Amen.

These are all just shadows of things to come and when we get involved in the expectations of others, what I expect in my pastor, what do I expect in my small group, what do I expect in my friends, what do I expect in my church, what do they expect in me? And then we all form like this, we have this religious practice when nothing's going on in here and the world looks on and says, "I don't want to be any part of that." And they're right. They don't. I as your pastor, I don't want to be any part of that. You don't

want to be any part of that. We want to be part of a community where Christ is alive and celebrated for who He is and we have freedom by faith to glorify Him any way that He would so desire. Amen.

Amen.

Avoid the temptation of hyper-religious stuff. All right. Secondly, we're back in Colossians. Number two, avoid the temptation of hyper-experiential stuff. He says, "Let no one keep defrauding you." That means to be your spiritual referee. "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of angels, taking his stands on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind." Here's what he's saying, there are some in the body of Christ who once they're converted, it's not a matter of expectations of others or their expectations of me. Here's the expectation, I have expectations of God for how He is to treat me all the time. And I expect to see Him do something tangibly every moment of the day.

I expect when I open my Bible, I hear his voice right now. I expect when I pray for healing, it's done. I expect when I need a new job, there it is. I expect if somebody's sick when we pray for him, they're healed. I'm expecting, I'm expecting, I'm expecting because God you owe me because God, I'm yours and you got to do all this stuff by faith. Now, before we get to the point of this, I understand, I'm a pastor that believes that all the gifts are available today. I believe that God can do anything that we read about in the Bible. I believe that God can heal. I believe that God could raise the dead. I believe that God can decide to prosper you in numbers of ways, but I

don't think he's obligated to. I don't think He's obligated to you because you speak it.

As a matter of fact, I know some very, very faithful people who have developed cancer who have been prayed for, who God chose by His grace not to heal and decided to heal them on the other side.

Amen.

Okay. Because here's the problem, when you want hyper-experiential stuff, you'll get mad at God if God doesn't do what He does. And if God doesn't do it for other people the way you think He should, you'll tell them it's because they don't have enough faith. So if you have cancer and you've been praying for it and somebody prays over you that's hyper-experiential, here's what they'll tell you, "The reason you're not healed yet, sister, is because you don't have faith yet." It's not true. Some of God's greatest saints have gotten sick and died. All God's saints who have ever lived have died. Okay? So you can't say that. Hyper-experiential people want God to do stuff. You'll hear them say stuff like this, "God's on the move. Hey, in these latter days He's doing some stuff," to which I respond, "He's always been on the move and He's always been doing stuff."

And I believe that God is experiential. And I believe we do want to encounter Him, but I don't think He's obligated at my words or your words to do what we want Him to do. You'll hear people say stuff like this, "Well, the Lord told me, but I can't tell you about it yet. You're not ready for it." That's hyper-experiential stuff, right? I mean, I know people that in the last year the Lord's told them this and then the Lord told them that and then the Lord told them this. And I'll sit down, I was like, "Well, you told me

three months ago it was this and then it was this and then it was this. The Lord's told you six different things. And I know my Lord, He's not schizophrenic. So which one did he tell you?" We use that as a buffer for a lack of what's going on in the heart.

The most spiritual people you know are rooted in the word and are persevering under trial when they don't understand sometimes why God hasn't moved the way we read about in the scriptures, but they still love Jesus and they're centered on the cross and the gospel of Christ in them, the hope of glorying. Amen.

Amen.

Now I'm not saying it's wrong to go outside our church and go to a conference. And it's not wrong to experience God in a place outside church. I certainly have, or it's not wrong to go to a worship night with lots of other. It's not wrong. It's when your whole identity is wrapped up in what's the next experience and where are we going? And who's speaking and oh, they're good and this person... Oh, if you come to this, if you miss out on this, you're not going to get the gift of tongues. And if you miss out on this, you're not going to be able to hear a prophecy word for you. And if you miss out on this... You can miss out on anything. As long as you have Christ in you, you have everything you need.

Amen.

