

Paul Warns us about Mysticism
Col 2:18-19

I. Introduction

A. Let's talk about sports and bad refs!

1. My dad watched a LOT of sports
 - a) BUT he hated NBA basketball
 - b) Always told me the refs were bad
 - c) Made calls for "entertainment value" / protect favored franchises that brought in big money, etc.
 - d) He had me watch Michael Jordan take more than 3 steps with his famous down-the-middle lay-up!
2. 2002 – Sac. Kings in the playoffs against LA Lakers
 - a) Lead series 3-2 then game 6
 - (1) Two star King's players foul out guarding Shaquille O'Neal
 - (2) LA gets some 40 free throws vs Kings
 - b) Disgusting how the refs were "seemingly" throwing the game to LA
 - (1) They were the favored franchise
 - (2) More money to basketball
 - c) Sac lost and then lost last game
 - d) Everyone cried foul – but everything was denied – until recently!
3. Referee Tim Donaghy caught in a betting scandal admitted to throwing that game to LA!
4. If you were in that game
 - a) You would've been intimidated by the refs
 - b) You would've changed the way you played as the refereed against you
 - c) AND, they took away your prize – the championship!

B. Paul – the same thing happens in Christianity!

1. There are those who UMPIRE AGAINST YOU
2. They STEAL your PRIZE of SPIRITUALITY
3. Today's sermon - BY INTIMIDATION of "MYSTICISM"
 - a) Intimidation by FALSE HUMILITY – too humble to approach God directly – so humbly worship angels
 - b) Intimidation by FALSE DOCTRINES –from visions – special spiritual revelations, deeper spiritual life, spiritual experiences, etc.
4. Paul – Don't let them do this to you!
 - a) This is just fleshly PRIDE
 - b) They aren't part of the body of Christ – holding fast to the head – Christ Himself!

C. Today – a passage with a STRAIGHT-FORWARD message

1. BUT a difficult passage to interpret
2. Lots of debate, rare words, manuscript differences, etc.
3. But – as with all the commentators and preachers I studied, the message of the passage is clear and can be readily taught!
4. NONE of the differences lead to a meaningful difference in interpretation of the WHOLE passage!
5. But just to show you the differences, I'll read both the NKJ and NAU versions!
Listen to just the translation differences!

D. TURN TO Passage to read Col 2:18-19...

NKJ Col 2:18 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in *false* humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not [Not in NAU] seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

NAU Col 2:18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on *visions* he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, **19** and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

E. PROPOSITION: Paul is going to WARN us about the EVIL of MYSTICISM so that it DOESN'T steal the joy of our spiritual life and turn us away from CHRIST ALONE in our spiritual life!

1. Mysticism JUDGES by PRIDE
2. Mysticism STANDS on ERROR
3. Mysticism HOLDS NOT to CHRIST

<p>II. Mysticism JUDGES by PRIDE</p>

Col 2:18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize

A. “defrauding” = To “umpire down” so as to lose the prize

1. COMMAND – Don't let this happen!
 - a) “to wrong a person by an unjust decision as an umpire”
 - b) In classical Greek used in a story where the umpire gives the prize to the wrong competitor.
2. Let no one be a bad umpire against you
3. Giving an official judgment against you
4. “Don't give up to someone else's judgment so that you lose your prize”

B. What prize?

1. Spiritual Maturity
2. Spiritual Joy, Peace, contentment, etc.

C. Who is “no one”?

1. False Teachers in the body
2. Mostly Judaizers, but also other heretics

3. Are they the leaders of the church? NO
 - a) So, how do they take away your prize?
 - b) A: People LET THEM influence them – intimidated
 - c) Have you ever let someone say something /judge you and let that hurt you EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE NOT AN AUTHORITY OVER YOU? Sure.
 - d) How do they judge you? A: very subtly!

D. by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels,

1. “by” = means of defrauding / influencing / intimidating - Controls both phrases
2. Delighting in = willingly choosing to glory in
3. Self-abasement = false humility / mock humility
 - a) Delight in faking humility!
 - b) NOT true humility which IS a virtue
 - c) Real humility = JC = Meek, lowly of heart
 - d) They took delight in false humility for appearance!
 - e) Influence / Intimidate by false humility!
 - f) Something enticing about it – how could these False Teachers be so wrong when they appear so humble!

