

Christ Over Religion

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[0 : 0 0] Anybody ever been to a victory parade? Anybody ever been to a victory parade? Anybody ever been to a victory parade? Anybody ever been to a victory parade? Anybody ever been to a victory parade? Anybody ever remember this one?

! This was the Dallas Mavericks back in 2011, the last time they won the NBA championship. Usually a victory parade, for those of you who don't know, is after your team wins the league championship.

And then at the end of the season, they get to come back to their home city. And they get to throw a big bash, a big parade. And go through the streets and everybody cheers and claps. And it's a great time. Taking pictures.

Usually they're playing, we are the champions, my friend. I don't know if Queen knew that was going to become the official song of victory parades when he wrote that.

But listen, yeah, 2011, about 200,000 people lined the streets of downtown Dallas, climbing light poles, hanging off of overpasses.

[1 : 1 0] It was great. Then the Rangers, it was about two years ago when they won the World Series. Wasn't that great? We're getting a little more excited about that.

Okay, good. Packed half a million people along the parade route in Arlington. It was awesome. I didn't get to go because I valued my life.

But had a great time and got to watch it online. And then for the Dallas Cowboys. I think I was 11. It was great. You should have been there. Look, I'm mad too, folks. All right? Dak's going to get us there, maybe. All right. Anyway, that's not what this is about. But wouldn't it be great if it was? Wouldn't it be great if life was more like a victory parade? No matter what happens, a flat tire, somebody cuts you off in traffic, somebody's passive aggressive to you at work, a cold goes through your house, doesn't matter, man.

[2 : 1 5] Your team won the championship and everything else just doesn't compare. How great would that be? Well, let's dive back into Colossians. Paul's letter to the church at Colossae.

And let's see what in the world victory parades have to do with what he's teaching us in Colossians chapter 2. This is our series, Christ Over All.

When you take a whole book of the Bible and you reduce it down to the main theme, this is Christ Over All, our study of Colossians. Two weeks ago, we learned that in him, Jesus Christ, all things hold together in this grand cosmos, this ordered universe in which we live.

Jesus is holding it all together and he holds us together. And then last Sunday, we looked at the end of Colossians 1. We saw that once we were alienated and now we are reconciled.

God has brought us into the family as his children when once we were considered his enemies because of our sin. So, this Sunday, we're going to look at Colossians chapter 2.

[3 : 2 5] Colossians 2 verses 1 through 3. Let's go ahead and read. For I want you to know how greatly I'm struggling for you, for those in Laodicea, for all who have not seen me in person.

I want their hearts to be encouraged and joined together in love so that they may have all the riches of complete understanding. Wouldn't it be great to have complete understanding of God?

Someday we'll have it. Right now, we get bits and pieces as his spirit reveals them to us through his word. But that we would have complete understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery. What is that mystery? Christ. Jesus Christ. He is the mystery that we're beginning to have revealed to us. In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

So, before we pick it up in verse 4 here, I wanted to get through these three verses because Paul sets it up here. And he says, If you understand who Christ is, if you understand who Jesus is, and who you are in him, then you'll never settle for religion again.

[4 : 47] And that's what the theme is today. Colossians chapter 2. Christ over religion. Let's pray together. God, I pray that you would open up our minds to the teaching of your word today.

That through this letter from Paul to this church in Colossae so many years ago, that this church in Henrietta would by your spirit have our eyes open to see that you are so much bigger than what we call religion.

That you would free us from its shackles. Show us the freedom we have in you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Alright, so we're picking it up in verse 4 now. I am saying this, Paul says, so that no one will deceive you with arguments that sound reasonable.

Has anyone, if you're not ashamed to lift your hand, is anyone willing to admit that you've been deceived by arguments that sounded reasonable? And then later you found out they weren't.

Yep, me too. I got both hands up. There have been times in my life when I was deceived by something that sounded really reasonable. Yeah, that makes sense. And then later I found out it was a bunch of crock.

