

Colossians -August Class

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[0 : 00] Well, first of all, thank you for being here this morning. I like the size of this room. It's a lot cozier, and with a small group like this, it's just a little bit more intimate. So thank you for joining us for our August class. We are in Colossians chapter 2, and the material that is before us is absolutely critical.

And we have no business bringing it if it isn't critical, because everything in this book that we call the Word of God is critical, and all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, and all those good things. So let's pause right now and thank the Lord for the Word. We're grateful, Father, for the revelation you've been pleased to provide for us, and we pray for a facility of understanding it, and not only understanding it, but the implications that arise therefrom.

Thank you for your presence with believers wherever they are, and thank you for what is made available to us, and we commit this time to you with thanksgiving in Christ's name. Amen. Earlier in chapter 2, Paul has already made the absolutely stunning statement, which is probably not at all appreciated by the world at large.

[1 : 19] And he said, I think it's in Colossians 2.9, if you want to look back there, where he talked about being complete in Christ. And the concept is one that the world has no appreciation for at all.

How that everything that one could possibly need as regards this life and the next life is wrapped up in the person of Christ. But especially is that true in a spiritual sense.

And the word that is used there in the Greek, which we don't have a great deal of appreciation for, but it is a word. Well, just let me give it to you in the Greek.

The word is *epichoregumenon*, and it has to do with everything that is needed as regards function and future.

And it is a term, a long term in the Greek, that is used in classical Greek for the outfitting of a ship, a vessel that is all set to go to sea.

[2 : 29] And this word conveyed the idea that the vessel that is to be put out the sea has already laden upon it all manner of equipment, all of the rigging, all of the hands on deck, everything that's needed for the ship to set out the sea.

That's what it means to be complete in Christ. You have absolutely everything that could be needed. And now he is going to go on and explain what he means by that in the balance of chapter two, because there is a great tendency on the part sometimes even of Christians to think that it is necessary to add something to the finished work of Christ.

There is absolutely nothing to be added. And the apostle takes great pains to make that point. But we must understand that it is part and parcel of the flesh of our old Adamic nature to want to do something that would result in credit accruing to our account.

Whereas there is absolutely nothing that can be done. But that doesn't keep people from trying.

And Paul dealt with this 2,000 years ago. And it wasn't beginning then.

It was continuing then. And it's continuing today. And the reason this is such a vital issue is because every generation of human beings born from Adam on has this tendency to think of something else being needed.

[4 : 16] And the concept of our absolute sufficiency being wrapped up in Jesus Christ is just foreign to many people. And even some Christians consider it too good to be true.

Too hard to believe. And consequently, they want to put forth their effort, their intentions, their whatever, to add to that. It is always for them. It is always Christ plus something.

So what Paul is going to address in this portion that we're considering now is the curse of asceticism and the curse of legalism. Both of these are rampant in the Christian community.

Although asceticism, not so much in evangelicals, but certainly legalism is found everywhere. So we're just going to jump in here with verse 16 at the top left hand of your page, which is page 924. And he is reaching a conclusion based upon what he has said earlier about being complete in Christ. And as a result of being complete in Christ, nothing lacking.

[5 : 22] Absolutely nothing lacking. In fact, it is nothing but insulting to the work of Christ to suggest that any mortal who has put their faith and trust in Christ can do something else to enhance that or improve that or add to that.

It besmirches the character of God and it demeans the finished work of Christ on the cross. And after all, the work of Christ on the cross was finished.

That simply means you don't add anything to that. But that doesn't keep people from wanting to do it because that's what appeals to the flesh. I remember talking to somebody about this who was boasting of the fact that they had been in church and had been in Sunday school for X number of years in succession without missing a Sunday.

Now, you know me well enough to know that I, along with every pastor, wants people in church and as often as they can be there. But at the same time, to get carried away and think that God is somehow going to smile his approval upon you because you've never missed a Sunday all these years.