Mt 6: 16 “Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. **17** “But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face **18** so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.

- (1) Matt 6 – never for show, doing things seen of men, getting praise from men
- g) Truly humble not conscious of it! Here = fake sincerity!
- h) Today: Emergent Church -
 - (1) “it is prideful to assert to know what Scriptures say!”
 - (2) we’re too humble to be authoritative = you’re prideful
 - (3) = hermeneutics of humility – I’m not going to try to understand
- i) Q: Have you ever felt “beaten down” / unspiritual by someone CONSTANTLY PARADING their humility around you? SURE!
 - (1) Of course, as soon as you MENTION your humility, it goes away!
 - (2) Humble people really don’t see their humility – they’re focused on Christ!
 - (3) BUT we LET OURSELVES feel judged BY OTHERS who FALSELY “push” their false humility on us!
- j) When someone has to talk about themselves and what they’ve done that is SO humble – what is this?
 - (1) A: Pride seeking attention
 - (2) Look at me – see how great I am!

- k) Paul to the Romans:
Ro 12:3 For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment [which includes not thinking TOO LOW of yourself], as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. 4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;
- l) These false teachers were FALSELY HUMBLE and DRAWING followers by INTIMIDATION.
- m) BUT – continue here because there is a SPECIFIC FOCUS to their FALSE HUIMILITY!
4. Worship of the angels = another instrument to seduce faithful
- Reverence / awe to angels
 - Spirit beings filled the whole universe
 - Seeds of Gnosticism here
 - Matter was evil
 - God cannot be connected with matter
 - So He created layers of angelic beings and eventually one of them created matter, so God was separate from evil matter – not his fault
 - FT: we know that God wants us to worship His angels and as we attain higher spiritual planes we'll grow closer to worshipping Him!
5. PUT the TWO together: Heretics were insisting that worship of angels was humility since they were approaching God through angels and not directly!
- Too insignificant to approach God directly!
 - They would God for him
 - RCC – go to God through Mary, through priests
6. BL: Colossians had a specific Problem but the general point here applies to all
- DON'T LET SOMEONE beat you down spiritual by comparing to their false humility
 - Don't let anyone keep from your direct relationship with God
 - Through the knowledge of Scripture
 - Through Prayer to God!
 - The Veil is Torn – you have Access (Rom 5)
 - You can go DIRECTLY to the throne of Grace!
 - Christ is IN YOU and YOU IN HIM – you have a living, vital, Spiritual Union with your Savior! Live it!
 - This kind of intimidation is SIMPLY PRIDE JUDGING YOU FALSELY
7. Jump ahead on phrase, skipping “taking his stand on visions he has seen” – we'll come back to that.

8. Here's Paul's judgment on ALL who would

E. inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,

1. inflated without cause
 - a) "inflated"
 - (1) Puffed up / blown up
 - (2) Related to the word "bellows" that blow air onto a fire and inflate things
 - (3) In context = Put themselves in a Superior position
 - b) "without cause" = NOT illumined by God and His word"
 - (1) How do we know this?
 - (2) Next phrase...
2. by his fleshly mind,
 - a) =sensuous mind – what he feels / experiences
 - b) Mind taken up by senses and experience
 - c) These teaches have inflated themselves SOLELY in their own minds
 - d) God didn't put them there!
 - e) PURE PRIDE coming from a Fleshly mind!

F. So, the whole picture here is one of

1. People in the church going around parading their false humility (self-abasement) by being so humble as to not approach God directly
2. AND NOT just SULKING in the CORNER
3. BUT actually using this to CREATE A FOLLOWING – Elevating themselves / inflated in their fleshly minds
4. We see this too – NOT ALL LEADERS lead by strength and confidence and positive pride!
 - a) Many lead by weakness and false humility!

G. But there's more to the picture!

1. What's the content?
2. What are their fleshly minds BASING their position on as they lead people away?
3. They aren't this way because they're deep into Scripture and following Christ! No!
4. They are basing their whole "ministry" on mysticism on error! Visions!