Hyper-experiential stuff is the stuff that says I don't have what I need, I need something extra. And he goes, "Here's what you'll notice about those people. Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting what? Self-abasement." That's

false humility. False humility. Many of the people that you will watch that drive movements of hyper-experiential stuff will appear extremely humble. Where if you were to say something about the person that's leading movements like that, you'd be like, "Well, that person's so humble. I mean, they're so nice. How could you say that? That is so mean to say about them?" No, but what you see is... In them they're just like, "It's not me, it's the Lord. It's not me, it's the Lord." It's not really the Lord, it's you, but you're driving this whole thing based upon people's experiences and emotions rather than on the glory and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The gospel's what you want to see. And so when you listen to people that are talking to you, think about how many times they talk about the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Think about how many times they talk about Christ in you the hope of glory. Think about how many times they say it's all about Jesus and it's not about you. Because many people that lead hyper-experiential movements don't talk about Jesus at all. He never even gets a mention, maybe a name here or there, but certainly not blood, certainly not righteousness, certainly not death, certainly not burial, certainly not resurrection, certainly not hell, certainly not any of the glorious things that the New Testament describes.

How about this? The worship of angels. "So Pastor Jeff, I would never worship angels." Well, good. But even John as he's writing the book of Revelation in Revelation 19:10, in Revelation 22:9, there's two different times where this angel is giving him information about all the things that are to come. He goes to bow down and worship and the angel twice is like, "No, no, no, no, you don't understand. We're just like you.

You don't worship us." I mean, angels are glorious beings created by God, but we don't worship angels. You say, "Well, Pastor Jeff, I never word worship an angel." Yeah. But the way that we do it sometimes is we think that there's different ways to get to God other than through Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 2:5 says, "For there is one mediator between God and man, it's the man Jesus Christ." When you pray through Jesus, you have full access to God. You don't pray through dead saints, dead people, dead ideas, dead relics. You don't get worked up into a frenzy and then God will hear you. You just pray through Jesus and you have full access to God. Don't let anybody rob you of your prize by telling you there's somewhere other than Jesus to go and get your information from the Lord. And then he talks about this. What about visions? Taking his stands on visions he has seen. You can go back and read the book of Jeremiah. I read it quite frequently, but Jeremiah 23:25-32, if I had time to read it to you today. Just one of the places where Jeremiah is complaining to God because he is like, "Lord, I'm looking around and all these people are talking about peace, peace, and these visions that they had."

And God's telling him, He's like, "Yeah, they're talking about their vision that they had, but I didn't give them that vision. They're talking about peace, but I didn't tell them peace. They're making up all these things that they saw." Have you ever seen somebody talk like this and all they do is talk about their vision and God told them and God said and God did. What's the word say? Are they expounding what God is saying or are they expounding their experience, what's more important to them? Many people in hyper-experiential movements don't give a rip about God's word. They don't give a

rip about who Jesus is. They don't give a rip about the glory of Christ and they don't give a rip about the gospel. What they give a rip about is experiences that you may or may not have had.

Now I'm all for praying for you if you're sick and by faith I believe that God can heal you. But I also believe if He chooses not to heal you, that He's got really good reason to not do that. I have faith to believe that God can do everything the New Testament tells us to do and we as a church are to come together and believe that. But I also believe that God is bigger than what we do or do not experience in His church. I come this weekend to church to preach the word and to worship because I believe that when God's people come together, there's an experience and a tangible experience of Christ where He moves among us. But there's certain weeks where I can sit over there and have tears in my eyes and there's other weeks where I'm like, "Yeah, it's good."

There's certain days I wake up and read my Bible and I say, "Okay, I'm reading my Bible." There's other days I wake up and I'm like, "Whoa, I've never seen that before." Right? I mean, experiential seekers tend to think that every time you pray, read your Bible, go to church it's just like, "Aah," but these same people wouldn't say that about marriage. Would they? I mean, when I got married I thought every day my wife was going to wake up and be like, "Ah, I'm married to you again, awesome." Right? And that's only like what? 99% of the time. But I thought it would be every day, but we have this experience, this idea that everything's supposed to be like cupcakes

and cookies and sugar all the time and it's not.