[5 : 58] It was absolutely false. So, he says, I don't want this to happen to you. So then, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him.

Being rooted. Make note of that word. Rooted. And built up. So did you get the contrast there? We're going down deeper in our roots.

And we're going up, built up in him and established in the faith. This is how you are established in the faith.

By digging your roots deep in Christ and then letting him build this building on top of those roots. Just as you were taught and overflowing with gratitude. So Paul's saying, don't fall for reasonable sounding religion.

Instead, choose Christ. Don't settle for religion. Save that for Jesus. What are we talking about?

[6 : 58] A reasonable sounding religion. The kind that says, if you just try harder, do more, follow all the rules that we've given you, by the way, then God will love you more.

God will value you more. God will choose you if you follow what we say you should do. But that, in a nutshell, described most religions in the ancient times and it still describes them today.

So when we say religion, I want to be very clear about this up front. When I say religion, in this sermon today, I'm talking about the man-made construct that often takes the place of what Jesus was coming to institute on this world.

And if you look at Jesus' time walking around on this earth, much of it was spent fighting against religion. Fascinatingly enough, most of it was spent fighting against the Jewish religion that God had founded and then man had co-opted.

Man had hijacked. Jesus was coming to turn the page and do away with what they had done. So, if you just try harder, if you do what we tell you, then you can have victory.

[8 : 32] then you can have what you're striving for. But there's a truth here that Paul is teaching all through Colossians chapter 2 that runs totally counteracted to that.

And it's this truth that we don't fight for victory. We fight from victory. We're going to dive into that a little bit more and flesh it out.

But I want to lay that out there as where we're trying to get to. This is the point we're trying to arrive at today, okay? We don't fight for a victory. We fight already from the place of victory.

So, as we discover that today, let's look at number one. From rules to roots. We're going to look at what Paul just taught us in verse 7 being rooted and built up in Jesus.

So, we're shifting from the rules of religion to our roots in Christ. What do we mean by roots? How are we rooted in Christ?

[9 : 37] Well, don't you just love roses? Aren't they beautiful? Lovely, aren't they? Wives, would you accept that as an anniversary gift?

It's roses, man. It's the roots of roses. roses. How many of y'all like apples? Aren't they tasty and delicious? Don't you just want one right now looking at that picture?

That's an apple tree, folks. It's the roots. One of my favorite things in all the world is a nice, crisp, juicy, green grape. Don't they look appetizing?

It's the roots. roots. But I can promise you that roses, apples, and grapes would not exist without these three things. These things cause the fruit to appear that we then enjoy.

But the roots are the most important part. Without the roots digging deep into good soil, we don't get to enjoy the roses or the apples or the grapes or you substitute whatever you'd like to.

[10:46] You don't grow by pretty fruit. You don't grow by making your fruit prettier. How do you grow? By making your roots deeper.

You grow by getting your roots deeper. That is what produces fruit. That is what produces something that you would enjoy.

Something of value. So just like a plant or a vegetable or a fruit that we enjoy, it comes from the roots. So, the fruits only exist because of the roots.

Jeremiah 17 produces a principle here. The more we're rooted in Christ, the stronger we will be. The more we're rooted in Christ, the stronger we will be.

The person who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence indeed is in the Lord, is blessed. Anybody ever seen somebody on social media put in hashtag blessed?

[11:49] Usually when they get a new car or a new house or something great happens to them, hashtag blessed. It's great. Kind of seems a little shallow. I don't know, like they don't maybe understand exactly what the blessings of God are because they don't always manifest themselves in something of monetary value.

Something that would be only for the wealthy or only for those in the financial place to be able to do it. That's not always how God's blessings manifest themselves in our lives. Sometimes they're in joy in the midst of a storm.

Sometimes they're in peace when everyone around you is losing their minds. Often that is how God's blessings manifest themselves. And so it says when you trust in God and your confidence is in Him, you will experience God's blessings.

