

## Colossians 2:16-23

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Date: 01 October 2017

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[ 0 : 00 ] We will be continuing our sermon series in the book of Colossians. I invite you to turn with me to Colossians chapter 2, starting in verse 16.! If you don't have a Bible, we'd love to give you one.

They're on the back table back there. They are already bookmarked to today's passage. This is God's Word.

Therefore, let no one pass judgment on you. In questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or new moon or a Sabbath, these are a shadow of the things to come.

The substance belongs to Christ. Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason, by a 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.

If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, 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 teachings.

[ 1 : 19 ] These have, indeed, an appearance of wisdom, in promoting self-made religion, and asceticism, and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

Last week, the Apostle Paul had us hard at work. We worked really hard, and it was a long road that we walked, right?

It was one of our longer sermons. Deconstructing worldviews, right? Well, why? Why was that the first step in walking, as chapter 2, verse 6 says, walking by faith in the same way that we received Christ?

See, if you start the journey with the wrong map, that's, you know, the things we think about the world, how greatness is achieved. We think the wrong things. If we start the journey with the wrong map, we don't stand a chance of getting there.

And Paul is telling us, don't go the wrong way. Maps to the good life, apart from Christ, are dead ends, or worse. That's the first and the foundational step to a walk with Christ.

[ 2 : 32 ] And today, he says, as you go down that road, be careful of the steps that you take. In a way, he's saying, don't shoot yourself in the foot.

Not only will it impede your progress, but it hurts. If you don't attend to it, it'll stall your journey. All together, and you might even bleed out along the way.

Well, the Christian life isn't easy. That doesn't mean it's complicated. Today, Paul sets us free. Sets us free. From a lot of the complicated baggage that we ourselves have added to the Christian life. And so it's filled with prohibitions. Do not do this. Do not let that happen. And at first, that can sound really negative.

But what he's trying to do for us, it shouldn't drag us down. He's not trying to limit Christians. He's trying to set us free. He wants to break the chains of false, or extraneous, or just additional religious practices that are not found in Scripture, that weigh us down along the way.

[ 3 : 48 ] And he wants God's free grace to blow away our additions and breathe fresh, clean air into the church. So he says, don't be captive to man-made religion.

Don't submit yourself to a yoke of slavery. Don't live under elemental spirits of the world according to man's wisdom. So it's full of negatives.

But Paul is saying, friends, you're alive. You're alive in Christ. So don't live lifeless Christian lives. So he wants to break the chains and throw off the burdens and free Christians from slavery that we don't belong in.

So let's pray. Father, this is a challenging message. A challenging passage. It's uncomfortable. But Lord, will we live on the solid rock of Jesus, in his death and his resurrection, alone, and live by his word, alone, where we look for life nowhere else?

[ 5 : 03 ] Lord, will you help us to cast off chains of man-made religion so that we are free to serve you joyfully.

We pray that in Christ's name. Amen. Paul begins today in verse 16 and verse 17, saying, 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.

These are a shadow of the things to come. But the substance belongs to Christ. If you lived in the first century and you were a new Christian, you came from one of two places.

You came from the Greco-Roman world or you came from the Jewish world. In fact, many of the early Christians were Jews who recognized Jesus as the Messiah.

He is the fulfillment of all the old covenant promises. Now that in itself is a year's worth of sermons, right? And to that I'll point you maybe to the book of Hebrews or something like that, which shows that the priesthood awaited his priesthood.

[ 6 : 14 ] The sacrifices pointed to his sacrifice. The feasts celebrated his victory. The prophet spoke about his ministry. And so following him, that's the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

But what if you had grown up in the synagogues your whole life following after the law of Moses in honoring the Lord, recognized that Messiah started following hard after him, you would have had a lifetime of rhythms and family traditions related to the festivals, the Sabbaths, and the Old Testament law that was indeed fulfilled in Christ.

And so you would have this whole background of things you did. Things you did as a family.

