



“Let No One!
Colossians 2:16-19
February 20, 2022

The title of this morning’s message is, “Let No One.” Well, then, let no one what? The answer is: you are going to let no one treat you in a certain way in relation to your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But in order to fully appreciate what is ahead of us in this lively and spirited paragraph of Scripture from the pen, by the Holy Spirit, of the Apostle Paul., it is vital that we take a moment to think about where we have been thus far in the book of Colossians and how from this book, we have been taught about the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ and the overflowing sufficiency of all that the believer has been graced with as far as salvation from sin and all of the resources necessary for spiritual growth in the Lord. We have been given so much.

Just by way of review here are some of the things we have been taught in Colossians Chapter 2. For every one trusting in Jesus, having received the Gospel—the good news about Christ who forgives sinners like us—God has totally cancelled your sin debt and has credited you with the righteousness of Jesus. God has disarmed your spiritual enemies and has triumphed over their accusations. God has severed your sin nature and released you from its dominion. God has raised you up from spiritual death to spiritual life in the Risen Lord Jesus Christ. God joined you to Christ in a covenant of grace and has given you fullness in the Messiah. This is just Chapter 2!

Going even further back into what we have learned from the Spirit-filled brother, the Apostle Paul, going back to Chapter 1: God has reconciled Himself to you and you to Him by the blood of Jesus Christ, bringing absolute harmony, Shalom and peace in your relationship with Him. God has transferred you from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of His beloved Son. God has qualified you as a permanent citizen of the Kingdom of light. God has even given you an inheritance in heaven, secured by your union with Christ. God has revealed to you the great mystery, which is Christ in you securing the hope of basking in His glory in an everlasting kingdom for ever and ever and ever and ever.

In view of these things, let no one tell you that there is anything inferior about trusting in Christ. Don’t let anybody tell you that there is anything that you need for salvation or for growth into spiritual maturity apart from what has been given to you by grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let nobody condescend your faith. Let nobody think that you are lacking anything if you are joined to Jesus Christ in faith.

This morning as we read the text of Scripture, let’s see how Paul conveyed this to the Colossian Church in a way that was specific to their situation as Jewish false teachers were trying to convince them that they needed something more than what they had in Christ. As we search this portion of Scripture, we will see its ongoing relevance as we are those living in Christ, even here today.

Let's see what is here for us in Colossians Chapter 2 and Verses 16 through 19:

¹⁶Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in question of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. ¹⁸Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, ¹⁹and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

So here in this paragraph we find the repeated use of the phrase LET NO ONE. This was in Verse 16 where Paul said, "Let no one judge you in relation to certain religious requirements," talking about the practices that were related to the practice of Judaism in the Old Testament.

Then Paul went on to say in Verse 18, "Let no one disqualify you" and the sense of it was for them, "Let no one tell you that you are disqualified for anything as it relates to the worship of God and life in Him." Don't let anybody be your umpire, calling balls and strikes. Don't let anybody tell you that you are disqualified from purest forms of worship of the Lord our God.

Here in this paragraph, in what we have read and in what we will continue in into next week to the conclusion of Chapter 2, we are now finally brought face to face with the so-called Colossian Heresy. There have been hints of it all along that this small group of believers in Colossae, this strong church, they were being influenced and even condescended and looked down upon by a certain group, a sect of Judaism, that was found in this small city in the Lycus Valley.

While there are a lot of different conjectures as to just what the Colossian Heresy was, what we can see here from this portion of Scripture, is that it is very, very clear that it was some kind of Jewish Mysticism that they were feeling pressured by. It was very clearly Jewish, because it involved and concerned Jewish festivals and holy days and the dietary regulations of the Old Testament Law of Moses.

We would also understand it to be mystic, because it involved and emphasized visions and even the worship of angels. As we carefully read through the book of Colossians, we will try to discern what was going on with the group that was judging and trying to tell Christians in Colossae that they were disqualified from true worship of God.

Throughout this letter, it would seem that this Jewish sect was tolerant enough of their belief in Jesus as Messiah, but what they were really holding fast to were visionary experiences. Their take was: believe what you want about Jesus being the Messiah, but we have a way to get you access into the very heavenly temple of the Living God. It is with these experiences of these visions that we can help unlock for you so you will really find maturity; that you will really find growth; that you will find explosiveness in your spiritual walk with God. These are the gateway to conquering sin. These will help you into new sources of power.

