

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

False Elements Added to Salvation

Scripture: Romans 3:20-31

Code: 45-28

Well it is, as Tom said, a great time to be together tonight and as Clayton said, to share in fellowship and worship and sharing our joys through music and also through the attitude of our hearts as we lift ourselves before the Lord. And now, as we come to the time of the study of the Word of God, I want to initially draw your attention back to the third chapter of Romans, so take your Bible and let's look at that chapter for just a moment.

As most of you know, we've been in a study of Romans chapter 3. We stopped at verse 20 having covered that masterful section on sin and we're about to begin the section on salvation. And this is not the official beginning of that section; this is just kind of a little taste of some of the things we're going to get into. This is sort of a preview, if you will. And I want to try to lay some foundation stones for understanding the passage that is before us. In fact, salvation is an issue all the way through chapter 3, chapter 4 and chapter 5 and even it is an issue in chapter 6, 7 and 8. So, it's a very important part of the heart of this Roman epistle. And it's essential that we understand it. And I think as we flow through it in the months to come, you'll get a grasp of all of the great things that the Apostle Paul is saying. But by way of just kind of a survey, I want us to just kind of look at verses 20 through 31 which is a big passage of Scripture, and I'm going to read it to you. You follow along and then I just want to pick out one thought and see if we can't lay a foundation tonight.

Verse 20 says: "Therefore," and I really think that's where the transition in Paul's thinking should be rather than in verse 21, even though most notations in the Bible seem to separate verse 20 from 21. "By the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." Now that in itself is a rather important statement. No one is redeemed or made just, declared righteous before God, through some effort of law keeping by the flesh or by his own humanness. "But now," verse 21 says, after the statement about the law only revealing the knowledge of sin, "now the righteousness of God apart from the law is manifest."

Now what we see in just those very brief statements is that salvation is not a matter of maintaining some religious law in the flesh but rather righteousness, or salvation, is apart from the law. "It is witnessed by the law, however, and the prophets." And that means that it is revealed in the Scripture. And verse 22 says: "This righteousness of God is by faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference." No difference between Jew and Gentile as we've seen in chapters 1, 2 and 3. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

So, the point of all of this is that you can't get saved by keeping the law. The Gentile cannot become saved by a fleshly effort to maintain the law of his conscience. The Jew cannot save himself by a fleshly effort to live up to the written law given to him through the Old Testament. The law has the effect of showing us our sin, but we cannot keep it to the satisfaction of God and thus be granted salvation. Redemption, salvation, justification, righteousness is apart from the law. It is given to us as a free gift, verse 24, through grace granted in Christ Jesus.

And if we skip the verses intervening and come down to verse 28, we'll carry the thought that we want to emphasize. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified," that is declared righteous, "by faith apart from the deeds of the law." In other words, salvation occurs apart from some human effort to live up to the divine standard. You can't do it. All have sinned and come short, so we're all left incapable of reaching the standard and salvation therefore must come another way and it comes through grace in Christ.

Now, verse 31, does that in effect then make void the law? If we cannot be saved by keeping in our flesh the law of God, does that mean that we are under no obligation anymore to pay attention to the law. The answer is "God forbid: yea, we establish the law." Now that is a very broad statement and I just want to draw one thought out of it for our thinking tonight. That when a person becomes redeemed, there is never a separation between grace and law. And that is a major fallacy in the thinking of many people. They want to so purify grace that they make salvation all of grace and no responsibility or obligation whatsoever. And this is an effort to maintain what some have chosen to call super-grace. But grace and gracious salvation never makes null and void the law but rather establishes the law. Now that statement has all kinds of interpretive ramifications, but just to focus on one--becoming a Christian by grace does not remove from us the obligation to obey God. All Paul is saying is you cannot save yourself by your good works, he is not saying therefore give up and never bother with them. He is saying - when you come to Christ and are justified, and as we shall see later in this epistle, when you are implanted with the Holy Spirit, He then can produce in you those good works, yes, He will produce in you those good works and you will even establish the law or fulfill it.

And it's very important, I think, that we understand this. When people want ... now listen carefully to this thought because it's really the hook to hang the whole deal on tonight ... when people want to separate grace from law all together, the logical step that follows that is to separate the Savior-hood of Christ from His Lordship. And so, they will affirm that Jesus Christ is Savior and receive purely and only as Savior, and then there's no other thing required for salvation and hopefully at a later time, you'll acknowledge Him as Lord and get with the issue of obedience, that is not germane to salvation. Now this is an artificial dichotomy. It does not belong there. It is not biblical. It is an effort to maintain pure grace. But I think it is an ill-advised effort. And so, we have people today who tell us all you have to do is receive Jesus as Savior, and that's it. There doesn't have to be any manifest change in your life.

I was riding along with a man, and I ... we passed a liquor store and I said, "That's a funny name for a liquor store." And it did have a funny name.

And he said, "Yeah," he said, "there's a whole chain of those stores in our city." And he said, "It's interesting, there's a guy in my Sunday-school class who owns then, all."

And I said, "That is interesting." I said, "Does he come regularly?"

"Oh, he wouldn't miss it, he's there every week. In fact, I meet with him now and then and we talk and...trying to help him along in his Christian life."

And I said, "Well, what in the world is he doing owning a chain of liquor stores?"

