

Self-Reliance vs. Trusting Jesus

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[0:00] So that singing this morning was great. Back when I was in high school, I shared with you, my brother and I started a Bible study! In our home, that really grew. The Lord really blessed it. But one of the things I haven't told you! Is that for whatever reason, we drew a lot of kids from the local choirs in Colorado Springs.

And when we go to camp and sing those songs, there are harmony parts and rounds that when you got people who can, and you guys can sing, don't get me wrong. I'm not implying that. But those kids would really get into it. And it was powerful. God works through our singing. We're actually going to talk about that in a few weeks in Colossians chapter 3. But God works powerfully on our emotions and the way we view Him and His Word through song. And so to have those things and to sing with our whole heart unto the Lord, that's important. And you all do it very, very well. I love listening, like Pete said. I love listening to you sing because it blesses me and it's uplifting to hear people who sing loud and sing with confidence. So I've started this habit, if you will, of opening each week's sermon encouraging you to position your heart and your mind so you're ready to receive what God has for you today. And so we're going to continue on that. A month or so ago, we talked about being faster learners. Then I introduced three questions to you. I have to remember to point there and not there.

How can I use this? Because God's Word has a purpose. I'm not here just to educate you so you can win Bible trivia. If you're paying attention, you'll probably score pretty well. But we're not about Bible trivia. And then we talked about why must I use this? Why does this matter to me? That's a major question that people ask about the Bible, people who are skeptics. Oh, you know, that's a 2,000-year-old document. What does that have to say? That's not relevant. Well, as you think through, why does this matter to me? A couple things will happen. Number one, you'll be motivated to actually put it into practice because you'll see its relevance. But when somebody asks you, oh, come on, you really believe in that dusty old book? There's way more current stuff over at Barnes & Noble or Books a Million.

And you can say, no, no, this matters. And actually, if you read that stuff at Books a Million, that entire bookstore is contained in these pages. And so you'll learn why is it relevant. And then our question for this week is a mystery. So I will go back one. Younger me sometimes has problems with technology. When will I use this? Do you remember when we talked about being faster learners? That acronym, the E, stood for enter it into your calendar. Set a time. I was talking to somebody this week, and we've been talking about a number of issues over several months, actually. And I said, you know what? I just want you to do one thing. I want you to make an appointment with God that you will keep, period. Bar none. I said, you're on time for work every day. That's never an issue.

You're punctual. Well, if you can be punctual for work, certainly you can be punctual for an appointment with God. And so that's part of it. When will I use this? But it's actually, when will I actually put into practice the principles that we're going to talk about this morning?

[3:27] And think about, when is this relevant? Is it tomorrow at work? Is it in a conversation with family? Is it as you talk to the checker at Hy-Vee or Aldi? When will I use this? And what's implicit in that question is, do it. Put it into practice and watch and see what God will do and see how He'll act in your behalf. Now, the other thing that I introduced last week was the idea of Selah.

Selah. Remember we talked about that? You see that word in the Psalms? And theologians believe that that means to pause. Well, I put that at the beginning, and we took some time to pause at the beginning of the sermon. And I realized when it's in Psalms, it's always at the end of whatever the author of that particular Psalms wants you to think about. So there'll be a paragraph or a stanza of a psalm. And then in the margin, you'll see Selah. Stop. Think. It's an intentional pause to allow it to

soak in. And so we're going to do that at the end. Because what we're going to talk about today is pretty heavy stuff. Not heavy as in, ugh, this is a burden. Heavy as in, these are concepts that are hard to get our minds around. Our relationship with Christ and how that impacts our day-to-day life is a challenge to understand. And so we're going to pause and reflect on that at the end of our sermon today. So let me open us with prayer. We're going to read the passage in Colossians chapter 2, and then we'll get on with our teaching. So let's pray together.

Lord Jesus, if anything has stood out to me this week as I've been preparing this message and reading through Colossians again, is that you are the center. God, we have everything in Christ, everything we need, everything that's required of us, everything that's required of a man or woman before God is satisfied in Jesus Christ. We need to learn to walk in that, that we're justified by faith, that we have your favor, we are your children. Everything we have has been given to us as a gift because of Jesus' death on the cross for us. God, we say the words, but we don't think about what it means. And I pray, Lord, as we start to have that conversation today and going into next week, that your Spirit would help us to understand how we work these things out. God, I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So we're going to go to Colossians chapter 2, starting at verse 16.

Therefore, no one...I'll give you a second to get there. I tend to race ahead. I apologize for that. Colossians chapter 2, verse 16.

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. I want you to remember that phrase, the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the 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, that's us, grows with a growth which is from God. Key concept.

