

Who Grows You?

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[0 : 0 0] Father, we ask that the Holy Spirit would help us to see ourselves in your Word, and to see ourselves in your Word in a way that makes us long, to have the Gospel become more real in our hearts, and for your Holy Spirit to change us more and more in a way, Father, that is for our true good, and that fits us for heaven, and is for the true good of the world around us.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son, and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. This is the first Sunday I'm doing a service with a hearing aid in, and I'm still getting used to the fact, those of you who have hearing aids, I'm still getting used to the fact that I hear my voice in my head in a different way.

And if you're not familiar with that idea, I can just tell you it's something that it just throws me off a bit. Anyway, one of the things which is very true about being human is that we can be very, very, very bothered about things which don't really matter that much, but not be very bothered by things which matter a great deal.

In other words, we can feel guilty about something that really God doesn't care about, and not feel guilty at all about things that God really does care about. I'll give you an example. It might be that somebody could be feeling very guilty or very depressed right now about their weight, but not feel even remotely guilty about the fact that they just told several lies to their best friend or to their boss the day before.

People can feel very, very guilty about maybe the condition of their vehicle or what type of vehicle they have. They can feel very bad or very proud, but often very bad, yet not even feel a tinge, a twinge of guilt over something like, I don't know, lying on your income tax, which is in effect a type of stealing.

[2 : 0 0] So it's just one of the things about human beings that we can, and we all probably could give examples afterwards about other people, of course, never about ourselves, about how something very, very trivial really bothers them, bends them out of shape they feel guilty about or they feel very proud about.

And we know that God doesn't give a hoot about it. It's a very, very common human problem. The Bible text that we're going to look at today speaks into this. In fact, we have to keep this in the back of our mind as we're reading the Bible text because it's going to speak into this particular condition.

It's going to speak into this condition more and more in the weeks to come as we look into the text that comes after it. But this is a text which starts to look at this human problem, and it's Colossians 2, verses 16 to 23.

Now, actually, just before we look at this, two things. I'm going to be looking at actually the few verses before it, which aren't going to be on the screen, which is just a good reason to have your own Bibles with you, either a paper Bible like this or having something like YouVersion on your phone so that you can read the Bible on your phone.

But the other thing is that you're going to notice that when I'm reading the Bible text, when we get into 16 to 23, I'm going to be reading from the English Standard Version, but I think, I hope, the text on the screen won't always be the English Standard Version.

[3 : 21] And part of the reason for that is this text is a notoriously difficult text if you read academic Bible commentaries.

It's a notoriously difficult text to translate, in a sense, in a very literal type of way, because there's nuances in the original language which don't exist in English. So what I've done, what you'll see above me, and sometimes I'll refer to it, is either from the academic commentary that I've read.

Basically, it all comes from the academic commentary that I've read. I've tried to give you a version on the screen that gives the basic sense of the text. And if you look at the English Standard Version, you can see that that's the right way, you know, that that's a way to interpret it.

So anyway, that's why there's going to be sometimes a bit of a gap. I'm going to read this, and you're looking up at the screen, and you're looking up at the screen and say, that's why I've provided a bit of a help on the screen. Anyway, so the problem is, what is it about human beings that we can feel very, very bent out of shape and guilty about things that we probably would recognize don't really matter, although obviously to many people in the world it really matters, yet not even be remotely guilty about something else.

Somebody can feel very, very, very guilty about the fact that they drive an old car, that they're not really, you know, with it, and have a new car really nice and clean, but they don't feel any guilt at all about the fact that they show no generosity whatsoever.

[4 : 43] They're very, very just ungenerous, ungracious people. So why is that about us? Why is it we worry about maybe our weight? The Bible doesn't care about that, but we don't worry about lying, or about betraying confidences.

Why is that going on? Well, what we looked at last week, as part of the flow, because we're preaching through the book of Colossians, is last week what we looked at, it's all sort of developing this idea that when you receive Christ Jesus, you receive him as the Lord, and so we have to learn how to walk in him.

And the text that we looked at last week talked really about this profound idea that when we give ourselves to Christ, we, in a sense, enter into him, and he enters into us.

This is one of the many profound ways that the Bible, and I think only the Bible, really accounts for features of human experience that we take for granted, and that other systems of thought and other religions can't really account for, because it's, in fact, a part of personal relationships that we, in a sense, enter into the other person's life, and the other person enters into our life.