And even when you went out of town, you got a bulletin from that church so you could bring it back to your church so that they could make sure that the score was kept and that the running was still valid.

[6 : 54] And the idea is, God should take notice of this. I'm being very loyal. I hope God appreciates it.

Isn't this worth something? I mean, that should score me some points. But to take that position is to, as I suggested, demeaning the work of Christ.

So, by way of conclusion, we've got a therefore to deal with in verse 16. Let no man therefore, or you might even lead with a therefore, because in the Greek, sometimes these words are moved around.

Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink or in respect of an holy day or the new moon or the Sabbath days.

Do you not appreciate how important those things were to the Jewish element in this constituency here at Colossae to whom Paul was writing? Now, it didn't register that much with Gentiles who had come out of paganism.

[7 : 55] But you've got to understand that in all of the churches that Paul wrote his epistles to, there was always an element of Jews present. Because, and these were believing Jews, at least for the most part, or they wouldn't have been there.

These were Jews and Gentiles in these early congregations. Jews who had embraced Jesus as the Messiah. Gentiles who formerly were pagans. And they came to faith in Christ.

And as a result, they are here in the same fellowship. So, you've got to keep in mind that when Paul writes his epistles, he does address some remarks that are obviously directed to the Jews and some to the Gentiles.

And when he talks about the holy day, the new moon, or the Sabbath days, of course, he's thinking of the Jewish element there. And he's saying, don't let anyone sit in judgment on you as regards those days.

Now, if you were a Jew, and if you were still operating under the Mosaic law, which was second nature to these people.

[9 : 01] And by the way, put yourself in this position if you can. Here you are a Jew, first century. You have been an observant Jew. You have submitted nothing but a kosher diet to your dinner table.

You keep the Sabbath strictly so that at sundown Friday you light that candle and you go into the Sabbath prayers and all the rest. And you abstain from pork and certain other foods, etc.

You have observed the new moons. You do the ritual sacrifices and all of a sudden you hear the gospel that Christ is God's Messiah.

You consider the evidence that is presented from the Old Testament because the new didn't even exist yet. You come to the conclusion that Christ is the Messiah and you embrace him as your Messiah and Savior.

Where does that put your position as regards the law and all of those rituals that you have religiously kept up to that point?

[10:04] If you think they just go right out the window and they're done with them, you're wrong. Because tradition dies very, very hard.

A slow, agonizing death. If it dies at all. So the natural thing for these people to do was to just keep right on doing what they had been doing. And many of them had no idea at this early concept that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Well, what about a kosher diet? You mean I don't have to? You mean what about circumcision? What about the Sabbath?

What about those things are all passe? They were in force in the minds of many. But when Christ said it is finished on the cross, he meant the great transaction that he came to fulfill is complete in his spiritual and in his physical death.

And these things have no longer any hold on you. Because the law of Moses was given as a temporary thing, as an interim thing.

[11:22] And it's passed away with the finished work of Christ. This was a tremendously difficult thing for these people to deal with. Because when you're born and reared in a family that just does these things automatically without even thinking about them.

And then all of a sudden have somebody dump on you and say, those things don't matter anymore. What do you mean they don't matter anymore? We've been doing this from time immemorial.

And one of the great accusations that was leveled against Paul was what? He is teaching against the law of Moses.

Well, he never did teach against it. But he taught regarding it, saying, the law of Moses represented the first covenant.

And Jeremiah 33 makes it very clear that that first covenant that was given through Moses was a temporary covenant. That there was a new covenant was to be made.

[12:22] And remember the night before Christ was betrayed? When he said to his disciples, this cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Wow. That was a tremendous time of transition. So you've got these diehards who are hanging on to it. Most of them, if not all of them, with complete innocence and sincerity.

And they just can't get their brain around the idea that the law of Moses is no more. Because most of the Jews thought in terms of the law of Moses as being eternal, perpetual.