He said, "Well, that's just the business that he's been in." He said, "That's not the worst of it, the worst of it is that he left his wife and he's living with a 22-year-old girl and he's been living with her for a year."

And I said, "Has he got any plan to go back to his wife?"

He says, "Oh no, he'll never go back to his wife, he's...really believes this is the girl for him. And so he just left her and all of his children."

And I said, "This has been going on for over a year?"

"Yes, it certainly has." And then he said this, "You know, it's hard for me to understand how a Christian can live like that."

And I said to him, "Has it ever entered your mind that maybe he's not a Christian?"

"Oh no, no he definitely... there was a time in his life when he asked Jesus Christ into his life."

You know what that means? It doesn't mean anything. But you see, that is one theological perception of salvation, that all you have to do is ask Jesus to come into your heart, no commitment, no change of life, no nothing and you're still saved. In fact, one writer says: "Believers who become agnostics are still saved. They are still born again, you can even accept Christ and become an atheist but if you once accepted Christ as Savior, you cannot lose your salvation even though you deny God." Now it says in my Bible and in his Bible, 2 Timothy 2:12, "If you deny Me, I will deny you." Another author, Dr. Stanford, who is the president, by the way, of Florida Bible College, which propagates a lot of this, says: "Any teaching that demands a change of conduct, either toward God or man for salvation, is adding works and human effort to faith and is an accursed message."

What he is saying therefore is that you can be saved and have absolutely no manifestation of it. Is that true? I don't think so. Because if salvation means the life of God is planted in the soul of man, there's got to be some revelation of that life, just as there was of the life of evil that was there before. We do not accept that. And so, when we teach whether it's Matthew or Romans or any other book in the New Testament, or even in comparison to the Old, we teach that when a person comes to Christ he receives Him as Savior and Lord and genuine salvation demands a commitment of life to obedience to the Lordship of Christ. Now we don't always follow through the way we should, do we? But there has to be a willingness to turn from our sin and accept the responsibility to live under the Lordship of Christ. I think Thomas had it right when he said in John 20:28, very simply, "My Lord and my God," and he affirmed instantly when he saw who Jesus was that this individual had absolute dominion and sovereignty over his life. In Romans 10:9 and 10 it says that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as ... what?...as Lord and believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. And by the way, that is a quote from Joel 2:32 and you have there the word "Lord" is the word Yahweh, it is the very name for the sovereign ruler of the universe, Jehovah God Himself. And that is what salvation is. It is an affirmation of the sovereignty of God in my life through the mediator Jesus Christ.

Now that is not adding a works to salvation, that is a recognition of who He is. In Acts 2:36 at the first sermon preached by Peter there in the birth of the church, after the Holy Spirit had descended upon them, he says: "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know for sure that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ." He is Lord. And that is a biblical affirmation that cannot be denied. And the word "Lord" there, by the way, that's a quote out of Psalm 110:1 and the word used there is adon, adoni, which means "sovereign ruler." Again and again, Christ is designated as sovereign ruler. First Corinthians 12:3 uses that same idea, it says that "No man speaking, by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed, and no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Spirit." Now what's important about that verse is that's talking about salvation. Nobody can be saved except through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Nobody can make the proper insight into who Christ is except by the Holy Spirit. Nobody will truly understand Jesus except by the Holy Spirit. And when the Spirit does His work, he will say: "Jesus is the Lord." And so, there is no reason to dichotomize the saving work of Christ from His Lordship, you do disservice to His person and you miss the message of true salvation. There's no way in the Bible that you could ever separate; mark this, faith from obedience. Why in Romans chapter 1 verse 5 it says: "We have received grace and apostleship," listen to this phrase, "for obedience to the faith among all nations."

In other words, he says as an Apostle, we are proclaiming to the nations the obedience of faith. There's no such thing as a faith that has no obedience. There's no such thing as a salvation that does not acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And yet, when I have taught that, people have accused me of teaching a works salvation. In fact, when I was roaming around in south Florida, some years ago, in the environs of Florida Bible College, I got attacked all over the place. People would

cone and hear Pie and they'd come up afterwards and say, "You're teaching works salvation because you're saying that you have to repent of your sin, and confess your sin and you have to embrace the Lordship of Christ and commit your life to be obedient to Him, that's a works salvation, it adulterates pure grace." I think they have a nice idea trying to keep the purity of grace, but in so doing I think they've emasculated the doctrine of salvation. And there are a lot of people under their aegis who are running around thinking they're saved when they're not because all they've done is identify Jesus Christ as a Savior from sin, but because they've not submitted to His Lordship, the completion of their salvation has never occurred.

There are many other Scriptures that deal with this, but let me just show you one, and I think I could show you dozens of them, but Titus 2:11: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men," now watch this ... when the grace of God that brings salvation appears to men...what does it do? ... what is its response? ... when the grace of God brings salvation appears to all men, the first thing it does, verse 12, is to do what? Teach...and what does it teach? It teaches that we're to deny ungodliness ... and worldly lusts and live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age until the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of Christ. Listen now, put it in theological terms. There is no such thing as regeneration apart from sanctification. Regeneration must be the initiation of the sanctification process. When the grace of God appears to us, the first thing it does is teach us to deny ungodliness. And it says in verse 14 that the Lord gave Himself in order that He might redeem us from iniquity and purify unto Himself a people of His own. The purification of life, the submission to the Lordship of Christ, the obedience that comes at salvation is that which marks the true salvation. And yet in spite of all the Scripture, a well-known theologian wrote this, "The message of faith only and the message of faith -plus commitment of life can't both be the gospel, therefore one of them is false and comes under the curse of perverting the gospel or preaching another gospel," end quote. So he goes on to say you have to have faith plus nothing, all you have to do is believe. In fact, one writer says, "You can dare God to save you and He has to do it."

