

THROUGH THE BIBLE

COLOSSIANS 1-2

The last pagan emperor of Rome was Flavius Claudius Julianus. He died in 364 AD. And his dying words were revealing, “[You have conquered, Galilean.](#)”

Julian’s words were a reference to Jesus... and an admission of defeat. The Emperor realized that in just 300 years, Christianity had overwhelmed paganism and had prevail as the religion of the Roman Empire.

Pagan Rome had become Christian Rome.

Who would’ve thought that today - in the early years of the 21st century - we would witness a revival of ancient, Roman paganism. *It’s making a comeback...*

Paganism is a religious-sounding attempt to tap into and manipulate the power of God, *without allegiance to God*. It’s amoral. It requires no love or loyalty. And it’s formulaic. There’s no such thing as orthodoxy, or truth, or right belief. You plug in a, b, c, and get out x, y, z.

Today, paganism goes by the title, “[The New Age.](#)”

It claims all kinds of spiritual techniques... astrology, crystals, pyramids, positivity, channeling, meditation.

Paganism is the promise of a special knowledge - apart from Christianity and the pages of Scripture.

Remember the wise words of King Solomon. He said in Ecclesiastes, “There is nothing new under the sun.”

In his fiction, CS Lewis has the senior demon, Screwtape, instructing his apprentice, Wormwood, on the means of temptation. He tells the rookie devil, “Old error in new dress, is ever error nonetheless.”

We’re going to learn tonight that much of the modern spirituality that gets propagated today sounds identical to the false doctrine that threatened the church in Colosse... New Age religion is really not new at all.

The New Age is simply a repackaging of an old lie.

Chapter 1 begins, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother (both men were together when Paul wrote the letter) to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Here’s Paul’s familiar greeting - “grace and peace” - the bookends of the Gospel.

Colosse was a small town in what is today western Turkey. It was 80 miles up-river from Ephesus. The book of Colossians is the only one of Paul's letters we have that was written to people he'd never visited.

The Church in Colosse was probably a byproduct of Paul's ministry in Ephesus. One of the converts was a man from Colosse, named *Epaphras*. After he became a Christian, Epaphras went home to start a church.

And the Colossians flourished in their faith... Until false doctrine infiltrated their thinking and placed a chokehold on their newfound belief. Pastor Epaphras, himself a new Christian, realized he needed help, so he traveled 900 miles to Rome, to consult with Paul.

Thus, it was from a Roman prison that Paul sat down and penned this defense for orthodox Christianity. In this letter Paul dissects the Colossian heresy - a form of paganism that will later be known as *Gnosticism*.

Epaphras took this letter and raced home to Colosse to douse the wildfire... It would be another three centuries before the heresy was fully extinguished.

But before Paul *douses any fires*, he first *warms some hearts*. In verse 3 he writes, “We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you...” Here's the greatest gift you can give at Christmas time, or any other time - the gift of prayer.

And Paul had been praying for the Colossians, “since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up

for you in heaven.” Notice their *faith, hope, and love*. One commentator refers to “*faith, hope, and love*” as apostolic shorthand for genuine Christianity.

Here’re the marks of a real relationship with God.

These Colossians were flirting with dangerous doctrine, but this didn’t nullify the good and godly in them. Paul saw *problems*, but he also saw *potential*.

The Apostle Paul is writing to correct the Colossians, but first he acknowledges what they’re doing right.

Paul realizes what all parents have learned – “a spoon full of sugar helps the medicine go down.”

Notice verse 6, the Colossians had rested their hope on the Gospel. He says, “of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world...” Understand, the year was 62 AD - only 30 years had elapsed since Jesus’ resurrection... There was no motorized travel - no printing press, or radio, or film, or TV, or internet.

Jesus had left the Gospel in the hands of a few fishermen all gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem.

What kind of progress would you have expected?

Well amazingly, Paul says that in those brief 30 years, the Gospel had gone out into *“all the world.”*

Three, short decades saw the Gospel spread throughout the whole Mediterranean world. And there were two reasons... First, *the ability of the Holy Spirit*. And second, *the availability of the early Christians*.