So if these false teachers had their way, it would have been with the Colossian believers letting go of their pure devotion to Christ, the One who had all that they needed for their growth and maturity in the faith, and them beginning to hold fast to other things like they were doing, namely mystic visionary experiences.

In all of this, they were detracting from Christ. They were standing in judgment on the believers. If heeded, their influence would have made those young Christians blush with inferiority. Paul addressed this false gospel head on, saying, “Don’t let anybody influence you in this way. Don’t let anybody pass judgement on you. Don’t let anybody tell you that you are somehow disqualified from true experiences of worship from what worship truly is. You have all that you need for salvation and for growth and for pure worship by virtue of your relationship with Christ.” Paul addressed and encouraged them on this level.

I don’t know how many of us are dealing with Jewish Mystics. It’s a fairly diverse place here in Southern California and it may come to pass that you will sometime come across an Orthodox Jew who tells you, “If you want to be right with God, you do need to be practicing the statues of the Law of Moses. You do need to be practicing these festivals.” It is possible that you can come across such a person.

Or given the diversity that we are living in, you can come across someone from the nation of Islam, saying, “You need to submit yourself to Sharia Law if you really want to have a breakthrough in your knowledge of the ways of God, and you are disqualified if you don’t.” Paul would say, “Don’t let anybody tell you that you are disqualified. Do you see what we are talking about here? There are so many different manifestation of spirituality in this region that we live in here in Southern California.

Last week Dad and I were in the heart of Los Angeles, California. We were there visiting Kaiser Sunset for a consultation with a doctor. The Kaiser Medical Office is located in the heart of Hollywood, California, and it dominates a whole section of Sunset Boulevard. We were going to the doctor’s appointment, and right there adjacent to the doctor’s office is an ornate and lavish blue building.

I wondered what it was and upon a closer look, I discovered that it is the epicenter of the Church of Scientology. As we were making our way into that building, there were a couple of impeccably dressed young men with cards inviting us to go in and see a movie presentation, which would have been taking us into the teachings of L. Ron Hubbard and his Dianetics.

Whatever we would have heard had we gone to a such presentation, it would not be encouragement to find your complete and total sufficiency in the grace and in the power of being joined to Jesus. What I know about that cult, that false teaching, is that it would say, “No, no, look within yourself to be your own spiritual guide. That’s where you are going to find the way forward into growth and true life.”

There are all kinds of teachings like this everywhere. There are New Age practices that will deemphasize a living union to the Messiah from whom power from God flows into our lives for grace, but what these cults will tell you is that you need meditative practices where you can clear your mind and tap into yourself.

Self-help books tell you to find the power within. There are so many different diverse forms of thought that will not only detract from Christ, but even have some smug condescending attitude toward belief in Jesus.

So many of us can understand the hymn that states, “Prone to wander, Lord I feel it.” We need to be seeking the Lord for fresh grace to have the knowledge of the power, grace, love, and goodness—all that we have in Christ—so that we will allow no one to influence us in such a way that we would be led away from the grace uniquely given in Him. Let no one judge your trust in Jesus. Let no one tell you that your are disqualified from anything that relates to the Lord God of All Creation.

Paul was dealing with this in terms of the specifics of what was happening in Colossae and there is so much for us to learn and to be strengthened in by taking a close look at what is here. Along these lines, let’s dig into two reasons why we ought not let anyone judge simple trust in Christ and in Christ alone. First:

Let no one judge your trust in Jesus, because:

1. True spiritual substance is found in Christ (2:16-17)

True substance for salvation and growth, it is found in Christ alone—uniquely in our precious Savior. Look at what Paul had to say as we look again into what it says in Verses 16 and 17:

¹⁶Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in question of food and drink

This is the particular Jewish aspect of the false teaching that was condescending and trying to turn eyes away from Jesus to something else. “Let no one pass judgment on you” in relation to these things, namely into Jewish dietary restrictions, food and drink. Perhaps even having the Nazaret vows, these special consecrations seeking the things of the Lord.

¹⁶Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in question of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

What we read in Verse 17 is such an important verse for having and getting a sense of the New Covenant perspective in the understanding of the Old Testament ceremonial and sacrificial system. It was a shadow that was being cast by a certain substance. The substance being found in Christ.

