

‘Christ is my all in all’

A girl comes running to her father with tears streaming down her face and said, ‘Dad! You just gave me some terrible financial advice.’ Dad said, ‘What did I do?’ ‘You told me to put all my money in that big bank down town.’ Dad said, ‘Yes, it’s one of the best in the country.’ She said, ‘Well, they’re going under.’ He said, ‘There must be some mistake.’ She said, ‘I think not. I just got a cheque back from then and it said, insufficient funds!’

A lot of times we’re blaming the wrong source for the insufficiency. The problem has never been that Christ wasn’t sufficient, the problem has been that we haven’t thought so. You see a heretic never comes up and says, ‘Don’t believe in Christ.’ A heretic never says, ‘Christ not.’ A heretic says, ‘Christ and’, instead of Christ only. Heretics are masters of the art of spiritual intimidation.

Today I want to talk about the problem of spiritual bullies. People that come up and literally intimidate you and make you feel inferior spiritually, because you don’t do faith the way they do. And that is what Paul is talking about in [Colossians 2:16-23](#).

In [Colossi](#), Paul is trying to encourage these new Christians, who have been told that they are inferior spiritually. Notice his argument, he does **two** things. He exalts the fullness of the God-Man Christ. Heretics in [Colossi](#) were giving a condescending view of Christ, just like the cults do today. So he was exalting the fullness of the God-Man Christ. He didn’t begin his epistle by tearing down error, he began his epistle by lifting up Christ. What he’s doing in [Colossians 2:16-23](#) is attacking false ideas.

But notice that isn’t where he started, where he started was reminding people of the C.V. of Jesus Christ. [Colossians 1:15](#) says, “He is the image of the unseen God, the first-born of all creation.” [Colossians 1:17](#) says, “He exists before all things and in him all things hold together.” [Colossians 2:3](#) says, “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” [Colossians 2:9](#) says, “For in him dwells the whole fullness of the deity bodily.”

What he’s saying is Christ isn’t the first amongst equals, Christ is the first and there aren’t any equals. His point is this, if Christ is fully God and Christ is fully man and all that fullness of deity lives in Christ and all that fullness has been given to you. [What more do you need? What more do you need to be truly spiritual, than to be connected to Jesus Christ?](#)

The best way to defend the Christian faith isn’t to attack other religions, the best way is to lift up Christ. That’s what Paul did in the [first chapter and a half of this letter](#). Before he ever talked about something he disagreed with, he said, ‘Just let me remind you who Christ is.’ And the next time someone wants to disagree with you or ask you why you believe what you believe. Don’t attack what they believe, just tell them who Christ is and most of the time that will take care of things. So the first thing he did was exalt the fullness of the God-Man Christ.

But the **second** thing he did, now notice this. He exposed the emptiness of man-made religion. Paul doesn’t believe that all religions are basically the same, he said, “there is a faith once for all delivered from heaven”. Then look at some of the words he used for man-made religions. He said things like, “they are shadows of things to come” in [Colossians 2:17](#). [Colossians 2:22](#) “They’re idle notions based on human commands and teachings”.

The religion of the heretics in [Colossi](#) was basically a religion of the world, because the world has to have religion. The world loves religion and Satan loves to give the world all kinds of religions that keeps the world away from God. He’s been doing it ever since the days of Cain. We’re not just talking about Eastern religion or Cults, no, we are talking about what can happen to the Christian faith.

Remember the people in [Colossi](#) claimed Christ, they weren’t denying Christ, they were toppling Christ from His throne. You see, Satan loves for you to have a religion with Jesus in it that still keeps you away from God. You might ask, [is that possible?](#) Let me tell you, absolutely. Paul says, “these religions have the appearance of religion, but they take you back to slavery.” Understand this, when Jesus died on the cross, He didn’t just condemn the sins of the world, He condemned the religions of the world. What we’re going to do today, is deal with this.