When *God’s ability* and *man’s availability* come together there’s no limit to what can be accomplished.

The Gospel was on the move and according to verse 6, everywhere it went it was *“bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.”* Colosse was not unique, when believers *embrace grace* spiritual fruit results...

Verse 9, *“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you...”* And pay attention to how Paul prays for the Colossians...

“And to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power...” This is a powerful prayer, *but this is not how we usually pray...*

We pray for our health and happiness - our cash and comfort – we focus on our physical state and material welfare... *But Paul prays for their spiritual condition...*

Not for *thrills*, but to know *God’s will*. Not to *walk safely*, but to *walk worthy*. Not for *fluff*, but for *fruit*. Not for an *increase in income*, but for an *increase in insight*. Not for *possessions*, but for *power*... If you pray for me, I hope you mimic this prayer for the Colossians!

And also pray, “for all patience and longsuffering with joy...” Pray that we can endure difficulty *joyfully* - not begrudging, but with a smile on our face - “*with joy!*”

“*Longsuffering*” is endurance in difficult places. “*Patience*” is an endurance of difficult people. Which is harder? Both can be taxing. Let’s pray for endurance.

While “giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.” I love this – God has qualified us. In Jesus we’ve met all the requirements to inherit the riches of heaven.

“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love...”

The word “*conveyed*” was used of a victorious general when he deported his captives. You and I have been conquered by Jesus, and He has now transferred us from darkness into the Kingdom of His love.

Verse 14, “*In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.*” I’ve read of Christian organizations who work in South Sudan. They enter slave markets and purchase people to set them free.

Obviously, these missionaries put their lives at stake.

Why take such a risk? *There’s only one reason...*

This is what Jesus has done for us. He entered the spiritual slave market, and dug deep into His pockets. He laid down His own life. It cost Him His own blood. He purchased us... and forgave us, to set us free.

In verse 15 Paul specifically targets the heresy brewing in Colosse. Here is one of the most majestic descriptions of the deity of Jesus in all the Bible. He states of Jesus, “*He is the image of the invisible God...*” Here Paul *expounds truth* while he *hammers heresy*.

Each of his following points are going to shoot down a different pagan, Gnostic assertion... To appreciate *what Paul is teaching* understand *what he’s fighting...*

The Gnostics believed in *dualism* – that both good and evil are eternal. The material world is evil, while the spiritual world is good. Thus, since God is spirit and holy, He would never handle anything material or evil.

And this made God’s creation a difficult procedure.

Since the Creator couldn’t touch anything tangible, He acted by proxy. He sent out “*emanations*” - or *personifications* of Himself - to do the dirty work. T h e s e reverberations or revelations of God were like a rock splashing into a lake and creating ripples. Each ripple was a little less divine than the one before it, until finally a ripple evolved that didn’t even know God - it was completely evil - and thus, could create the world.

The Gnostics believed that the nature of god - or the “*pleroma*” - *the fullness, the divine essence, that which makes god God* - was chopped up like a fine pepper, and sprinkled out over the entire religious spectrum.

Jesus was one of many different emanations... along with other gods - the angels - even wise teachers.

In Gnosticism there was nothing unique about Jesus.

He was just one of many links to God. In Gnostic belief, god could be found anywhere - in anything. It was an ancient version of today’s New Age.

Under Gnosticism, because spirit is good, and matter is evil, the Son of God could never have created the world. Jesus could've never inhabited a physical body.

Thus, Gnosticism opposed Jesus' humanity.

No one living in the first century could deny Jesus lived - there was too much evidence - but they said He came as a ghost, a phantom. They concocted fanciful tales that He walked the beach, but left no footprints.

John had the Gnostics in mind when he wrote in his epistle, "That which was from the beginning, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life..." Jesus did come in the flesh. John touched Him.

In 1 John 4:3 John writes directly to refute Gnosticism, "and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ is has come in the flesh is not of God."

And of course, this heresy despised the crucifixion.