Traditions that you really enjoy.

And now, when Christ comes and fulfills them all, what do you do with it?

And, what do you expect other people to do with it? Right? If he's the savior of the world who comes from the Jewish people, are we supposed to be Jewish too?

[ 7 : 33 ] Are we supposed to do all those Jewish things and then also believe Christ? See, if he fulfills them and they no longer are necessary, participating in them as a means of gaining access to God is actually an insult to Christ.

Why? One pastor put it like this. Say that you've been separated from a loved one for a long time. You keep a cherished photo of them in your wallet.

These days, that would probably be more likely to have a picture on your phone. But, you know, you look at it all the time. You come to really enjoy not just the person that the picture points to, but the picture itself becomes meaningful to you.

It's a sign, it's a symbol, and you hold on to it. What happens on the day when you're reunited with that long-lost loved one?

You're supposed to run and hug them and kiss them and say, how have you been? But if you whip out the picture instead and just look at it while they're standing there, what have you done?

[ 8 : 42 ] Who have you loved? Do you love me anymore? I'm the one that the photo pictures, right? And so, there was a great longing for Jewish Christians to remain, in some sense, Jewish, as well as following after Christ.

and some, whether they were confused about what the Old Testament law pointed to, or, if some of them wanted to show off their religiosity, made it a requirement for other people.

Said, no, you've got to do these same things. Now, when we require things like that, all sorts of stuff can happen in our own hearts, right?

If you're interested in looking good before others, you can really flaunt your piety. If you know, oh, look at me celebrating this. Look at me being extra pious here.

or if you're interested in gaining influence among people, you can hold these new requirements over people's heads.

[ 9 : 55 ] And that's why he says, let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to festivals or new moons or Sabbaths. In the moment, we add to the simple gospel and the simple instructions for Christian life.

That's the moment that we've left Christ for man-made religion. Now, without a cultural heritage of Judaism, we in this room are not very likely to be tempted to observe those same festivals and rules, right?

I mean, who here is planning this year to throw an awesome festival of booths? Like, who, right? So, like I said, like we said last week, right?

We started kind of in the shallow end of the pool. The remaining verses are going to get home a little closer, I think, for Western evangelical Christians like you and me.

Paul moves to verse 18 and 19 and says, let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by a 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.

[ 11 : 22 ] I think it's awesome that he begins here and says, let no one disqualify you. Because if you look back to chapter 1, verse 12, it was God who qualified us.

Give thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. How did that happen? Well, that is the gospel message.

If we look to chapter 2, verse 13 and 14, we see it so clearly. Jordan already read this, but it's worth hearing again. You, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us of all our trespasses by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.

This he set aside, nailing it to his cross. He made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God.

Friends, if that is not your story, receive his grace today. He will unite you to his son and nail your sins to his cross. If God has qualified us, chapter 1, verse 12, for an inheritance among the saints, don't let someone else, someone lesser, disqualify you.

[ 12 : 54 ] And he goes on here and lists several practices that people tend to insist on, to add on, to bolt on to Christianity. Things that are not required in scripture, and things that will distract us, things that will weigh us down, put burdens on us.

I'm going to teach you a term today, extra-biblical. That doesn't mean even more biblical than before. You aren't extra-biblical when you start reading John Stott, that the cadets are going to read, right?

Extra-biblical, when we say that, we mean adding something to the Bible, something that isn't there to begin with. It could be a good thing, like thinking through the practical ways to live out the Christian life, or it could be a bad thing, like adding a dash of legalism, or white supremacy, or licentiousness to the Christian life.

And that's what Paul is talking about here, these practices in verses 18 and 19. They are extra-biblical. They don't come from this revealed word of God. They come, you'll see, from the wisdom of men.

So asceticism or false humility, putting on a show of depriving yourself. When Jesus talks about fasting, how does he talk about it?