[7:12] Jesus is the substance. Our growth comes from God. If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you are living in the world, do you submit yourselves to decrees 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 self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, you need to get this next phrase. This is really, really important because we tend to live as duty-bound servants of God. 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.

I'm going to read it again. But are of no value against fleshly indulgence. In other words, you can't rule yourself, you can't make new rules to fence yourself in and fix your behavior. You can't. You can't. So stop.

Stop trying. We're going to come back to that because that's really the core of what Paul is teaching. And the reason it's the core of what Paul is teaching is because it's at the core of the Colossian heresy. Now remember, we're going to spend some time looking back this morning. You remember that Paul was writing the book to address this Gnostic heresy that was growing up in Asia. It was still in its early forms. It doesn't come to full fruit probably until into the first, even in the second century, but the roots are already there and it's starting to percolate up. It's starting to bubble up. You know, it's a natural thing for these types of things to happen. I want to pause for a second and think about why are we so captivated by false teaching?

Why does false teaching get our attention? When we've got the Word of God, it's pretty clear what it says that we have in Christ. Why is false teaching so attractive? I'll tell you why. It's pretty simple, I think. And I think you'll agree with me.

[9:38] Life is hard. You may have heard me say that a time or two. There's a lot in our lives that just doesn't make sense. We can't figure out the reason for it. We don't know why things happen the way that they do. Most often when we talk like this, we think about bad things. Tragedy, heartache, bad things happening to good people. One of the biggest bestsellers of the 20th century addressed that topic. Why do bad things happen to good people?

And we're mystified. God, why? Oh, I guess we have to figure it out. Now, you've heard me multiple times talk about wrestling with God. But instead of wrestling with God, going to Him with these questions, we step back from Him and say, I'm going to figure this out myself.

I'm going to figure it out. And inevitably, we fall short of what God is offering to us. We miss out on what's on offer from Him. And we create a whole new system of beliefs that's just a resurrection of old rules that just don't work. Solomon said in Ecclesiastes, there's nothing new under the sun. And every time we make up a new rule book, oh, I got it figured out this time. This is what it's going to take for me to have a life in Christ, to answer the big questions. Oh, no.

It's been done before. You think you're original. You're not. These systems of rules just don't work. But that's what was happening in Colossae. In the city of Colossae, they're trying to figure out an explanation, a unified field principle, if you will, that explains everything. They didn't want to turn to the Word of God. Now, you might say, well, they didn't have the New Testament yet.

The answers are in the Old Testament. They're there. But they didn't want to go there. They wanted to make up their own rules because they feel more controlled. And so this Colossian heresy arose. In more modern times, we've talked about the false teaching that's very prevalent in the church of therapeutic moralistic deism. You just sound smarter when you say that. Don't I sound smarter?

Therapeutic moralistic deism. Basically, what that view is that this book exists to make you be nice, to feel better about yourself, and to just kind of go along to get along. That's the therapeutic part. The moralistic part is that God wants you to be nice. Just be nice to people.

[12:08] Don't make waves. Don't cause controversy. Just be nice. And then deism is the worst part. Deism is the belief that God created the universe, kind of set things in motion, and then just stands back and lets us do what we want. And there's all kinds of problems with that view. First of all, it assumes that we're capable of taking the wheel. We are most certainly not. That'd be like me letting Jonah, my grandson, who is five, drive my car. I let him drive from the end of the street to the front of our house, and it required constant correction because we were going like this because he'd see something over there, over there. We're not qualified to take the wheel. But deism says we are. But when things start to go off the rails, deism also teaches that God comes in and intervenes, but only to the degree that we're comfortable with. He doesn't really have a say in correcting our behavior because we're nice people. We don't really need that, and that's not what the Bible teaches. That's a heresy, and it's all over the church. I believe that therapeutic moralistic deism, that worldview that infiltrated the church in the 90s, is the reason that from 2000 to 2015, the Christian church,

Catholic and Protestant, saw the greatest flight of people, the departure of people who attended church in church history. I think I've shared the statistic with you that more people left the church in the West than came into the church in both great enlightenments in American history combined. I don't think those people were believers. I don't think they actually knew Jesus that we're going to be talking about. They embraced a false doctrine that made them feel better, but it doesn't measure up to the actual stresses of life. It's not enough. Now there's a new one that just popped on my radar.

I want you to be aware of it. The most prolific theologian writer today is a man named N.T. Wright, and he is reframing the New Testament. I'm not going to go into the details, but the key piece that he's thrown out is that Paul really wasn't that concerned with justification by faith.

If we don't have justification by faith, brothers and sisters, we're going to hell. Let me re-explain what that is. Justification is a legal term. When a sentence is satisfied for a criminal, and make no mistake, this is a criminal. This is someone who deserves the penalty.