On the other hand, James A. Stuart responds to that with this, "Men in movements have often given the impression that the acceptance of the Lordship of Christ is a second experience of grace and a sort of optional addendum to the Christian life. So great has been this perversion that many congregations are astounded when they hear the true gospel of the Lordship of Christ and they believe we are preaching a new gospel," end quote. And I've experienced that. People have been cheated of the concept and the truth of the Lordship of Christ and when you preach it they think they're hearing a new gospel. Now I believe that we have not been vigilant in our western culture, we have not been vigilant in the church and that the gospel, the message of salvation has been so corrupted by Satan because we have not watched carefully to make sure it fit the Word of God. And it gets corrupted every way possible. As I said, I've received letters saying I pervert the gospel. By the way, I'm in good company. Listen to what John Calvin said, "Christ justifies no one that He does not at the same time sanctify. Whom He justifies, He sanctifies." What does that mean? That means that when you are redeemed there will be the result of a holy life pattern. And if it isn't there then there

was no real justification. And Spurgeon said, "Salvation would be a sadly incomplete affair if it didn't deal our ruined estate. We want to be purified as well as pardoned, and justification without sanctification would not be salvation at all."

The doctrine of salvation in the Scripture is very clear. God saves us by grace through faith, not human effort. But part of God's gracious work is to bring us to repentance and to bring us to confession and to bring us to submission to the Lordship of Christ. Now why do people have such a hard time allowing that to be the gracious work of God in our hearts? Because I say that I believe the Bible teaches you have to repent of your sin doesn't mean that I decide to repent of my sin all by myself and I sort of resolve that in my own heart. No, no, no, that is a gracious work of God as much as any other thing. Because I say you need to submit yourself to the Lordship of Christ in salvation does not mean that I do that in my flesh, it means that God Produces that in my through His gracious act of salvation. You see, justification is the initiating of the sanctifying process, or the purifying process and it begins with turning from sin to God, Acts 20. Anything less is religious reformation. And you know what happens to people who religiously reform? They get swept and garnished and they're still ... what? ... empty and eight more come back and the end is worse than the beginning.

So, when you say salvation is by grace through faith, I believe that. But I believe in that gracious work there is a transforming of the nature of the individual. For example, it's so beautifully summed up in the second chapter of Ephesians. It starts out by saying, you know, in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the Dower of the air, the spirit that works in the sons of disobedience, you were ... obedience ... you were dead in trespasses and sin, you obeyed the lust of your mind and the desires of your flesh and you were by nature the children of wrath. In other words, it's a pitiful picture. A person is dead in sins. A person is covered and controlled by lust and evil desire and the reasonings of their own irrational mind. They are the, really, the pawns of Satan, the prince of the power of the air, and they're headed for the wrath of God. They're living out a dark, dismal, sinful, vile, wretched existence.

And then in Ephesians, all of a sudden in verse 4, God is rich in mercy, for His great love where with He loved us. He reaches out in grace to us through Christ. And the Bible says, "For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves," right? "It is a gift of God, not of works lest any man should a boast." But it doesn't end there. It then says, "For we are created unto...what?...good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in then." You see, it's a reversal.

In the middle of 2 you have salvation. On the backside of salvation you have a life of evil. What must you have on the front side? A life of what? A life of righteousness. For someone to say, "Well, I'm saved but I deny God and I deny all righteous activity and I do this, and this is the way I want to live, that I did it one time back there and God has to save me," that is ridiculous. Salvation has to be a transformation. "If any man be in Christ he is a ... what? ... new creature." It's all over the place.

Now, turn in your Bible to Colossians and this is just a part of the Scripture that I want to sort of talk to you about. And I'm kind of anxious to hear what I'm going to say, to be honest with you. I love Colossians 1 and chapter 2 as well. I just want to help you to understand. I don't believe that repentance and confession and the Lordship of Christ are errors added to the doctrine of salvation, I don't believe that. I don't believe that. I believe that repentance and confession and submitting to the Lordship of Christ are intrinsic elements of gracious salvation and transformation. But, there are some things that are added to the gospel that do corrupt it and I want you to know what they are so you'll know the difference between the real corrupters and the ones that people are telling us are the corrupters.

The thing that corrupts the simplicity and the purity of salvation is not confession and repentance and the Lordship of Christ. The thing that corrupts the purity of salvation, I believe, Paul gives us here in chapter 2 of Colossians. But before you can read chapter 2 you have to read what? Chapter 1, good class. You have to have a context, don't we? So, look at verse 20, chapter 1, "Having made," and we're going to go real fast, "Having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, by Him I say whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." Now he has just talked about the deity of Christ down through verse 19, "Now that Christ is the fullness of God," and he's given us this marvelous, incredible passage, the passage of verses 15 and following where he talks about Him being the invisible God and all that. And now he says...that was His person, here's His work, "He made peace through the cross." And then it resulted in salvation, verse 21, "You who were alienated were enemies in your mind by your wicked works," He's reconciled." How did He do it? He did it in the body of His flesh through death and when He did it; He did it to present you ... what? ... holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight.