[ 14 : 20 ] He says, don't make a big deal about it, right? Don't make a show of it. Worship of angels is obviously not in the Bible. It violates the first commandment, right? He probably also has in view here the idea that we would need angels as intermediaries between us and God.

It's very common in the ancient world. There is one mediator between the Father and his children, Jesus Christ. No angels, no saints, nothing.

Now, on the one hand, it's really easy for us to look outside of our doors here and say, oh, look at those people who are doing terrible things that are bolting on extra stuff.

to Christianity and weighing people down with new burdens, right? There are famous charlatans that you could probably name if you've been in the Christian world very long, who teach all sorts of nonsense in the name of Jesus just to get a following, right?

There are some ministries that say you can't please God until you pay us X number of dollars, right? I recently stumbled across a book called The Karma of Jesus.

[ 15 : 29 ] I haven't read it, but the idea of karma is exactly, precisely the antithesis of grace. Karma says what goes around comes around. You get exactly what you deserve.

And the cross says that Jesus took what you deserve and gave you what you do not deserve, right? It is the exact opposite. One mega church pastor tweeted this week, and I say church very lightly, the guy denies the trinity, he's a prosperity preacher, but he tweeted this week, if you obey God, you will never be broke another day in your life.

Tell that to Paul, who wrote this letter in a prison cell for his faith, right? Tell that to the many Christians all over the world who are impoverished, who are suffering for their faith. The many Christians in his church who are on welfare, right? So in your face, really overt heresy, that's really easy to spot, stuff that we add on the Christian gospel. But the extra-biblical practices of verse 18 and 19, they sneak in, unawares, really subtly into the church, and put us under bondage.

[16:51] Think of something so simple as, how should we pray? how should we pray? The scriptures are clear. The Lord Jesus, when he was asked by his disciples, teach us to pray, he taught them, here's how to pray.

The Lord's prayer. The Bible's got a prayer book, it's called the book of Psalms, full of examples of how to pray to the Lord. If you go to a Christian bookstore, you'll probably find lots of books that'll put you under a sort of bondage by saying you won't really experience God's power in prayer until you put this other practice into your prayer life.

And most of those things come from paganism and Eastern religions and have nothing to do with the very simple instructions of the Bible. another subtle bondage that comes into the church, an extra biblical idea, are the cartoon caricatures of masculinity and femininity that I think we sometimes have in Christian circles.

One best-selling book on Christian masculinity has virtually nothing to do with Christ and everything to do with you and your adventure. Now, at first, that might sound naively harmless, right?

But by making the Christian life about your adventure, it fails the test of verse 19, holding fast to Christ instead, holding fast to your adventure, right?

[18:39] And second, it puts a huge burden, on people's shoulders, right? Gone is the simple Christian life. Now you must find some mountain, climb it, rescue a princess, all while wearing flannel with a full beard, right?

And here I thought Christianity was about Mount Calvary, not your mountain, not my mountain to climb. Here I thought Christian manhood was about growing and spiritual maturity.

And as Paul instructs us in 1 Thessalonians 4, to aspire to live quietly. There's this brash bravado, I think, that we have imported from rugged American individualism and the Wild West mentality and said, that's manhood.

That's a version of manhood. It's not a terrible one. But if that's what manhood must be, then we've added the gospel. There's nothing wrong with adventure, there's nothing wrong with mountains or flannel of beards, but neither are they required in Christ.

So if that becomes the Christian life, if that's how the Christian life must be lived out, someone is loading you up with burdens! That Jesus didn't mean for you to bear. And the expectations that our culture, that our Christian culture, often puts on women apart from the Bible, are even heavier burdens.

[20:10] It's these kinds of burdens that Paul wants us to be free of. Don't let people shackle you with extra practices that don't come from the Scriptures.

Paul also mentions going on about visions and not holding to the head. Some of you may have heard the name Nabeel Qureshi. He died probably a week and a half ago, age 35.