[14:43] When the penalty is satisfied, the judge bangs his gavel and says, you, Mr. and Ms. Criminal, are clean. The debt's been paid. You can go. It's forgotten. It's gone. It's a legal term.

Now we receive that by faith in Jesus Christ's work for us on the cross. We cannot have what we have in Christ without that, because we can't do it.

Our works are not enough. We simply can't satisfy, we can't pay the debt that we owe, because we've sinned against a holy God. And so if we throw away justification by faith, you might as well throw away the entire Bible. It's like a sweater with a loose thread. You start pulling on that thing, and pretty soon you're naked. We cannot allow that. We need to be aware of the truth. Justification by faith is the gift that the God who loves you demonstrated it by sending His Son to become a man, actually to become a baby and to grow up and to live a life that we should be living. He showed us what a perfect man would look like. And then He died on the cross.

Not for anything He did. He was clean. He died on the cross because you deserve to die on a cross. I deserve to die on a cross. The debt had to be paid. Justice was served, but not on you or I.

Justice was served on Jesus. The theological term is substitutionary atonement. What's that mean? Jesus took what I deserved. And He gave me what I did not deserve.

[16:45] I heard a one, or I saw, this is a tremendously powerful, there was an actor back in the 80s, that he would do a one-man show. And he would portray biblical characters. And usually they were obscure biblical characters. The one that I'm going to tell you about, I used to use with youth groups. And I would cry every time I showed it. I'm going to cry telling you about it. The character that this man portrayed was Barabbas. Now, if you remember, Barabbas is the one that was set free by Pilate so that Jesus would go to the cross.

So, in the scene, Barabbas is giving an interview about 15 years after Jesus' death. And he's talking about his new life. He's got a family. He's settled down. He's got a business that's very profitable. He's doing well. And what it's rooted in is that after he was set free, now this is fictional, just so we're clear. After he was set free, he decided to go back back to see the sucker that took his place. And as he followed that sucker carrying a cross through Jerusalem to Golgotha, watched him be crucified, he realized, that's no sucker that took my place.

That's my Savior. N.T. Wright is throwing that away. And what I hope you see this morning is what we have in Christ depends upon Jesus' work on the cross on our behalf that we are declared righteous.

We're clean. We don't have to earn righteousness. We don't have to earn God's favor. We already have it. But we have got to get that into our heads. We've got to get a hold of it. Because it answers the questions that often lead us to false doctrine. This is the defense. And the root of Paul's defense is Jesus. I grew up in an era in church history, modern church history, where apologetics was everything. Josh McDowell was going around the country on the More Than a Carpenter tour. They had debates all the time. It was like Charlie Kirk on steroids. Because it was, there was, Josh McDowell had a little book called More Than a Carpenter. Or if you were serious, you could buy his notes called Evidence of Demand a Verdict that was a thousand pages of an outline of all the things this man had studied to learn about who Jesus was. He was actually doing a study to prove the falsehood of Christianity. And because God has a tremendous sense of humor, Josh McDowell got saved and became the leading defender in the 70s, 80s, and 90s. You know, our temptation is to think that's how we address people's objections and their misunderstanding about God is we need to give them facts. We need to give them a thousand pages of proof about our faith. Paul does it in four chapters. Actually, half a dozen verses. It's Jesus. And I want to show you how it's Jesus. Are you with me? So be focused, be thinking, because we're going to be walking through some stuff here that's kind of hard to wrap ourselves around.

[20:29] So Jesus is the center of Paul's argument. He's refuting Gnosticism. We've already established that. And he's showing us how to live the Christian life, what it actually means. It's not rules. As we established from Colossians 2.23, it's not about rules. So what is it? Well, I'll tell you in just a few minutes and into next week. So I want to take a moment. Now, we've covered this ground already. I want to cover it again. And we're going to cover it again and again, because this is the core of Paul's argument. Jesus is the center. Now, where he starts is he recognizes that the Colossians are who they are because of their faith in Christ. You remember I told you that the Apostle Paul and his traveling companions landed in Ephesus, had great reception in Ephesus, were there for several years, and the gospel spread from Ephesus throughout Asia. And one of the people who got saved, followed Jesus, learned from Paul, was Epaphras. And Epaphras went directly to the west, no, to the east, to Colossae, because he was from there, and he planted a church in Colossae. And Paul is writing to the people who are the fruit of Epaphras' labor. And Paul recognizes you have put your faith in Jesus Christ.