In other words, He did a sanctifying work in you. But you know something? It's only valid, verse 23, if you ... what? ... continue in the faith, grounded and settled and not moved away from the hope of the gospel.

What if somebody comes along and says, "I don't believe in God, I deny Him," but once in his life he said he was a Christian, is he a Christian? Not according to verse 23 he's not. Because the only thing that validates his faith is if he does what? Continues it. Do you see, if there's no manifestation of a righteous pattern, then you know that the work didn't get done because if he was redeemed he would have been presented holy and unblameable and unproveable and that is not only to be seen as a positional reality but is to be manifest as a practical truth as well. And that's the practical aspect in verse 23, it's going to have to be manifest. And if he bails out of the faith, you can be sure he never was really redeemed. Jesus said it in John 8, He said, "If you continue in My word, then you're 14 real disciples," right? Because, you know, Jesus would say some things like He did in John 6 and He'd get all done saying them and it says: "Many of His disciples walked no more with Him," they just split. In John 8 He says, "If you stay with Me and keep My Word, you prove yourself to be real.

So, sanctification, righteous manifestation, godly behavior, holy activity is the manifestation of genuine salvation. In fact, you read I John and that's all you can conclude, it says in there if you don't love your brother, I don't care what you say, you're not saved. And it says in chapter 3, if you go on living continually in sin, I don't care what you claim, you're not saved, you're the child of the devil...not the child of God. So there must be manifestation.

So, that's what he says in chapter 1. And then in chapter 2, he shows the false things that are added to salvation. And I think there are five of them that I want to point out to you. Number one, well, before I say number one, look at verse 10 a minute, chapter 2 verse 10, and this is really a kind of like the hub of the wheel and all the rest of the chapter just spokes out from that. But it says in verse 10: "Ye are ... what? ... complete in Him." And that's all we need to say. Him being Christ. You're complete in Him. Salvation is complete in Christ. You don't add anything to it. You don't add anything to it. You're complete in Him--that's it.

Now why does he say that? He says that because there were people attacking the Colossian church and telling them that Christ was not enough, believing in Christ was not enough. That was a good start, but you had to have Christ plus something else. And I think particularly in Colossians, he's dealing with the Essenes, but we won't get into that this time, but I think if...for you that want to follow it up, I think he's particularly has in mind, and most likely, the Essene community because these are reflective of their attitude. But nonetheless, we see the same attitudes throughout all the history of the church.

So, you're complete in Christ. And he emphasizes this to them because they were being attacked and they were told, "You know, Christ isn't enough." And here he shows us the real ... the real culprits in those things that are added to salvation to corrupt it. And the first one is in verse 8, "Beware lest any man spoil you through...what? ... what is it? ... philosophy." Philosophy ... human wisdom. Satan attacks the doctrine of salvation not always by just blasting it but usually by adding to it. Isn't it interesting that most people in the world sort of like Jesus? He's a hero to most people, isn't He? It's only really the adamant Jewish people that just get all tied up in knots when you talk about Jesus. Most people are very tolerant of Him, they like Him. And if you ask most people in our society they would say that they believe in God and perhaps they believe in Jesus. And Satan will be comforted in that but also help them to try to see that Jesus isn't sufficient, it's Jesus plus. And here's the first plus philosophy.

Now, Colosse as it ... in all of that part of the world, had its philosophers, purveyors of human wisdom. It was a typical pagan city, populated by Greeks and Roman's and Jews and about a hundred miles from Ephesus, it was right in the midst of Greek culture and philosophy was everywhere. Epaphras, who has come with a report for Paul that prompts this letter, has described to Paul, no doubt, that some of these dangers are hitting at the church and the people are becoming somewhat

confused. And one of the things that confused them was that folks weretelling them about a higher level of wisdom. And that's why if you go back to verse 3, 1 think Paul says what he says there, that in Christ are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He wants them to see that Christ has all the wisdom and knowledge they need.

But there's always that pressure - Christ plus human wisdom. So in verse 8 he says, "Beware, (it literally means "be continually being aware,") lest anybody spoil you." That's an interesting word, that "spoil," sulaggogan...gogon. It comes from sule which means booty or plunder and ago to carry off. It means to plunder, to carry someone off, to kidnap someone. It's used to subdue someone. Don't let anybody kidnap you. Don't let anybody plunder you. Don't let anybody seduce you, carry you away with their philosophy.

He also parallels the term "philosophy" with the term "vain deceit." And I think those are parallel terms, philosophy equals empty deceit. So we are not to think, then, that salvation, or the doctrine of salvation is Christ plus human wisdom.

Now, he goes on to describe human wisdom and we'll see how it fits into our world, but let's look at the rest of the verse. First of all, he says it follows the tradition of men. And what he means is that philosophy comes out of human reason, it flows out of human thinking 'Patterns, it's man-centered. And of course, the natural man understandeth not the things of God, they're foolishness to him, -he can't know them because he's spiritually dead and they're spiritually discerned, so he's tuned out. So, here comes man, however, and he says, "Oh yes, God is fine and the Bible is fine and Jesus is fine as far as it goes, but let me interpret it for you with my philosophy, let me interpret it for you with my human wisdom and insight and my evaluation, etc., etc." And hesays, "These kinds of perditions (verse 8 again) flow out of the rudiments of the world and are not from Christ." Now, what are the rudiments of the world? Rudiments means ABC's, basics, these are the ABC's of childish, infantile, human thinking.

