

Final Warnings

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[0 : 00] to have you go to Colossians chapter 2. We're going to finish Colossians chapter 2 today. It's verse 16 through 23. Rather than preach or read the whole passage at the beginning, I'm going to read it bit by bit as we go. And so let me just start out trying to pull you into where this passage is. You got to remember Paul is concerned for the Colossians because false teachers have crept in. And chapter 1, chapter 2, he has been portraying Christ as glorified. He's been giving this huge defense of how glorious Christ is and Christ is all we need and Christ is the one whom we should be living in and we don't need all these other things that these false teachers are telling us. And he comes down to the end of chapter 2. He finally takes direct aim at the false teachers and the things that they were teaching and he's giving one final warning basically telling the Colossians, don't get scammed. Don't get scammed. And when he goes to chapter 3, he's going to shift his focus from warning about the false teachers to instead telling the

Christians now, you want a full Christian life, this is how you have it. And he's going to do that through chapter 3 into chapter 4 and that's the way the book's going to work out. Well, so I was thinking about this and I was thinking about the idea that nobody likes to get scammed. No one likes to get scammed. No one likes to find that they have poured their heart and soul into something or they've given money to something only to find out that it was a scam. And I remember when I was in high school, I dated this girl and it turned out to be a scam. And what I mean by that is this, my parents could see that she was not good for me. They could tell right up front that she was not going to help me become a better person, to help me become a better Christian or anything. And without telling me, they prayed that we would break up. Right? And they prayed hard evidently because when we did break up and I was no longer dating this girl, I remember telling my parents and my mom like wipes her brow and says, whew, we have been praying so hard that you'd break up with her because she was not good for you. And I thought to myself, wow, that is, you know, and they began to tell me the things that they saw.

And that's where I realized what a scam it was. And it was a scam because she was really only into the relationship for herself. It wasn't a thing of, of, of love and concern. It was just all about her. Now, I think that she probably had some issues and I don't, I don't want, I'm not trying to tear her down. But the point is, is that it's easy for us to get scammed. It's easy for us to, to hear someone say something and think to ourselves, well, yeah, that's the truth. And oh yeah, I'll buy in. And oh yeah, maybe this, this sounds right. This sounds good. And the reality is, is that it's not. And Paul is telling the Colossians that they're getting scammed in three ways. And these three ways of them getting scammed gives us a way to kind of visualize and say, we need to avoid this. And he gives us the solution for it as well. So I want us to look at these three scams, if you will, that we need to avoid from Colossians two, 16 through 17. The first one is we need to avoid the shadows. We need to avoid the shadows.

Let's look at verse 16 and 17. Paul says, Now, the nature of this warning is that Paul says, let no one pass judgment. Now, what he's not saying is that when someone's looking at you about to pass judgment, you like smack them on the face or something and say, don't you pass judgment. It's not, it's not a controlling what they say.

It's also not a controlling what they think. He's not telling you to walk around and say, stop thinking that. What he's saying in let no one pass judgment upon you is don't let what someone else is saying affect your behavior, particularly if it's something about one of these things.

[4 : 54] don't let them say, oh, well, you know what we did. I mean, I hear that you prayed over your meal last night, but we prayed for 12 hours. Like, you know, when somebody says that, you kind of go like, wow, I'm not as good a Christian as you are. Right? And so that's sort of the, the feel that Paul's giving. He says, don't let anyone pass judgment upon you. Don't be taken captive by

their teaching, by their life. And here's, here's the way this one breaks down. It breaks down into something that trying to forbid and something that they're trying to encourage them to do a demand, if you will.