And for Christians, we understand that, ultimately, this is rooted in the very nature of God, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, that from all eternity, the Father, in a sense, has given himself to the Son, and the Son has received the Father into his life, and the Son gives himself to the Father, and the Father receives himself, receives the Son into his life.

[6 : 13] And human beings bearing God's image, it's the same thing for us. So, if we've ever been at, let's say, a wedding reception or a funeral reception, back in the day when you could meet without being socially distanced, and you're at a table of strangers, and you try to make conversation with the person beside you, and they either ignore you, or they give brief, grunt answers, which they grunt affirmative, or they grunt negative.

And obviously, what they're doing is they're keeping their force fields up to not let you into their lives. And you're trying to just be friendly with them. But in things like love, and friendship, and family, there's this very, very real sense that as you share things about yourself, you're hoping that the things you share with the other person will be received.

And we can almost picture that being received as, to use body language like this is just a very natural thing to say to be received, because we open ourselves up to let the other person come into our life.

And then we share something back. And I use language like, my hands like this, and we hope that they receive it like this, that they open their lives up. And that's why, you know, when we experience the death of a friend, or a family member, or like a spouse, it actually feels as if something from inside of us has been taken away.

There's now a hole inside of us that wasn't there before. Because there is a real sense that human beings enter into each other. And we know that it's not just emotions, that there's some other thing which goes on, that there's not really human words, English words that can capture.

[7 : 51] And the Bible is saying, all the way through the book of Colossians, the phrase, in Christ, is, it's said over and over and over and over again. And what the Bible is telling us is that when you trust Jesus as your Savior and your Lord, you enter into him, and he enters into you.

That it's not just an analogy, it's not a metaphor, it's not an experience per se, but that in the case of Christ, it's real, it actually happens.

You enter into Christ and now, in a sense, live in him. And he enters into you and in a very real and true sense, enters into you and is in you.

The two truths are very, very true. And we looked at that last week. And then the Bible text talked about using two analogies, one of circumcision from the Old Testament and then baptism in the New Testament, and showed how both of those symbolic actions, so to speak, are signifying something that God does.

And then it culminates in verses 13 to 15. And you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, here's the thing I want to point to, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.

[9 : 19] This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. And last week I shared how this word legal demands is sort of a, it's a very, very legal, it's a very, very literally correct word, but it actually isn't, it doesn't really capture the right sense in English.

And what the Bible text is saying is this very wonderful and profound truth. It's saying that when you, like when you give yourself to Christ and you enter into him, it means then in a very real sense that the death Jesus dies on the cross is your death.

And his resurrection is also your resurrection because you're in him. And just as in, you can sort of see it over there a little bit with the stained glass, that if you read the gospel accounts, it was very typical with crucifixion that a brief summary of the charge against the person was nailed above the cross so that everybody walking by would know that this is why the person was dying.

And so Paul uses this analogy because crucifixion was a very common form of punishment. Hundreds of thousands of people died of crucifixion in the Roman Empire. And so it's a very, very common thing, a very shameful way of dying.

And Paul says, what do you need to imagine is this, that the first part of that, which it talks about the record of debt, that's referring to real objective, from God's point of view, moral wrong.

[10 : 44] Every lie that I've ever told, every time that I had an opportunity to do something good and I didn't do that good, a sin of omission, every betrayal of a confidence, every stealing, every slander about another human being, every sexual thing, every injustice, everything which from God who sees perfectly, every single real wrong, objective wrong thing that I have ever done, well, that's nailed to the cross above Jesus.

But the other word is really implying human regulations, the human judgments that we make on each other. And human judgments might have a bit of a grain of truth to them, but they're a bit very, very different.

The way that people condemn you because you're too skinny, too fat, too muscular, are not muscular enough. You eat crappy food. You're too obsessed about eating healthy food.

You only eat organic. You never eat organic. You only go to Tim Hortons. You never go to Tim Hortons. You think you're better than people by going to a hipster coffee place. You drink wine out of a little box that has plastic or you only drink the finest vintages.

All of the normal human things that we mean to put each other down or evaluate everybody else, those also are nailed to the cross. That's what regulations are, human assessments that make us feel guilty.

[12 : 09] And so it's this profound truth that on the cross, I'm to imagine, well, imagine, it's not just imagining because the Bible's telling us it's actually what happens, is that every accusation that a human being could make against me that gives me worth or doesn't give me worth, that's nailed to the cross as well.