The Gnostics refused to believe anything physical could effect our salvation. Thus, they denied the atoning work of Jesus' blood. That's why Paul wrote in the preceding verse, "in Christ we have redemption through His blood." It's the physical blood that atones.

For the Gnostics, salvation was the result of spiritual enlightenment. "Gnostic" or "gnosis" is Greek for "knowledge." To the Gnostics in Colosse, Jesus was just the

starting point for spiritual discovery. Like today's New Agers they failed to accept Jesus as Lord.

The Gnostics looked for God in all the wrong places.

But Paul calls Jesus the “**image of the invisible God.**” The Greek term “**image**” means “**exact representation.**”

Not just alike in form, but in substance.

Jesus was fully God - in nature and character.

Though He was also a man, He wasn't a weaker reflection of God, He was the full blaze of God's glory.

And verse 15, He was “**the firstborn over all creation**”

The chief Gnostic theologian of the third century was a heretic named Arius. He used this verse to infer that Jesus was a created being - and not truly divine.

Today, Jehovah's Witnesses echo the Arian heresy.

But the early church fathers, headed by Athanasius, correctly explained that the biblical term “**firstborn**” refers primarily to status - not so much to birth order.

Exodus 4:22 calls Jacob the **firstborn**, even though he was born after Esau... In Jeremiah 31:9 Ephraim is called **firstborn**, over his older brother Manasseh...

Biblically speaking, *firstborn* is a title of authority and preeminence. As “*the firstborn over all creation,*” Jesus is not part of God’s creation, but He is over His Creation. Jesus is the chief - the CEO of creation.

Verse 16, “*For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers.*” A holy God had no problem handling the stuff of creation. His Son, Jesus, made all things!

And I love the next line, “*All things were created through Him and for Him.*” Have you ever wondered, “*Why was I created? Why do I exist?*” Here we’re told.

You were created *through Jesus...* and ***for Jesus.***

If I drove my truck into the ocean I wouldn’t get very far... For my truck was not made for underwater travel.

If I drove it off a cliff I would crash... for my truck isn’t made for in-air flight... But on the freeway my truck does fine, because that’s what it was designed to do.

And likewise, you were not designed to simply work, and play, and party, and earn, and spend, and save, and sleep, and eat, and toil, and try, and sweat, and cry, and eventually die. *You were designed for more...*

You were created for Jesus, and you’ll never know real fulfillment apart from a relationship with Him.

Verse 17, “**And (Jesus) is before all things, and in Him all things consist.**” Jesus is not only the *Creator* of the universe, but its *Sustainer*. He holds it all together.

Basic Laws of physics state that “**like charges repel.**”

Yet the nucleus of every atom is made up of particles with like charges, or protons. Scientists have theories, but no one really knows what makes the protons stick.

Here though, Paul reveals the atomic glue is Jesus.

Jesus is holding all things together - and not just atomically... Jesus holds my life together – my family, my sanity, my schedule, my health. He sustains me.

As far as the universe is concerned, 2 Peter 3:10 tells us that one day Jesus will let go of the nucleus of every atom. And “**the elements will melt with fervent heat.**” When Jesus loosens His grip, the physical universe will instantly vaporize. It’ll totally disintegrate.

God will usher in a new heaven and a new earth.

“**And He (Jesus) is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead...**” Lazarus, and Jairus’ daughter, and the boy from Nain were all resurrected from the dead - but the resurrection of Jesus was unique. He was the first person to be raised from the dead never to die again.

This makes Jesus “***the firstborn from the dead!***”

“That in all things He may have the preeminence.”

Jesus is not one way to God. He's not just a ripple from the original splash. He's God. Jesus is the Rock.

And He needs to be treated as such!

Look on the top shelf of your life and if there's anything there other than Jesus you should knock it off. It doesn't belong there. Clean off the top shelf, and make certain nothing is crowding out or rivaling Jesus!

Verse 19, **“For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell...”** This word **“fullness,”** or its Greek counterpart, **“pleroma,”** was the theological term the Gnostics used for the essence or totality of God.