And he says, in regards to questions about food and drink, questions about food and drink. Now, here's the, here's the truth. The truth is, is that this first scam was Jewish in flavor, right? It was Jewish in flavor because it was taking from the old Testament and using it in ways that the Old Testament was never meant to be used and trying to force these Christians to adopt Old Testament ways of living. And so this food and drink, you could think of it in a couple of ways. He's going to forbid them to eat food. Why? Well, because maybe they're trying to force the clean and unclean laws, right? Don't eat catfish. I didn't eat catfish. You ate catfish. You must not be a very good Christian, right? Kind of a thing. Now that's a simplistic way of saying it, but you get the illustration, right? It's this forbidding of food, but there's also in the Old Testament fasting, right? There's all kinds of fasting in the Old Testament and all the fasting in the Old Testament was primarily targeted at two things. Number one, a mourning over your sin. And number two, a mourning over the consequences of your sin. That's what Old Testament fasting was about. And so you can almost see these

Christians being taught by these Jewish flavored false teachers, hey, you ought to not be eating that food. You ought to fast. You ought to abstain from this kind of food. But they go further than that because it talks about drink. You need to abstain from this drink. Now the Old Testament doesn't have very much about abstaining from drink. There's very little, as a matter of fact. There's really only a couple of things. You get the Nazarite vow. Anybody know what the Nazarite vow is? The Nazarite vow is you dedicate your life to God and you can't do three things. Number one, you can't cut your hair.

Number two, you can't be around a dead body. And number three, you can't drink anything made from the fruit of the vine. So whether it's wine or whether it's grape juice, you can't have any of it. And it was a special thing that somebody would do to dedicate themselves to the Lord. It's not even something that we're commanded to do. So you're kind of thinking to yourself, it's like, what is going on here? Well, what's going on here is that you have these false teachers saying, listen, you want to be pleasing to the Lord? You want to have a pleasing life to the Lord? You need to abstain from these foods. You need to go on fast. You need to, you know, cut out this kinds of drinking and these kinds of things. And the fact of the matter is, is that this is not at all what the Christians were supposed to do. He goes on and he, he says, now there's a demand. They have questions regarding festival, new moon and Sabbaths. Festivals, new moons and Sabbaths. Do you know what those festivals, new moons and Sabbaths are? The festivals are the feast days of the Jews, right? You have the feast of Passover, the feast of first fruits, the feast of weeks. Those are, they're recorded in, uh, in the Old Testament, in the law, right? In the, in the Torah. The new moon was the start of every month and the Sabbath was the weekly, right? It's the weekly sort of thing. But the reason that these are held together is because when you hold these three together, it's speaking about ceremonial law.

[8 : 56] We all know that when you look at the feast, the Passover, the feast of weeks, the feast of the first fruits, they had all kinds of sacrifices during those times, right? So many lambs, so many cattle, so much, uh, drink offering, so much food offering, so much of this, so, and, and, and then sacrifice these things. And you had these seven days of these feast days, but here's the, here's the interesting thing. It wasn't just the feast days that were ceremonial in terms of the practice, but it was also the new moon and the Sabbaths. Listen to Numbers 28 verses 9 through 11.

On the Sabbath day, two male lambs, a year old, without blemish, and two-tenths of an ephah, a fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil and its drink offering. This is the burnt offering of every Sabbath, besides the regular burnt offering and its drink offering. Verse 11, at the beginning of your months, that's going to be the new moon, you shall offer a burnt offering to the Lord, two bulls from the herd, one ram, seven male lambs, a year old, without blemish. So what these false teachers were saying is that you have Jesus, you're a Christian, that's great for you to really be pleasing to the Lord. You need to observe the feast days, you need to observe the new moon, and you need to observe the Sabbath. Now, not the Sabbath out of the Ten Commandments, but the Sabbath out of the ceremonial law offering these sacrifices. In other words, they're trying to get them to go back to these things that, because of Christ's sacrifice, have now been done away with.

It'd be like someone telling you today that in order for you to be pleasing to God, you must, you should, it would be a sin to not celebrate today as Palm Sunday. You know today is Palm Sunday, right? So if somebody said to you, you must celebrate Palm Sunday. Now, I'm just going to just make everybody mad, so here we go, all right? If somebody were to tell you, you must celebrate Palm Sunday, that it's a sin for you to not celebrate Palm Sunday, they have zero scripture to back that up.

