

masquerade – to operate under false pretense or character; to disguise oneself or to present a façade. To pretend to be someone or something you are not.

A few weeks ago we began a journey in Colossians to unmask the masquerade of cultural Christianity. So far we have exposed the fallacy of a good faith versus a God faith, we've seen Jesus for who He is instead of who we want Him to be, and we've exposed the church for redefining both the mission and the message to make themselves culturally acceptable instead of culturally impacting. Today, Paul is going to address the primary threats to our walk of grace and offer us (3) principles to expose and handle grace-robbers.

Thanksgiving 1971 in Portland, OR, D.B Cooper bought a \$20 airline ticket to fly from Portland to Seattle. Once air born, he gave a flight attendant a note notifying her that he had a bomb and was hijacking the plane. He then directed the plane to land in Seattle where he exchanged the passengers for (4) parachutes and \$200K. Eventually, the plane crashed in the Washington wilderness w/ no signs of Cooper. B/c of a lack safety pre-cautions, Cooper was able to bring aboard his bomb to take over plane and take control of the lives of the passengers and crew.

I believe the same is happening today in Christianity – we’re getting hijacked by a tide of cultural heresies and opinions b/c we have no spiritual security measures in place. Not just from w/out, but also from w/in. We’re allowing manmade philosophies to hijack our faith. It is absolutely frightening how we allow our lives to be hijacked by untruth intended to tickle our ears and draw us away from Christ – some of which is completely unintended.

Under the banner of pursuing and experiencing an authentic and intimate relationship w/ Christ that puts a smile on God’s face, Paul challenges us to be aware and on guard against this kind of attack so that we might know and experience a complete and fulfilling salvation keeping Jesus right where He belongs on the throne of our lives.

I Be AWARE of the THREAT

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

takes you captive (*sulagogeo*) to kidnap or carry off w/ the spoils of war – to get hijacked.

Watching someone get hijacked is a painful. Our oldest son Colin, who turns 11 today, has a diagnosis of Fragile X Syndrome. FX is an inherited genetic mutation that causes a number of disabilities including cognitive impairment. But of all of Colin's challenges, the most painful thing to watch is when his life gets hijacked by anxiety. It takes over and seemingly controls him. From a minute or longer, his mind and body go walk-a-bout.

Paul is concerned that those who've been rescued from sin's domain and relocated as citizens into God's kingdom will get hijacked and become enslaved to a worldly ideology by getting tricked by nice sounding teachings.

Hollow (**empty**) and deceptive (**not in alignment w/ truth**) philosophies – based in human traditions and opinions.

This is the only time Paul uses this word. He's referring to the heresy of universalism being espoused by the Colossian errorist. Specifically, these people had a devised a human philosophy that attempted to explain and determine who God was and how he worked. Of course, their philosophy was a mixture of all religious thought and human philosophies.

We have the same problem today. We have people espousing atheism, humanism, agnosticism, occult-ism, and every universal thought and cultic belief imaginable. And people are buying it and even synthesizing it w/ Christianity.

II Be ALERT to the TACTICS

A Don't Be INCRIMINATED by Legalism

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or w/ regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

judge (*krineto*) *pre. act. imp.* – to take one to task; to condemn another w/ unfounded criticism.

Notice the tactics: (1) they judge your food intake; (2) they judge your religious activity according to ritual/tradition; and (3) they judge you by your Sunday attendance.

Paul says – Don't let someone convince you your faith isn't alive b/c you don't practice their rituals. True spirituality doesn't consist of keeping external rules but by having an inner reality w/ Christ that produces an outward godliness.

This is what caused Jesus chided the Pharisees for in Mt. 23.

The Pharisees had developed a system of 613 laws (365 – negative and 248 – positive). But by the time Jesus arrived, the system was sterile and manipulative causing Jesus to say:

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, w/out neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. Mt. 23:23-28

Legalism is the religion of human achievement. It holds that spirituality is based on Jesus plus human effort. It measures spirituality by how a person conforms to rules.

B Don't Be INCAPACITATED by Mysticism

¹⁸*Don't let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up w/ idle notions. He has lost connection w/ the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.*

Mysticism is the pursuit of a deeper or higher subjective religious experience. It is the belief that spiritual reality is perceived apart from the human intellect and natural senses. It's a hyper-spirituality based on emotional experiences and supernatural visions. Mysticism derives its authority from self-actualization and personal enlightenment and it leads to false humility and artificial faith.

disqualify (*katabrabo*) to be ruled out by an umpire; to be deprived of the prize so that you allow your joy to be stolen.

We must never forget that once we receive Christ we enter into a great spiritual race in which we're called to run to win. **We can't allow anyone/anything to take us out of the race.**

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.

Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. 1 Cr. 9:23-27

C Don't be **INCARCERATED** by Asceticism

²⁰ *Since you died w/ Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? These are all destined to perish w/ use, b/c they're based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations have an appearance of wisdom, w/ their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.*

Asceticism refers to the lifestyle one chooses that employs rigorous self-denial. They advocated poverty, starvation, and other forms of outward self-abasement as a means to penalize the flesh and its evil inclinations to ascertain a level of self-righteousness they perceive will be pleasing to God.