This picture of shadow versus substance is such an important picture that it is restated elsewhere in Scripture in Hebrews Chapter 10 and Verse 1, where we read:

¹⁰For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered ever year, make perfect those who draw near

So we see this same language of shadow versus substance as the Old Testament sacrificial and ceremonial systems were anticipating the One who is the substance and the fulfillment of those things.

There is a difference between a shadow and the object casting the shadow, is there not? They are related to each other. There is the sense in which the shadow indicates that the object, the true form, is close by, but we are not to mistake the shadow for the actual substance. This is the illustration that the Scripture is using talking about how all of the holy days and the festivals were indicating Someone who was coming who is the very, very Living Substance of those things.

Think about it this way with another picture I think helps. Imagine a young woman and she is the wife of a young man who is a soldier in the United States Army. This young man is deployed to a zone of combat overseas, so they are separated from each other. While he is away at war, you can find this woman in their home every day, gazing upon pictures of him and thinking about him. She is praying for him. She is writing to him as she is looking at pictures of him.

Then, hallelujah, the battle is concluded and there is victory, and he comes home safely. There he is back in the home again. Wouldn't it be rather strange if this young woman continued giving attention and devotion to the pictures of this beloved man when the beloved man is right there in her home with her? No, give the young man hugs and kisses and have dinner, paying attention to him, because the substance is there.

Likewise, what we have with the coming of Christ, it is the fulfillment of what all of the festivals were pointing to all along. All of the holy days, all of the sacrifices, they are fulfilled in Christ so that if we have Christ, we have the very One that it was all pointing to all along.

So likewise, if you have Jesus you have the very One that the Passover lambs were all pointing to. And because this One came and gave His sacrifice for sin, He was sacrificed for sin once for all and in Christ, we have the manifestation of the One that it was all pointing to all along.

We can understand there would have been some health benefits with some of the food that was restricted back in the Old Testament Law. However, the dietary restrictions were really making the nation of Israel distinct from the pagan nations around them. In Christ, we have our distinctiveness, so you are free to eat ham and bacon to your heart's content, because in Christ we have our distinction in this world, as we are growing in His ways. Christ is our Sabbath rest. Christ is the fulfillment of the Sabbath as we see here in this text.

In Christ all of the striving ceases. He has fulfilled all righteousness for His people. He has brought the forgiveness of sin and when the knowledge of this reaches into our hearts and we understand it, there is a great sense of relaxation and peace because the work is finished. Christ has accomplished it for us.

In all of these things, if you have an interest in some of the Jewish festivals and you think it would be pretty cool to commemorate a Passover Feast, you can do that but you cannot judge the spirituality of other believers based on whether or not they do it too. You can't make it a test of piety and more importantly, you can't let others judge you based on those practices.

With Sabbath, we look back into Genesis Chapter 2, how God had a day of rest after six days of creating the earth. There is great wisdom in practicing that. I aim to practice that. I don't always pull it off perfectly. Friday is supposed to be my day off and I will let some work come in but as a rhythm of life, there is great wisdom in taking a day just to cease and to rest, reflecting on the good gifts of God.

However, understand the Jewish Ceremonial Sabbath has been fulfilled in Christ. He is our rest. So we cannot make a sabbath a test by which we judge the spirituality of other people or allow ourselves to be judged, because Christ is the essence of it. He is our rest. In Christ, the substance is found. There is such substance in Him, so that our union with Him is what provides us with salvation and all that we are going to need for growing in spiritual maturity.

That is the first aspect of this. We are not to let anybody judge us in relation to various ceremonial practices when we have Christ and are trusting in Him. We move on and see a second point.

Let no one judge your trust in Jesus, first because true substance is found in Christ. Second, let no one judge your trust in Jesus, because:

2. True spiritual growth is found in Christ (2:18-19)

It is by virtue being connected to Jesus that we grow in Christlikeness. So we see that Paul emphasized this as we continue into what it says in Verses 18 and 19:

¹⁸Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, ¹⁹and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

Growth in the Lord comes by virtue of being connected by Christ, not by some mystical vision experience. That is where growth happens. It is through union with Jesus.

These verses take us into the heart of what was happening with the cult in the city of Colossae. At the very heart of what their experience was and what they were trying to press upon this young gathering of believers is that they too needed to have experiences of being caught into another plane, namely visionary experiences. They were going into great detail, going on and on about these things. For them, this was the gateway to true growth in God.