Dallas Willard uses the word confidence. I love that. Faith is confidence. We have confidence in God through Jesus Christ. So then we talked about in verse 9, Paul's prayer for the Colossian church, that they would be filled with the knowledge of the will of God with all wisdom and spiritual understanding. And we use the analogy of a sailboat. Remember those images?

And we learned the term trimming our sails, where we align the sails, we configure the boat to catch the wind? Because the wind doesn't move for us. We have to shape our lives around the will of God, which is, in that metaphor, is the wind. And what do we gain? When we trim our sails to follow Jesus, what do we gain? Martha, can you move me back to the slides right after? Oh, wait. Are you with me?

There we go. Trim your sails. I knew it was in there. First of all, these are the benefits of having our sails trimmed to follow God. We walk worthy of the calling. It doesn't say walk worthy of the calling that you've received in order to be. It says when you are filled with the knowledge of God's will, you will walk worthy of His calling. You will be pleasing to God. It's not about keeping a list of rules. You will have a fruitful life. I just read an article this week on Substack. For those of you who aren't tech savvy, that's a collection of news articles online about these three different philosophers with totally different backgrounds reaching the same conclusions about what is important in life. And you know what's at the top of the list for all three of these guys things was meaning, that we see that our life has value and importance and significance.

[23 : 56] That's what Paul is talking about here. When we're following, when we're filled with the knowledge of the will of God, fruit inevitably follows. We don't have to go, oh, I'm going to make fruit.

When we're living the way we should, fruit follows. This is cool. We have deeper intimacy with God. We have deeper intimacy with God. As our sails are trimmed, we're filled with the knowledge of His will, pressed forward by Him, He provides the direction and the energy. We get to know Him better. And I tell you, I am a biography junkie, especially of missionaries. And to hear these men and women and their experience of God from the time I was 15 years old, to God, I just want that type of a relationship with you. Here's the answer. Be filled with the knowledge of His will.

Now, this is a big one. We're strengthened for endurance and patience in the hardships of life. Life is hard. We're going to face challenges. Nobody is surprised by that statement.

We know it. I mean, little Jesse that was here entertaining you while I was trying to give the announcements this morning, he's already figured it out and he's only two and a half. Things don't go the way you want them to go. But when we are filled with the knowledge of the will of God, Jesus is at the center, we receive patience and endurance to get through and to be thankful, to be joyful in the midst of those things.

[25 : 43] And there's more. You'll be qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints. That would be like me coming up here and saying, guess what?

I just got off the phone with Elon Musk and he loves you guys and he's going to take that trillion dollars and everybody gets an equal share of that trillion bucks. You'd be pretty stoked because one one hundredth of a trillion dollars is more money than you could spend in your entire lifetime. You're welcome. Me and Elon go way back. Because of Jesus, you get so much more than that. Elon's a pauper in the waiting room of heaven compared to us who are in Christ.

You have been made worthy to receive that inheritance because of what Jesus did for you. Jesus is the center. Do you see how being filled with the knowledge of the will of God, centered in Jesus, addresses the problems that we try to solve with false teaching?

It's centered in Jesus Christ himself. Now, if you think back a few weeks, I'll remind you or tell you if you weren't here, the next sermon that we did in Colossians 1, we talked about the idea of mountains.

[27 : 01] That when you're climbing in the mountains, there's the foothills and then there's gradual steps up, sometimes false summits, and then there's a very summit. And the summit in Paul's writing in Colossians 1 is Jesus himself.

It's like standing at the top of Mount Everest and everything is below you. You see glory. You see wonder. Jesus is the summit. Let's talk about that. Let's talk about that.

I thought I made a slideshow of this one. Oh, look, it's right there. Martha, you're the best. Thank you. Teamwork makes the dream work.

Just saying. So Jesus is the summit. He's our redeemer. I love that title for Jesus. We all know the verse, Romans 8, 28, all things work together for those who love God and who are called according to his purpose.

Not all things are good. We know not all things are good. But all things work together for good by God's design, by God's work, for those who love God and who are called according to his purpose.

[28 : 12] That's redemption. That's when something is bought and receives value. We have been redeemed. It says that we have been redeemed or bought with a price.

Is that in 1 Corinthians 6? We've been bought with a price. Jesus' death on the cross. He redeems us. He has bought us out of slavery and into a new life as his children.

So we're redeemed. We have a relationship with Jesus. Remember we talked about Hebrews chapter 1 many times, over and over again.

I love Hebrews 1, 1 through 3. That Jesus is the exact representation of the nature of God. Jesus came down. Part of his mission was to help us understand who God is.

In Jesus, God is speaking to us in words of one syllable. You want to know what I'm like? God says, look at my son. Remember Jesus said that to the disciples.