And the reason they concluded that was, who gave it? God gave it. Well, God doesn't change. God's eternal. God's law is eternal. No, it isn't. Not the law that was given through Moses.

It was intended to be a stopgap measure. And let's get into the text here and we'll see that. Let no one judge you. Let no one sit in judgment on you as to eating or drinking.

[13:24] 20th century New Testament says, Do not then allow anyone to take you to task on questions of eating or drinking. This reminds me of, and we've probably all dealt with people like this.

Maybe some of us have even been people like this. Because it's characteristic of new Christians. I don't know of anybody who is more susceptible to legalism than new Christians.

Because they cannot escape the idea that now that I am in Christ, I have to change my life. I have to change my habits, etc.

And in reality, you do. Because if anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation. Old things have passed away. But the idea is, we tend to impose on ourselves then, in order to get our act together in this newfound Christian life.

We put regulations and charges and demands upon us that God doesn't put upon us. But we put upon ourselves. Or sometimes others will put them upon us.

[14:33] It is amazing how many people in evangelical churches are eager to be someone else's Holy Spirit. And they will tell you what constitutes spirituality, what is pleasing to the Lord, and what is not.

I remember years ago, there was a sad, sad case. A couple lived across the street from us. This was way back in the 60s when we lived out in Southgate.

And this couple lived across the street. And they had a little boy that our son Tim played with a lot. He was only like four or five years old at the time. And this couple had been around the block a few times.

And they were kind of rough, you know. And they would get out in their garage and argue and fight and cuss and carry on and yell and scream at each other back and forth and everything. And the neighbors would just kind of sometimes amuse by it and just kind of shake their head, you know. And, well, lo and behold, a couple of hounds that's down from us lived another preacher. And he was a Nazarene pastor.

[15:41] And he was a good friend. And our kids played with them, too. And we visited back and forth. And we were miles apart doctrinally. But we were both believers and good neighbors, et cetera. Well, this lady, this young mother that I was telling you about, came to know Christ.

And so did her husband. And it was the Nazarene preacher who was instrumental in leading them to the Lord. I was working with the radio station at the time. This was before grace even started. And he led them to Christ. And they were just overjoyed as new believers. And he said, well, I'd like you to come to church with me.

And she said, oh, we'd love to come to church. You know, they had a newfound interest now. And they had never darkened a church door before. But they were going to church. And this little gal and her husband showed up at this pastor's church.

And she hadn't been there. Here she was, first time visitor. Hadn't been there 10 or 15 minutes. But what some little bitty Christian lady came up to her and started laying her out because she had come, she had had the nerve to come to church wearing a sleeveless blouse.

[17:07] And she just told her in no uncertain terms how displeasing that was to the Lord and all the rest of it. And this poor lady who hadn't been a believer probably 10 days just had a meltdown.

She didn't know what this was, what she was into, what was going on. And here is a perfect example. And you know something? The lady who laid her out and talked to her like that, I'm sure that she probably thought she was doing her a favor.

Straightening her out. Telling her what was well-pleasing to the Lord and what wasn't. But it had such a negative, devastating effect upon this new Christian. They never went back.

Never went back. Now that is a case of legalism. Where you're going to impose your standards on someone else. And what we are communicating to them is if you really want to be spiritual, you really want to be acceptable to God, this is what you have to do.

And they base those rules and regulations on theirs. And their interpretation of these things. And it's devastating. Legalism is a curse on Christianity.

[18:21] And asceticism is too. This is one of the things that eventually, and I haven't done it in these first eight sessions on Christianity Clarified, but trust me, I'm going to get there. Because there is so much of Christianity that is misrepresented, that gives people wrong impressions, negative impressions as to what it means to be a Christian.

And that's how I came to the title, by the way, Christianity Clarified. And eventually we're going to be dealing with these things. So, don't let anybody sit in judgment on you in regard to any of these things.

And verse 17, he explains the nature of them. All of these things, the holy days, the new moon, the Sabbath days, were they wrong?