He was a former Muslim and he married a friend of ours, actually, one of Aaron's classmates at the academy. He was a medical doctor and then immediately after becoming a doctor started working with Ravi Zacharias International as an apologist to Muslims.

Now, he wrote a book, he wrote several books, but one of his books is the story of his testimony of coming out of Islam. He's actually a member of the family of Muhammad and coming to Christ. Now, if you know anything about evangelism in Muslim contexts, the Muslim world often reports visions of Jesus Christ before coming to faith.

[21:28] Nabil himself had two visions in his journey. Most of his conversion testimony has to do with his roommate who faithfully explained the gospel to him and answered his questions while he was in medical school.

But along the way, there were two visions. If you read his book, Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus, he doesn't make much of those visions. He reports them.

He says that they were confirmation, but he doesn't, as we see in verse 18, going on in detail about visions.

What he did was not go on in detail about visions. What he did is he went on and on and on about Christ. There's a big difference. Christianity isn't about our experience.

It's about our Lord. And so verse 19 tells us to hold fast to the head. That's one very important litmus test for any spiritual practice.

[ 22 : 35 ] First, is it biblical? Do we find it in the Bible? And second, verse 19, does the practice of this discipline make me hold fast to Jesus?

If not, it might be helpful, maybe not, but it's certainly not required. And so let no one, Paul says, let no one put that burden on your shoulders because it has nothing to do with pure and simple Christian life.

A simple Christian life that the Lord wants for us, not a burden. My yoke is easy, Jesus said. My burden is light. So in verses 16 and 17, Paul freed us from observing old covenant practices as we live in the new covenant.

And then in 18 and 19, he frees us from the people who would require spiritual practices that aren't outlined in the Bible. Galatians 5 says, it is for freedom that Christ set us free.

Don't put on a yoke of slavery again. Now we could have that said to us and almost feel like there's no obligation for Christians anymore.

[ 23 : 47 ] Right? Are there no requirements placed on us? Is it all grace with no responsibility?

Well, in chapter 3, Paul is going to show us that because God, in his grace, has liberated us from sin, it's our responsibility to put to death our sinful desires and actions.

Christian obedience to the word is not an option. It's a responsibility. And so it's important to distinguish between passing judgment on these human standards that are coming in from outside these caricatures of masculinity and femininity, these foreign practices in our prayer life, those sorts of things, and holding each other accountable to our confession of faith and to Christian obedience. So we do rebuke sin, we correct error and heresy, we call for repentance, for God's glory and for the person's good. The extreme end of that is church discipline.

It's an act of a congregation whereby the congregation says, your behavior and your refusal to repent indicates that your profession of faith is not genuine. And so we will treat you as an unbeliever, we will exclude you from the sacraments, and we will evangelize you.

But the church only, only ever directs its correction, only ever directs its discipline at things that are biblically required, never on something that's not biblically required.

[ 25 : 35 ] So it's only in matters of biblical faithfulness that we can legitimately correct one another. And at the same time, it's actually in the midst of that obedience.

And the question, how do we obey scripture, that we are most likely to find the extra-biblical chains that Paul is concerned about.

That's what he's going to show us in verses 20 to 22. If with Christ you died, to the elemental spirits of the world, why?

As if you were still alive in the world, 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 teachings.

I think this is where American Christians get tripped up with adding to the scriptures, putting burdens on people they do not need to bear the most.

[ 26 : 41 ] This is the judgment from other people that you are most likely to experience within the church. And it looks a lot like what the Jewish people did at the time of Christ.

The Jewish rabbis had a practice of teaching called halakha, which comes from the Hebrew word halak, which simply means to walk. And it means the way we should walk in the commandments. The rabbis had identified 613 commandments in the Old Testament. Now, they decided to write down how you are supposed to live out all of those 613 commandments.