Even today there's a sense of asceticism in the church. There are some who believe Christians have to live w/out to be truly spiritual. Meaning, some feel that poverty is synonymous w/ spirituality. Similar ideas are found in all denominations.

In the early church, Anthony, the founder of monasticism, never changed his vest or washed his feet. Simeon Stylites spent the last 36 years of his life atop a 50 foot pillar. He mistakenly thought the path to spirituality lay in exposing his body to the elements and w/drawing from the world.

III Be ALIGNED with the TRUTH

A Live in His PRESENCE

just as you received Christ as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught and overflowing w/ thankfulness.

B Live in His POWER

⁹For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

In Christ all of the fullness of God was present – in Jesus alone was the full nature God and the fullness of saving grace and redemption was constituted.

lives (*katoikeo*) to dwell or to settle down and be at home

B Live in His PROTECTION

¹¹In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not w/ a circumcision done by the hands of men but w/ the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried w/ him in baptism and raised w/ him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

Circumcision – a sign of God’s covenant w/ the Israelites (*Gen. 17:9-14*). Circumcision was an action of identification.

circumcision (*karaith*) to make an alliance. To covenant by cutting flesh

In **Gen. 15**, God makes a covenant w/ Abraham asking Abe to cut animals in two. Then, God walked b/w the pieces sealing His covenant w/ Abe. In response, God required Abe to confirm the covenant by **circumcision**. It served as a faith response and constant reminder of the God’s covenant.

Circumcision was a physical operation performed on all Jewish boys on the 8th day after birth, but the ritual had a greater spiritual significance. The cutting away of the male foreskin was a graphic way to demonstrate how man needed cleansing at the deepest level of his being and it could only occur as a result of being in a covenant relationship w/ God.

People want to trust in the physical and not the spiritual. Problem is a physical act can’t convey spiritual transaction. Throughout the O.T., we discover that God never intended for circumcision to take the place of grace. God warned His people to turn from their sins and experience spiritual circumcision of the heart. People make the same mistake today when they depend on baptism or the Lord’s Supper for salvation. No amount of water or wine can bury a person’s sins or make them alive in Christ.

God isn't interested in slapping a coat of paint on you to cover the blemishes, He wants to completely restore and regenerate His lost creation from the inside out. He desires to cut away the sinfulness of our inner man so our hearts can be in tune w/ His heart.

Through the finished work of Christ, when I receive His grace by faith alone, I was crucified with Him (*Gal. 2:20*), buried in the tomb of spiritual baptism, and raised to walk in a new life under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

D Live in His PROVISION

¹³When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive w/ Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴having canceled the written code, w/ its regulations, that was against us and stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

We were spiritual dead, totally depraved, incapable of having a relationship w/ God, and condemned to the consequences of the law of sin and death – God made a provision in Christ. God initiated the redemptive process by providing a satisfactory sacrifice and, according to *Jn. 6:44*, He employs the H.S. to convict/woo people to salvation.

The result of a faith response is that we are **made alive** (*souzooproieo*) to make alive together – that is, we have been moved from death to life in a spiritual union w/ Christ.

forgiven – canceled the written code by nailing it to a Cross.

written code (*cheirographos*) an autographed certificate of indebtedness issued to a debtor explaining the parameters and particulars of repayment of a debt.

The law given to us by God wasn't to provide a means of salvation but to reveal to man that He was a sinner in need of being saved. No man can perfectly keep the law. – *James 4* tells us that if I stumble just once, then I am held in contempt and am guilty as if I had broken every law.

canceled (*exaleipho*) to wash over or wipe out. The word was used for wiping out the memory of an experience, or for canceling a vote or debt. In particular, it was used when a scribe would wash off a mistake or to reuse a papyrus.

In Christ, God wipe off our sin debt. He cancelled our indebtedness and the penalty we were due to incur leaving no trace of evidence to be held against us. Therefore, b/c of His death on the cross we've been granted full and complete immunity – forgiven and the slate has been wiped clean.

The result is we have victory in Christ over sin and death.

¹⁵ *having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

At the Cross, Jesus not only dealt w/ the law and w/ sin, but He also dealt w/ Satan and His forces. At the cross, Jesus experienced three great victories.

He DISARMED Satan and His Legions

disarmed (*apekduoamenos*) – to put off as one were taking off a garment. Jesus stripped Satan of his power, dominion, and reign serving him notice of His return and final conquest – and gave us His power to fight Satan when he attacks us.

He Made a Public SPECTACLE of Them

He exposed Satan for who he really is and for how he works. Jesus pulled back the veil and revealed to us all the schemes of the enemy and how to conquer him when he attacks to kill, steal, and destroy.

He TRIUMPHED Over Them

Whenever a Roman general won a great victory on foreign soil gaining new territory for Rome, he was honored by an official parade known at the “Roman Triumph.” In this parade, the Roman general was paraded through the streets w/ his army to support him and w/ his captives in tow.