<p>III. Mysticism STANDS on ERROR</p>
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taking his stand on visions he has seen,

A. "taking his stand"

1. Root started with basic meaning of "stepping upon / putting foot upon"
2. Evolved into : enter into / go deeply into / investigate
3. In Mystery religions can mean "entering into a sanctuary to experience the mysteries of the religion"!

B. “on visions he has seen”

1. = higher religious experiences / mystical experiences
2. Special revelation! Just to them!
3. Elevating visions / mystical experiences to DOCTRINE!
4. THEN Basing teaching on that!

C. *IOW – Mysticism stands on error / false teaching*

1. It STANDS on visions / mystical experiences

D. *THINGS THEY COULD NOT PROVE***E. *Things YOU CANNOT DISPROVE!*****F. *How do you question an experience / a vision?*****G. *A: I know what I saw! I just know! You know when you know that you know!*****H. *See this everywhere today!***

1. Inner prompting! = I feel it in my heart!
2. God came to me and I experienced Him! He spoke to me!

I. = *taking stand on something other than biblical teaching!***J. *Appeal to a deeper spiritual life that is more than what Scripture teaches*****K. *Subtle form today: Taking our stand on experience***

1. Example: How do you know that you are saved? A: I had an experience where God came to me...!”
 - a) Biblical Response: I’m sorry but you are not saved, not going to heaven, salvation DOES NOT come by God visits or experiences like that!
2. Or – I ask someone about their position on something or why they did something
 - a) A: I just know that it is right
 - b) A: My experience says this right
 - c) I had a special feeling / a peace came over me when I was doing it -I knew God was there blessing what I did!
 - d) Biblical Response: Sorry, you’re wrong.
 - (1) Unless you can base your action /position on Scripture it isn’t God’s way of doing it!
 - (2) Our experiences, gut feel, inner sense IS NOT FROM GOD!

L. *What a contrast to Paul’s vision – 2 Cor 1*

2 Co 12: 1 Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. **2** I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago— whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows— such a man was caught up to the third heaven. **3** And I know how such a man— whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows— **4** was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. **5** On behalf of such a man I will boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to *my weaknesses*. **6** For if I do wish to boast I will not be foolish, for I will be speaking the truth; but I refrain *from this*, so that no one will credit me with more than he sees *in me* or hears from me. **7** Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me

a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!

1. Taken to heaven! Can't talk about it!
2. Even had to talk about in 3rd person
3. Because of this, God brought him a TV ministry! Big house, fame and fortune
 - a) – No! A Thorn in the flesh! – keep from being prideful!

M. But false teachers are not so humble!

1. They BASE their teaching on their "[visions](#)"
2. Could you imagine Paul at the Acts 15 council
 - a) Trying to decide on Gentile salvation vs. the ways of the Judaizers?
 - b) Their discussing, debating, disagreeing with Paul and his position.
 - c) Then Paul ends the debate saying, "Excuse me, how many of you here have been to heaven – seen what I've seen"?
3. Then Peter chimes in – "Paul's right and I agree with him" – How many of you were at the transfiguration – I mean, have you ever met Moses and Elijah?
4. Instead Peter later wrote – [You have the more sure word of Scripture](#) – better than visions!

N. Net of this: Anything NOT from Scripture is FALSE

O. Visions, experiences, ARE WORTHLESS. = ERROR.

P. But worse than that even...

IV. Mysticism HOLDS NOT to CHRIST

[19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.](#)

A. Paul ALWAYS pulling us back to Christ!

1. v.17 substance belongs to Christ
2. = Same here!

B. 4 ways Paul Exalts Christ while Exposing Error of Mysticism (teach truth to defeat error!)

1. Christ is the head
2. Christ nourishes the church (being supplied)
3. Christ holds together the church
4. Christ grows the church

C. (1) Christ is the Head

[19 and not holding fast to the head](#)

1. "[NOT](#)" is emphatic!
2. [Holding fast](#) = Holding firmly / grip firmly /tenacious hold
3. [To the head](#) = CHRIST ALONE ("the")

[Col 1:18](#) He is also head of the body, the church; ...