They said the fullness of God had been sprinkled out over all Creation, but Paul says an emphatic “no!”

The pleroma is found in one place - a person named Jesus. Christ Jesus is the sum total of all that God is.

The knowledge of God isn't to be found under hidden rocks, or at the end of some New Age rainbow. All the knowledge of God is found in one location - *in Christ*.

“And by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.”

Every month I reconcile my bank statement to make sure my records synchronize with the bank's records.

Likewise, in Christ God balances our spiritual checkbook. The cross paid our debt. It even added righteousness where we were short. It reconciled me to God. Never again will I be found with insufficient funds.

Verse 21, “And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight - if indeed you continue in the faith...” In Christ, God considers me holy, blameless, and above accusation... *if...* and yes, there is an if...

Your spiritual status - a person's right standing with God - *is conditional*. It's up to us not only to have faith, but to continue in faith! Faith is not a one time profession, its an attitude in which we must continue.

I use to be staunchly *once-saved-always-saved*, until I took this verse, and others like it, at face value...

You can't avoid the obvious meaning of verse 21.

Saving faith is not just a faith that believes once, and stops. It's a faith that keeps on believing. It perseveres.

Verse 23 teaches us to be saved, we have to continue in our faith, “grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”

Make sure your faith is anchored. Don't drift. A faith that turns its back on Christ is not a faith that saves.

Verse 24, “I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church...”

Here's a verse that's greatly debated.

Roman Catholics use it to support the idea of purgatory. That somehow the sufferings of Christ were not sufficient for salvation. We should add to the cross.

To this I, and all of the NT, vehemently disagrees. Colossians 2:10 will tell us, “*we are complete in Christ.*”

Here's my take on verse 24... Recall when Paul met Jesus on his way to persecute Christians in Damascus. The Lord spoke, “*Saul, why are you persecuting ME?*”

Paul hassled the church, but Jesus took it personally.

And Jesus still suffers - *not physically, or in any atoning way* - but He suffers in empathy with His Church. Persecution continues around the globe, and we help fill

up, or bear with, the sufferings of Christ when we show concern for His persecuted Church.

Paul speaks of the Church, “of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.”

The Church is the unveiling of a mystery - that God could take sinners, and turn us into His righteousness!

“To them (to us) God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Here is Christianity’s most stunning characteristic - this is what sets it apart from every other ideology.

Christianity is not a philosophy I learn - or a set of rules I obey – *it’s an invasion of the human soul*. Christ comes to live in me! It’s not *imitation*, but *impartation*...

I can watch LeBron James dunk a basketball from now to the day I die, and never be able to do it myself.

I'm not going to become like Lebron through careful *imitation*. But what if you took the spring in Lebron's legs and put it in my legs - *impartation*? At the very least, I would be dominating the 50-and-over league.

And likewise, it's impossible for me to consistently live the Christian life by simple imitation. If I don't have it in me, it's hard to live it out. But Christianity is more than *imitation*... Christ lives in me. His Spirit is *imparted* to me. It's *Christ in me* - this is "*the hope of glory.*"

Paul adds in verse 28, "Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

The word "*perfect*" means "*mature.*" We'll never be *flawless* in our character, but we can become *mature*.

And it's to this end Paul works. "To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily." Paul wants to see the Colossians grow.

Chapter 2, "For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh..."

Colosse and Laodicea were sister cities. Paul will later suggest that this letter be read to the saints in Laodicea. Paul had been to neither city. He had a big heart. It was full of concern for people he'd never met.

He hopes for the believers in both cities, “that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

Paul’s words in verse 3 are a direct assault on the heresy in Colosse. The Gnostics claimed they were the secret-keepers of the mysteries of the universe.

But Paul says the treasures of divine knowledge were unfolded - not in *eastern mysticism*, or *Jewish legalism*, or *Roman paganism* - but in Jesus Christ!

William Randolph Hearst was one of the richest men of his day. He had a vast, expensive art collection.