Now, God's going to help us to sort out what of those human things are right or wrong because sometimes human views of things are right. We might say that such and such a thing is cowardly or such and such a thing is foolhardy and it might be right or there's a germ of truth in it that the germ of truth is to be too concerned about food is a sin or to be too underweight or too overweight, of course, is bad for the body and there's a germ of some sin in there.

It's hard for us to figure it out but the comforting thing is that it's all nailed to the cross. Jesus died for all of that and part of what will happen as we walk with Christ is those human regulations start to get hopefully sorted out in our lives.

That's what Christ wants to do and definitely in eternity. It's all sorted out but all of those accusations, they're all up there on the cross and that's why it goes on to say in verse 15, Jesus disarms the rulers and authorities and puts them to open shame by triumphing over them in him.

As I shared before, rulers and authorities here are two different types of angelic beings, demonic beings, I should say. And so the main way as I shared last week that most of us experience demons in our lives is by guilt, accusation, slander and lies.

[13 : 57] In a sense, the demon speaks lies into our ears and they go into our hearts. And the lies could be, you were right, you're always right.

Or the lie could be, you're wrong, you're always wrong. And the devil tells you the lie, you're right, you're always right when you've just done something wrong. When you've just done something right, the devil tells you the lie, you're wrong, you're always doing something wrong.

But he tells you lies, he slanders you and they go deep into you. And in a sense, how does understanding the cross help to disarm it? You see, if you understand that you're not quite sure how to figure out the whole weight thing and what you should feel guilty about and what you shouldn't really feel guilty about, but the thing is that is profoundly comforting is you can just think, Jesus knew every accusation against me.

Those are nailed to the cross and Jesus died for them. He's over time going to help me to understand what needs to be done about some of these things. And in fact, in chapter 3, we're going to see how Paul starts to help us to figure out what true north is, like where we really are.

That's what he's going to talk about in chapter 3. But it's all been, all these accusations, they're all dealt with. So then, if we put up verse 16 on the screen, you'll notice in the English Standard Version, it begins with, therefore, let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.

[15 : 33] These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Now, what Paul is doing here, you'll notice it says, therefore, that's how it begins. And the verses 16 to 23, and by the way, I don't know how to pronounce this correctly.

One of you can shout it out. You know, there's that, it's an ancient, I think it's an old Greek god or it's a part of a Greek story, a Janus figure. I don't know if it's pronounced Janus or Janus.

It's, eh? Janus. Okay, thank you very much. So a Janus is a figure that has two faces looking in opposite directions. And lots of times in the Bible, there's a text which in a sense is a Janus text.

And this is a Janus text. In other words, verses 16 to 23 on one hand is looking back from all the things that have happened from chapter 1 to chapter 2. And it's looking back at that and bringing it to a bit of a conclusion.

But it's also a Janus text in the sense that it's looking forward to chapter 3 and it's giving us a bit of an introduction about what's going to come. But it begins with this powerful word, therefore, let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink.

[16 : 37] Now, what's going on here is this. So I've just shared the gospel with you. You put your faith and trust in Christ and every accusation against you, the ones that have just purely human regulations, the ones which are, in fact, that God could say are objectively wrong, they're all nailed to the cross.

So when you walk out the door after the service and you begin now to live the rest of your week or even maybe as you're listening to the sermon, how are you going to live? Like, how do you live?

How do you live when you walk out the door of the church? And in a sense, it's not just how do you live when you walk out the door of the church, it's also, in a sense, how are you right now evaluating things? Will you, that's the question.

So here's, you see, the problem is that what happens is we often as human beings, in fact, it almost always happens as human beings, that we hear this wonderful news about the gospel, but we walk out the door and now we start to live as if the gospel isn't true, but we live as if to develop as a human being, to develop as a godly person, as to develop as a person that God would use, to develop as God's friend, whatever the analogy is as God's child, as soon as we walk out the door, we very quickly start to use regulations to frame how we live our lives.

In other words, human rules. And what the Bible is going to do in this text is it's going to give us, in a sense, the classic six, the classic six ways that human beings use regulations to try to understand how to get better with God, how to grow with God, how to become more Christ-like, how to be fit for heaven, how to live a godly life, how to live a spiritual life, how to be, all those different analogies, and there's these classic six.

[18 : 21] They're not always as prevalent in certain subgroups or certain times as others, but they're the historic classic six. And here's how it is. So let no one pass judgment. And the word there, I think, I think I used the word condemn up here.

