

The Emptiness of Man-Made Religion

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[0 : 0 0] All right.

Well, good morning again. It's good to have you with us. We are continuing in our sermon series in the book of Colossians.

And as we have seen along the way, the Apostle Paul has written this letter to a church that he did not plant and probably has never visited, but he's heard about God's work in them and he wants to encourage them.

He wants them to have greater confidence in Christ, which is sort of the overwhelming message. But in it, you see laced at points, there are these warnings.

There's a concern that he expresses. The concern is that you don't lose, that they would not lose their way in seeing that Christ is all that they really need.

[1 : 1 6] Paul's concern that this fledgling church as it's growing might turn aside from the right path. And like a toddler grabbing onto a pant leg that looks really familiar but ends up being the wrong mother in the crowded mall, that they would grab onto the wrong thing and be led astray from true worship of Christ and true confidence in what he has done.

They might do this out of immature zeal or willful rebellion or weakness of understanding, but they might be led astray. And if you've read any commentaries on Colossian or even have been here, even if you were here last week as Pastor Greg punted on this completely from verse 8 in chapter 2 when he said, don't be deceived by these philosophies, he just said, and Pastor Matt's going to preach on that next week.

This is where we're at. We're figuring out what is it that Paul's really concerned about? What are the dangers that he sees? And how is it that he expresses themselves? How is it that he sees them expressing themselves as potential false paths for the Colossians to fall down?

And there has been a lot of ink spilled on what the quote-unquote Colossian heresy is. And as we start, I want to say a few things.

One is that it's fascinating how creative people can be in trying to figure out what the Bible is talking about when they aren't really sure. And it's fascinating to see them look into historical context to say, oh, maybe it connects with this or maybe it connects with this.

[2 : 5 5] And what I do want to say with confidence, though, is that the book of Colossians is not like the book of Galatians, where there's a very clear false teaching that is being addressed very clearly and opposed very strongly.

It's not even like the book of 1 Corinthians, where there are false teachers coming in and and whatever they're doing, Paul goes after them with a polemical force. And Paul doesn't take that tone here in Colossians.

And I think we need to be careful not to overstate how we approach this. But it seems that Paul is laying down concerns about, hey, this is the world that you live in.

This is the water that you drink and the air that you breathe. These false paths are all around you. And I want you to be aware of what they might be. I want you to see their dangers.

And I want you to see Christ as sufficient in the midst of them. And that's where we're going to do this morning. We're going to dive into what those things actually look like and what some of those dynamics are.

[4 : 05] And as much as we can unpack what those problems might be, and hopefully that we will see and have benefit for ourselves as we look at these things and think, oh, I need to be aware of that danger in my own life, in our own world, in my own heart.

So that's what we're going to do this morning. Let me read. We're going to look at Colossians chapter 2, starting in verse 16.

We're going to read 16 to 23. And I completely forgot. Anyone want to give me a page number? 9? 84?

9.84, I'm being told. There you go. 9.84, we'll get you there. And so let's read God's word together. 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 Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

[5 : 12] 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.

If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why? As if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations?

Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch. Let's pray together. Let's pray together.

Father, Lord, we ask for your help this morning as we look at this passage. We ask that you would make it clear to us, Lord, what you are saying, and Lord, that you would apply these truths to our hearts.

Lord, I ask by your Holy Spirit, Lord, you would show us where we are prone to wander, where we are prone to fall into the dangers that Paul is concerned about in this passage, that we would see how easily we do stray from true and complete confidence in Christ.

[6 : 54] Lord, we ask that by your Spirit you would work in us, Lord, to deepen our confidence in you this morning. And Lord, I ask for your help. You would help me to speak clearly and that my words would be, Lord, in your hands, useful to proclaim the truth of the gospel.

And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Don't let yourself be confused about what the gospel is really about.

That's the summary of what this is about. He has three warnings, and I'm going to state them as warnings to you as we read through. So we're going to look at three warnings.

The first one is in verses 16 and 17, where Paul is telling us, don't let people judge you by replacing Christ with things meant to point to Christ.

What does that mean? Well, let's look at it. Paul says in verse 16, 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. Now, for those of us, we sort of think, huh?