There's nothing wrong with wanting God to do something. There's nothing wrong with expecting God to do something. There's nothing wrong with believing for God to do something. But it also needs to be couched in the experience of whatever He wants and notice what it says, "These people are inflated without cause by their fleshly minds." It means so much of their religious activity is all just about their religious activity and it's not about Jesus. And he says, "Avoid the temptation," because there's a temptation for us as believers especially when things aren't going our way to think that there's a shortcut that we can take, a spiritual conference we can go to and everything will break free and then we'll be fine from this point. There's no such spiritual shortcut. There's no such one.

So just continue to walk with Christ and continue to expect Him and continue to live by faith and God will use that. And by the way, to the world that looks on, it speaks volumes to the world that looks on when you say your God is good and they're looking at your life, they say, "Well, your life's not good, and if God was good..." No, God's still good even in my not good versus He's going to heal me. He's going to do this. He's this, He's this and He doesn't and then the world's like, "Well, you said your God was this and He didn't do that." I mean, I've heard some many stories on the mission field of the people that have gone out.

Day one in the mission field, somebody's sick. Missionary comes, prays over the sick person, the sick person gets well, guess what happens next week? The whole town's there. Okay. "Heal us all," and then God doesn't and then these people say,

"Well, then your God's no good," and they're done with your God. See, if we make an experience of God, what God is and if He does this, then He's good and if He doesn't do that, then He's bad, we miss out on the whole point. God is good, period. God is great, period. God is great in the gospel in that He sent His son to be the savior of the world. And by repentance and faith and believing in Him, we have Christ in us and our enemies defeated. I mean, that's awesome. What else do we need?

And Paul's saying, "Avoid this temptation," because notice what he says, verse 19, he said, "These people are not holding fast to the head from whom the entire body being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments grows with a growth which is from God." Who's the one that grows you? God is. Jesus Christ is called the head of the church. Jesus Christ is who we go after. What do you call a body without a head? It's a corpse. It's dead. You ever hear people talk about, "I love Jesus, I just don't like the church"? I mean, you can't have it that way. You have to be connected to the head. You have to be connected to the Lord. It's the Lord who we hold fast, who cleave, cleave, cleave to him. Amen.

So he says avoid this temptation, because there's a temptation as you're growing in your faith to get all involved in hyper-religious stuff. There's a temptation as you grow in your faith to get involved in hyper-religious stuff. And while God wants us to be disciplined in what He calls us to do personally, He doesn't expect other people to do the that. While God calls us to expect things from Him and by faith to do this, He doesn't tell us to demand that of Him. And then He gives us a third one. The third pathetic practice is avoiding the temptation of hyper-disciplined stuff. Hyper-disciplined

stuff.

Notice what he says, verse 20, "If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why as if you were living in the world do you submit yourself to its decree such as do not handle, do not taste, do not touch, which all refer to things destined to perish with use in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? This is similar to the religious stuff, but where religious stuff is me placing expectations on you or you placing expectations on me, hyper-discipline stuff is me placing expectations on me. This is where I should do better or I should know better, or I should look better, so I'm not really concerned about what you think, but I'm going to do things in such a way that you'll look at me and know that I'm way more disciplined than you. You'll look at me and know that I'm way more spiritual than you.

Because if you ever ask me about my practices and what I do, or you ever watch my practices, you'll think to yourself you'll never be as disciplined as me. You'll never arrive like that. And there's all sorts of examples that we could talk about. How you read the Bible. I mean, where you seem falsely humble, but you're just begging for somebody to ask you, "How do you read the Bible?" And then you say, "Well, I don't want to tell you, but really I read through the Bible once every month. Just casually go through it." "Well, how do you pray?" "Usually about two hours every morning from 4:00 AM to 6:00 AM then I read the Bible till 10:00." And they really do, right?