[Eph 1:22](#) And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as

head over all things to the church, **23** which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

- a) Scripture – ALL connected to Christ as the Head
- b) Physical body metaphor is obvious! Paul uses it often (and we'll see more)
- c) Body functions well UNDER control of the head!
- d) Christians NOT people who run around like a chicken with its head cut off!
- e) Paul: A person
 - (1) Falsely humble
 - (2) Worshiping angels
 - (3) Standing on visions
 - (4) Does NOT have a death grip on Jesus Christ in their life!
- f) What does holding fast look like?
 - (1) Have to be SOLELY focused on teaching Christ
 - (2) NOT just sprinkling Christ in with other teachings!
 - (3) Their FOCUS is CHRIST ALONE – the PERSON!
 - (4) We'll see in 3:4 Christ who IS our LIFE!
 - (5) John 15 He's the vine – we're the branches!
 - (6) LIFE IS CHRIST – so OUR ENTIRE focus is HIM!

D. (2) Christ nourishes the church

from whom the entire body, being supplied

1. “from whom” = Christ, the head
2. “the entire body” = the entire church
3. “Being supplied” = furnishing supplies for a musical chorus!
 - a) Giving them what they needed! Benefactor paid for musicians
 - b) Over time just meant GENEROUSLY SUPPLIED!
4. Source of nourishment of the church IS CHRIST!
5. Eph 4 – companion passage – 4:11-16!

Eph 4:11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, **12** for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; **13** until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. **14** As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; **15** but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, **16** from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

- a) = picture of the church where NOURISHMENT comes through TEACHING of the WORD! And PEOPLE diligently studying and growing up!

E. (3) Christ holds together the church

and held together by the joints and ligaments,

1. 2:2 hearts encouraged – knit together same words. We'll see ligaments again in Col 3
2. Joints and ligaments – inter-relationships of the body of Christ AS WE EXERCISE our GIFTS! = Mutual dependence, serving, building
3. To repeat what Ephesians just said
Eph 4:16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.
 - a) POINT: Christ has formed a spiritual body,
 - (1) the church
 - (2) places people where he wants them.
 - (3) ALL connected to head.
 - (4) Body built up as we grow...
4. PAUL: False teachers
 - a) HAVE NO CONNECTION to the body!
 - b) Contribute NOTHING to the church!
 - c) NO CONTACT with CHRIST!

F. Christ grows the church

grows with a growth which is from God.

1. Growth that God intends
2. He builds NOT YOU and I
3. Man's growth = Weight lifter or Beauty Queen
 - a) Go to ANY length to look good on the OUTSIDE!
 - b) People attracted, even in great numbers
 - c) Reality – most often destroying the INSIDE of their bodies!
 - d) Reality – not a growth from God
4. True growth in the body
 - a) = Spiritual Growth
 - b) = A church that IS more like Christ inside and out
 - c) He is the source!
5. False Growth = focused on the externals at the expense of the internals
 - a) Focus on numbers not nutrition (teaching)
 - b) Focus on externals like music not on internals like relationship with Christ, spiritual health, holiness
6. Growth that can ONLY happen by holding fast to the head!

7. Isn't that the MESSAGE of this whole book!
- a) Christ is sufficient,
 - b) Christ is the only strength,
 - c) Christ is the source of knowledge and wisdom
 - d) Christ, Christ, Christ – EVERYWHERE!

V. Conclusion: Why is he warning them?

- A. Same reason I warn you today!**
- B. Satan infiltrates the church and tries to influence believers**
- C. If he Can't take our salvation – he'll take our sanctification, our joy, our peace – OUR USEFULNESS TO GOD in this life**
- D. SO - Don't compare, become intimidated, feel inferior**
- E. Don't Elevate experience ABOVE Scripture! = WRONG**
 1. NOT saying that there isn't Joy, peace, assurance – all have experiences
 2. BUT you don't turn those into doctrine / truth and stand on that!
- F. Stay with the simplicity of Scripture!**
- G. Live by Scripture! Be faithful! Trust Christ!**
- H. Mystical approach is NOT the biblical approach**