[29:13] Philip asks a Peter-like question. Well, we just want to see the Father. And Jesus, oh my goodness. If I've been with you this long, you still don't get it? When you look at me, you see the Father.

Jesus is the exact representation. He's the radiance of God's glory. The pinnacle. We know who God is. His character, His love, by looking at Jesus.

You want to know about the love of God? Look to the cross. You want to know about the power of God? Look to the resurrection. You want to know that your sins are certainly forever forgiven?

Look to the resurrection. Jesus was raised because the work was done. But Jesus shows us who God is. Jesus, I should put this in a slightly different order, was the creator of all things.

When God said, let there be light, Jesus said, here you go. Every step of creation, Jesus was there. He is the ruler, the firstborn of all creation.

[30:20] And He's the sustainer. One of the things that drives physicists crazy is why doesn't the universe blow up? Why do we hold together? All these eggheads can't figure it out.

Because basically, fundamentally, Jesus is holding it together. You want to have your mind blown? Even while Jesus was dying on the cross. Even then, He held us together.

That's our Lord. That's the center of the argument against false teaching. He is the ruler, the creator, the sustainer of creation. He's the one to whom we look.

He's the head of the church. Now, if you remember, when we read that, we typically think of headship in terms of being in charge, which is not false. You know, the CEO of a company is the head of the company.

We talk about heads of state because they're in charge. But there's more to it than that that's actually addressed in biology and neuroscience. Your mind has enormous impact on how your body functions.

[31:34] Right thinking really does affect your health. When you've got high stress, your immune system plummets. Inflammation becomes a problem. What goes on with our mind, our heads, affects everything about us.

Jesus is the head of the church. When we're in alignment with the head, we're doing what we're supposed to do. We're going to see in a few minutes as to how God works out our salvation.

Part of it is how we interact with each other. We each have gifts. God has given me a preaching gift. Thank you.

The goal is that you be blessed from that gift. Not to give me glory, but to give him glory. I'm just a tool.

If you see me, your focus is in the wrong place. But as we follow the head, each of you has gifts. Notice that as you allow those gifts to be unleashed, following the direction of the head, this body will function the way God designed it to function.

[32:49] God will work here. Because God will say, oh, these people pay attention. They listen. Jesus is at the center. And he's the peacemaker.

We were enemies of God. It says in Romans 5. Enemies. Resolutely, arms crossed, backs to God. I'm not going to do what you ask. We may have seen that behavior from a certain toddler in our household occasionally. We're not unlike that toddler, even as adults. We were enemies of God. And Jesus came in and reconciled. He brought us back together with God. And here's the thing that blows my mind.

It says this in 2 Corinthians 5. He's committed to us the ministry of reconciliation. What does that mean? That means as Jesus reconciled me to God, he's now using me and you to go out into the world and say, you know what?

[33:50] You want to be reconciled to God? Let me show you how. Let me introduce you to Jesus. Not let me introduce you to a bunch of rules. Let me introduce you to Jesus.

Because Jesus creates the bridge between man and God. And we are welcome in his presence again. We can stand having him in our presence.

Jesus is the peacemaker. And then Jesus is our solid foundation. Remember we looked at chapter 1 verse 23. And the verbiage in English is a little confusing.

Where Paul says that we're blessed if indeed you continue in the faith. He's like, oh, that means I have to hold myself in the faith? What if I mess up? No, no, no, no, no, no.

That's just an inadequacy of English. What Paul is saying is since, since you will continue in your faith because you stand on the solid rock of Jesus Christ.

[34 : 50] Do you remember? At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talks about two houses. One built on sand. One built on bedrock. The bedrock is the word of Jesus.

And when we stand on that bedrock, nothing can sway us. We're protected from false doctrine.

We're protected from trying to figure things out on our own. On Christ the solid rock I stand.

All other ground is shifting sand. That's where we stand. And Jesus is the one who holds us fast. If indeed you continue in the faith, firmly established and steadfast, that's God's work in you.

And not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed to all creation under heaven. We have that in Jesus. Jesus is the core of Paul's argument.

You getting it yet? We're not done. So then Jesus is the answer to the Gnostics. Good job, Martha.

Thank you. So one of the things that happens, and this is the root of why hardship in our lives causes us to figure out our own way to solve problems.

[36 : 07] Life is mysterious. If you don't have a relationship with God and Christ, life is a mystery.

Why do things happen the way they do? We can't figure out basic stuff. I'll give you an example that I like to do because I'm a horrible person.

So I do this to someone. You might come up to me and say, Hey, John, I'm traveling with my family. I'm going to go visit my family, and we're going to fly from Chicago to wherever. Great. Hey, let me tell you something about flight that I learned when my son was in high school.