So they made rules about God's rules. Follow them? Are we tracking here? They made rules about God's rules. So for every one of those 613 rules, there were all of these regulations on how you went about making sure you were following them.

halakha. Now, that tradition of halakha continues to this day in Orthodox Jewish communities. This week, I was kind of researching this and thinking through it, and I found on YouTube a Jewish rabbi in an Orthodox Jewish context who was trying to help his flock figure out how to obey the commandment to do no work on the Sabbath yet drink coffee on the Sabbath.

[ 28 : 21 ] Now, that might seem so frivolous to you and me, but cooking is work. Right? Well, in their context, yes, it absolutely is, and you cannot do it.

And so, I can't tell you that I fully understand what his instructions were, but it involved three different cups. It involved an automatic timer.

It involved a lot of work, which is really ironic if you think about it. If you are adding a ton of work to making coffee so that you aren't working on the Sabbath, you have completely defeated the purpose.

In their zeal to do no work on the Sabbath, they've ended up doing a lot more work. That's bondage. That's absurd. And I think we do it, too, in different ways.

We do the same thing to each other. When we require people to do anything beyond what the Bible requires, or require people to obey Scripture in the exact same way that we do.

[ 29 : 35 ] And Paul doesn't want that burden on us. He wants us to know that, well, has anyone judged you on not obeying Scripture the same way they do?

About their rules, about the Bible's rules? rules. Don't let anyone pass judgment on you, Paul says, on questions of things like, for instance, your style.

Now, the Bible clearly has instructions about things like modesty. It doesn't have any rules about exactly where a hemline needs to go or how much plaid is enough. And so, we need to be careful when we say, you must conform to my interpretation, my preferred way of obeying the Scripture. And that's why he says in verse 23, these have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

God's people are always tempted to make rules about the rules. We've replaced the Jewish halakha with other rules.

[ 31 : 02 ] And when we make rules, we're tempted to rely on them. If I plan my work and work my plan, I'll succeed in this Christian life.

What's forgotten there is that Jesus is nowhere in that statement. That's why rules don't work. You can first never make enough rules.

There's always a situation you don't cover. Like, oh, how do we get coffee on the Sabbath? But more importantly, rules aren't alive. They can't give life.

But Jesus is alive. So I think in this room, we are most likely to run into these rules about rules in a few areas.

And first is in the area of sexual purity. Now, things like pornography are visible and rampant in our culture and in the church, and they destroy people.

[ 32 : 05 ] Right? They turn people into objects. They skew our perceptions of what is regular and healthy, marital relations.

And the scriptures are clear. We must flee immorality. 1 Corinthians 6.18. We should make no provision for the flesh. Romans 13.14.

The question is how? How do we obey that? How do we go about doing that? Christians have found all sorts of good ways to go about good ways to go about implementing that.

The fleeing, the making of no provision. Some people don't use smartphones because it's an ever-present temptation for them. Some people keep their computers in the kitchen or some other public area in their family.

some people have internet filters that send usage reports to someone in their family, to a spouse or a friend.

[ 33 : 06 ] Now, those are all good, those are all wise ways of implementing in our lives those commands to flee sexual immorality, to make no provision for the flesh.

But the Bible does not require them. So if someone says to you, oh, you don't have a filter on your internet, what's the matter with you?

You know, that kind of thing. If they come to you in judgment and say, well, the Bible says flee sexual immorality, but I don't have to obey exactly the same way that you are doing it.

Oh, your husband doesn't, you let your husband have a cell phone, a smartphone? You're brave, right? You know, that is a mentality that some people have.

And they will judge you for it. And Paul is saying, do not let them pass judgment on you. Walk the other way. That's the kind of judgment that Paul is excluding here.

[ 34 : 12 ] Now, the other thing I want to say here is, we'll get into this in chapter three in particular, but by themselves, you know, internet filters and moving your computer different places and all these steps of obedience, they will never fix your porn problem, ever, if you still love porn.

Right? If they are simply barriers to the thing you want, they will remain always something to get around. When there's a will, there's a way.