[What kind of things do you add to Christianity so that it turns into something that isn’t very Christian? What kind of man-made religion do you mix with Christ, so that when you’re through, Christ isn’t really who he is?](#) This is tricky because Paul is going to talk about things on the surface that doesn’t seem really bad. He’s going to talk about festivals, Sabbath and visions and self-discipline and he did all of those things.

But here's the point, what he did voluntarily, the people in **Colossi** were made to do as a compulsion. Because they were saying that if you don't do it this way, if you don't do what we do, you're not spiritual and Paul would never go there. **What we want to do is talk about what kind of things do you add to the faith that make it not Christian anymore?**

It's going to command what God never required, it's going to guarantee what God never promised. But all man-made religions are going to suffer from the same basic flaw and that flaw has many forms. In **Colossians 2:16-23** he lists **three** different man-made religions that people want to mix with Christianity.

In **Colossians 2:16+17** he talks about **legalism**. Apparently, there were people in Colossi trying to mix the Law of Moses with the Christian faith and came out with something new. Paul says in **Colossians 2:17** **"These things are a shadow of what is to come. The reality is found in Christ."**

You've always heard that Christianity is built on Judaism. I want to say, it is the other way around, it was always Jesus. He was always the foundation, He was always the reality, the other was a shadow. **Is Paul against following God's laws?** Of course not, we follow God's commandments, this is the crux of what Paul's against.

Paul is against you making up some commands God never made and then judging someone else's spirituality on the basis of it. That's legalism, we do it all the time. We're always coming up with rules that you can't find in the Bible and say you're not really a good Christian, unless you do this. Here's the problem with legalism, **who gets to make the rules?**

That's one of the problems of legalism, phonies can always meet external standards. But the problem with that is you can try to keep all the rules and do all the more and still know you're not doing enough. Legalism will never give you confidence in your salvation. You don't come up with better faith by mixing legalism with Christianity.

A **second** thing people try to mix with Christianity is **mysticism**, according to **Colossians 2:18+19**. They delight in the worship of angels. **Have you noticed how popular angels and New Age religions have become lately? Do you know why?** There's a real reason for it, you see for 300 years we have lived in the Age of Reason.

When **Isaac Newton** discovered gravity, man decided if humanity could unlock the laws of the universe, God's own laws, **why couldn't it also discover the laws underlying all of nature and society?** People came to assume that through a judicious use of reason, an unending progress would be possible. Progress in knowledge, in technical achievement, and even in moral values.

The **18th century writers** believed that knowledge is not natural, but comes only from experience and observation guided by reason. Through proper education, humanity itself could be altered, its nature changed for the better. A great premium was placed on the discovery of truth through the observation of nature, rather than through the study of the Bible. They saw Christianity as the principal force that had enslaved the human mind in the past.

Human aspirations, they believed, shouldn't be centred on the next life, but rather on the means of improving this life. Worldly happiness was placed before religious salvation. Nothing was attacked with more intensity and ferocity than Christianity, blaming it for the suppression of the free exercise of reason.

Now we don't believe anymore that science and technology can fix our problems or make us morally better. If anything it has made us morally worse, but that's what we were told for 200 years. We'll just study it, we'll go into a lab, we'll write a computer program and we'll fix it. And after 200 years we've decided science and technology cannot fix all our problems, so we turn to spirituality and that's why the New Age is so popular right now.

That's why angels are so popular, you see angels don't come with baggage. The spirituality of the New Age is not Christianity, angels don't demand anything of you. They just show up, they're cute, they're nice, they help you and they leave. **Isn't that wonderful?** You watch the movies where angels are in them. Movies like, **The Preachers Wife or Angels where a team of angels come to the rescue of a children's baseball team when a young boy pleads for divine intervention.** You read books that tell you about guardian angels and which one to approach for help.