No, they weren't wrong. They were God-given. But they were God-given to a specific people for a specific time. And they all were precursors to something that was coming.

And that's what he's going to explain. He says all of those things are a shadow of things to come. They were not the substance. They spoke of the substance that was to come.

[19:40] They were all well and good for their time. But God never intended them for the long haul. He intended them for a time of temporanity.

And being a shadow of things to come, look at some of the other translations. Nox says all these were but shadows cast by future events.

Philip says all these things have at most only a symbolical value. These things are only the shadow of what was to come or a shadow of something that was to follow.

What were they pre-shadowing? What were they typing? The verse goes on and says, the body is of Christ. The substance is of Christ.

And Paul's message is, don't get hung up on the shadow. Embrace the reality. The reality is Christ. And the best illustration that I can use of this is you can put your wife's silhouette or your husband's silhouette on a screen.

[20 : 50] And you can see the shadow of the person. You get any real satisfaction out of kissing the shadow? No.

You want to kiss the substance. You want to kiss what the shadow represents. What these people were willing to settle for was kissing the shadow.

They were in love with the shadow, the rituals, the rules, the diet, and all the rest of it. And Paul is saying, hey, you've got to get behind that. And by the way, this is the message of Hebrews.

Let us go on, not laying again a foundation of dead works and cleansings or baptisms, etc. Let us go on into the full stature of Christ.

That's the message here. And the tendency is to get hung up in do-goodism and do this and don't do that. And by the way, legalism has a superabundance of negativity connected with it.

[21 : 57] Don't do this, don't do that, don't do the other thing. All these things you don't do because you are a Christian. So all of these things are a shadow of things to come.

But the body or the substance or the reality, the solid fact is Christ. And Norley translates it, the one foreshadowed is Christ. So why in the world would you confine yourself and be content with all of these things that speak of that which is to come when you can really embrace that which is to come?

So verse 18, let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshiping of angels. Now, this is a curious phrase.

I don't know of anybody who's ever been into worshiping angels, but it was a rather common thing back in this day. And one of the reasons they believed this was because some were of the opinion that God is such a high, exalted, elevated being that there is no way that any mere mortal would dare approach God directly.

You can't do that. You need an intermediary. And the angels served as intermediaries. So they engaged in the worship of angels and in prayers to angels.

[23 : 27] And really, this isn't terribly far removed from prayers to the saints. It's the same concept, the same principle. And the idea is that they will be intermediaries for you.

But as Paul makes it very, very clear when he writes to Timothy, I think it's 2.5. There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

And these who were engaged in the worship of angels as an intermediary, he goes on with other translations.

And look at Moffat's translation. Let no one lay down rules for you as he pleases with regard to fasting and any cult of angels.

Stop letting anyone in gratuitous humility and worship of angels defraud you as an umpire. This defrauding means that these people are cheating you.

[24 : 28] They are cheating you out of what is really available to you by substituting all of these phony things that don't amount to anything. And they're actually depriving you.

Knox says you must not allow anyone to cheat you by insisting on a false humility which addresses its worship to angels. This is kind of a difficult phrase to get our heads around because it's talking about concepts that we're not all that familiar with.

But look at some of the other translations. It's talking about this person's imagination and ideas. 20th century New Testament.

That's TCNT says. Such a man busies himself with his visions. That is, his personal visions or his personal ideas or personal imaginations.

And without reason is rendered conceited by his merely human intellect. In fact, someone has said, I think, I remember reading this anecdote by Spurgeon.

[25 : 49] And he said, a young student said to him in a Q&A; that Spurgeon was holding. This young preacher rose his hand and he said, Mr. Spurgeon, wouldn't you agree that we do not need the writings or the commentaries of any men?

That all we need is the Spirit of God to reveal to us what we need to know and that we ought to do away with all of these human written books. And Spurgeon said, isn't it amazing how little some think of what God reveals to others and how much they think of what he reveals to them?