You will be like a tree planted by the water. Notice that word water. And then in verse 8 it says it sends its roots out toward a stream.

There it is again. The water, the stream. It doesn't fear when the heat comes. Why? Because it's near the water. Its foliage, its leaves remain green. This is what a life looks like when its roots are deep in Christ.

[12:59] Because who's the water? Who's the stream? It's Jesus. It's God's spirit. That's where we draw our strength. So when the heat comes and it threatens to dry you up and those around you are getting dried up, you remain productive because your roots are deep and moving toward the water.

Moving toward the stream. So this is what Paul's encouraging this church to do. Move your roots toward Christ. let them grow deeper down.

I can promise you there are so many people who come to church on Sundays and they live relatively upright lives in society and they say they're Christians but when the storm comes their house is built on sand.

when the heat comes their roots are not deep. They're not digging toward the water of Jesus and they dry up.

Their house falls. They can't last because it wasn't real. It wasn't faith. it was something else.

[14:24] So Paul's saying don't be like that. Dig your roots down deep. Continue to live in Christ Jesus being rooted and built up in him and established in the faith.

So from rules to roots. Before we go on to number two I want to make this last point. Religion is all about rules. Jesus is all about roots.

You say what makes our church the Baptist church different from the Methodist church or the Christian church or the church of Christ or the Catholic church or whatever else. When you nail it down it comes down to whatever rules that we have decided to believe or teach.

The sign on the church usually distinguishes that church's set of rules from a different one. But that's not what it's about.

And I'm not telling you that there's no difference between the churches sometimes there are. But the real difference between whether a church is right or wrong.

[15:34] You ready for this? It's going to be a controversial statement. You can put it out on Facebook and say that preacher's lost his mind if he ever had it in the first place. Here we go. The difference and how you decide whether a church is right or wrong is whether Jesus is more important than the rules.

Whether its roots go deeper than the rules that they've decided on. That's the difference on whether a church is right or wrong. So we're not going to pick on a particular denomination or say this one, there's no way that that's the case.

You have to let the Holy Spirit guide you in that. But there are many that it's pretty obvious from the outside looking in that their rules are more important than Jesus himself.

And I pray, literally every day, I pray that our church would not be one of those. That we would not be one that says our rules that we decided on, because I can promise you this, you take a passage of scripture and you get ten different people in the room and they can all read it and they can come away with ten different opinions on what it means.

The Bible is like that. Why? Because the Holy Spirit of God is supposed to guide each of us individually. So we can come away with ten different opinions and ten different set of rules based on what we think the Bible teaches in this passage.

[17:00] So who's right? Which one of the ten is right? That's where God's Spirit has to guide you. and you have to hold some of those rules loosely and say my roots are going to go deep in Jesus and that's going to guide me more than my interpretation of this one particular set and how it disagrees with hers or his or his or hers.

But that's not how the church has operated. For centuries splits have happened. Christians have gotten mad at each other. They say I'm done with this kind of church because they believe these rules and I don't believe this is what the Bible teaches.

So I'm going to go over here and we're going to start our own church. And that happens time and time and time and time again. Why? Because the roots were not as deep as their belief in their rules.

The truth is we ought to be able to set aside some of those things. Say well in this church we do this kind of music. In this church we believe in this and we absolutely do not believe in that.

You say no you do. Truth is the person on the other side of the sanctuary from you may not believe that like you do. And that's all right as long as both of your roots are digging down into Jesus.

[18:19] That's what it's about. So I'll get off that soapbox now and we can move on to number two. It's about the roots in Christ.

It's not about the rules and how good you are or bad you are at obeying them. It's about how deep your roots go in Jesus. Number two, religion's about the flesh.

Jesus is about fullness. We're moving from flesh to fullness. Look down in verse nine. the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ Jesus.

And you have been filled by him who is the head over every ruler and authority. You were also circumcised in him with a circumcision not done with hands.