Or they talk about evangelism. "Well, what I try to do is every Friday night I'm on down 16th street. I do not leave until someone comes to Christ." I mean, this is where

when you're talking to someone, what they'll talk about is their disciplines and what they are doing to make themselves spiritual. Here's what you won't hear. Listen, you won't hear them talk about their love for God that translates into a love for other people. As a matter of fact, the more disciplined you are and God wants us to be disciplined. I mean, disciple, that's where we get our word discipline. There's nothing wrong with being disciplined in life. Some of you by nature are just more disciplined. Some of you weren't born with any of it. I mean, it's okay, right?

But being disciplined and growing in spiritual disciplines are good if they result in I want to love God more and love His people more. I'm spiritually disciplined so that, God, I can love you more and love your people more. But I'm not just disciplined for the sake of being disciplined. I'm not just doing for the sake of doing. That's why I was trying to think this week if I've ever told you how I do my daily devotions. I don't think I have. I don't think I will. It's really not important because my fear is if I tell you what I do, you'll think that's what you need to do and you don't. For people that do it in the morning, they tend to tell people, "You got to do it in the morning or you're not spiritual."

People that do it late at night they're like, "You got to do it at night right before you fall asleep so the word can get into your soul," right? For people that do a piecemeal throughout the day it's just like, "Man, when the Lord gives me time, I drop to my knees and just pray." Whatever you do, you'll think that other people need to do it like you and they don't. "I do it totally silent with my cup of coffee. I do it listening to worship music." You see what I'm saying? When discipline is more important than

loving God and loving others, then it's you're focused too much on the discipline.

Whatever spiritual disciplines you put in your life should be that you love Jesus more and love people more. If it's resulting in those two things, it's good. If all it's resulting in is a religious practice for you to feel like you're prideful and spiritual, it ain't no good. Right?

"I listen to sermons more than anybody. I only listen to Christian music. These are my disciplines." And you'll see it in different faiths too. I mean, where it's super aesthetic where people will put hooks in their back and flagellate themselves and beat themselves. I mean, Martin Luther, the great reformer before he was saved was beating himself because he was so aware of his sin and he just wanted to get right before God. Here's what you'll find with anybody that's self-disciplined at the expense of loving God and loving other people, here's what it is, it's normally a cover up for a love for God and a love for others that people would rather go through strict self-discipline rather than come to the cross and repent of their sin and give their life to Jesus.

People would rather go through strict self-discipline than love other people. I mean, I've heard of people that have lived up on a post for years, have fasted for long periods of time, I'm like, "Okay." I mean, the Bible says there's nothing wrong with fasting when you're going to fast. But when you fast, don't do it in such a way where everybody else looks at you and like, "Oh my gosh, that guy's fasting. He's fasting all the time. Wow, so spiritual." I mean, how much love for other people do you have if you're up in a tree for a year? It doesn't translate with anything we read about in the

New Testament. It's just personal, self hyper-discipline garbage. It's usually a cover up for a lack of a love for God. Paul says, "If you've died with Christ to the principles of this world, why do you keep living in them?"

Well, why do you keep practicing this hyper-religious stuff, hyper-experiential stuff, hyper-discipline stuff? And the reason why I find when I talk to non-believers as to why they don't come to church is they don't want any part of any of the stuff we've just been talking about. And I don't want any part of the stuff we've been talking about, but you listen. When you listen to people, listen to what they're saying, they'll tell you what they reject about Jesus is hyper-religious stuff. They'll tell you what they reject about Jesus is hyper-experiential crazy stuff. They'll tell you what they reject about Jesus is that hyper-discipline stuff. And you can tell, well, that ain't Jesus. That's religion.

Let me tell you about Jesus, His only expectation is that you would come to Him and you would take all your sin and put it on Him and He would give you all His righteousness and that you would live free and that you would have Christ in you, the hope of glory and that you would know that your enemy is a defeated foe and you have total freedom to walk with authority in this world not because of who you are, but Christ in you, the hope of glory. Amen. That's the gospel. And yet our flesh is so tempted. I mean, we can even hear a message like this and walk out of here and say, "Well, what are a couple things I need to change this week just so I can be more spiritual with Jesus?" You miss the whole message. Here's what you need to do, how can I spend more time with God? How can I allow him to invade my life in such a way

that it translates into a greater love for the people in my sphere of influence?