God has never commanded us to observe Palm Sunday. Now, if you want to observe Palm Sunday, you are free. You are free to do so. But that's very similar to what's going on here, is that these false teachers are pulling from things from the Old Testament that are supposed to be pointers to Christ. And the solution of this is to avoid the shadow things and look for the substance. All of these things were shadows of the real thing. All of these were shadows that pointed forward to the real thing. You know how in TVs and movies, you'll see a scene open up and there's this shadow on the wall and the music is kind of like, ooh, you know, and here's this shadow and it gets bigger, bigger, bigger. And then all of a sudden, the hero is revealed in the scene or the villain is revealed in the scene. The shadow, though it was real, wasn't the thing. It was the villain or the hero that cast the shadow. That was the real thing. Paul is saying, listen, all this ceremonial law, all these things that pointed from the Old Testament forward to the real thing, the real thing is Christ. Don't be taken captive by people telling you that you've got to do shadowy things out of the Old Testament in order to please God because you have Christ, the real thing, the thing that everything points to. And anytime we take from the Old Testament and say that as a practice for Christians, they must do this in order to be pleasing to God, we're falling into the false doctrine of these false teachers in Colossae. There are things in the Old Testament that surely are very clear and must be just brought forward as they are. Let me give you one example.

[13 : 20] How many of you know the second great commandment? The first great commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. But the second one is to love your neighbor as yourself. Do you know where it comes from? The book of Leviticus.

Now it's super crystal clear what love your neighbor as yourself means. And that one needs to be brought right over because even Jesus quotes it and says that we're supposed to obey this. So we don't have to look at that and say, well maybe I shouldn't obey it because it's in the Old Testament. No, that's not the attitude. But there are things that people like to pull out of the Old Testament and tell us that if you want to have a fulfilling life, you want to have a life that pleases the Lord, you need these things in your life.

Like the diet that Daniel had with his three friends. Listen, the diet that Daniel had was never meant for you to follow in order for you to have a life that pleases the Lord. It's just there showing us what Daniel did. Or how about the still small voice? Let me see if I can make you mad. How many times have you been told you just need to listen for the still small voice? Oh man, so many times. But we need to take it in context. Who had the still small voice spoken to them? Elijah. Do you know what the condition was of Elijah at the time? He was running scared from Jezebel, thinking he was the only prophet of God left. He was in deep depression and he was wallowing in self-pity. And as God showed these three signs to him and didn't speak to him through these big things, then God comes to him, speaks to him and says, why are you here, Elijah? Get up and go. Go anoint a new king in Syria. Go anoint a new king in Israel.

And go anoint a new prophet in your place. In other words, the still small voice is a voice of chastisement. Do you understand? When we just sort of willy-nilly grab things out of the Old Testament and go like, oh, well, Christians, if you want a life that pleases the Lord, here, do this. Without any proper interpretation of what that is, we're just asking for trouble in our lives. Or laying out the fleece before the Lord, like Gideon. You got a major decision in your life and you have a tendency, I know you do because I do too. I used to do it all the time, of laying out a fleece, right? Giving God a test. God let this happen, that way I know what your will is. Gideon is not to be followed. Gideon did that out of disbelief, right? Or the idea of killing your own giants, right? David killed Goliath and so what you're supposed to do is any situation in your life that troubles you is a big giant and you're supposed to take that giant out. That is not what the story of David and Goliath is about.

[16 : 23] The story of David and Goliath is about the anointed one of God taking out the enemy of God so that the people of God go free. It's an image of Christ. What I'm saying to you is that so often Christians are put into this place to say that if you really want to live a life pleasing to the Lord,

you've got to do all of these things that get foisted upon us and it's not at all what it's what we're supposed to do. He's told us what we're supposed to do and he's going to tell us and he's going to be clear with this. And so don't get scammed by this. As a matter of fact, there are a lot of people who aren't Christians who they get confused by all of this too because we don't know how to use the Old Testament properly. So avoid the shadow scam and realize that you have all you need in Christ.