Does anybody need to pause here and try to figure out why Paul's talking about circumcision? Does that strike any of you as odd? Because that's something that's a procedure, a medical procedure that happens to little baby boys right after they're born.

[19:28] What is it? A week or ten days or two weeks after they're born? Something like that, right? You take him back in, you get him circumcised. Why is Paul talking about this? Because it was a big controversy.

Because the Jews back then were pretty much the only ones circumcising their baby boys. Now are you ready for this? Men, are y'all ready for this?

Back then, if you were going to be a follower of Jesus, a lot of those early churches were telling the men that they had to get circumcised if they were going to come join their church.

Like adult grown men. I'm sorry, that's not pleasant to think about. Ow! Especially with the relative lack of anesthetic back then.

Tough ask. Here we just tell you to give a bunch of money and I'm kidding. We don't really put any obligations on you, restrictions on you if you want to join the church other than do you believe in Jesus?

[20:36] Have you been saved, baptized, and we welcome you into our fellowship as a follower of Jesus? But back then it was yeah man, you got to go under the knife.

It's not going to be fun. Well Paul's fighting against that. He's saying no, absolutely not. You are so focused on the outward, the flesh, saying well they've got to look like us.

Well first of all, who would even know? You know, I mean come on folks. No, that's not what it's about. It's not about whether on the outside physical appearance you fit in.

But that's what these early Jews who had chosen to follow Jesus but they couldn't get past their rules. They couldn't get past their regulations.

They couldn't get past their traditions. Say you've got to do it how we do it. you've got to look like us. It's all about the flesh.

[21 : 42] God says it's about so much more than the flesh. I'm here to offer you complete fullness in me. So verse 9 he says the entire fullness of God's nature is available to you through Jesus.

it's so much better than your religious restrictions. So he says this is about a circumcision that's not done with hands.

Putting off the body of the flesh. The circumcision is done in Christ. This is how we are united. This is how we are made right.

it's all in Jesus not through any physical procedure. And then he continues when you're buried with him in baptism which you were in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God who raised him from the dead.

Paul says you don't need external religion to make you right with God because everything that needed to be done has already been done by Jesus.

[22 : 53] We can't add anything to the gospel. In our starting point class this morning we talked about the gospel. We talked about the good news what it is what it isn't. And I can promise you circumcision had no part of the gospel.

That was never a requirement. Neither was faithful church attendance every Sunday. Now you ought to be faithful in your church attendance every Sunday. Why? Not so you can go to heaven when you die.

Not so you can have a good relationship between you and God. The relationship is there regardless. It's for your own benefit and the benefit of the body of Christ. It's because we are good for each other.

It's because we need each other. And the Holy Spirit in me communes with the Holy Spirit in Bonnie Hoff and we can fellowship together because we're faithful in attending the gatherings of the body of Christ.

When the body's missing a part it's not whole. But that doesn't affect our standing in God's eyes whether we miss a Sunday or not. But we choose to gather because we love each other as Jesus first loved us.

[24 : 04] That's what fullness is. That's what God's offering you. Romans chapter 3. Romans, I'm sorry, chapter 8 verse 3.

Romans chapter 8 and verse 3. I don't have it on the screen. It's a little bit of a passage so if you wouldn't mind turning there real quick. Romans chapter 8 and verse 3.

It would have been a lot of flipping through slides if I put it all up there. So I just thought we could look at the Bible together. Look on with somebody next to you if you don't have a copy but there should be a copy in front of you.

If you need to look at your phone or tablet that's fine too as long as you're on the Bible app and not checking Facebook. Alright? Romans chapter 8 and verse 3. What the law could not do since it was weakened by the flesh, God did.

Remember a few Sundays ago when we looked at the law and then we looked at grace. These are two opposing forces. God established the law to show us how we couldn't keep it and to bring us to the place where we needed his grace.