[8 : 07] This is a very odd set of categories that we don't normally think about. But for a first century Christian, this would be a very common category because all of this flows from the Old Testament. All of this flows from the Jewish context out of which Christianity grew.

And it seems that in the air there was a message going around of, if you really want to follow Christ, recognize that He is grounded in the Old Testament.

And in the Old Testament, you had to keep these laws. You had to keep laws of eating and drinking these things and not these things to set yourself apart as being pure and faithful.

You had to follow these patterns and rituals of a yearly calendar of festivals and sacrifices and offerings because this is how you worship God in the Old Testament.

And it seemed that there was not only a strong exhortation, hey, this is really valuable to do, but even a condemnation. If you don't do these, you're not really a Christian.

[9 : 20] Now, look, we need to understand this carefully. The Old Testament law was good in that it meant it was there to display the dynamics of God's kingdom to show us the fabric of His character.

And it teaches about the ways of His salvation. It established a righteousness and gave us standards for God's kingdom, but it was powerless to change us.

And we see this so clearly in other places. The law could not save us. And that's why Christ came. In fact, the law was given to point to that helplessness and to point to the need for a Savior who is greater than us, one who could actually keep the law that we could never keep.

One who could actually be righteous in ways that we never could. But as in verse 17, we see clearly, those things, the Old Testament laws, were shadows.

And by shadows, that doesn't mean murky or mysterious. It means these things are signposts. These were forerunners pointing ahead to a truth.

[10 : 30] Again, in Galatians, we see the law was a tutor, a teacher to instruct us on our need for a Savior. And this is what this is pointing to.

And so we don't need to, as believers in Christ, submit to the laws of the Old Testament anymore for our salvation, for our standing with God.

We need to look to them to know the character of God and the ways of His kingdom, but we don't need to submit to it as for the means of our salvation. And it seems that there were those in the Colossian context who would be promoting this idea.

Real Christians are not only those who believe in Jesus, but who keep the law too. You've got to do it both. And you've got to especially do these ritual parts. You've got to keep the ceremonial law.

You've got to follow the patterns. Now, I doubt that there are many of us here today who struggle with this and think, oh, man, I had pork on Sunday or on Saturday.

[11 : 43] Maybe I shouldn't have done that because I believe in Jesus. You don't have to worry about pork. Thank God. That's a good thing. But what I do want to recognize is that the same impulse that I think was in a first century Jew to want to gravitate towards that can be a heart impulse for us as well.

We love to have a standard of external conformity that we can try to meet to look good and to please God. We love to create rules and laws.

We love to, and even when we're explicitly not doing it, we implicitly often do it over and over again. You're only a real Christian if you do this or don't do that.

We love it because it creates an insider and an outsider dynamic. We're the ones who do it right. And you poor people out there, well, do you see?

That's what he's concerned about, that you're not just doing it, but you're passing judgment on people about what they're doing. And these external things are easier for us to do.

[12 : 58] I know that I can do these things, and then I can say, I'm doing it right, aren't I? And isn't that good? Rather than the incredibly humbling call of the gospel, which is to be transformed by the power of God.

We are to grow in righteousness. We are to honor God with everything we do. We are to schedule our whole life around worshipping him.

But as we'll see in chapter 3, the heart of that is not about laws and rituals, but it's about character transformation. Putting on Christ and living as a Christian, as a follower of Christ, is not about keeping these external laws as much as it is being transformed so that with humility and kindness and gentleness and patience and self-control and forgiveness and love, spurring one another on in our hearts.

This is what the true signs of following Christ are. And that in Christ, we actually find the power to live them out. I don't know if you've ever been hiking and lost the trail.

It's kind of bewildering when it happens. You're halfway up a mountain. You know you want to get up there, or at least that's where you think. But suddenly you don't know what the next 50 yards looks like.

[14 : 27] And it could go that way. It could go that way. It could go that way. And I've done this. You fan out. Where's the next blaze? Where's the next trail? But friends, if you found the blaze, would you then stop and say, woo, we found the blaze.

Now we know where we're going. All right, we're done. Let's party. We're going to camp out here and celebrate because we have found the blaze. Friends, this is what the problem that Paul has with those who would want to impose the law.