This is really interesting. Did you know that we don't know why planes fly? And people go, Oh, sure we do. Yeah. It's low pressure on the top of the wing and high pressure on the bottom of the wing causes lift and causes the plane to fly.

Yeah, that's a theory. But the problem is hummingbirds and bumblebees don't fit that theory, and yet they fly. So are we sure?

Have fun on your flight. Kara hates that story. So we have these mysteries, simple stuff. Do you know, we don't know why seeds germinate.

[37 : 13] We know how to facilitate it with the right combination of soil and water and sun, et cetera. But the fundamental what is the process that unlocks it and that allows that DNA code in the seed to produce a tomato plant or cucumbers or peppers or poison ivy, we don't have a clue.

We don't know why our cars run. I mean, we know the mechanics of it, but fundamentally, we don't know. Life is a mystery. And if you get so wrapped up in the mystery, you can just get lost.

It's like being in a fog. You lose your way. Paul is unveiling a mystery. It says this at the end of chapter one of Colossians. Paul is unveiling a mystery.

What's the mystery? This thing that has not been revealed until now. It's Christ in you. It's Christ in you is the answer to the mysteries that we face in life.

Way more important mysteries than why planes fly or why bumblebees don't crash. Way more important questions. The fundamental questions that are deeply, deeply centered in our souls are answered by Christ in you.

[38 : 33] In you. Your soul has become a place that God himself, who is completely holy, no sin, but he has cleaned house, not is cleaning, has cleaned house and made it so that he is welcome there and he's comfortable there.

The mystery revealed, revealed, is Christ in you. That's the fundamental answer to the problems of life is Jesus.

Now what do the Gnostics do? So the Gnostics start with life is a mystery, we need to figure it out. And so the next step, and this is really cool, I didn't catch this until this week about how Paul arranges his thought.

I love Paul because he's so structured in his thinking. Paul is really easy to teach because he thinks in outlines. At some point, I want to do a series out of John.

Teaching John is a nightmare because the way his thinking is structured is different and outlines are really hard from John. But Paul, not so much.

[39:46] the Gnostic heresy, first, there's a mystery that we can't solve. We're going to tell you how, and it's rooted in Judaism. So if you look at verse 16, if you don't have it, it's okay.

Therefore, no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day. Those are all Jewish rituals. This Colossian heresy was rooted in a form of Jewish mysticism called Merkabah mysticism.

They were trying to get, to replicate what Ezekiel experienced when he got his prophetic call.

Merkabah means chariot. And so they were trying to get that for themselves.

And so they were, they were teaching a rigid obedience to the law and then a level of asceticism, denying oneself even above that. And so Paul says, no, no, no, no.

No. Don't let anybody tell you differently. Don't let anybody be your judge. Because Jesus is the end of the law for righteousness for us. It says that in Romans 10.

[40:50] Romans 10. Listen to me carefully. You do not have to earn a thing.

Nothing. Nothing. You already have it in Christ. Jesus is the end of the law for righteousness. Why? He who knew no sin became sin on your behalf. Why? So that you could have the righteousness of God in him. That answers the Jewish portion of the Colossian heresy.

You don't have to revert to Judaism. Well, and by the way, Paul's such a brilliant writer, he also addresses the Galatian heresy here. In Galatia, sitting in Greece, Pharisee, former Pharisee Christians were trying to teach that Gentiles had to embrace the law to become Christians.

And Paul was saying, no, no, no. You're going back to earning your way. You can't earn your way.

So Jesus is the end of the law. So the next, oh wait, I almost forgot. Can't forget this part.

[41:56] Because this is, I love the unity of the Bible. This is so cool. You got to get it, you got it, I'm just, it's not because I'm a nerd. Okay, I'm a nerd. But you've got to see the unity of the Bible here.

Verse 17. So Paul talks about these Jewish practices, things which are a mere shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

Remember I emphasize that when we read it. The substance belongs to Christ. Now, don't do it now. This is your assignment for during the week. In Hebrews chapter 9, actually most of the book of Hebrews, is the author of Hebrews is saying, here's the Old Testament way of doing things and here's the better way.

Old way, not so good. New way in Christ is awesome. You want to follow Jesus. And in Hebrews chapter 9, he's developing this idea that the Old Testament equipment, so the tabernacle, the altar, all that stuff, was a shadow of Jesus.

He even uses the terminology shadow. The sacrifices, shadow of Jesus. The priest, shadow of Jesus. And look, Paul starts that thought here.

[43:08] Hebrews was written later. Jesus is the substance. All these other things that we try to do are just echoes. They're shadows. And shadows don't satisfy us, do they?