[25 : 07] And all of us are there. We're all in the same boat. So he says what the law could not do since it was weakened by the flesh, God actually did it. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending his own who?

His own son. In order that the law's requirement would be fulfilled in us. But wait a minute, how could the law's requirement be fulfilled in us? We don't walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.

That's how. When Jesus forgives your sin and makes you his child, then you move from under the law to under grace.

So now we don't walk according to the law anymore. Am I doing okay today? Well, yes, because I fulfilled the law mostly. No, that's not how we judge our day anymore.

It's am I walking by the spirit today or am I walking according to my own thinking, my own understanding? All right? So for those who live according to the flesh, in parentheses, the law, they have their minds set on the things of the flesh.

[26 : 15] But those who live according to the spirit, have their minds set on things according to the spirit. So when you have your mind set on the flesh, you're thinking, am I doing all the rules right?

Am I doing all the circumcision? religion? All the things that man-made religion has placed above a relationship with God.

They say as long as you're doing that, long as you're not wearing your hat in church, long as I didn't hear a cuss word come out of your mouth. For me growing up, as long as you didn't go to the movies.

Is everything in the movie theater wrong? No, but people might think you're watching one of the bad ones. What? Do you have a TV?

Isn't that the same? Anyway, the rules can change and they do depending on the church you go to, depending on the person you hear, how they see things, how they think, the rules change.

[27 : 27] That's why it's never going to be about the rules because you can't follow everybody's. You certainly can't follow God's. It has to be about our listening and being guided by the Holy Spirit.

That's the new creation. That's the new way. That's the new command that Jesus gave to us. Some of us are still stuck in the old one.

That's called religion. So, the mindset of the flesh is death. Verse 6. The mindset of the spirit is life and peace.

In case that wasn't clear enough for you, verse 7, the mindset of the flesh is hostile to God because it doesn't submit to God's law.

Your flesh will never submit to God's law. It won't. You're wired differently. You're not going to obey God. You're going to take every chance you have to disobey God.

[28 : 34] That's what we all want to do. God's the one who makes us different. So, the mindset of the flesh is hostile to God. It doesn't submit to God's law. Verse, the end of verse 7, it's unable to do so.

You think you're a good guy without God? You're not. I'm not a good guy without God. Trust me. And I'm not just picking on the guys. You think you're a nice lady without God?

You're not. None of us are. We are unable to be so. Verse 8, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. So, I don't care how good you look on the outside.

This reminds me of the passage where it says there's going to be people who get to heaven someday and stand before God and they say, God, we did all this in your name. We went to church every Sunday.

We gave our tithe. We were good, upstanding citizens in the community. And he's going to say, depart from me. I never knew you because I never had your heart. You were doing it in your flesh.

[29 : 33] You were doing it under the law. You were trying to earn it yourself. And God says, get out. You have no standing here. You have no place here. You never humbled yourself and accepted my grace as a substitute for your religion.

Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Verse 9, you, however, are not in the flesh. You are in the spirit, if indeed the spirit of God lives in you.

And that's what we got to remind ourselves of every day. Does the spirit of God live in me? Then I am not under the flesh. I'm not under the rules. I'm not under the law. I have a real relationship with God.

I'm family. I'm family. Let me live like it. Let me live like God loves me. And because he loves me, I can love others.

That's the new way. The law could expose sin, but it couldn't erase it. The law was unable to do so much that Jesus instead did for us.

[30 : 41] The law could diagnose the problem, but it could never deliver a cure. Your religion can expose sin, but it cannot erase it. Your religion can diagnose a problem, but it can never deliver a cure.

So where does that lead us? Religion is no substitute for relationship. And Jesus' forgiveness is no substitute for his fullness. You see, it doesn't just start with his forgiveness.

Oh, your sin's gone. You get a blank check. You get a get into heaven free card. That's not what it's about. It's about experiencing the fullness of God. God, we have unlocked the fullness of God.