Let me ask you this, **do you ever hear the name Jesus?** You see the vanity of the human mind works like this. I need a mediator to help me get closer to God but I don't want a mediator with an old rugged cross on their back. I would rather have an angel over a crucified Jew as a means to get closer to God.

And so we live in the exact same time as the Colossians. Where you have all manner of mediators available to help us get close to God and Paul says that doesn't cut it. There is only one mediator between God and man, His name is Jesus. And if you have Jesus, you don't need any more than that. Besides, Paul says, "you know all these people that have all these experiences in the other world and meet all these angels." He says, "they don't know what they are talking about". He says, "they're making it up in their heads".

There was a TV talk show recently discussing mediums and spiritualism. Of course there were sceptics and believers amongst the audience. They asked someone who exposes mediums and a real medium to give a reading and the audience had to decide who was the fake and who was the real one. The audience voted unanimously that the fake was the real medium and that the real medium was the fake. Making it up in their heads and taking people for a ride.

The only more that mysticism offers is more of self-importance, 'hey look at me I'm talking to the dead.' By the way, most of us don't need any more of self-importance, we've got more than enough already. In 2 Corinthians 12:1-4, Paul says, "that nobody has ever lived that has had more visions and Revelations than he did."

He was even taken up into the third heaven and saw paradise and he can't even talk about it. But Paul says, "I will never boast about that, I will never try to impress you with how spiritual I am by telling you of the things I've seen." In fact he said in 2 Corinthians 12:5 "What I'll do is boast in my weakness." You don't improve Christianity by mixing it with legalism, mysticism or spiritualism.

In Colossians 2:20-22 Paul talks about asceticism. People walk around saying, "do not handle! Do not take! Do not Touch!" Which seems like a strange road to Christ's likeness to refuse the blessings Christ has made and yet for centuries we have tried to measure spirituality that way. Don't eat certain food, don't drink coffee, if you really want to serve God don't marry. And we've come along for years and said, 'I'm going to measure your spirituality by what you don't do'.

How many of you have grown up with an unspoken assumption in church that Christianity is not supposed to be fun? It's supposed to be grim and if you put up with it, long enough, you get to go to heaven and only then will you have a good time!

A preacher found the roads blocked one Sunday morning and was forced to skate on the river to get to, which he did. When he arrived the elders were horrified that their preacher had skated on the Lord's Day. After the service they held a meeting where the preacher explained that it was either skate to church or not go at all. Finally one elder asked, 'Did you enjoy it?' When the preacher answered, 'No,' the elders decided it was all right!

That's the thinking of asceticism. If you can just deny yourself and keep yourself from enjoying life then you'll be more spiritual. It's easier to deny the body than give up the will. You can punish your body to the limit and still have your heart filled with all kinds of wickedness. All these man-made forms of religion have the appearance of wisdom.

Doesn't it just seem more spiritual to keep all these rules and if you have all kinds of visions and if you deny all these things, doesn't that seem good? Paul says, 'they all have the same basic flaw.' It promotes haughtiness, man-made religion and encourages spiritual competition, it really does.

You start judging each other by things God never talked about. 'We'll, I've never ate raw meat.' 'Oh yeah, well let me tell you what I gave up.' 'Well, let me tell you about all the rules I keep.' And we start judging each other on things God never demanded, required or forbid. You see there is something innate in human nature. It's all about being part of an exclusive club. Doesn't matter what it is, you like to think you are in a special club, that's really hard to get into.

Now what does that do? These people were saying you're not full yet, we'll give you more to make you full. Paul says, 'the only thing they're full of is pride' and the irony of pride is, it's the core of all human sinfulness. He says in Colossians 2:23 "Even though they have the appearance of wisdom with their self-imposed worship and false humility achieved by an unsparing treatment of the body – a wisdom with no true value – they in reality result in fleshly indulgence".

All this man-made religion stuff really does is promote judging. It doesn't make the body more loving, it doesn't make the body more unified. The only more it does is create more sin, it promotes haughtiness without promoting holiness. Colossians 2:23 says, "but in fact they have no value against self-indulgence."