They found the blazes, but never got to the point. They didn't get to the destination that the blazes were leading to, which was Christ. And somehow they're making the signposts the point rather than the end.

And we need to be aware that we too might do the same thing. We are free to follow Christ.

Free from obeying the law for the basis of our justification and acceptance with God. Free from those patterns. Now look, I need to say this well because you could hear this and think, great, so I don't have to worry about those things at all.

[15 : 47] I don't have to do anything. Well, no, let me say two things. One is that we need to recognize that this freedom does have some limits to it.

The limit is that we do make Christ the center of our lives. There are boundary markers for the people of God, but the boundary markers for the people of God are not the external performance of certain things, but it is actually the believing faith in Christ for our salvation.

It is looking back at chapter 2, 11 through 15 and believing that in Christ the fullness of God dwelt and in Christ God has done everything we need. That the condemnation that is ours has been nailed to the cross.

That by the resurrection from the dead the power of sin and death has been broken. And by his being seated at the right hand of God we now know there's no power in heaven that can control us.

And we have to believe in that and trust in that as the central point and as the focal point and as the foundation and as the goal of our lives.

[16 : 59] This is the boundary marker for true Christianity. And we need to recognize that the gospel and trusting in the gospel is that. The second thing we need to say is that there's a lot of wisdom out there about how we cling to Christ and how we pursue that.

Scripture has given us patterns maybe even New Testament commands. We need to be in God's word. We need to be praying. We need to be in fellowship with one another.

We need to be giving and serving in God's kingdom and in God's church for the glory of God. We need to be gathering with other believers.

I don't need to tell you that because you're here. But we need to be gathering with other believers. These are all normal parts of those who follow Christ. These are means of grace that are so clear in the New Testament.

They are not laws. But they are patterns that is wisdom given to us on how we are meant to do that. So we need to hold them not as basis of judgments but as gifts from God to recognize how it is that we actually pursue a knowledge of God in Christ.

[18 : 17] And look, there's a whole other level of things too. You may have been super helped by Dave Ramsey on how to manage your finances to the glory of God. You may have found that a certain time management program has been your salvation and how to organize your chaotic life so that you can actually serve God the way you want to.

There are all sorts of things but you know what we do? We then become the apostles for time management or Dave Ramsey or whatever else it is. The things that we have found particularly helpful in the application level of pursuing Christ.

We then glorify and raise to a level of law, of expectation. then we judge other people when they don't do that. Oh, you watch Netflix.

Well, okay. Good for you. I'll pray for you. You know, or whatever it is, right? I mean, I could go on it. We are so prone to do that and I don't want to go on and on because all of us are prone to do it and we need to be careful not to judge one another in these things even as we ought to be free to seek and to share wisdom with one another.

Hey, this is what's been helpful for me. This has been, but these things are only helpful in as much as they point to Christ and help us to Christ and when we cling to them and think, well, if you have this, this is really going to like jumpstart your spiritual life.

[19 : 46] No, Christ will jumpstart your spiritual life. The Holy Spirit will jumpstart your spiritual life and maybe he might use something like that along the way and if so, praise God and be thankful for it and don't condemn it and don't get up, but also don't deify it and make it everything.

So the passage warns us of a danger of judging, judging others by replacing Christ with things that point to Christ in our lives.

The passage goes on in verse 18 and 19 points to a second danger and that is don't let others exclude you on the demand of a deeper spiritual life apart from Christ rather than a deeper spiritual life in Christ.

Did you get all that? It's a little complicated. Let me read that again. Don't let others exclude you on the demand of a deeper spiritual life apart from Christ rather than a deeper spiritual life in Christ.

Look with me again in verse 18 so we see the language. Let no one disqualify you. It's a strong word, disqualification. If you're a world football aficionado, I mean a soccer fan, then you know what it means to be disqualified, right?

[21 : 13] You get a red card in a game when you have been, when you have transgressed the boundaries, the laws, when you have, you've become disqualified from continuing in the game and you are removed from the field and you're removed from the stadium.

You're removed from your team because of that and that's the picture here. Some of the language behind it is like an umpire or like an Olympic referee who disqualifies a runner for leaving the starting blocks too early or for interfering with another runner.