His forgiveness was just the path to his fullness. It was what opened the door. Now we can experience the fullness of God, not hollow religion.

Finally, from chains to change. religion offers you chains. Jesus offers real lasting change.

[31 : 52] Look back at verse eight. We skipped it a minute ago, but I want to go back to it. Colossians chapter two and verse eight. Be careful that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition.

Does that sound like religion to you? It does to me. Taking you captive through philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition, based on the elements of the world rather than Christ. Now skip down to verse 16. Therefore, don't let anyone judge you in regard to food and drink or in the matter of a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day. These were the controversial topics for them back then.

Insert your own controversial topics that religions argue about and people argue about. Should I? Shouldn't I? Don't let anyone judge you in regards to these controversies. These are a shadow of what was to come.

The substance is Christ. Is your religion a shadow or does it have the substance of Jesus? Because most of what we get in arguments about and we go online and we bash each other about, it's a shadow.

[33 : 02] It's not the substance. Jesus is not a real part of any of that. It's just people getting caught up in silly, vain arguments.

So, let no one condemn you by delighting in ascetic practices. I'm not going to get into asceticism and all that. I preached a sermon about a year and a half ago that talked about asceticism and how they were trying to be more holy than everybody else by renouncing all the pleasures of life.

They wouldn't allow themselves any earthly pleasures in saying, I'm more like God because I've done all this. It's not at all what Jesus ever asked them to do. The worship of angels, claiming access to a visionary realm.

Such people are inflated by empty notions of their unspiritual mind. He doesn't hold on to the head from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and tendons, grows with growth from Christ.

I'm not saying that you can't, God doesn't sometimes give you a vision of something. He certainly did that in the scriptures and he could certainly, if he chose to, do that again today. But it has to be based on the substance of Christ.

[34 : 09] It can't ever run counteractive to the teaching of Jesus or lead you someplace that Jesus doesn't lead us. He is the head. He is what guides everything else.

That's what Paul's teaching here. And so verse 20, if you died with Christ to the elements of this world, why do you then live as if you still belong to the world? Folks, he's not just talking about going out and getting drunk and living like a heathen.

He's saying, why do you live as though you belong to this world by submitting yourself to all these rules of the law? And not just submitting yourself, but trying to bring everybody else under it with you.

That's the context of what he's talking about here. Why instead don't you release that and live with open hands and say, God, teach me.

You guide me now. I'm not going to be stuck in my tradition, my expectations, what I'm used to, what I grew up with. I want you to reprogram me.

[35 : 13] Change the way I think. Why do you submit to regulations? Don't handle. Don't taste. Don't touch. Anybody ever heard that before? Don't.

Don't touch this. Don't be around this. Don't taste this. Why do you submit to these things? All these regulations refer to what is destined to perish by being used up.

They are human commands and doctrines. Although these have a reputation for wisdom, isn't that true? Some of this stuff, oh yeah, man, that's the way to live right there. You see how that guy, he doesn't do anything wrong.

They have a reputation for wisdom. But why? Verse 23, by promoting self-made religion. Y'all, if we had to focus on one verse in this entire chapter, in this entire sermon today, it's verse 23.

Promoting self-made religion, false humility, and severe treatment of the body. These are not of any value in curbing self-indulgence.

[36 : 19] You know why? Because you end up faking it. You end up focused on the outside. You end up focused on the flesh, and your heart is far from God.

That's what religion offers you. Chains. Jesus instead wants to change you, not what you do.

Hello. The wasp enjoyed the preaching too. He's just like, hey, I got to get a closer look at this. All right, anyway. Y'all, we got to do something about these wasps, all right? It's the devil fighting right there. Jesus wants to bring real change, all right? And the wasp wants to fight against that. That's our final point today, from chains to change. Religion will chain you to performance, but Jesus changes you by his presence. Are you more interested in performing according to religious expectations than you are basking in the presence of Jesus?