Man-made religion is morally impotent because an external approach can never change our internal bent. A yolk can change temporarily what I do, but it cannot change who I am. There is only one path to real holiness, Christ in you as Paul said back in [Colossians 1:27](#).

Religion tries to work from the outside in, God works from the inside out through the gift of his indwelling spirit of Christ. [Galatians 5:16](#) “Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh.” Jesus said the Holy Spirit is a river of Living Water and when the Holy Spirit comes into your life. God from the inside out begins to do a work in you and clean you up, that religion from the outside in, can never do. [2 Corinthians 3:17](#) “The Lord is the Spirit who gives them life, and where he is there is freedom from trying to be saved by keeping the laws of God”.

The way to God to make people spiritual is slower and messier than the way of man. You take a brand new Christian and you give him some rules and stuff to do and stuff never to do. God’s way is so much slower and messier, God’s way you walk by the power of the Holy Spirit. [Now which way makes people more spiritual?](#) That’s what you have to decide.

The really spiritual man isn’t the person who gave up this or saw that or knows Gabriel on first name terms. The really spiritual person is the person who practices love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and gentleness and self-control, the fruit of the Spirit. There is only one way the fruit of the Spirit will take over your life and that is when the fruit of the Spirit takes over your life and you walk by him.

[Is Jesus a guest in your life or does He live there?](#) When Jesus isn’t just a guest you invite occasionally one day a week. When He becomes a permanent resident in your heart and you start letting Him take over. Then God starts to do a work in you and change you into the person you always really wanted to be. That’s what spirituality is and Paul said Jesus starts to live in your house and takes over your life, you don’t need or have room for anything more.

The path to spirituality is to learn to live dependent on Christ. He’s the head, these other forms are discounted. When you stay connected to Christ you will grow stronger in your faith, He is totally capable of keeping you spiritually full. He really is your all in all.

What Paul is saying, if man-made religion is so empty, [why do you still let people intimidate you?](#) You’ve been there, you’ve had someone get in your face and try to tell you, you didn’t measure up as a Christian because you didn’t do it their way. Paul says don’t let anybody disqualify you, don’t let anybody judge you.

[Now how can I obey that?](#) I can’t stop you judging me, that’s not what he means. I can’t stop you from judging me but I can stop being intimidated by your judgements. We can let ourselves be intimidated by spiritual bullies. They come with all different kinds of agendas, all different kinds of theology. But they will get in your face, by telling you what you ought to be doing if you were a real Christian and they will try to intimidate you.

They will tell you if you were really a Christian you would only use a [King James Version](#) of the Bible. If you were really a Christian you would only use one cup for communion. If you were really a Christian you would speak in tongues. The list is always different, some will be to the right theologically, some will be to the left and some you don’t know what planet they’re on!

And the people who suffer the most at the hands of these bullies are preachers. [The phone goes one night, the preacher picks it up, it’s the supporting congregation. ‘Tell me brother,’ asks the caller. ‘What do you think of Romans 14:5?’ Preacher gives him an honest answer. Then the caller says, ‘You had a thousand pounds a month in support, you’ve just lost a thousand pounds a month in support.’](#)

Just like that, without any thought for the man’s well being, his family or financial commitments. That’s how fickle some bullies can be with preachers. But the point is you shouldn’t let yourself get intimidated by these people. And if you examine closely the lives of all these bullies, you begin to realise they’re not too holy either. And we need to learn to stop letting bullies intimidate us.

You’ve given your life over to Jesus and you might not be everything God wants you to be. But you are a lot more like Christ than you used to be and you should be convinced that if you stay obsessed with and possessed by Christ you will be OK. You can judge me all you want, but what you cannot do anymore is intimidate me. I don’t need more than Christ to be a Spiritual man, what I need to do is to let Christ have more of me, and so do you.