It's a very strong word. It's a very categorical word. You're being separated out and divided from and excluded from something. On what basis is Paul concerned that that exclusion could happen?

Because as we've seen earlier, there is an exclusion. If you are not in Christ, you are separate from the people of Christ. But that's not the problem he's dealing with. He's dealing with the problem within a church community, within a body that people are excluding others on a basis of some kind of demand for what I'm calling a deeper spiritual life.

Look with me again in verse 18. See how he describes it. Insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in details about visions, puffed up and without reason by his sensuous mind.

[22 : 51] Now, this is where all the ink has been spilled in commentaries about what in the world is he really referring to. If the first part was pretty clear that it was coming from some kind of impulse towards a return to Judaism or submitting to the Jewish law, the Old Testament law, here we have a broad number of terms that people have really wrestled with.

And I don't think anyone has succeeded in convincingly identifying particular strands of first century religious or mystical practices that ought to be pegged as this is what it was talking about.

But I do think that actually as you read this, the patterns are pretty clear. Right? On what basis is this disqualification happening? Well, one, the basis all seems to be in some form of experiential religion.

All right? On one end, you have asceticism. I'm going to deny my body. I'm going to deny the goodness of the physical world that I live in.

I see that it's dangerous, that it could lead me away from pure spiritual worship. And I'm going to do that. This is the kind of thing that led monks to, in the fourth century, live their lives literally on the tops of pillars in the desert to separate themselves from the world to try to subdue their body.

[24 : 20] This is the kind of impulse that leads us at times to self-destructive patterns of bodily control.

we treat the world as a, this impulse is to treat the world as a, as a, the physical world as something that wasn't good and created by God.

And call that spiritual. We set them up in contrast to one another. there are lots of ways this could live itself out today.

But I think that recognizing that it's, it's an experience. If I can pursue this hard enough, I, I'm going to show that I'm really serious and that I'm really gonna, I'm really devoted and that I'm really committed to sacrificing for Christ.

but it's more about our own experience of devotion than it is about truly submitting all things to God.

[25 : 32] Let me go on. The second thing, spiritualism. The worship of angels and going on insisting on visions.

Well, yeah, this is the one that people really don't understand exactly what he's talking about or even remotely what he's talking about at one level. Some people even think that it's talking about being joined with the angels in their worship of God.

Other people think that it's more worshiping angels as the object of their devotion but whatever it is, it's a spiritual practice that has an experiential component that includes visions and dreams and some kind of ecstatic experience that doesn't seem to have Christ in it at the end of the day.

But the focal point is how it's relating to angels. And it seems that some were suggesting that real Christianity looks like having those experiences.

Then the third part of this, he says, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind. The core of these, this pursuit of experiential religion is that it's actually deeply, deeply self-centered.

[27 : 05] It is about me. I am pursuing these kinds of experiences. I am pursuing this kind of discipline. I am pursuing these kinds of things in a way that puffs me up and that tickles the fancy of my own fallen heart.

When it talks about a sensuous mind, the word there is actually fleshly. And in Paul, the fleshly mind is the mind that rather than submitting to God and receiving from God, sets itself up against God in some kind of proud rebellion or resistance.

sense. So whatever this is, this pursuit of experience of God in certain ways, it ultimately is a very self-centered spirituality.

I had an experience with this quite a while ago. Some friends who I worked with got really excited about visions and how God was going to work in a particular way, in a particular face, in a particular space, in a particular time.

And the further along it went, it got more and more particular and there's this invitation, come in and be a part of this. But at its core, what I saw was exactly what Paul was warning about here.

[28 : 35] That it didn't bless and invite and express the glory of God in the face of Christ with a gracious winsomeness, but it excluded. Why weren't you at the prayer meeting?

Don't you really want to seek God to work here? Well, I know you haven't had this vision, but I have, so why don't you believe me and get on board with this particular plan?

Oh, you're not fasting with us again today? maybe you're not really committed to us. This is the kind of disqualification that happened in the circumstance that I saw it happening in.

It's one of those times where we see when excessive zeal for the glory of God gets warped. These are some of the ways we can see the cracks show.