No, we want the substance. We want the real thing. So the next piece is the Gnostics taught that God, this was rooted in Greek philosophy, that the material world and the spiritual world where God lived were completely and utterly separate.

That the material was eventually going to be completely done away with because it was inherently evil. God wanted nothing to do with it. Well, that presents a problem.

Actually, it presents a lot of problems. If God utterly rejects the material, how does Jesus become a man? The answer is He can't. But the other issue is with this break is how do we, fleshly that we are, get access to God?

We can't. Well, the Gnostics had an answer for that. Angels. Angels do the work. So we have to develop relationships with angels, basically worship them because they build the bridge to God, which kind of makes Jesus unnecessary at that point.

[44:31] But we see here that Jesus is the only mediator between God and man. There is no other mediator. Angels aren't necessary. And we're to worship nobody else but God Himself.

Whereas the Gnostics were saying, no, you need to worship these angels because not only do they conduct you into the presence of God, but it's a journey fraught with danger and they will protect you against other angels who want to stop you.

So there's a little trickle of true theology there because we do believe in fallen angels. The devil is opposed to us. But Jesus is the only mediator.

There is no other. There's no need. There's no need. We all have access to God. Isn't that great? Back to Hebrews. We can boldly approach the throne of grace.

Boldly. We had a living example of that this morning. My grandson doesn't care that I'm trying to do my job. Poppy's up there talking.

[45 : 33] He's fun. I'm cute. I'm going to go say hi. That's the picture of your access to God. Really. You're Jesse in this image just to be clear, not me.

We're like children but we have that access to God. There is no other mediator because Jesus conducts us in. It says in Romans 8 that we have been adopted through Christ. We're part of the family.

We're fellow heirs. We call God the creator of all things. Holy, holy, holy God. We can call him daddy because of Jesus. I skipped ahead.

We have access through Christ. And this is important. No spiritual elites. That's the other thing about the Gnostic heresy.

You guys really aren't good enough. You just can't, you can't make the cut. Sorry. You're not dedicated enough. You haven't taken the special steps to be ordained.

[46 : 41] You don't have a degree. Of course, neither do I. But you have to go through somebody like me to be qualified to get to God because you're just not good enough.

But because I'm a gracious and nice guy, I'll bring you along but don't bother me. Just follow quietly. That's really what the Gnostics were teaching. That's not what the Bible teaches.

The Bible teaches that we're acceptable to God and we don't need somebody else to conduct us there. You don't need me. You don't.

I might help you along the way but fundamentally you don't need me. You have the Holy Spirit. I better see a church on Sunday next week. Just saying. But you get my point.

This idea of a spiritual elite that's gone through all these steps to make themselves worthy and that's the key phrase. They've made themselves worthy. That's what gets us to God. Absolutely not.

[47 : 40] Jesus is the center. Jesus is the core. So let's look at how this applies.

What does this all mean? So if you've got your Bibles open look at verse 23. Verse 23. There we go.

This has been a struggle for me my entire Christian life trying to wrap my head around what this means. I think I've shared with you that the first verse I ever memorized was John 14.6.

Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but through me. Verse 7 which I've learned since should have been we should include that with verse 6 of John 14.

Jesus said, I'm the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but through me. When you look at the Father when you look at me you see the Father. That's what Jesus was trying to get across to the disciples.

[48 : 47] But I thought, but that doesn't tell me how to get there. And some of you may be feeling that frustration.

Okay John, that's great. Jesus is the answer. Then I don't understand the freaking question. How is Jesus the answer? And I want to tell you something just as a side note.

You've got to face these types of questions. Don't shy away from them. Don't think this is above my pay grade. Don't think it's disrespectful to me to say, hey brother, that made no sense whatsoever. You said it really eloquently but made no sense. We need to address these challenging things. How is a person, even Jesus, the way, the truth, the life?

What does that mean? When I was in my early 20s, Kara and I had dinner at the home of a group of girls that were in our youth group.

[49 : 52] And I don't remember how it came up but over the course of dinner, these girls' dad, Ken, and I got into a conversation about this topic. How is Jesus the center of our Christian life?

And by the end of the evening, I would have cheerfully choked Ken into unconsciousness.

consciousness. Because his only answer was let go and let God.

And I would respond, go and make disciples, baptizing them, teaching them everything that I have taught you, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost. That's my job.

Let go and let God, John. Whatever. Go and sin no more. Just let go and let God, John. And I just brought up all these verses.

And there's a lot of them in the New Testament. We're going to look at them next week. We have responsibility. There are rules.

[50:53] So, let go and let God sounds nice if you put it on a bumper sticker. But it's absolutely meaningless without understanding what that means.

