

**Sermon Series:** True Spirituality

**Sermon Title:** "Avoiding False Paths part 2"

**Sermon Text:** Colossians 2:16-23

**Pre-Sermon:** This is to help you prepare for hearing from God's Word.

- What is the subject we have been talking about the past few weeks at church?
- Why is that subject important?
- Read Colossians 2:16-23
- What do you think this passage might have to say about that subject?

**Sermon Discussion Questions:** This will help you think through the passage and what you heard in the message.

- Why is the question "how do we relate to God?" such an important one?
- If someone asked you "how do I please God?", how would you answer?
- What are some examples of how our corporate gatherings to worship are different than in some other groups? Imagine someone said to you, I think if the apostles were around now they would prefer to worship in this other way, how would you answer them?
- We often imagine that it was easy to know what to do in the early church. But what evidence do we have that they faced challenges as well?
- What is the particular challenge the Colossian believers seemed to have faced?
- What are some of the things we know about this "heresy" from the book of Colossians that would have made it particularly tempting for them?
- As Paul helps the Colossians think about how to live in a way that is pleasing to God, where does he begin? What three doctrines does he look to in order to instruct them in practical Christian living and our approach to God?
- What doctrine in particular does he focus on in verses 16-23? Why do we say that? And what aspect of that doctrine is he discussing?
- We organized what this passage says into three parts. What were the three categories we used to understand Paul's instructions here?
- What are the three commands?
- We said that verse 20 is an implied command. What does that mean?
- What makes obeying this command difficult in our culture right now?
- What makes obeying this command difficult for you?
- What in general is Paul telling us that we need to watch out for? How do we know that?
- Paul describes the regulations the Colossians were tempted to submit to as being connected to the elemental spirits of the world. What does that phrase mean?
- What insight does this give you into the Christian life?

- Paul gives several characteristics of worldly religion. What are they and where do they come from in the text?
- What is the issue Paul is getting at when he talks about food, drink, etc?
- How did the average Gentile in Paul day think about questions of food and drink, and festivals and all that when it came to their relationship with God?
- What were the people that were tempting the Colossians to wander away from Christ delighting in?
- What does the first word he uses in verse 18 to describe that mean?
- How does asceticism, the worship of angels and going on in detail about visions connect?
- What is really behind someone who feels like God is going to be impressed and moved by watching them deliberately and unnecessarily choose to suffer physically? What is that saying they believe about God?
- What is the difference between this and legitimate self-denial and humility?
- What does the fact that they were worshiping angels and teaching and defending that by going on in detail about visions tell you about how worldly religion often works?
- Why do we have to reject this kind of worldly religion? What reasons does Paul give in this passage?
- In what way are questions of food, etc. a shadow? What does that tell you about them? What is someone who focuses on them doing even if they are talking about the Bible? In what way would they be being unbiblical as they pretend to be biblical?
- What does Paul teach here about how growth really happens?
- How does he connect union with Christ to saying no to these regulations in verse 20 and 21?
- Why is this kind of worldly religion tempting according to verse 23 and why is it dangerous?

**Sermon Outline:** A sermon is much more than an outline, but perhaps this outline will help you follow the sermon.

In this passage, Paul gives very specific and practical help for pursuing a God-pleasing spiritual life:

1. What to do
2. How to do that
3. Why you must do that

**Important Quotes:** The following quotes may help you think about and apply what you heard in the sermon. Think about how they may help you understand the spiritual life.

- "Our Lord requires us to take up our cross and follow Him, and there are many testimonies to the blessedness of godly self-denial. Biblically it is not an attempt to gain forgiveness or spirituality through self-abasement. Rather it is the willing

response of a heart dedicated to serving Christ at any cost. Asceticism is a different matter. It is motivated by pride rather than humility, and it is an attempt to accomplish in the energy of the flesh a right relationship with God, which can be brought about only by a divine transformation through faith in Jesus Christ."