If you have Christ and you have his word, then you have all you need. The second thing or the second scam is we want to avoid mysticism. Okay, mysticism. I need to define mysticism. So I'm going to put a definition up on the screen for you. Mysticism is the search for a higher initiation into spiritual mysteries or a higher consecration to spiritual realities or a union with deity by a withdrawal from the external world. Okay, so I draw away from the world and by means of contemplation. So it's just me by myself with my thoughts. And in this way, mystics profess to apprehend truths which are beyond understanding. In other words, it avoids the word of God, right? It doesn't read the word of God, but it just goes out by itself just to try to contemplate and grab a hold of spiritual realities with just nothing but my mind. That's what a mystic is. Now listen to what Paul says in verse 18 and 19. Let no one disqualify you insisting on asceticism and worship of angels going on in detail 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 grows with a growth that is from God.

Now this warning here, don't let anyone disqualify you really. It's the idea of someone robbing you of a prize. Robbing you of a prize.

You're not to listen to people who are going to teach you things that rob you of the richness of your walk with the Lord. And their demands are a little different, right? This, this, you could call this a Gnostic flavored scam, right? It's a Gnostic mystic flavored scam. They, they, they insist on asceticism.

[19 : 20] Okay. What's asceticism? Asceticism is the harsh treatment of the body. Now this particular word means a harsh treatment of the body primarily expressed through fasting. That's just what the word is.

Okay. Then he talks about worship of angels, worship of angels. Now this word worship is translated oftentimes as religion or religious. And so what's happening here is that they're these angelic beings that many of these Gnostic false teachers were seeking to connect with in order to connect with the divine. In other words, they felt like the divine was so far removed from them that they needed a mediator between them and God in order to connect to, in order to get to the divine. And these two things probably worked together where they would fast, keep themselves off of food, to put themselves in a more meditative state, to connect to one of these spiritual beings in order to try to connect with God. And they got this information going on in detail about visions.

That's what the text says. It says they went on in detail about visions. This idea of visions is the idea that they are seeing something and this thing that they see in their vision tells them that they ought to do these things such as fasting and these angels and all those kinds of things. You might think to yourself, this just sounds crazy. Well, of course it sounds crazy.

Paul, Paul is trying to help these Colossians understand that these false teachers are getting their knowledge from themselves. They see these visions. You know, it's interesting to me that King James is based upon some Byzantine manuscripts. And since the King James was written, we've discovered most of the Greek manuscripts that we currently have, right? And so the oldest manuscripts and the King James disagree right here on this verse. But I think the King James is instructive here because what the King James does is it adds the word not. It says that they go on in detail about things that they have not seen. Because what the King James is telling us, or at least what the Greek scholars who were, or the Greek scribes who were copying these manuscripts were trying to portray, is that these people are not really seeing dreams. They're not really seeing visions. They're not really connecting with something. This is all demonic or made up. And the point is, is that Paul is saying, listen, don't let, don't let these people scam you with their mysticism. Telling you that you ought to fast in order to connect to spiritual entities in order to get to God, because how you know the truth about things is through these visions. No, that just comes from a puffed up, sensuous mind.

[22 : 28] But we have to deal with an objection here. Some might say, but, but Brady, hasn't there been in the Bible dreams and visions that people had and God spoke through those things?

Absolutely.

Absolutely. Absolutely. He has. Throughout the Old Testament and then some in the New Testament, you get people who've had dreams and visions. How do we know the difference then? How do we know the difference between Peter seeing a vision of these animals that are unclean coming down and he's told to get up and eat versus some false teacher that comes along and says, I've had a vision.

Well, here's the difference. This is the way I take it anyway. Hebrews chapter one, verse one and two. Verse one says, long ago, and many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. Now, just full stop right there. Just take that in for a second.

It's saying that God spoke to the fathers. It's saying that God spoke to the fathers by the prophets long ago.