Man comes along and thinks he's so erudite, He's got Ph.D.'s, he's got plaques on his wall to prove how intelligent he is. And in his self-deceived pride, he articulates what he thinks is great, profound wisdom and it's nothing but ABC's of infantile, childish, human thinking. Christ is everything, verse 9, "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." What he's saying is Christ is enough; you don't need Christ plus human wisdom. Poverty-stricken sin-cursed opinions of immature religious leaders only draw truths from the heart of man which cannot know ultimate truth rather than God.

Liberal theology is in view here in our day. They want us to say, "Oh yes, the Bible is true, oh, we think Jesus is wonderful, Jesus is the Lord, the Savior," they use those words, I don't know what they mean by them always, but then they have to tell us how this -part of the Bible isn't true and that part of the Bible isn't true. And of course, no one believes that that story really happened. And they attack the Scriptures. And they just begin to pull it apart with their supposed human wisdom. "Well, this can't

be true, we don't believe that ... and the higher critical views of the Old Testament tell us that Moses didn't write the Pentateuch, why anybody knows Moses didn't write the Pentateuch, it was written by J., E., P., and D." Who are J-E-P and D? Well, every time you see Jehovah, that's the Jehovah writer; every time you see Elohim, that's the E writer; and the priestly writer and the Deuteronomist--and that's J, E, P and D. And then a bunch of redactors or editors came along and corrected it and mish-mashed the whole thing.

And then you have the same thing in the New Testament. And the latest little deal, coming out of even evangelical schools, is that Matthew didn't write Matthew in terms of sitting down and writing an inspired book given by the Holy Spirit, Matthew was just an editor and he had a whole bunch of sources on his desk and he picked a little from here and a little from there and pushed it all together. Redaction criticism--that's human wisdom.

And so, we can't really interpret Christ, we can't really know Christ, we can't understand the true doctrine of salvation unless we bend over backwards to the wisdom of man. And it can even get as sophisticated as Jesus isn't enough, you have to have possibility thinking to go with Him, or positive thinking, or some other element of human wisdom.

There's a second thing that is very often added to the doctrine of salvation that does truly corrupt it and that is ritualism, look at verse 11. And he says, "In Christ you are complete," verse 10, "And you're circumcised with the circumcision made without hands." A lot of these people, see, were being attacked by the, as I said, the Essene community which is a sect of the Jews--there were the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Zealots and the Essenes who were the monastics, who lived out by the Dead Sea where they found the Qumran scrolls. But anyway, these people were mystical and so forth and they had these views and they were coming along and saying, "Oh, you Christians, you can't be truly in God's Kingdom, why you have not had circumcision."

Now, they're saying this in Colosse. These aren't necessarily Jews, these are Gentiles. They're saying - Circum...what? And they're saying, "You can't possibly enter into a relationship with God until you've been circumcised." And that's the second error that I see in Colossians 2 and that's ritualism. And some people want us to believe that it's Christ plus the rituals. Some of you people came through a whole lifetime of that in the Roman Catholic Church. I'll never forget the guy who was a jazz drummer and he was playing at Disneyland one night and he was alw... just consumed with his sin. And he went to the Catholic priest late at night and he said, "I...I have sinned." And he gave this big long list of sins and the priest said, "Well, you need to say 26 Hail Mary's through your beads ... for absolution." So, the guy went over to the altar and he started through the thing and he got down through the beads, half a dozen times, and he stood up on his feet and he said, he told me, he said he just yelled. This isn't doing anything. And he stormed out of there and he came the next day to Grace Community Church and we were over in the chapel, and he gave his heart to Jesus Christ. He said, "For the first time in my life, I have peace and freedom from guilt." But he always believed in

Christ and he always believed that Jesus died, but that was never enough. It was that plus, and it was the plus that stole the reality of it. So, he's saying you're complete in Christ; you don't need to have a fleshly circumcision. You have been circumcised in your heart. You have been buried with Him in baptism. You've had; the true washing. You don't need the ceremonial Jewish washings, you see? And he goes right down through verse 13 talking about that. And then he even in verse 14, he says, "The cross took care of it all, the cross blotted out the accusation list that was against you." Those days, when a criminal died, they would nail ... they would nail his crime to the cross, you see, that's why they put at the top of the cross when Jesus died, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," cause that was His crime and that was a mockery to the Jews. He had no crime. Pilate said, "I wash my hands of this ... what?...innocent man." He was an innocent man, there was nothing they could put up there, so Pilate mocked the Jews by saying his crime is He is claiming to be the King of the Jews. And so, they would always nail the crime up there and this is what verse 14 is saying, when Jesus died on the cross, He took the list of your crimes and they were nailed there and they were paid for...and when you were united with Jesus Christ in the great triumph of the cross, verses 14 and 15, in that great triumph over hell and over the fallen angels, everything was taken care of and the only circumcision you needed took place...and the only washing you needed took place. There's no need for ritual.