- "This false teaching at Colossae is failing in two ways: one, it isn't glorifying Christ, and two, it isn't defeating sin. It's producing puffed-up Christians, and it is diminishing Christ. So here's the issue with asceticism. Asceticism has a legitimate place in the Christian life, as does the thankful enjoyment of food and drink that God gives us. Eating and drinking can become gluttony with a loss of self-control, and not eating and drinking can become boastful and Christ-diminishing. That was happening at Colossae. "Is Christ being exalted or is self being exalted? Is asceticism killing sin or feeding sin?" So the question is not simply, Do you eat or don't you eat? Do you drink or don't you drink? Do you sleep or don't you sleep? Do you deny yourself certain legitimate pleasures or don't you? That's not the main question. The main questions are, Is Christ being exalted or is self being exalted? While crucifying the sin of gluttony, are you feeding the sin of pride? Is asceticism killing sin or feeding sin? Those are the key questions."
- "Self-denial is a practice found in virtually every major religion. For example, in Buddhism, self-denial is seen as a means to spiritual enlightenment, a mechanism of great detachment from the material world. In Islam, fasting is an obligatory act during the month of Ramadan. The purpose of this self-denial is to prevent your spirit from paying excessive attention to anything except Allah. In Roman Catholic teaching, self-denial is for the purpose of self-purification... The purpose of Biblical self-denial is not greater detachment from the material world, not a redirection of attention away from anything apart from God, nor a means of spiritual purification. In addition to these errors, self-denial can be practiced as a form of punishing the body for many wrong and dangerous motivations including: Seeking to gain control over one's life...Self-harm as an outworking of depression and anxiety...Seeking to win favour with God..."
- "Christ sets bounds for the message of the Holy Spirit himself. He is not to preach anything new or anything else than Christ and His Word. Thus we have a sure guide and touchstone for judging false spirits. We can declare that it surely does not indicate the presence of the Holy Spirit when a person proclaims his own thoughts and notions and begins to teach in Christendom something apart from or in addition to what Christ taught...now that the apostles have preached the Word and have given their writings, and nothing more than what they have written remains to be revealed, no new and special revelation or miracle is necessary."
- "Biblical Scripture...alone deals with everything that serves the true knowledge, love, and honor of God, as well as true piety and the making of a godly and honest life."
- "Thou hast the Scriptures, go search the Scriptures, wait thou upon God therein; for in them are the words of eternal life: they are a sure and safe light, more sure, safe and certain, than all Revelation, visions, dreams, or immediate voices...the safest, surest way, is to keep close to the written word of God, which is both the judge of all our doctrines, and the only rule of all our practices; and therefore above and beyond all impressions, whether with or without a word."
- "To walk with God, is to live as in his presence, and that with desire and delight...we believe and apprehend that wherever we are, we are before the

Lord...Our walking with God then is not only a sense of that common presence which he must needs afford to all; but is also a believing apprehension of his gracious presence, as our God and reconciled Father, with whom we dwell, being brought near unto him by Christ, and who dwells in us by His Spirit."

- "The way of believer's partaking and feeling of this graciousness and sweetness of the Lord be spiritual, arising in their hearts from the exercising of their faith in God as favorable to them through Christ...All those tastes of the graciousness and sweetness of Christ which the saints may expect in this life are to be looked for in and through the Word."
- "They that have lived most in communion with God have lived most in the exercise of faith; trusting him with all they have, in all they fear, for all they want. Walking in communion with God is a walking by faith, not by sense...While you stay yourselves on God, and go leaning on him, you are near him; he is near you, you are in fellowship with Him."
- "God is present everywhere, but especially with his saints and not only when they are apprehensive of him, but when they perceive no evidence of his presence...the sun may shine and I not see it, there may be fire in the room and I not feel it, so God may be present with His people when he is not sensibly present with His people."

**Sermon Notes:** This is a place you can record your own notes and thoughts as you listen to the message today so that you can think about them later.