When it becomes a self-centered zeal, this kind of disqualification and separation and judgmental spirit is exactly what we can look for as a fruit of not true growth in Christ, but some kind of self-centered counterfeit.

[29 : 57] We become the church of mean girls, spiritually, when we do that. Right? I've got it together.

What's wrong with you? This is where God is leading us. If you're not with us, you're against us. Oh, you don't have that?

I feel sorry for you. There's so many different ways that we can express it. Paul says, don't let this happen God.

Because in fact, what these people are pursuing, maybe with honest hearts and misguided direction, maybe with much more nefarious hearts, what they're pursuing is a real knowledge of God and a true deep spirituality.

And what verse 19 reminds us is that we know where we find that. We've already seen it. Christ is the head of the body. He is the kingpin.

[30 : 59] He is the control center for the church. And in the church, as we live under Christ's headship, he is the one who causes the growth. And do you notice that one of the things that Paul says in verse 19, but from whom the whole body nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, it's this picture of the totality.

Nobody is excluded from a being under the head. If you're in Christ, you're a part of the body. And if you're a part of the body, then you are in. And Christ is able to make the growth that God wants to do in your life.

In Christ, we are not disqualified. But as we saw in chapter 1, verse, where is it? Verse, I should have wrote this down.

Verse 12, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Christ has qualified us to be God's people and to be in him to experience the salvation that delivers us from sin and death and the kingdom of darkness and brings us into God's kingdom and God's people.

[32 : 29] Paul is saying to the Colossian church, don't think there's something more. The lure of a higher life, of a higher vision of Christianity is somehow separate from the grace that brought you in.

It's not true. It's an illusion. It's a false path. Because the true path continues in the path that you started in, which is in the path of Christ. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the grace of God meeting us in our fallenness and our inability to turn to him.

He says, we have a head and that's where you're going to find all the spirituality that you want. You want more? You want a deeper walk with God?

Don't go somewhere else. Go more into Christ. And yes, you may have visions.

as you pursue Christ. And yes, you may practice self-discipline of your schedule or of your eating or of your physical, of all sorts of things.

[33 : 38] You may do those things. But they're all in service to pursuing Christ and knowing him. He is the one in whom we have the deepest spiritual life.

Friends, Paul is then leading to his third and final warning in chapter two, which builds and expands on what he's already said. In verses 20 through 23, he says, don't be deceived by the empty promises of man-made religion when Christ is all you really need.

Look with me again at this. You may have, if with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why is if you were still alive in the world?

Do you submit to the regulations, do not handle, do not touch, taste, do not touch, referring to things that all perish as they are used according to human precepts and teaching? These have indeed 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.

Paul paints out a picture. Before you were in Christ, you lived in a world and you were under the influence of these elemental spirits, and these elemental spirits, maybe they're more personal, spiritual, like demonic forces, maybe they're more cultural or just human dynamics in a fallen world.

[35 : 17] world. I don't think we need to determine or say which one. I think we're influenced by both. He says, you lived in a world whereby people sought means of justifying themselves, of belonging to a people, of changing themselves, of being accepted in the world by external things.

Do not taste. Right? Sorry, let's say it right. Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch. One commentator made it funny that this is actually ironic and he's sort of saying how ridiculous these rules can get.

It's kind of like saying, son, I don't want you to go on a date with that girl. As a matter of fact, I don't even want you to look at that girl. As a matter of fact, you can't even think about that girl. And he's sort of saying this is the extremity of the ways that these kind of regulations can go as we're trying to pursue some kind of acceptance or belonging or justifying ourselves and our lives in this world.

It's characterized by rules and it reflects the building of a religious system that is man made. We know that we are made for God but apart from Christ, we don't know how to get there.

and we fill that gap in all sorts of ways. We create our own religions whether they be more spiritual or not. We create our own ways of getting to be acceptable by God.

[36 : 58] And Paul says, you know what it was like to be under that? That's slavery. There's no freedom there. There's no hope there. It's an ongoing hamster wheel of performance that grinds you till you die.

It's a standard of unmeetable expectations that causes you to despair and give up hope or to succeed, which is even worse because then as a puffed up person you walk around pitying all the others who can't do it as well as you can.