I picked up my little copy of The Talmud for Today yesterday, when I was kind of studying some of these things, and I looked up the concept of circumcision, and this is what it said: "The commandment of circumcision is more important than all the other injunctions of Scripture," end quote. In other words, the Jews were told that the most important thing in the Scripture was to get circumcised. Why? Because they believed that salvation came through ritual. There are people who still believe that. Why there are people who go into a church and light candles and they think that because of that ritual activity, somebody already dead in Purgatory is going to get saved. It isn't even that person doing the ritual; it's somebody else doing the ritual ... ritualism.

That can even occur within Protestantism. I've been to some Protestant church where you stand up and sit down all the time. And you go through all that hocus-pocus. I turned on the television at midnight on Christmas Eve and I went from station to station and station just to see what the world would be doing to celebrate the first dawning, or the first hour of the day of the birth of Christ and I never saw so much holy hardware in my life. I mean, people were flailing stuff around and guys were dressed like they were on their way to a circus and waving stuff and all of this stuff, just ritual.

I'll never forget two summers ago when we were on our Sabbatical with the kids and we went into a particular church, it was a Protestant church but very ritualistic, and they introduced a visiting dignitary, a bishop from some other country, and he got up and we weren't use to this, this guy had on a gold robe, flowing all the way out on the floor and stuff hanging everyplace, all over him and then he had on his head a gold cone, 18 inches high that came to a point. And the MacArthurs made a hasty exit and the kids said, "Dad, who is the cone-man?" And I had a very difficult time explaining.

“Well, I said, they do it differently.” “Yeah, they really sure do, you would never wear that, Dad, would you?” “No, I would never wear that.” I might wear a baseball hat, but I’m not going to wear an 18 inch cone on my head. And it was just illustrative to them of ... they didn’t even understand what was going on.

But, there are some people who believe that it’s Christ plus all of that. I’ll never forget Dr. Ralph Kypur telling the story one time about when he was in New York and he had a friend there who was a Catholic and he thought when he showed him the city, he was a student at that time at Columbia University in New York, and he said, “I wanted to show him around New York so he could kind of enjoy things and I thought one of the places he’d like to see is the great Catholic cathedral in the city of New York.” And so he said, “I took him there.” And he said, “You know, I would like to ask you, if I could, when I go there, I’d like to go worship at my saint.” And he said, “Well, who’s your saint?” He said, “Well, Joseph is my saint and I’d like to go and worship at Joseph.”

So, down the great, what they call the nave of the church, the great long part, in the sides they have these little stations where different saints are. And they came to the one marked “Joseph” and they had electronic candles, in some of the churches they’ve gone to electronic candles rather than the ones you light, you just turn them on...I don’t know how they do them, but anyway. They went in there and this is true, Dr. Kypur said, “He took his friend in there and his friend was very upset because there was a sign hanging around Joseph’s neck that said ‘This shrine is out of order, do not worship here.’” And it just totally destroyed the guy’s day because he didn’t ... he couldn’t...or didn’t know how to worship God if the shrine wasn’t open. Ritual.

Now I’m not saying there aren’t some people in that system who come to know Jesus Christ but I’m saying that most of those people believe that it’s Christ plus ritual and in most cases they really feel if they’re faithful to the ritual they’re going to be okay in the end. Now that is an aberration added to the pure doctrine of grace. Not obedience and not repentance, but philosophy and ritual.

Third--legalism, legalism. This is the religion of human achievement. Verse 16, Paul hits on that and he says - Now look, you’re complete in Christ, so don’t let anybody condemn you because of your food or your drink or whether or not you keep a feast day or a new moon or a Sabbath. Those are shadows of things to come. The body, the reality, is Christ. Legalism is salvation through external religious activities. Typical of the Judaizers. You can read about them in Galatians, who came upon the Galatians and started to tell them that they weren’t really saved because they didn’t keep all of the Jewish holidays. And so, they got all mixed up and went back to those things and Paul says, “Why did you go back to the weak and beggarly elements which you use to be in bondage to, you want to be in bondage again?” And then he says in chapter 5, - Why don’t you stay free in the liberty where with Christ has made you free and not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage? He says you’re observing days and months and times and years and I’m afraid that I’ve done all my work in vain.

They were imposing the law on the doctrine of salvation and they're saying you're not saved without the law.

Somebody came to me this morning and said, "We're going to come tonight to hear that message because we spent the last ten years in Armstrongism, the World-Wide Church of God, Gardner Ted Armstrong, and the father Herbert W. Armstrong." And I said, "Well, then you know what it is to be in a system that says Christ plus legalism." Oh yes, they believe in Christ but Armstrong said, and this is what the gentleman said to me, "Armstrong says you cannot be saved by the blood of Christ alone." That's what he says. And this man was for ten years a deacon. It's Christ plus keeping the Ten Commandments, Christ plus some legalistic life style.

And it even happens to people who are sort of in more mainline Christian circles. They think that because they don't do certain things and they don't do certain things and they live this very prescribed, circumscribed life, legalistically bending to a sort of hyper-critical super fundamentalism, that they're therefore redeemed by that activity, or lack of it. But it isn't true.

Well, look what he points out, verse 16, he says - Don't let people judge you in food or drink. And in Romans 14 it says the Kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit, so don't let people judge you in that. And that's what the Jews would do. They would say well, you don't function the way we do, you know.