[37 : 31] Galatians 5. Christ has set us free. This means we're really free. Stand firm and don't get tied up again in the what? Chains.

In the what? Chains of slavery. Time and time again, this imagery is used. And then in verse 4, he says, if you try to be made right by the law, you cut yourself off from Christ. That's strong language, isn't it? The only thing that counts is faith working through love. Don't cut yourself off from Christ. But you do that when you get out from under his grace and you go try to live according to the law again.

That is not what that's about. That's not how this life is meant to be lived. Religion is a cage, but Jesus is the key. That sounds strong, doesn't it?

How many of you said when you came to church this morning, I bet he's going to call religion a cage today. When I was writing this last week, I'm thinking, man, how's that going to go over? Religion is a cage.

[38 : 32] But Jesus is the key. And until he unlocks the cage for you, can I tell you something? Then religion ceases to be a cage.

Once Jesus unlocks the door and he lets you out and he says, you don't have to live here anymore. You don't have to live according to these harsh rules and regulations. I have now freed you by my grace.

Then religion becomes a house that can be built up. And Jesus is the foundation of it. And then he's building this house and he says, true religion, undefiled by God, is to visit those who need help. It's to be a blessing to those. It's to keep yourself unspotted from the world. It's to not be like everybody else, think like everybody else. Why? Not because we're trying to obey a list of rules. Not because we're trying to check a bunch of boxes. It's because Jesus is making us different. It's because he's changing us. And we're not looking at each other like, huh, that guy, I saw him drinking a beer the other night.

[39 : 40] No way he's saved. No way he's going to heaven. That's not the religious, the religion that Jesus is talking about. That's the cage.

And maybe the Holy Spirit's telling you drinking alcohol would be a terrible thing. Do not do it. Then you listen to that because God's got your best interest in mind. Maybe for someone else he's saying, you worry about you, I'm dealing with them.

We don't compare each other and judge each other according to this list of legal rules or regulations or anything else. What our religion espouses, we judge each other according to our pursuit of Jesus.

We start right here in our own heart. So, I said this was the last, this is the last one. From guilt to grace. From guilt to grace.

This is my favorite part. Verse 13 and 14. Finishing it up. When you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive with him, forgave you all your trespasses.

[40 : 47] He erased the certificate of debt with its obligations that was against you and he opposed you and opposed to you and he has now taken it away by nailing it to his cross.

That's what Jesus did. With all your law breaking, all your rule breaking, he took it away so it can't be held against you anymore and he nailed it to his cross.

We read in Romans 8 just a moment ago and I want to go back there. There is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. No one can condemn you, not even yourself.

I don't know about y'all, but I'm way harder on myself than I think anybody else is. I can get myself depressed like hardly anybody else can. I can condemn myself and you can too.

But no one can truly condemn you if you are in Christ Jesus. So don't live under religious rules and regulations because that opens you up for condemnation.

[41 : 55] Yeah, you know what? You didn't follow all the rules. You're a mess. But if you abandon that and say, no, God freed me from that. That's not the world I live in anymore. Now I live under

grace.

Now I'm in Christ Jesus and he says you can't condemn me and I can't condemn myself and Satan can't condemn you. In the middle of the night when you're having a hard time sleeping, Satan can't condemn you.

No one can condemn you because you're not living according to how good you are or how bad you are. You're living according to how great Jesus is, how forgiving he is, how good he is.

Say, no, Jesus is my advocate. He's the one who stands in for me. So Max Lucado, a famous Christian writer, said the same hand that stills the sea stills your guilt.

The same hand that cleansed the temple cleanses your heart. The hand is the hand of God. The nail is the nail of God. As the hands of Jesus opened for the nail, the doors of heaven opened for you.

[42 : 54] I thought that was beautifully written. This is what Jesus offers to us. It's what he did for us. So you could say it this way, and I read this from Max Lucado, when grace moves in, guilt has to move out.