Here in this text, we see that these visionary experiences also emphasized asceticism and the worship of angels. Asceticism is a form of self-abasement that denies enjoyment of legitimate gifts that have come from the hand of God as a means to spiritual growth. That self-denial being the means to spiritual growth.

According to this perspective, it is a matter of denying yourself the enjoyment of food, of drink, of sunlight, of fragrances, of blossoms, of comfortable clothing, of comfortable bedding. You could not let these things distract, so you deprive yourself of those things to get yourself radically tuned in to this spirituality.

We see that there were some Jewish groups that believed that this kind of fasting and self-denial was effectual for receiving visions into the heavenly realm. There was a group of Jews called the Essenes and they took extraordinary measures of self-denial like this, seeking to achieve such experiences. It would seem that this Colossian cult was very similar. So it was all about self-denial and if you were not practicing this self-denial, you were disqualified.

Then this text says that this had to do with worship of angels, so the question is: what did these angels have to do with it? There are two views of what Paul may have had in mind when he talked about these visions and the worship of angels.

First, this could have been a matter of worship offered to angels, or it could have been a fixation on the worship offered by angels. Do you see the distinction between those two? The focus on worship given to angels as opposed to having an interest in worship offered by angels.

The early chapters of Hebrews also indicates that there were corners of the Jewish religion back in the First Century where there was an interest in worshipping angels.

But in addition to that, what we see here is that it could have been a fixation on worship offered by angels in relation to these visionary experiences. So it could have been that these false teachers were focused in on passages such as Isaiah Chapter 6, thinking about how the prophet Isaiah was given an entry into the very Throne Room of God, where God was being worshiped by the seraphim. Isaiah was there with all of the angelic worship to God taking place before his eyes. It must have been such an overwhelming experience hearing the angels cry out, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty."

These Colossian false teachers were saying, "We know how to provide a gateway into such experiences. It is going to require some attention to Mosaic Law and some self-denial, but it will get you there, and this is what is going to cause you to grow and you need this." They were having an air of superiority about those in Christ in relation to these things, telling them that they needed more than Christ, they needed these kinds of experiences for maturity.

All of this takes us into the nature of Christian worship and the expectations of the practice of the life of worshipping the Lord. These Jewish groups like the Essenes and apparently the Colossian Jews, they were not content to worship the Lord in the midst of the dreariness and the difficulties of this world.

They were longing to have these thrilling experiences of being catapulted up into some other realm, which, by the way, was opening them up to demonic influence and total deception. It was not enough to be worshiping God here in this plane of experience, they needed something much higher—these elevated encounters.

There is a yearning for this that is found in human beings everywhere and the fact of the matter is that even some churches design their public worship services for this. Instead of having worship gatherings, you will hear about worship experiences, and it is the effort to take participants into a higher level of sensation and feeling.

In some corners of the church, it leads to a supposed manifestation of the gift of the speaking in tongues which indicates a true breakthrough in the worship of the Lord and spiritual maturity. There are other situations where people try to get caught up in the worship of the Lord so that they are taken into another realm with emotional upwelling by repeated choruses and ongoing musical interludes.

I am not saying that coming together and worshiping with the body of Christ should not involve a stirring of the heart, because, brothers and sisters, there is joy in the Lord and rich doctrine set to melody does in fact touch the human soul. Good preaching ought to engage the mind and stir the heart with the glory of God. But don't mistake some other worldly sensational experience for finally hitting the jackpot of what worship is all about.

So often the Holy Spirit is stirring worship in the hearts of people with two feet planted on a cursed and fallen world. By the grace of the Spirit, praise and thanksgiving is being lifted up to God from hearts that are bereaved and broken by the painful things faced in this life. Our worship rises up from diseased and pain ridden bodies, with sore backs, sore heads, upset stomachs, and weak lungs.

Our worship of the Lord rises up from weak and wounded sinners, grieved once again from another failure and a stumbling into a sin that has been dogging them for years, yet they find fresh grace in the tender mercies of the Lord to pick themselves back up and put them on their feet with gratitude for the grace of the Savior, who holds them fast and through the trials of this life.

Someday we are going to be brought up into an incredible, elevated experience of angelic worship amidst the heavenly choirs. That day is coming! Our sister Linda is experiencing that right now, by the way. Hallelujah!

However, today worship of the Lord is taking place in the company of fellow strugglers. It is the praise and worship that is being lifted up from jars of clay and broken vessels being filled with the Spirit of the Living God in the midst of the hardships that we face in a very difficult world.