Right? And so, we need to replace our love for porn with something else. That's chapter three. I'm kind of encroaching on that, but I'm just so excited about it.

Right? One writer put it this way. We don't avoid sin by rules. Instead, we fight sin by pressing closer to the source of our new life, Christ himself.

Only a love for Christ that is fiercer than our love of our own comfort, escape, and pride will ever overcome the selfishness of pornography.

[ 35 : 28 ] And so, the rules that we set up for ourselves, they are good things, but they are not things that we can require of other people, and they are not things that we should submit one another to in judgment.

Another area that we in this room are likely to encounter extra-biblical rules and judgment is in the realm of parenting. The Bible commands God's people to raise their children in the instruction of the Lord, with quite a few details on how to do that, but not as many rules as we have.

The Bible teaches us to raise our children in the instruction of the Lord. So, do you have to send your kids to a Christian school for that? Or do you have to homeschool your kids?

Or do you have to use this curriculum? Or do you have to send them to Awana? Or do you have to? They're all good things. But none of them are the way in which we are required to raise our children in the Lord.

Yet many of you, many of us, as we walk the walk of parenthood, may have felt, condemning glares for not doing it the same way someone else does.

[ 36 : 49 ] And Paul says, do not be disqualified by that person. Do not be judged by that person. Same thing with discipline. The Lord does absolutely tell us to discipline our children with some detail.

do you have to follow the exact same pattern that your pastor does, that your neighbor does, that the people in your community group do, with every single child?

Those of you who are parents, if you love your children, you will know that they are different from each other and need to be corrected differently. Right? So we have to follow the exact pattern someone else does, with every child, without question.

No, of course not. Christians have been made, though, I think, to be felt, to be unfaithful for simply obeying the Bible differently, in their different situations.

How about music? Has anyone ever judged you for the music you listen to? Paul tells us to speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

[ 37 : 58 ] One way to honor that is to listen to Christian radio. as you drive them up. But you're not bound to do that. I mean, last week, Paul equipped us to deconstruct worldviews, right?

So, we won't be enslaved by Taylor Swift and her worldview. You can listen to her music if you like. Now, I'm not criticizing Taylor Swift. I tend to listen mostly to music without lyrics.

I don't really know what her game is. But we are not beholden to rules about what music to listen to. Now, there are certainly things that are wise or less wise to listen to.

But we are not bound to follow that instruction in the exact same way as our name. one church had recently renovated their sanctuary.

And this was an intergenerational church. And there were a lot of different views on how they were going to treat this place. A lot of the young people, because of their cultural presuppositions, really wanted to have a coffeehouse vibe, right?

[ 39 : 09 ] That was the thing they wanted. And they thought it would be great, it would be inviting, they thought it would be a help to the community, it would draw people to. And a lot of people from the older generation said, we don't want that, you're dishonoring, you're not reverent to worship the Lord.

And all that was, was people prioritizing different things, right? One was prioritizing community, one was prioritizing reverence for the Lord, neither of those is wrong, but no one should be able to say, you are wrong, for wanting that good thing.

That was a pretty serious fight in the church that it happened in. A lot of judgment, not just discussion about what are we going to prioritize, but judgment between people and accusations. About alcohol, we are a Southern Baptist church, Southern Baptists tend to have a very particular view on alcohol. The Bible is clear that drunkenness is a sin, but it doesn't say that every drop of alcohol is a sin, for every person.

Many of you probably know the name John Piper, a long-serving pastor in Minneapolis. When he first got to his church, their membership government required that no one drink alcohol.

[ 40 : 33 ] You couldn't be a member of the church if you consumed any alcohol. And he was accused of actually being a liberal when he wanted to change it. But he thought that that put a restriction on people that didn't come from the Bible.