And it's saying that God spoke to the fathers by the prophets long ago at many times. There were many times that God spoke to the fathers by the prophets. He spoke to them many times. And then there's also this in many ways. You go through the scriptures and you will find prophets that are told things directly, prophets that have dreams, prophets that have visions. You have prophets that have angels show up to them. God spoke to them. God spoke to the fathers many times and in many ways. There is no doubt about that God did that. Verse two, but it's the strongest Greek contradiction you can have, right?

[24 : 35] A contrast you can have. But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his son.

Whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom also he created the world. When his son came into this world, the revelation brought by God through his son is very different from the revelation brought by God through the prophets. Now without the dreams and visions, it's now a more clear, direct word. Without the mysterious of the Old Testament and the types and shadows and all these things, it's now the fulfillment and the substance and the more clear and the more direct way that he speaks. And what Paul is saying is that these people, they reject Christ.

You go on into verse 19 and you see that they reject Christ. They're not holding to the head who is Christ. And so they're saying that for Christians to really live a life that pleases the Lord, they have to have the knowledge of God and that knowledge comes through this vision, fasting, and angels. But what's the solution for us? The solution is to cling to Christ. God has spoken through creation. Psalm 19, the heavens declare the glory of God and God has spoken in his word. And you have in the two books of God, creation and his word, all that you need in order to hear from God, in order to know what God desires of you. I have a young man that I've been trying to disciple for years. And he came to me one time and he was talking to me about this whole idea because a lot of the Christians that he was around were talking about how, you know, God, well, God has spoken to me and God, I hear, I hear from God and they're very not careful with what they're saying. Right. But all of this idea of God speaking, God speaking. And he just said, you know, I don't think I'm a Christian. And I said, why? He said, because I've, I've never heard God speak. And he was just super honest. He was just like, I've just never heard God speak. And I said, okay, so why do you think that you're not a Christian because you've never heard God speak? He said, well, all these people around me, like they're talking about that they hear God speak all the time. And I'm just like, I've never heard him speak. And so I'm just like, maybe I'm not a Christian. And I thought to myself, well, that's, that's a shame. That's a shame that we're not careful with our language enough so that we end up leading people astray. Beloved, maybe you won't like to hear this because maybe you have a certain view of things, but I've never heard God speak either. You were not a second class citizen of the kingdom of God because you've never heard God speak. You're fully saved, fully pleasing to the Lord because you pray and you read his word. And there's a lot of people that want us to hear from

[27 : 44] God in other ways outside of these things. And I just think to myself, and maybe I'm just simple minded, but you know, when I look at the word of God, when I look at the Bible and I start reading it, I think to myself, I don't even understand this. Like I'll go and I've preached through John's gospel twice. I've preached the first Corinthians twice. I've preached through Genesis and Exodus probably three or four times. I've preached through so many places multiple times in 35 years of ministry.

And I look back at this and I kind of go, every time I study something, I learn something new. And the commandments that tell me to love my neighbor as myself are commandments that I look at and I think about that sometimes. And I go like, I still am terrible at that command.

I do not want God to speak to me outside of the word because I'm going to be responsible for more than I can't handle. And he's never told me that I need that to be pleasing to him.

And I just feel like that there's such a scam in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ these days that takes and wants us to get outside of the word, get into our feelings and leave it at that.

And I'm just saying, if you've got the word and you're serious about reading the word and you're praying and ask God to help you understand his word, you have all you need to grow in Christ and to know the truth. Don't be scammed. 2 Timothy 3, 16 and 17, Paul says, all scripture is breathed out by God and it's profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, training and righteousness. It's profitable for that so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. If every good work that I could ever do, I am thoroughly equipped for, I'm complete by the scripture, then what do I need anything else for?