I've had people write me letters and say, "If you're really a minister of God, how come your hair is over the top of your ear?" That's right. You didn't know that people ... that's right. You know, people have very ... people say, "How can you possibly ... how can you possibly use humor, there's no place for that as a representative of God?" They said that to Spurgeon, they said, "How can you say those things?" And Spurgeon said, "You ought to hear the stuff I think of and never say." And I say the same to you folks. I think of some terrific things, but I restrain myself.

I remember when I was a student in my first year in college and they...the legalism, I think of the ... some of the students rather than the school, was the issue. I don't think the school always knew how everybody picked up their ... their standards and made them as legalistic as they did. But one ... we had one optional thing and that was you didn't have to go to a prayer meeting, everything else was mandatory but there was one prayer meeting you didn't have to go to. And so this ... so I didn't go, right? I needed to do some homework and so forth. And so I was in my room and a guy walked by and said, "Aha!" And I said, "Aha what?" And he came in and he said, "I knew it, you're not spiritual." I'll never forget that. I said, "You're right, I'm certainly not what I ought to be, what brought that up?" He says, "You're not at prayer meeting, you didn't go to optional prayer meeting." Well, a couple of weeks later he didn't go to optional prayer meeting and so I went to his door and I said, "Aha!" And you know what he did? He jumped up and the poor fellow was, you know, he jumped up and as I think somebody said the other day, I think his elevator stopped a few floors short of the top, but ...

have to think about that ... but he jumped up and he got just really upset. And the next day I had a note to go see the dean and the dean said to me, "I want you to read this note." And the note said, "I would like to report that there is a demon-possessed person on our campus."

But you know what? That young man ended up in a mental institution and I think, I think part of it may have been he didn't know what true freedom in Christ was, didn't know what true salvation was and he couldn't keep up the artificial system. Christ plus legalism destroy salvation. Feast days, new moons, all elements of Judaism and isn't it interesting that he threw the term "Sabbath" in there? The Sabbath is included in this list. If it was still demanded for Christians as some claim, it certainly would not be in a list of non-binding rituals.

So, Paul warns against legalism. Now when you're talking then, beloved, about false things added to salvation, don't talk about repentance, don't talk about confession and obedience to the Lordship of Christ. If you want to talk about something, talk about the addendum of human philosophy that emasculates the Bible, or talk about ritualism, or talk about legalism, or fourthly, talk about mysticism. Verse 18, and he says, "Look, don't let anybody beguile you," that's an interesting word; it means to defraud you, tell you a lie ... take away your reward. And then the verse gets a little bit complexed in the Authorized. Let me read you the New American which I think hits it on the head, "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement, and the worship of angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind and not holding fast to the head," verse 19. Who is the head? Christ.

Here's somebody who's -not holding to Christ for his salvation but he is trusting in his self-immolation, his self-abasement, his self-humility, his worship of angels and his visions. Now here is the heart of a heresy that plagued the church for centuries. It later became known as Gnosticism. They believed that Christ was a series of emanations, spirit beings that descended from God to man and all of this and there were all kinds of people climbing this ladder and we could ascend up and down and meet these spirit creatures and so forth. Paul says don't let anybody steal your prize, don't let anybody defraud you of your reward, don't let anybody rob you of the truth by making you think that true salvation and spirituality comes in some kind of mystical self-immolation, like the Buddhist who turns himself into a torch, or the priest who puts nails in his belt and wears it for years, or fills his shoes with rocks, or walks on hot irons, or the psyche who goes across the needles, or the man in the Philippines who every year crucifies himself. Don't let anybody steal your prize. Don't let the legalist condemn you. Don't let the ritualist condemn you. Don't let human philosophy beguile you. And don't let mysticism intimidate you.

There are always people who come along and they appear so holy. Have you ever seen those gurus? They are... they look so holy and so calm and so ... they always put them in a bunch of stuff that looks like it's their funeral but they're still breathing, flowers everywhere. It looks just like, to me, like a... like the front of a funeral parlor and they sit there so sedate and they appear to be at peace and they give

out all of this sort of powdered, Pablum kind of talk, trying to intimidate people with their supposed humility.

And then of course, there are within the mystics, as it indicates in verse 18, the people who claim to have a higher level of knowledge, a higher level of experience. They...they meet with the angels, they worship the angels. They follow their visions. You get intimidated by that, don't you? You've got to have a mystical experience, a profound exit from this world onto a higher level of exper ... of spiritual experience, they are the spiritually elite, the inner circle, something has happened to them that is indescribable. Francis Schaeffer calls it "Their other worldly experience, their leap of faith, it's non-describable." In other words, if you go to them, he says, and say -"Well, tell me about it." They say, "Oh no, can't tell you about it." He sees that in all of the arts and sciences. He says that's when-modern art turned. You use to paint a cow that looked like a cow ... paint a man like a man ... paint a house look like a house. Now they throw a bunch of stuff on a canvas and it doesn't look like anything and you don't ask them why. I mean, when your kid brings home something like that, the child psychologists say -Don't ever say to your child - What is that? - You say - Tell me about it, dear - because that's he ex...that's his little leap, see, into a non-descriptive, non-verbal, non-rational dimension.