Here's how he said it. Legalism, which is what we've called today making rules about the rules, legalism is a more dangerous disease than alcoholism because it doesn't look like one. Alcoholism makes men frail. Legalism helps them succeed in the world. Alcohol, alcoholism makes men depend on the bottle.

Legalism makes them self-sufficient depending on no one. Alcoholism destroys moral resolve.

Legalism gives it strength. Alcoholics don't feel welcome in church.

Legalists love to hear their morality. extolled in church. If we make our habits of obedience the rules for other people, we've judged them.

[ 41 : 48 ] Now, what should we do when we are judged wrongly on our obedience? What should we do? I think the answer is found in verse 19.

These false practices are verse 19, not holding fast to the head from whom the whole body nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments grows the growth that is from God. So first, we go to the head, that is Christ. We go to him in prayer to not judge them back. right? We go to him in prayer to find comfort in the gospel alone, to read his word well, and then we also go to the whole body, nourished, knit together through its joints and ligaments.

let's lean on each other for comfort, for strength, for gospel clarity, for instruction in righteousness.

Go to Christ and go to his church. So you don't need to live up to someone else's extra biblical expectations.

[ 43 : 11 ] You are free. of that. Live free of that. You don't need to obey the same command in the same way. In many cases, you shouldn't.

You're in a different season of life. You are a different person. You are at a different stage in your spiritual growth. The last thing I'll say is don't become the judge.

We've talked about Paul has been talking about don't submit to other people's judgment. But let's not become the judges ourselves. See, who is most at risk of doing this?

It's not someone far away. It's someone right here. It's you and it's me. We are most likely to become the person who's making rules about the rules and judging other people. Don't become the one who puts others under judgment.

God's And so I'll ask you, do you think less of? Do you speak ill of? Do you look down on other blood-bought children of God based on your rules about the rules?

[ 44 : 20 ] in all the kinds of practices we've talked about today and in all the others. Tell you a story about my own heart.

A few months ago, the Landex and I traveled to northern New England and visited a popular church there. They were talking about their ministry methods and things like that. I can rattle off a lot of things that I don't like about that church.

about the way they do church. If we moved to that area, my family would not be looking first to go to their church. We'd look probably first to become a member of another church.

But the gospel of salvation by God's grace alone, through faith in Christ alone was preached.

church. And that's enough. Now in some areas, I believe they truly do need to make a change to fully conform, to comply with the Bible's instructions for churches.

[ 45 : 31 ] And they need to grow there. We need to grow as a church. But some of the areas, in fact most of the areas that I disagreed with that church were based on my personal preferences.

and I cannot in Christ judge them for that. I'm tempted to make my, and I think we're tempted to make our preferences into rules.

Things about how they do their music, how they do prayer, how they, those sorts of things. Their building is orange, by the way. Okay. Okay. Okay. If we insist on our own preferences in addition to

the gospel, we also do something to our evangelism.

And that is we cripple it. If we say, you know, clean yourself up before you come to church. If we say, stop that behavior before you run to Christ.

we have added to the gospel and we have destroyed it. If we are going to be a faithful church, we must add nothing to the gospel.

[ 46 : 55 ] The gospel message should be clear and clean and simple. Christ died for your sins, rose from the grave so that you could live forever with him, and we receive that grace by repentance and faith alone.

Not by stopping this, or ascribing to that, or meeting my preferences. Those things alone. Friends, let's give thanks to the Father, chapter 1, verse 12, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in life.

So let no one disqualify you with their own rules. And let us not become the kind of people who pass judgment on others based on our preferences and our goals.

Let's pray. Father, thank you that we can say that we have died with Christ.

thank you that he was not ashamed to come for us, but in love and for his own joy, went to the cross on our behalf so that we might be in him.

[ 48 : 25 ] Lord, will you help us make that our theme and not submit to extraneous and extra biblical standards that have nothing to do with the simple Christian life.

Father, will you help us not to become judges ourselves? We pray that in the name of Jesus Christ and for the sake of his glory. Amen.