This is true. These are matters which have to be sure the appearance of wisdom. So, these rules. Look wise. And I'm not talking the Jewish laws.

I'm not talking that stuff. I'm talking the stuff that we talk about every day. That I share with somebody every day. You need to read your Bible. You should be in the Word every day. You need to be a person of prayer. You need to be in community. You need to be a worshipping Christian. You need to be a person who's on mission. Meaning, you are following the footsteps of Jesus executing the mission that He came to begin.

Because it's not done. So, are we stuck in a paradox? Are we being pulled in half?

[51:58] No, what is it? How does this work? How is it that 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, if we stop that statement they're of no value, that would be one thing. They're of no value to change our behavior. Key difference.

And this is where we're going to end today. And you're probably not going to be satisfied because this is only half of the message. And I didn't want to give you the whole thing because I thought I'd be in trouble if I kept you here until one o'clock.

You people are so demanding about time. This is what you've got to remember. What we've said over and over and over for the last 40 minutes. We don't earn anything.

Nothing. We can't. Our efforts do not get us favor with God. Our efforts do not earn us forgiveness of sin.

[53:06] Our efforts do not reconcile us to God. Paul's favorite description of the person who's being reconciled to God is an enemy, it's corpse.

You're dead. Dead people don't do anything. because the work is Christ's. We don't do this stuff to get God's favor, to get His forgiveness, to be reconciled, to be made righteous, to gain access. None of it. That's religion. And it's worthless. It doesn't work. However, however, we have in Christ been reconciled.

We have been moved from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. We have received a share of the inheritance. We have received the forgiveness of sins. We have been reconciled to God and to each other.

You know what's common about every one of those phrases I just gave you? Time for a grammar lesson. It was in the past tense. If you're in Christ, you have this stuff.

[54:19] You've got to get a hold of that. You have it already. And because you have it, part of the package deal that comes through Christ is a growing relationship with God.

Our mission statement. We exist to glorify God, walking closely with Him, striving together to become more like Jesus every day.

That is a process of growth. But what did Paul say? That we are supposed to hold fast to the head from whom the entire body, this is verse 19, from whom the entire body being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, us, grows with a growth which is from God.

As we enter into the life that God has for us, as we trim our trails, trim our sails, to follow the wind, the direction it's going, to receive the power from the wind to compel us forward, we start to do these things.

We read the Word of God not because God's happier when I read the Bible, even Leviticus or 1 Chronicles. No. When I read the Word of God, I am entering into a dialogue with God.

[55:35] and He's talking to me. We are engaging in relationship as we read the Bible, as we pray, as we come together.

It's kind of mysterious. This will blow your mind. Look around. These people are God's representatives to you. Kind of, ooh, really? Really? Even me.

But the idea is that we do these things because it allows us to move closer to God. more deeply into relationship, really to possess more fully the things that we already have in Christ.

And here's the money line. And I'm going to close with this. This self-made religion is about rules. It's about a law book. It's not personal. It's no more personal than the DMV. If you think back to everything I've talked about this morning, we're not being invited to the DMV.

[56:42] We're being invited into a relationship with God. A person who thinks, who feels, who has a will, who is good to a degree you can't even fathom.

You don't understand goodness that good. You don't understand the power, the magnitude of the love that's directed at you. You are being invited to go deeper in intimacy with a living person. And if you will get a hold of that, you'll begin to understand that it's not letting go and letting God. it's coming into a relationship where you're walking with God and you're talking about all these mysteries.

Remember we talked about the mystery of life leads us into false doctrine? There's another direction it can lead us and that's deeper into Christ. As we talk to Him about why are things the way they are?

Why do I struggle with the things I struggle with? Get into the relationship with God. God. Pursue that. And we're going to talk about that more deeply next week as we round the corner into chapter 3 and where our mind is supposed to be focused.

[58:01] But if you've got nothing else this morning, nothing else sticks, please don't let the only thing that sticks be that we don't know why planes fly.

What I want you to walk out of here with is we don't understand how it works, we don't understand why beyond the fact that God loves us. But you have access to a personal relationship with God. That's not just a trite word from an evangelist or a Bible tract. Your best friend, your best friend is but a shadow of the relationship to Jesus.

You're offered through Jesus to God. That's the answer. Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Father, our brains are too puny to understand this stuff.

We just don't get it. But Lord, I pray that by your spirit that we would not worry about understanding, but instead, just trust and to step into the invitation to a relationship with you and let the chips fall where they will.

[59:14] Let us trust in your love. Let us trust in the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf. And Lord, in the process, I pray that we would be changed people. Because we know whom we have believed.

And that we're in good hands. God, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.