So for my spouse, for my kids, for my neighbors, for my friends, for my community, they tangibly, palpably experience the love of Christ through me because of who Christ is in me. And when they ask about who I am, I'm not talking about my religion, I'm not talking about all this crazy stuff, and I'm not talking about all the disciplines I do, I'm talking about the Lord Jesus Christ and how He's available for them. Amen.

Amen.

All right. This is the gospel. And there's a temptation in our flesh to do this and verse 23 really sums up the entirety of everything we've been talking about, where he says this, "These are matters." In other words, the things we've been talking about are matters which have to be sure the appearance of wisdom and self-made religion, which means they appear to be good things. You'll hear Christians talk or even non-Christians talk like, "Well, it'd be good if you were more religious and you came to church every Sunday and you did this and you did this and you did this. And if you just practice this way, and if you just read this way and if you didn't drink and you..." It has the appearance that that's really good, but what does he say? In self-abasement this false humility, it wasn't me, it was just the Lord, praise God, and severe treatment of the body.

But notice what he says about all these things, "But they are of no value against fleshly indulgence." There's no value in them, right? Let me give you one example as I

close. I mean, think about this, for many guys that have come to Christ and guys that haven't come to Christ, they struggle in our culture with sexual purity. And so we tell guys, "Bounce your eyes, do all this stuff." We talk about external things that can change them. The only thing that can change a man is his heart and guys that I know that struggle with their impurity blame women for the way that they dress. Now, the Bible makes clear if you're a Christian woman you should dress with modesty. That's a good thing. Okay?

But here's what ends up happening. What ends up happening is guys blame their lack of purity on women and something exterior rather than blaming their own heart. If the way women dress could change sexual purity in men, and all you had to do, women, was just wear burka every single day for the rest of your life and all sexual immorality would go away, then we would endorse that. But if that were really true, then you would also have to say that there's nobody in the Middle East that struggles sexually. But Jesus already told us sexual struggle is not external, it's internal, it's in the heart. It's in the heart. You can't change the outside and make the heart different. The only one who can change the heart is the Lord Jesus Christ.

All the religion, experiential, self-discipline stuff that we think is so important is only changing all this around us so that we feel better when this remains just as wicked as it was before. But at the cross of Jesus Christ, when we come and we repent of our sin and we give him that sin, He comes from the inside out and cleanses and purifies and washes and changes us so that we can live fully for Him. It means the message is don't go out here and practice your hyper-religious stuff, your hyper-

experiential stuff, your hyper-discipline stuff, your expectations of God, others and yourself. Here's what you do, you come to the cross and you remind yourself that at the cross is incredible, great glory and in Christ and in Christ alone, that's all you have.

That's why here in Inglewood we have four words, Jesus Christ is Lord and we have an empty cross. If you get that part, you got the whole thing, right? So would you stand with me on both campuses as we pray today? Lord Jesus, we give you all the glory and honor for who you are. And Lord, we thank you that we don't have to perform for you, that we don't have to perform for others, we don't have to perform for ourselves. Lord, that we're completely forgiven at the cross. And if you're here today and you've never trusted Christ, and you've been following religious practices, here's what you can say, Jesus, I believe that you're the Lord. I believe that you're alive. And I confess to you right now I'm a sinner.

And I repent of my sin which means, Jesus, I'm giving you that sin and I'm taking all your righteousness right now because I confess with my mouth that you are the Lord and I believe in my heart that you are raised from the dead. And Lord, we give you all the glory. We give you all the honor and all the praise. And for those of us who are here today who are believers, Lord, show us the areas in our life where we're pulled towards some of those pathetic practices that keep us from being our best for you. And we honor you, we love you, and we bless you in the mighty and majestic name of Jesus. Amen and amen. Can we give God some praise this morning?