That's the sense of it. It's a sense of disqualify you or condemn you. It's not just passing judgment on you as if, oh, you're a good, it's what, how do people condemn you? And look at the first of the six, food and drink.

Well, I mean, isn't that true? This coffee only uses, this church only uses fair trade coffee. Oh, we're very good, aren't we? And other churches say, yeah, these guys, they just want to be hipsters and cool and all that stuff.

We use Tim Horton's coffee because we're of the people or something like that. Or, you know, we only have organic. Well, you know, organic people, they just want to be politically correct and hipster.

They don't know what it's like in the real life. They have lots of disposable cash. They don't live from paycheck to paycheck. You can finish the rant if you want. Some of you have those rants in your head, right? You go grocery shopping, you see the organic section and in your head, there's a rant about people who buy it.

[19 : 27] Or in your head, you know, as you're buying from the organic, there's the rant about the people who are going to the sale and you think about, yeah, they don't care about slave labor, they don't care, but you know, that's what goes on in our heads, right?

And it's not just that, you know, there's the clean and unclean food and then it goes on, new moon, or sort of a festival. And I'm going to give you secular versions and I'm going to go back and give you religious versions of some of these types of things.

How many people in our society evaluate us by whether or not we'd go to a gay pride parade? Like, you wouldn't go to the gay pride parade? You wouldn't organize that? Like, you're a terrible person.

You're against inclusivity? You're against inclusion? You hate gays? Like, you hate, like what are you, like a Trump supporter or something like that? Make America Great?

Like, the judgments would come immediately upon that type of thing. And then, you know, or let me tell you, I'll finish the ones, new moon.

[20 : 28] And a new moon, that's in a sense that, I mean, on one level, all of these have Old Testament precursors, but new moon is really how much do we get told to keep in touch with nature, to get with the rhythms?

Like, isn't one of the advantages of Wiccan, why is Wicca a better religion than Christianity? Because Wicca respects natural rhythms. Wicca respects, in particular, the rhythms of a woman's body with her period and all of that type of stuff.

It respects the moon and the tides. It's one with nature and we have to be at one with nature. And then, you go on to Sabbath and then it could be, of course, that, you know, Sabbath, not necessarily in a religious sense, but you need to have a time of rest, you need to have your alone time.

And you see what I mean that all of these types of things are the types of things that judgments come about and they all have the religious versions as well. You know, in terms of, you know, food or drink, I've already mentioned the ones that churches can start to divide over what type of coffee they have or what type of food they serve or vegetarianism or not being vegetarian.

Festival, I'll just use Anglicanism as an example. Like, people will get all bent out of shape. Some of you who are old Anglicans will tell you how transgressive it was in our church when I sang a Christmas carol before Christmas Eve.

[21 : 51] Like, that was going against a huge Anglican religious rule. When I said Alleluia in church during Lent, I was being very transgressive against a whole pile of Anglican religious rules.

You know, and you can go on in terms of, you know, we've had people in this church who've been very, very, very upset because when there was coffee time after church we went to a store to buy cream and we weren't keeping the Sabbath.

But all of a sudden there's a whole range of different types of rules about how you keep these things and you need to keep them if you're the right type of church. I mean, it even comes up in the fact that for many, many churches they would say that one of the problems with us is that we actually have something like a liturgical year but ironically those same people would often probably judge me that George said one of the reasons your church doesn't grow is you don't do a big thing about Mother's Day.

You don't do a big thing about Father's Day. You don't do a big thing about Thanksgiving. You don't do a big thing about Remembrance Day. You don't do a big thing about this and that and we'll go whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. These are secular festivals and you're using art keeping of a secular festival to judge us?

like your church non-liturgically your church you're superior to us because you keep Mother's Day? That was invented by greeting card companies folks and you're passing judgment on us because we remember Advent?

[23 : 16] Like you see how it works in church circles? It's a bit of an aside. I'm clueless about a whole pile of things.

I've been in this church so long I've lost track of a whole pile of Anglican rules but at one point in time in Anglican history you walk in the door and the fact that I have this collar on rather than another collar would tell you that the circle the collar that goes all around they'd say ah, he's the right sort of the wrong sort.

Oh, a collar like this he's the right sort of the wrong sort. They'd instantly figure that out. The mere fact sorry I could keep going on and on about this.