That's a false kind of humility. And I've seen that. And I've even talked to some preachers about, oh, I don't have any commentaries. I just go straight to the Word and the Lord reveals to me what.

Well, that's disregarding what he may have revealed to somebody else. And I tell you, I've got a lot of shelf space devoted to commentaries.

And there's a lot of things in them that I don't agree with because in my limited understanding, I can't see how some of them square with the Word. But in many instances, I do. And I benefit greatly from them.

[27 : 15] And it's a sad thing when we discount what anybody else has to say or what God has revealed to them. But we place a premium upon what he's revealed to us as though we are a direct line.

Other translations here really bring this out. Look at Phillips down a little lower. Such a man, inflated by an unspiritual imagination, is pushing his way into matters he knows nothing about.

That is, claims of insight. And you know something? You can take an individual who has some really bizarre ideas. I mean, stuff that is just off the wall.

Really way out. But, I don't care how bizarre it is. If he has a pleasing enough personality, and if he is charismatic, he can convince people of almost anything.

And this is the very basis of cults. All you have to have is a flashy presentation, some pizzazz, personality, vim, vigor, and vitality, and be convincing and forceful.

[28 : 33] And the next thing you know, people will think, this guy really knows what he's talking about. And he may be miles away. And you know something? This is a threat for every preacher.

It really is. The tendency to get caught up in our own vision, our own imagination, and then present it as, thus saith the Lord.

And that's why we ought to be very tentative about some of these things. Where scripture speaks clearly, we can speak clearly. But where scripture does not, and we think we've got a handle on something, we think we've got an idea, the least we can do is warn the audience.

And sometimes I say, okay, now this is a Wiseman opinion, and that should send up a red flag. Because this may be right on, and it may be right off.

And the Lord may be saying, that a boy, Marv, give it to him. That's the truth. On the other hand, the Lord may be saying, where in the world did you get that? You didn't get it from me. So, this means the audience has to have some degree of discernment themselves.

[29 : 42] Don't fall for everything that comes down the pike. Be a Berean. And when Paul preached Christ from the Old Testament, the people in the church there at Berea searched the scriptures to see whether those things spoken by Paul were true or not.

And every audience has that obligation. Because people get on concepts and ideas, and then it'd be okay if they said, you know, this is speculation.

I'm not sure about this, but this is the way it appears to me. What do you think about it? Hey, that's fine. That's healthy. That opens it up, and everybody's saying, he's not saying he's got chapter and verse for this.

He's just trying to see if it fits. But sometimes, who wants to hear that? Who wants to hear anybody preach speculations? Who wants to hear anybody preach something that they're not sure about? That doesn't turn me on. But what does turn me on is when something comes across as truth, and you've got chapter and verse to back it up. But sometimes, they don't have chapter and verse to back it up.

[30 : 49] They just have a smooth, slick presentation. They are salesmen through and through, and they convince people. It's a tragic thing, but it goes on.

So, they are puffed up by his fleshly mind and not holding the head. And this conveys the idea, again, of completeness. Christ provides all that the body needs in his own person.

When he says, not holding the head, he's talking about Christ. And he means that these who are preaching all of these add-ons, all of these do not, do not, do not, they are completely negating the person of Christ.

They are not elevating Christ. Philip says, and in his cleverness for getting the head. And, of course, who is the head? That is Christ himself. From which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment, ministered and knit together.

So, who's the head? Christ. Who is the body? Believers. Christians. Those who are in Christ. And, he's using a physical analogy here that everyone was familiar with, because we know what a human head is.

[32 : 11] Well, Christ is a spiritual head. We know what a human body is. Christ, or the body of Christ, is the spiritual body. And, here he's talking about joints and bands, or ligaments, if you will.

This is everything that the body needs for functioning. If you're going to walk, you need joints, and you need ligaments. This means that Christ, as the head, is the one who provides everything that is needed in order for his spiritual body to function.