Verse 18 says they delight in their humility. They are so proud to be humble. It's like Uriah Heap, in David Copperfield, it says, "Humility, the sweetest loveliest flower that blossomed in Eden and the first to die has rarely blossomed since on mortal soil, it is so frail, so delicate a thing, tis gone if it but look upon itself and he who ventures to esteem it his, proves by that single thought that he has it not."

So, there are those who suppose themselves to be specially humble. And then those who worship the angels. That's true of Catholicism, too, by the way--veneration of angels. We're not to do that. When John fell down on his feet in Revelation two times to worship an angel, both times what did the angel tell him to do? Get up, worship God, I am a creature like you are.

And then it says he takes his stand on the visions he has seen. I get so weary of people who come along and they have all these visions. The one guy on television that gets me is the guy who died and went to heaven and whenever he wants to be remembe ... to be reminded of what it was like, he gets the tie out that he wore the day he went to heaven because the smell is still on the tie...the smell of heaven. And you know, some people sit there and say, "I've never even been to Albuquerque ... let alone heaven." That's very intimidating. And they're searching for all of these kinds of experiences ... basing their beliefs on visions...God told me this ... God told me that ... an angel came and told me this ... it's sad.

Those are things falsely added to the doctrine of salvation and they result, the end of verse 18 says, "...in people being puffed up in their fleshly unspiritual minds." And you know, they're devoid of the Spirit, they're full of the flesh. And they do not hold the head, they do not hold to Christ. They hold on

to their mysticism. This is everything from the monastics to all those people with the false humility.

Well, they don't hold to Christ. He's the true head who holds the whole church together, verse 19 says. One last thought... and that is asceticism is another addendum to corrupt salvation, verse 20. It says, "Wherefore if you be dead with Christ from the ABC's of the world, the basic elements of human reason and religion, why is though living in the world are you subject to ordinances, touch not, taste not, handle not, and so forth."

Now this is asceticism. These are the people who want to live a life of total abstinence. They deny themselves everything. The pagan ascetics of the day of Paul were really incredible beings. Some of them would go to the point where they would literally flagellate themselves, you know, cut themselves. And that still goes on today. You know, you can go to the Middle Ages and you find monks during the Middle Ages who regarded it as a sin to take a bath. That's right. Because they would see themselves naked. That's right. And they felt that marriage was an experiment of the serpent which separates from the Lord. Athanasius boasted of the devotion of a man named Anthony who never changed his vest or washed his feet and thus was praiseworthy. Antoninus proudly - related that such was the holy asceticism of Simeon Stylites that when he walked, vermin dropped off his body. That's how holy he was.

And you have that today. You have that in all kinds of ways. Self-denial, you have it with people who go into monasteries and convents. You have it with people who say that we should be poverty stricken and abandon... I remember meeting a man who gave everything that he had in the world, he was worth a half a million dollars and he liquidated every dime he had, I remember cause he gave me a bunch of little glow-in-the-dark praying hands, like about a thousand of them, and he liquidated everything he had and he was passing all this stuff out on Hollywood Boulevard and he gave me these to distribute. He came to the church here. I mean, what are you going to do with praying hands that glow in the dark, right? But anyway, he liquidated all the things that he had and he got up in his house because he had decided that he was going to be humble and he was going to give everything to the Lord and he was convinced the Lord was going to come and, of course, a certain date, and the Lord didn't come and there he was on welfare for the society to take care of ... self-abnegation in the wrong sense.

And so, he says don't let people come and tell you taste not, touch not, handle not - these things are all perishing commandments and doctrines of men. They're literally, he says in verse 23, self-worship...self-worship and are of no value, serving only to satisfy the flesh. People think they're holy in such behavior.

They have a reputation for wisdom. They have a reputation for holiness. But they're really unholy. They miss the point.

Let me just draw your thinking to a conclusion. Salvation is in Christ and Christ alone. Okay? Not Christ plus something. But within that genuine salvation, there will be repentance from sin and submission to the Lordship of Christ. That's clear in the Bible. If you're going to accuse someone of adding to salvation, it is when it is Christ plus human reason, human wisdom, education, philosophy, human criticism. Or, it is Christ plus ritual, that's sacramentalism. Or, it is Christ plus legalism that is externalism. Or, Christ plus mysticism, all kinds of deeper experiences, higher life, visions, miracles. Or, it is Christ plus monasticism, or asceticism, self-denial. And we go back again, don't we, to 2:10 and we read there that it is Christ plus nothing. You are complete in Him.

Now righteousness, then, is apart from any fleshly activity such as these are. But not apart from the true work of God in the soul of man. And we're going to go into that in great detail as we get into Romans 3. Let's pray.

We've had a great time tonight, Lord, just refreshing our minds on the simplicity of salvation. Help us to be able to avoid the errors that are so abounding as Satan endeavors to corrupt the pure doctrine of salvation. We know he will attack that and we must know it in order that we might know that we are truly saved and we must know it in order that we might preach it truly and not another gospel. And if there be in our midst any who have been under the deceit of such an effort as we have seen tonight, deliver them, O God, tonight from that deceit. And thank You, Father, for the clarity of Your Word. If there are any in this place who need Christ, may their hearts open as a flower to the morning sun and may they receive the one who came to die for them, the Lord Jesus Christ. And may they know that in Him they are complete if they come in faith to receive His gracious transforming salvation. We pray in His blessed name, Amen.

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