On one level it's a bit fun to look at a text like this. Because we don't have, I don't wear all of the robes that were developed like I don't know like in the 1600s or the 1700s with all these processions we've had people come from other Anglican churches that say that we're not even Anglican because we don't do all of that stuff.

I don't wear the robes to be well dressed for the year 1650. I mean as soon as I say that obviously I'm mocking it, right? But the fact of the matter is these are very very powerful things. I'm using Anglican examples but there's even, there's Baptist examples and there's charismatic examples.

[24 : 28] They're all examples in everything that all of a sudden you have these rules and regulations that come from who knows where often from certain things in the culture and it's means by which you evaluate whether it's a good church or a bad church.

I've had people come to the church and they've never come back again. Why? Because of these. because it's an offense against idolatry.

It's idolatry. It's against the Bible. Like I think to myself you'd never have a kid's storybook that has a picture of Jesus in it?

Like what do you do when you tell a Christmas story about the nativity story? Like is it just words? There's no pictures for your kids? Anyway, I won't go into it. But you see what I mean? There's secular and religious things. So here's you see the thing which is going on.

You have to watch the time. So what the text is saying, I just gave you that the first part of the sermon was all about this wonderful thing about the gospel that God doesn't look at me and say, God looks at me and knows that George, if all of the things that were listed against George by our culture and all of the things that I could put against George which are actually correct, objectively true, moral wrongs that George did and I put them all up.

[25 : 45] There's no way that George could sacrifice enough, atone for it. He'd come under judgment and God makes this profound offer to you and me and he says, listen, put your faith in Christ.

And when you put your faith in Christ, you enter into him and he enters into you. And the death he died, George, he died listing all those things against you and he offers you his life and it's all grace, it's all free.

It's not because I'm weighing how wonderful you are, it's because I'm pardoning your offenses, it's not because you're so unbelievably spectacular by your own definition, it's because I just love you so much and I value you and I want you to be with me for eternity and it's all love, it's all grace, it's all mercy, it's all kindness, it's all goodness.

But as soon as we hear that, instantly we want to grow ourselves, we're going to see that in a moment in the text. The fundamental choice before us as Christians is will God grow us or will I grow us?

Actually it's even more than that as we're going to see in a moment is will God grow me or will I grow me? Me, me, me, I will grow me and they have religious ways, we have charismatic ways of doing that, you know, like there's the right way to lift your hands at the right time and there's the wrong way to lift your hands at the right time and there's the right time to lift your hands in the wrong time and you don't do it the wrong time, you do it the wrong time and people look down their nose at you and there's Anglican things as to whether you bow enough or kneel enough or deep enough and it's all just regulations and rules.

[27 : 30] Look at verse 17, these are a shadow of the things to come but the substance belongs to Christ. In other words, these are just, at best, there's something that sort of points to Christ but the fact of the matter is it's just you're talking about shadows, you're not actually talking about reality and I've helped you here with the text up above us.

Literally in the original language it's pointing backwards to Christ. So I think the way I've worded it up above without having to turn my head is, and this has actually captured it better, these are a shadow of the things that were to come because it came in Christ.

We're not waiting for it in the future. It's all in Christ. These are a shadow of the things that were to come. The reality, however, is found in Christ. And then the Bible gives you two more of the big six.

Right here it's giving you food and drink, festivals, new moons, Sabbaths. But then in verse 18 it goes on, let no one again disqualify you or judge you or condemn you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in details about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the head from whom the whole body nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments.

And here's, there's two big ideas in the text and here's one of them, grows with a growth that is from God. See, that's the fundamental choice before us.

[29 : 05] Will it be me by my disciplines? Will it be us by our disciplines that grows? Or will we acknowledge that all growth comes from God? And if all growth comes from God, it's going to suggest that we have different, in a sense, types of postures in responses to God's word.

that allows, that God, that causes God to grow us. Because, in a sense, if we understand that all growth comes from God, it means I always come before God with empty hands.

In fact, unclean hands and an unclean heart. And a mind that sometimes can be very, very true, but often gets me into trouble.

And a will that can often be very, very good, but often gets me into trouble. And emotions that sometimes can be very good, but often get me into trouble. They're out of whack. I get bothered by somebody putting me down because I drive a 1998 Honda Accord.

Because if I was a really successful Christian, I wouldn't be driving a car that's 23 years old. I'd have a Beamer or a Lexus or something like that.

[30 : 16] But if I was a real successful Christian, really with it, you know, and I can get beat up. Actually, I don't get beat up about the car at all. That's why I'm using it as an example. I don't want to use an example that might actually betray the sinfulness of my heart.