One day he was thumbing through a gallery magazine when he ran across a masterpiece he considered exquisite. He coveted this painting. Hearst sent out his aide, armed with millions of dollars, to purchase the painting, and add it to his collection.

After an extensive search his aide returned with the painting. Hearst asked, “*How much did it cost?*” He replied, “*Nothing, we found it in our own warehouse.*”

Hearst had the art all along, but he never realize it.

So it is with God’s treasures of knowledge and wisdom. In Christ we have all God’s riches in-reach.

Yet in Colosse, false teachers were intimidating the Christians. The Gnostics told the believers they lacked divine resources. Paul says “*no way!*” In Christ we lack nothing! All we ever need in the eyes of God is Christ!

“**Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.**” Heretics often use big words, and sophisticated arguments. They sound impressive. Don’t be gullible. Lofty language doesn’t make it true.

Years ago, a Junior Higher won first prize at the Idaho Falls Science Fair by showing how conditioned people are to believe anything labeled “**science.**”

In his project the young man urged people to sign a petition demanding strict controls on the chemical “**dihydrogen monoxide.**” And for numerous reasons...

It can cause excessive sweating and vomiting, its a major component in acid rain, it can cause severe burns in its gaseous state, accidental inhalation can kill you, it can cause erosion, it decreases effectiveness of automobile brakes, it’s found in cancerous tumors.

People were alarmed - 86% of folks polled supported a ban on the chemical... Yet only one person realized that “**dihydrogen monoxide**” is another name for *water*.

Sadly, some believers are just as naive when it comes to spiritual rhetoric. Just because a person uses spiritual-sounding verbiage, or religious hype - or poses complicated arguments - doesn't mean it's right.

Complicated and *convoluted* isn't the same as "deep." If it's not clearly taught in Scripture - reject it - no matter how good, or impressive, or holy it sounds!

Verse 5, "For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving." In other words, spiritual maturity never involves forsaking the basics.

You were born again by putting your faith in Christ, and that's how you should walk as a Christian - by faith. "*As you have received Christ, so walk in Him.*"

The heretics in Colosse had created a salvation based on passwords, and rituals, and secret initiations.

Gnostic-style salvation - came not by sticking with the truth about Jesus - but by seeking a deeper life, by sampling an array of diverse spiritual experiences.

One commentary describes Gnosticism as, “very mysterious, complicated, astrological, and snooty.” It created a spiritual elitism. A few people made up the in-crowd. They felt spiritually superior to everyone else.

Understand, real spiritual maturity builds on simple faith Jesus. The *deep things* of God are not *different things*, but fuller and further applications of the truths by which you were saved. Author Kent Hughes writes, “To outgrow the basic truths of Christianity is to become post-Christian and pagan.” Paul is saying don’t leave the faith – grow stronger in that faith.

Verse 8, “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.” Gnostic paganism was cheating the believers out of a real relationship with God. It was steering them away from faith in Jesus.

Any philosophy that downplays or distracts from Jesus is a tool of the devil to rip off our true blessings.

“For in Him (in Christ) dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.” Here Paul deals a death blow to the nonsense known as Gnosticism.

Rather than sprinkling out the “pleroma” - or His essence across creation - God placed all the eggs of revelation in one basket. *All of God is found in Christ!*

And if Christ is in you, and you are in Christ - then you have *all access* to everything God - through faith in Jesus Christ. You never have to go outside Christ...

You are complete in Christ Jesus!

From verse 8 to the end of Chapter 2, Paul warns of four dangers: **intellectualism, legalism, mysticism, asceticism**. Gnosticism was a blend of all four isms...

It borrowed from **Greek rationalism, Jewish legalism, Eastern mysticism, and Roman asceticism**.

And Gnosticism created a very strange morality...

There were two extremes... Since matter was viewed as evil, one group tried to abstain from as much contact as possible with the physical world. They deprived themselves of natural relationships and basic necessities. They lived an austere form of self-denial.

For this group, physical pleasure was frowned on.

The other group also believed matter was evil, but they drew a different conclusion. Since our bodies consists of *matter* it's impossible to escape it, so it doesn't *matter* what we do. Just do it! Self-indulgence is the theme. **Spirituality was divorced from morality**.