And, he's using a physical analogy with the human body. And, you know, what all of this is actually pointing to is the concept of positional truth, which is so very, very important.

And, I am amazed how few Christians understand positional truth. Paul uses the phrase repeatedly, in Christ, in Christ, in Christ, in him, in him, in Christ, all through his epistles.

And, what he is doing, is identifying the believer's status, or position. It is in Christ. And, when you are in Christ, everything that is his, is yours.

[33 : 32] You are a joint heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. And, he's talking about, when you become a believer, at that point in time, you are baptized by the Spirit of God, into the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12, 13. And, you are placed in union with Christ, so that his crucifixion, is your crucifixion.

His death is your death. His resurrection is your resurrection. His being enthroned at the right hand of God, is your being enthroned. His being glorified, is your being glorified.

This is our official status. This is our, this is the position, that God views us as being in, at the moment you trust Christ. As far as we're concerned, we haven't gone anywhere.

We're not seated, in the heavenlies with Christ. We're seated here at this table, in Perkins Pancake Place. But, that's our practice. That's not our position.

[34 : 35] Our position is that, which is determined by him. from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment, ministers, and knit together, increases, with the knowledge, or with the increase of God.

Wherefore, if you be dead with Christ, and this is a first class condition in the Greek, and it presupposes a condition, that has already occurred, and some translations, would render it since. In fact, the 20th century New Testament, does render it since. It is, if you be dead with Christ, and you are. There is no maybe.

Maybe you are, and maybe you aren't. If you are a believer, you are dead with Christ. If that's the case, you are dead with Christ, if that's your position, from the rudiments of the world, and this is being translated out of the world, and the sphere of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear son, this is being in Christ.

Why, as though living in the world, are you subject to ordinances? Well now, why do you suppose Paul is chewing them out for doing it?

[35 : 54] Because this is what he's heard. This is the truth that messengers have brought to Paul, as to what these people are doing. And he writes this letter to the Colossians, as a corrective.

And he's saying, hey, where do you get off with this? You are complete in Christ, are you not? Then why are you behaving and acting as if you aren't? Why is it that you've come up with all of these add-ons?

Why have you allowed others to impose demands upon you, that God has not demanded? Why, as though living in the world, are you subject to ordinances, rules and regulations, decrees, etc.?

New English Bible says then, why behave as though you are still living the life of the world? Why let people dictate to you? Such things as, touch not, taste not, handle not.

good grief. Now this is dealing with probably, probably sex, the touch not. I think this relates to what Paul is saying, in 1 Corinthians 7, when he says, it is good, that a man not touch a woman.

[37 : 15] And then he goes on to explain the principle of burning with passion and desire, etc. And he says, you know what the remedy for that is? Get married. Get married.

And here, he's saying, touch not, taste not, this is the food prohibition, from the diet, etc. and handle not. Someone has said, you have to, you have to touch it before you eat it.

I don't know if that's the connection or not, but when, when Satan confronted Eve, she said, God has said that the fruit is in the middle of the garden, neither shall you eat it, neither shall you touch it.

And some put such strict restrictions upon people that they would not allow them to even handle anything, or they would condemn that. and, and Paul's logic is, all of these things are going to perish with the using.

They are after the commandments and doctrines of men. These prohibitions are humanly imposed. These are not things that God has placed upon you.

[38 : 21] And these things have indeed, these things have indeed a show of wisdom.

an outward appearance of wisdom that has no reality to it. It is a self-imposed discipline. Such practices pass for wisdom with their self-imposed devotions.

These are the kind of things that are done to impress people. And they're usually done in public. Remember, in the gospels, our Lord said, the Pharisees, they love to stand on the street corner, and offer their long prayers.

And it is all done as a show, as a pretense. And people are supposed to walk by and admire them. Because they'll say, why, why, he is such a holy man.