Frankly, I just want a car that's as cheap as possible that when I turn the key, it starts, gets me to point A and back home, and I don't care how ugly it is. I'm sorry. I have a whole pile of other sins.

That's just not one of my particular sins or virtues. I don't care about cars. Anyway, but the point is right here, go back to that, let no one disqualify you insisting on asceticism, and here it's really all about self-control.

The big besetting sin of much Christian teaching is it basically is teaching about self-control. Do these five things and you're going to have a better marriage.

Do these four things and you're going to be able to forgive. Do these seven things and you'll get that promotion. Do these nine things and you'll have financial security. And then you don't have those things.

[31 : 21] Well, it's ultimately because you don't have any self-control. Sucks to be you. I mean, we don't say that, right? We have polite Christian ways to cover the fact that that's what we think. It's one of the reasons why evangelical Christians and charismatic Christians have a very profound, hard time with mental illness and have a very profound and hard time against other types of things which are just physically wrong with us.

like we can be in great judgment on a street person who has no control of alcohol whatsoever. Why? Because I have control and I never stop to think about the fact that there's something probably actually biologically broken in them connected to a will that has been broken by past experiences which means that they will be profoundly more drawn to alcohol or drug abuse than I ever will be.

And I worship or I trust in my willpower. And that's what this word asceticism is getting at. It's the way to deal with the body. It's connected to a whole lot of other types of messy things as well in the Christian faith.

But look at the game. Let no one disqualify you. Verse 18. Insisting on asceticism, worship of angels, and going on in detail about visions. And that's sort of two different ideas. One of them wouldn't be true necessarily in a lot of the types of churches that we would go to.

But it's drawing on spiritual powers. It's a very common thing in the world that you manipulate energies around people. I went to an ultra-liberal equivalent to seminary.

[32 : 57] I am not making this up. And I had to go to a place to learn how to massage people's auras. Not making this up. And I was to try to sense the colors and auras around them.

And I was to move my hands around their body in such a way that it helped to rebalance the auras so they had no wholeness. I am not making this up. Liberal seminary. Catholic seminary.

The same seminary. I almost got fired. Not fired. We were told to go into deep states of relaxation, get in touch with animal guides from our subconscious to help us to guide us to a collective and kind.

I am not making this up. It goes on in certain churches. But there is evangelical and charismatic and Catholic equivalents to all of these types of things. How many charismatic and evangelical books value somebody who has had a vision of heaven as if they somehow have a better way to speak into the Christian life than other people?

It is because they have had a vision. Well the Bible just says here, look what it says about it. Look what it says. Verse 18, let no one disqualify you or judge you or condemn you, insisting on asceticism and the worship of angels, like getting in touch with spiritual powers, entering into all the details of their visions.

[34 : 18] What does it say? They are puffed up without reason by their fallen mind. They are actually just puffed up with pride. We are just puffed up with pride, not them, we are, and not holding fast to the head from whom the whole body nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments grows with a growth that is from God.

We are saved by God, we grow by God. Nothing in my hands I bring simply to the cross I cling to be saved. Nothing in my hands I bring simply to the cross I cling to grow.

So verse 20, if with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why as if you were still alive in the world, in other words, or why as if you let the world set the agenda, verse 20, do you submit to regulations?

That word regulations is the same there, the word that was there before translated in a different way in verse 13, basically the same ideas as the word translated earlier with legal demands in the English Standard Version in verse 14.

So all these regulations that come from the world. So if in fact when you put, you're in Christ and his death is your death and his resurrection is your resurrection and you're in him and he fills you, if this is the fundamental truth, and because on one hand it's already true that he completely fills you but it's also the not yet, you don't live, I don't live in this world as if I've never fallen and I don't have a sinful nature, it's already true but it's not yet fully true, it will only be fully true in the new heaven and the new earth, it will only be fully true when I see Jesus face to face that all that sin will be burned away but right now I live in a world and I still have these things and I have to deal with them in Christ but if it's true that I've died then why do I live as if the world is setting the agenda?

[36 : 26] That's what it means, do not handle, do not taste, do not touch, verse 21 referring to things that all perish as they are used according to human precepts and teachings in other words why is it do you think that you can prepare for eternity by manipulating that which passes away as you use it?

Why do you think that will fit you for heaven by manipulating things that perish as you use it? And here's the second big teaching in the text.