The heretics said, ***“search for God – chant, meditate, visualize – then go to bed with your neighbor’s wife.”*** It sounds familiar? It's like today's personalized religion.

In verse 11 Paul attacks the legalistic, Jewish, component of Gnosticism. “In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ...” Christians don’t get right with God through the surgical removal of a fold of flesh. Our circumcision is spiritual. God cuts off our sin nature.

And this gets illustrated. “Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”

Paul is saying baptism now symbolizes what circumcision foreshadowed... a spiritual transformation takes place when a person comes to Christ. At our conversion a part of us is cut off. The old person is buried. A new man rises up. This gets symbolized in baptism - we rise from a watery grave, with new life.

Verse 13, “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” When a person was nailed to a cross the Romans usually nailed a list of his crimes with him.

Here Paul says the Law was nailed to Jesus’ cross.

He died to forgive our infractions under the Law, but in doing so, He put an end to the Law so we'd never be guilty of breaking it again. He ended life under the Law.

When Kathy and I married we didn't agree to a list of rules. She didn't sign up to always scratch my back at night, nor did I agree to always take out the garbage.

We took a vow, and we agreed to live in a committed relationship - not a set of rules. We vowed to give our all to each other, and work out problems as they arose.

Now she does scratch my back (I think she plans to do it tonight), and *I do take out the garbage* (I definitely plan to do it tonight) – but she and I do it, not because of a rule, but it's in our hearts to love each other.

This is how God wants us to live – not by rules, but in a committed relationship. I love the Phillip's translation of this text, “He has forgiven you all your sins: Christ has utterly wiped out the damning evidence of broken laws and commandments which always hung over our heads, and has completely annulled it by nailing it over His own head on the cross.”

A lot happened on the cross of Christ. Verse 15, “Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.”

The decisive blow in the battle against Satan and his stooges was dealt on the cross. Jesus stripped Satan of his authority. Now the only power he has is that which we allow him. Resist him and he's forced to flee.

When a Roman general returned from battle, he led his defeated foe in toe. His crushed enemy marched in his parade. They became a spectacle of his triumph.

It's ironic, Satan rebelled because he didn't want to glorify God. In the end his defeat will do just that!

Verse 16, "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths..." Some Seventh Day Adventists teach that if you worship on Sunday - instead of Saturday the Jewish Sabbath - you're headed to hell. Paul says no!

Rules don't get you closer to God, and neither do rituals and tradition. Keeping one day holier than the next, does nothing to enhance your standing with God

All the Jewish feasts and Sabbaths were pictures of the work of Jesus and His rest. They were symbolic.

Paul refers to them as "a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ." When I come home after a long trip I don't hug and kiss my wife's shadow.

I'm eager to see her - I hug the real thing! If I only hugged her shadow you'd think I was a *shady person*.

The same is true with folks who get caught up in observing certain days or celebrating a feast. They're focusing on the shadow. The feast days were meant to point us to Christ... Hug the Savior, not the symbol.

“Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels...” The Gnostics taught that angels were part of God’s ripples of revelation. Angels were one layer of divine emanation.

And again, Paul sees this obsession with angels as a distraction. *All of God is found in Christ - not angels.*

Paul says those who focus on angels are “intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.” We are complete in Christ!

Sadly, it seems some Christians are always going off on tangents. Walking with Jesus is never enough. They need a hobby horse - angels, fasting, philosophies, etc. Don’t forsake Jesus for anyone or anything else.

Verse 20, “Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations - “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” which all concern things which perish with the using - according to the commandments and doctrines of men?”

It was pride. They opted for legalism to show off their self-discipline. It’s said, “*They fed the flesh by starving it.*” But legalism was a step backwards from Christ.

“These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.” There’s a lot of methods to appear spiritual without being spiritual. Religion is full of ways you can show-off without being more kind, or loving, or joyful.

Never forget, you and I are complete in Christ. This is why it’s not religion we need - but simple faith...