He was standing there on the street corner, praying to God, before, when I was on my way to market. And that was an hour and a half ago. And I come back, and you know what?

[39 : 27] He's still there. What a godly man. I wish I could be like that. All of that is done as will worship. It is all done ostentatiously to impress people.

And Christ condemned that kind of behavior. In fact, he said, and if you really want to mean business with God, you go into a prayer closet, or go into a small confined area, where you are by yourself, and you can just pray for hours, and hours, and hours.

And God would be pleased with that. But he won't be pleased for your prayers, that you do just for a show. And humility, and neglecting of the body, not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh.

All of these things that people do, they do out of a sense of self-discipline. It may be even a self-flagellation, like these people engage in the beating of their bodies, disfiguring themselves, all with the guise of pleasing God, or sacrificing themselves to God.

This is asceticism. It's asceticism, is where somebody goes off to a solitary life, and they eat the meagerest of simple food.

[40 : 49] They engage in none of the niceties or provisions of the world, no luxuries or anything. They just barely eke out a living. And the idea is, they are giving themselves to spiritual contemplation.

Well, I'm certainly not opposed to that. There is great value in a person getting alone in a quiet time, reflecting on the person of God, studying the scriptures.

All those things are well and good. But if you are going to try and achieve spirituality by depriving yourself of things, all that does is appeal to the flesh.

Because the biblical concept of self-denial, and here's a big, important difference, folks. The biblical concept of self-denial does not consist in denying things to yourself.

It consists in denying the person of self. There's a huge difference. A man may be a millionaire and practice legitimate self-denial, and yet he's got all the goodies and all of the things that the world has to offer, and he can still engage in self-denial.

[42 : 12] Because self-denial means you deny the person of self. It isn't denying things to yourself. That would be an easy way out. Denying the person of self is what Paul was talking about when he wrote to the Philippians and said, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ.

And then he went on to talk about the sacrifices that Christ made in denying himself. When we deny ourself, it means we prefer others ahead of ourself.

That's self-denial. It doesn't mean, well, I'm going to practice self-denial. I'm not going to buy a new car. Well, big deal. Big deal. That has nothing to do with one's spirituality.

But denying self is a whole different thing. Not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh. Hey, we're going to make it. I wanted to finish this chapter and still have a little time for Q&A.;

So let's go over to the next page. But they are of no value. All of these things that we would trump up that's designed to make us more spiritual, all they do is simply pamper the flesh.

[43 : 24] Because in doing those things, in doing those things, we get the feeling that credit is accruing to us. And that makes the flesh feel good.

You know, we are dealing today with numerous aspects of religion. And one of the things that we are contending with is radical Islam nationwide.

But there is something to be said in the same vein of just Islam in general. And that is any faith or any religion that requires certain things of their adherence allows those adherents to have a measure of satisfaction and pleasure and accomplishment when they do those things.

That can have enormous appeal. I've often said grace has incredibly difficult competitors.

because in the expression of grace and salvation by grace and security by grace and all the rest, there is not one shred of credit that can accrue to the individual.

[44 : 49] You have no bragging rights at all. None. None. But if you're going to embrace Islam or virtually any other faith, there are certain demands that they make upon their adherence in order for you to be a member of them in good standing.

And when you've done those things, there is a I'm in. I've completed it. I've done it. I've made all those requirements.

And with Islam, it's the five pillars of Islam. The shahadah and the fasting and all the rest of it. There are five of them all together. Praying five times a day.

And when a Muslim has done those things, he still doesn't know where he really stands with Allah. But he knows he at least has a shot. He's been obedient in all of those things.

And you know, every faith, every single faith, every religion, small and large, has certain hoops through which adherence must jump in order to be in good standing.

[45 : 57] and biblical Christianity comes along. Grace alone. That's a tough sell.

You mean I don't have to do anything? That's too easy. That's too easy. Well, anybody could do that. You know, anybody could believe. But that's what's required.