It has to move out. God might convict you of sin after the fact to lead you back to him and away from something that will take you down a wrong path. But you don't get to be overwhelmed by guilt anymore.

Say, no, you've got a new standing, a new identity in Christ. We're finished. I want to make this last point before we leave today. Back in Colossians 2, our final text here.

Verse 15. On that cross, Christ freed himself from the power of spiritual rulers and authorities. He made a public spectacle of them by leading them as captives in his victory procession.

Do you see that? Everybody look up there. His victory procession. Your translation of the Bible might put it a slight different way, but it's saying the same thing.

[44 : 12] Jesus, when he forgave us from sin and he triumphed over sin through his death and his resurrection, it says he took all the spiritual rulers and authorities, religion, and he made a public spectacle of them by leading them as captives in his victory procession.

Do you realize that when Roman generals would come back from fighting in other lands and they would lead back the victory procession of their armies, they would have their captives bound in chains leading them along saying, look who we captured.

Look at the spoils of war. Jesus is saying, I took religion and all those who would legislate against you and I'm leading them as my captives in a victory procession.

This reminds me of another victory procession. When Jesus was sitting on a donkey and he was riding into Jerusalem and they were waving the palm fronds saying, Hosanna, Hosanna.

Hosanna. You know what Hosanna means? Deliver us. Save us. It's a form of praise saying our deliverer, our savior has come.

[45 : 29] Please save us. The crowd went wild. They thought Jesus was going to offer them political victory. They thought he was going to free them from those chains. Jesus was offering a different kind of victory.

He wasn't interested in freeing them from Roman chains right then. He was interested in freeing them from the chains of religious obligation. Of sin that bound them and held them by their flesh.

That's what Jesus was doing. He was coming to go to a wooden cross because his victory was not about a nation winning. It was about salvation winning. And then in 2 Corinthians chapter 2.

But thanks be to God who always leads us in Christ's triumphal procession. And through us spreads the aroma of the knowledge of him in every place.

That's what this life is. It's a victory parade. This life with Jesus is a victory parade.

[46 : 32] You're not out there trying to earn the victory. You're not trying to win the game or win the championship. Jesus already didn't. You couldn't. We were destined to lose.

The enemy against us was greater than us. But Jesus triumphed. He won the victory. So now he's offering you to go along with him through this life on his victory parade.

His triumphal procession. That's the victory. The deliverance. Freedom. He's offering to you. So. With Jesus instead of religion.

You're not walking toward victory. You're walking in it. When someone accuses you. Or you feel like you're not meeting all the rules or expectations of religion.

I want you to remember. The parade isn't canceled. Jesus still has the victory. And you're on the winning side. Would you pray with me now? God. God we went a little longer today than usual.

[47 : 42] But I just pray that. I pray that by your spirit you can reveal to us. The freedom you offer. That this is not about. Obeying this church's rules or another church's rules or.

Anybody else. This is about having a real meaningful relationship with you. That frees us. And let's just experience your victory. And that we're not guided by.

Somebody says. This is what you need to do. Or this is what you shouldn't do. We're instead guided by your Holy Spirit. And that will truly change us. Then we'll become more loving. Then we'll become more.

Grace filled. And grace giving people. It's how you treated us. And it's how you want us to treat others. So I pray that you would change your people by your spirit.

Through your word. We'll give you the glory for it. In Jesus name. Amen. Church for sake of time. We're going to dismiss in just a moment.

[48 : 50] Before we do. Linda can you play. Amazing grace. How sweet the sound. That saved a wretch like me. Let's just sing this through.

The first verse. One time together. Think about the grace. That God's given to us. How sweet it is. Amazing grace.

How sweet the sound. That saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost. But now am found. Was blind.

But now. I see. Never forget the grace that we've been shown. And let's show it to others. Jared would you come and close us in prayer. Amen.

[49 : 47] Amen. Thank you.