It fits with the first one about all the growth that comes from God. These have an indeed, these have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body.

And what this means is it means these all have the appearance of wisdom because they promote strong devotion to religious rules and religions that you've made up for yourself.

But it emphasizes strong devotion. And these all have an appearance of wisdom in promoting asceticism. In other words, pious self-denial.

[37 : 41] And they all have an appearance of wisdom because they seem to show a severity to the body or a severe body discipline. Like great mind over matter.

great emotional control and willpower and mental abilities. And it all seems to show these types of things. The power of my mind.

The power of my will. The discipline of my emotions. The discipline of my imaginations. All of these things that come from me. From me. From me. And I can learn techniques to how to control my breathing.

To control my feelings. And control my emotions. And I can learn exercises so that when somebody says something to me. I can control how I'm going to respond. And these can all have religious guises and religious forms.

But it's all about my control of my mind. My control of my mind. My control of my will. My control of my heart. My control of my emotions. And then what does the Bible say?

[38 : 45] The end of verse 23. They are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. They are of no value in stopping the indulgence of our sinful nature.

They don't stop my pride. They don't stop my anger. They don't stop my envy. They don't stop my sloth.

or sloth. Which is indifference to things which should be important. They don't necessarily stop my gluttony.

Which doesn't mean overeating. Overeating is part of gluttony. The other part of gluttony is just actually being too concerned and too picky about food. food. In other words, yeah, it doesn't necessarily stop my lust.

But it has the appearance as if it will do all of those types of things. I mean, we just keep being rocked by scandal after scandal in the Christian world. And not only in the Christian world, but you can go into the Buddhist world, the Hindu world, you can go into the secular world, where people who, I mean, Harvey Weinstein, I mean, his name's mud, but he would eat with the Clintons.

[40 : 12] He would be a favorite on CNN. All the while, his outward ability to manage his appearance and all of those things, but inside he was a cesspool. It's a secular problem, a spiritual problem, a Christian problem.

And yet there still seems to be something about it that it has to be me growing me, even though it's not me that can save me, only Christ can save me. And this is a Janus text because on one hand it's summarizing the things that have gone before in chapter two, but it's also now helping us to go for a better way, which is what chapter three and the first part of chapter four is going to talk about.

How is it that we grow from the gospel? How is it that we grow from grace? How is it that God grows you? What is it that we have to do as God grows you?

And God growing me is going to also mean I fail. I screw up. It's going to involve humility. God growing you is going to be trying to reorient your moral compass so you can take, yeah, it'd be all right if I lost a couple of pounds with the right type of thing.

That might be a good type of thing. It might be all right for putting on a couple of pounds of muscle or something like that. That's not a bad thing. You know, it might be good if I could have a little bit of extra money to be generous, maybe to give to the church or just to have for a rainy day.

[41 : 35] We need to have our compass reset by Christ, moral compass, the moral way to understand our lives. But the main thing is the normal way that we think about it in the terms of the world, and there's Christian versions of all of it, is listen again, they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

We need Christ, the hope of glory, and we need to be drawn by hope, the hope of glory, and we need to be assured of the hope of glory, and we need each other to do it, which is why small groups are important, spiritual friendships, why worshipping together is important.

Let's bow our heads, let's stand please, and let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, we, um, Father, I, I know how powerful it is in my own life that I can see specks really well in other people's eyes, all the while having a huge log stuck in my eye that I don't even notice.

And I know how easy it is for me to see other people bowing down to regulations and self-control and willpower and mind power and emotional power and all these things, and I, I can, Father, get really bent out of shape and anger or envy over these things without even realizing that I'm doing it.

I, I'm just really better at condemning others than seeing my own sin. Father, we thank you so much for your word. We ask, Father, that you would make the gospel real to our hearts, and that as it is made more and more real to us that when we put our faith and trust in Jesus, we are in him, and he is in us.

[43 : 31] All of the fullness of deity now dwells in us, not that we are divine, but that he dwells in us. And that every true moral wrong and every human regulation against us, those are all nailed to the cross.

Father, make that real to us grace, and that we are so that we can repent of our sins and learn those postures that make us open to grace, grace changing and transforming us in every aspect of who we are, that all that is within us will one day bless your holy name in a way that is truly good for us, that brings you glory, and is truly good for those around us and for our city.

And we ask all these things in the name of Jesus, your Son, and our Savior. Amen. Amen.