It is by grace through faith that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works. Why not? Lest anyone should boast. So, if you're in any faith or any religion and you've met the requirements and jumped through the hoops, you're entitled to bragging rights.

You can say, I did this, I did that, they required those and those, and I did it. And what's more, I even did it again. You know, so that's worth twice the number of points. And this is the way people think because man is locked in to operating on the merit system.

And that's what appeals to the flesh. And the flesh, of course, is the real enemy here. And that's what Paul is combating. He's saying, all of this do-goodism has a destructive impact upon what Christianity is really all about.

[47 : 11] And he's writing to correct this. Now, does that mean, does that mean that there are no requirements for believers? Does that mean that there are no things that we need to do in order to be well-pleasing to God?

Not at all. In fact, he's going to deal with that in this next chapter, in chapter 3, and in chapter 4, he's going to tell us exactly what it is that God does require.

But none of it has anything to do with achieving positional truth, which is by grace through faith. However, once we are believers, once we are in Christ, then there are things that we need to give attention to in order to be well-pleasing to him.

Now we have a new will, a new mind, a new goal, new desires, new everything, and he's going to go on and tell the Colossians how to implement that in chapters 3 and 4. So, we've got a few minutes and you probably have some questions, comments.

Anybody? Anybody? Anybody? Anybody? Anybody? Anybody? Anybody? Anybody? Anybody? Anybody? Anybody? Anybody? Anybody? Anybody? Anybody?

[48 : 23] Anybody? Anybody? Anybody? Yes, I think of an example of Mother Teresa self-sacrificing and everything and how people just worship her almost for her being so godly and that Christopher Hitchens wrote a real scathing article about her and felt that she was keeping people suppressed instead of helping lift them out of the poverty.

Yeah. But, you know, your example of Mother Teresa is well taken. This is a woman with whom the world was virtually in love and just admired all over.

And I do not deny for one moment that she obviously was a very unselfish lady, a very giving lady. She obviously had great compassion especially for the poor and India, etc.

But I remember reading from her own words how she lamented the fact that she had no peace and no security and she did not know where she stood with God.

And you know, people like that, all they can say is, I hope I've done enough. I hope I've been good enough. I hope I've given enough. where is the stability in that?

[49 : 41] There isn't any. Where is the security? There is no security there. And although it is hard for some Christians to believe, I'm absolutely convinced that one of the principal things God wants you to do with the salvation that he has provided for you through Christ is to enjoy it.

Enjoy the peace, the stability, the assurance that comes from it. But so many Christians, don't enjoy it. They endure it. And let me tell you, that's not a very good advertisement for the gospel.

Well, you can be a Christian if you do this, if you do that, if you jump through all these hoops. And all of that, of course, adds to or negates the work that Christ accomplished on that cross.

This is why we have to keep coming back and with Paul say, listen, I determined to know nothing among you. save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

The power, the gospel is the power of God through faith unto salvation. And it is by grace through faith plus nothing.

[50 : 55] and that's difficult for people to understand because we want to do something. I've often said, if you tell a person, you can be sure of heaven if you push a peanut with your nose from here to Zinia, Ohio, there are people who would be out there on the street ready to go.

But when you say, it's done, it's finished, all God wants you to do is believe him, trust him, and what Christ did for you, well, that's too easy.

That's too simple. That's too, but that's exactly what our gospel is. Paul said, I do not frustrate. I do not frustrate the grace of God for if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

We don't need that substitutionary death. All we need to do is obey the law and be good. then he talks about that in Romans 8 and he says, for what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did in the person of his son.

Amazing. Amazing grace. Other comments or questions? Anyone? Okay, I'm going to let you go five minutes early if you promise not to tell anyone.

[52 : 22] thank you for being here today. Have a great day. What's left of it? And as far as I know, we'll be back here for the second Tuesday, can you believe?

I don't know if I can say this or not, but it will be September. Okay, thank you all.