This is the human heart. Verse 23, it says, they have the appearance of wisdom but they have no power.

Friends, has it ever occurred to you that we live in an age where we think that humanity ought to be getting better? We ought to be improving.

We ought to be showing that we can actually grow and become a better society and a better world. As a history major, it's just not true.

[38 : 14] There are some ways in which by God's grace things have improved. Wonderfully so. There are ways in which God's gracious common, that His common grace is blessing this world in wonderful ways.

And there are ways in which humanity has progressed that is glorious and beautiful. But friends, we're not better. That has come alongside with an ongoing persistent show that in fact, people are sinful and the world has fallen and we can't fix it.

And we can't make it better. We can't do it on a societal and a global level and we can't even do it on a personal level. It's what sin of Adam and Eve in the garden was about.

God, I'd rather create my own way rather than follow yours. Thank you very much. I'll do it myself. And we create our own religions.

And Paul says, why would you go back to that? Why would you go back to these rules and laws that create these ins and outs? when you have something so much better?

[39 : 35] Verse 23 ends with the fact that these things have no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. That is, they have no true ability to transform us so that we no longer are enslaved to our darkest desires and most destructive impulses.

He goes on in chapter 3 and this is what we're going to see. In Christ we really do have all that we need.

He looks back, what we talked about earlier in chapter 2 verses 9 through 15. Christ has saved us completely, fully, all that we need. Chapter 3 then is going to say, not only has He saved us, but if you want to pursue Christ, if you want to know God, if you think that there's more, there is.

And it's in Christ. And it's only in Christ. And we're going to see that in Christ there is a power to change and be transformed.

There is a power to put off patterns of sin and godlessness in our lives, to put off the evil things that continue to destroy our relationships.

[40 : 51] We have the ability to put off these things that dishonor God and ruin our lives. We can put them off because of Christ and because we have been transformed and made new in Christ.

There is now this new life that is in Christ for us where He will give us a character that we don't have on our own. We're in humility and patience and kindness and gentleness and forgiveness and grace and truth and worship.

We are able to follow and know God. and the fullness is there. It's not in these other things. It's not in these practices of self-made religion of various ways, but it's in Christ that we find these things.

So in closing, if you have found yourself put off by the empty powerlessness of churchianity, I just made that up. Maybe I didn't.

Somebody's probably thought about it for me, but churchianity. That's my word for the self-made religion that looks a lot like Christianity, but it's really about ourselves and not about Christ.

[42 : 04] If you have found yourself put off by the powerlessness of it, know that yeah, there's a lot of counterfeit out there, but the substance is in Christ.

If you have felt yourself excluded from the people of God because they have held ungodly standards, because they have created these in and out groups that are not based on scripture, but are based in human religion, know that that's not the gospel, and that's not Christ, and that Christ welcomes you.

if you are tempted because the long, hard road of fits and starts of pursuing Christ can sometimes get really hard, and you think, can't I just skip to the end?

If you're tempted to want to do that by adding on to Christ, heed Paul's warnings. Don't add on, but go deeper, go deeper into Christ.

Come for the next three weeks so you will see how it is that Paul wants to lay out what there is for us in Christ and see its glory and its power and be renewed in hope that this fumbling, stumbling walk of faith in Christ really is headed in the right direction and that Christ will carry you and Christ will take you to the places that you want to go and that in Christ you will find all that you need.

[43 : 53] He really is enough. Let's pray. Lord, thank you for this word and thank you for the pastoral heart of the apostle for us Lord, that we would not miss the glorious riches of Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Lord, that we would not miss out on that or allow that to be replaced by counterfeit self-made religion. Lord, search our hearts to see us that we might see ourselves and see how we may be tempted in these ways.

Lord, help us as a church to fight against cultural developments in our body that might communicate or build up these kinds of self-made standards.

words. Lord, help us to be faithful and true to the message of Christ and Him crucified, Christ and Him raised from the dead, Christ the fullness of God and all that we need.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, friends, we will close with a song of worship, so let me invite you to stand as we do so.

[45 : 21] what to tend to we do so? love you love you love you and that know how you love you love me love you love you love you love you love you love you love you love you