This worship that the Spirit is producing in us in this life is not so much about being catapulted up into the heavens as it is about knowing that there is One who comes from Heaven to earth—a gracious Savior who approaches His people in the midst of the burdens of real life; who is found dwelling in their hearts by the Spirit.

It is a Savior who comes to us sinners and strugglers and sufferers with His sufficient grace to forgive us, to cleans us, to renew us, and to uphold us in the worship of the Lord. It is just the expression of gratitude to this Living Savior who has come into our world and who remains in this world with us to see us through the things we face.

In view of all this, what a precious picture of worship is found here in the text that we have just read. In response to all that God has done for us, in response to the points outlined at the beginning of this message, according to what we read in this text, worship of the Lord is a matter of holding fast to the One who is already holding fast to us. This is what it is all about.

Worship is a matter of doing what the false teachers in Colossae were not doing. What were they not doing? Verse 19:

¹⁹and not holding fast to the Head

So what are we doing as we are given this vision of the glorious grace of our Savior, Jesus Christ and filled with the power of His Spirit? We are holding fast to the Head!

¹⁹...from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

The false teachers in Colossae, like so many in our experience today, were saying, "Growth happens from this other worldly experience." Paul was saying here, "No, growth happens as a result of being connected to Jesus." That is where growth happens. That is where growth comes.

Here in Verse 19 there are three truths about growth that are so plain to see . First, growth comes from connection to Christ alone. Holding fast to the Head, the Head being Christ. Growth comes by being connected to Christ. Second, growth happens in the midst of community with other believers.

We tend to think of growth being a matter of my quiet devotional time with the Lord, and amen to that. We grow during those times, but there is a definite community fellowship aspect to growth that is portrayed here in this text.

We grow in fellowship and in communion with those who have been called into this glorious salvation with us. It is just like ligaments in the body joined together. In the body of Christ, we grow together. That is why gatherings like this are so vitally important. That's what God calls us to. That's why fellowship gatherings through the week are so important, because we grow together in the Lord.

What is Christian growth all about? It is about being connected to Christ. It is about being in community with other believers, and it comes through the power of God. It is a growth that is from God. He is activating spiritual power in us that helps us to grow in the ways of Jesus. But we cannot go holding fast to other avenues of growth that we are being influenced to do, because

that is going to lead us away from where the growth actually happens to those holding fast to Christ. Praise God, He is the One who holds fast to us.

Let me ask you this: what happens when a hose is connected to the spigot outside in the garden and the water is turned on? The water is then released through the hose, giving life to the trees and the garden plants and vegetables.

What happens to the lamp that is plugged into the electrical outlet in the wall? It brings light! What happens to the vacuum cleaner that is plugged into the wall? It sucks up the dust and dirt from the floors and furniture. What happens to charged cell phones? They are able to provide communication.

Likewise, it is as we are connected to Christ, abiding in Jesus, that growth happens and spiritual power is released in us and through us into the lives of the people that God has called us to bless. We have so much in Christ.

Don't let anybody look down on your simple trust in Jesus. He is the resurrection and He is the life. He is the power source. He is our All Sufficient Savior, sufficient to make us right before the holiness of God. He is more than enough. More than we will ever need for growth in the ways of the Lord, growth into maturity, growth in love, growth in kindness, growth in holiness.

Jesus is the treasure chest of spiritual wisdom and understanding. So don't let anybody look down upon your faith in Christ. Don't let anybody lead you away. Don't let anybody judge you. Don't let anybody tell you that you are disqualified from anything when you are trusting in Christ, the One in whom all the fullness of God dwells bodily and the One that you have been joined to by God's grace through faith.

If you are here this morning and you are hearing about Jesus and all of the language of forgiveness of sin and the provision of righteousness and the everlasting life that is found in Him alone, understand that this is a gift that is received through faith. Put your trust in Jesus. Don't trust in yourself and your own inner resources to make you right with God. You trust in Jesus to make you right with God.

If you would like talk about what it is to be a follower of Jesus, I would love to chat with you. Pastors Chris or David would also love to chat with you. There is a prayer room to the right as you exit. People there would love to pray with you. If you are having struggle or anything that is causing you difficulty, there are people here who would love to come along side of you in prayer.

With this, let's go to the Lord and ask Him to cause His truth to have its way in our lives. Will you join me in prayer as we close?