[29 : 59] The scriptures teach me how to pray. The scriptures teach me how to be a husband. The scriptures teach me how to preach. The scriptures teach me how to love. The scriptures teach me how to confront. The scriptures teach me how to defend the faith. The scriptures teach me all I need to know. It teaches me how to be joyful in Christ. It teaches me how to love him with all of my heart. Do I need anything else other than that?

no and you don't either and i don't want you to walk away i don't want you to be like this young man that i've been trying to disciple and walk out thinking to yourself that maybe you're somehow less of a christian because you've never heard god speak because that's not the truth the third scam is the scam of slavery and by that i mean submitting yourself to these regulations look at verse 20 through 23 it says in verse 20 if with christ you've died to the elemental spirits of the world that elemental spirits could be the idea of rudimentary uh aspects of the world this word spirits or rudiments are kind of the same it's the idea that the basic building blocks of the cosmos right why as if you were still alive in the world do you submit to regulations do not handle do not taste do not touch referring to things that all perish as they are used according to human precepts and teaching these have indeed an appearance of wisdom and promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh here is another false teaching and the implied warning is don't submit yourself again to it that was slavery for anybody and everybody who lived under that don't go live under that again don't submit yourself to the rules and laws of men you can almost see that this has both a jewish and a gnostic sort of mixing together i mean you could just think about the sabbath laws that were put in place by the pharisees you know we talked a couple weeks ago on midweek bible study that if you spit on on the sabbath day it was fine to spit on the sabbath day so long as you spit on a rock because if you spit on the dirt what happens you're plowing and you're doing work right so you can see this idea of these regulations taught by men these regulations out of the minds and the imaginations of men do not handle do not taste do not touch and so the implied warning is don't don't put yourself back underneath all of that as a matter of fact he goes on to talk about how this thing looks like it's the right kind of thing right verse 23 these have indeed an appearance of wisdom when somebody tells you hey if you're a christian and you want to fight against your sin this is what you need to do it's going to sound wise it's going to look attractive you're going to think to yourself oh i ought to do that and paul is saying it's promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body which are no value in stopping the fleshly indulgence in other words the first scam is how do you live a life pleasing to god the second scam is how do you know what's true the third scam is how do you fight your sin all three of those things are things that every christian that i know of wants to do every christian that i know of wants to please god every christian i know of wants to know god every christian that i know of wants to fight their sin and these false teachers were telling them things that were not going to work instead they just needed christ and here he comes back to asceticism it's the same word harsh treatment of the body primarily expressed in fasting i think it's fascinating that in all three warnings all three groups all three scams attempt to get christians to fast group one wants christians to fast using the old shadowy ways of doing things in order to please god group two wants the christians to fast in order to attain divisions that connect them to spiritual entities so that they can really come to know who god is and group three wants christians to fast and follow a moral code made by men in order to fight their sin and the fleshly indulgence that's still in us do you not see what's going on every christian i know wants to live a godly life that's what that is to please god to know him to fight your sin that's living a godly life notice what second peter says about this he says that his divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness

through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence how do we know him through creation and the scriptures the creation tells us god exists the scriptures tell us that this god who exists saves and through that we have all that we need that pertain to life and to godliness so what is the solution to the problem avoid the shadowy things and cling to christ avoid mysticism and listen to christ avoid slavery to men's rules and look at being united with christ and his death in order to fight your sin he is the substance he is the final revelation he is the head over all things and if you are a christian and you've trusted christ then your life is hidden in christ with god and you have everything you need to be able to live a godly life the last thing that that brings up is this if you're not a christian what if you're not if you're not you've got to understand where you stand you've got to understand that you are not connected to god at all except that you're his enemy because if you've never trusted christ think of it this way we have broken god's law so many times just the very first great commandment love the lord your god with all your heart soul and mind have you ever spent every waking moment of your life every moment of your life loving god with all your heart soul and mind then you've broken that law and the truth is is that if god on judgment day judges you by the breaking of the law all of us are going to be guilty and that ought to concern you because the only the only hope for that situation is that what god has done for guilty sinners he sent his son to die and to pay the price for us and you don't need all these other things all you need is christ all you need is christ my prayer is that god would use his word to challenge you for you as a christian to see that you you're not second class your first class and if you're not for you to be bothered by your eternity by your state not knowing where you're going to go my prayer is that that will bother you until you turn to christ you