

How to Join a False Religion

[18] Let 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, [19] and 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. (Colossians 2:18-19 ESV)

There is no escaping the fact that a major theme of the New Testament book of Colossians involves discerning between the true faith and false religions. And this section of Colossians chapter 2 teaches us something about God:

GOD DOES NOT WANT CHRISTIANS CAUGHT UP IN FALSE RELIGIONS.

The Command - Do not let anyone disqualify you. **2:18**

[18] Let no one disqualify you,

There will be people in this world who will try to act as an umpire or a referee for Christians. There will be people who try to call Christians out, when really they are safe.

I need to ask: Is that possible? Could a Christian get disqualified? Yes and No.

Can a Christian get disqualified from heaven? No. A saved person does not get disqualified for heaven. Why? Because he never qualified himself to begin with. God qualified him or her (Colossians 1:12; John 10:28)

In what way could a Christian get disqualified? Let me offer you 4 ways this could happen.

#1 - A Christian could lose confidence of salvation (Acts 15).

#2 - A Christian could lose the joy of his/her freedom in Christ (1 Tim 4:1-3).

#3 - A Christian could lose spiritual victory in the Lord (Col. 2:23).

#4 - A Christian could lose rewards in Heaven. (1 Cor. 3)

But Paul is saying: Let no one fraudulently steal what's already been given to you by God in Christ. Don't believe them.

How could a Christian join a false religion? How might a Christian get caught up in false religion? I believe a Christian could get caught up in false religion by making 2 errors.

Error #1 - Believing what the false teachers promote. **2:18**

What do they promote? In verse 18, Pauls gives us 3 topics.

(Topic #1) - False teachers promote their humility.

[18] Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism.

Asceticism means to discipline yourself to avoid certain pleasures of life. It is physical self denial in extreme fashion.

King James Bible = voluntary humility. Somebody displaying to the world their extreme “humility”, by New American Standard = delighting in self-abasement.

Net Bible = delighting in false humility.

Paul gives us a topic that often a false teacher will emphasize to get your attention. He will showcase his humility. But here’s the problem: showcasing humility is actually false humility.

(Topic #2) - False teachers promote their unbiblical doctrine.

[18] insisting on asceticism and worship of angels,

False teachers will promote as doctrines, things that are not biblical. Evidently, in Colossae, the unbiblical doctrine that was being promoted was angel worship. False teachers will come in with their humble claims, but their doctrine will be unbiblical.

So what should we do as Christians? Test what you hear by the Bible (Acts 17). If it runs contrary to God’s already revealed Word, you can be sure, it fits in the category of what the Bible would call false religion - false teaching.

(Topic #3) - False teachers promote their personal revelations.

[18] going on in detail about visions,

What often accompanies false religions are teachers who talk about their visions, dreams, and experiences. They validate their claims by talking about what they’ve seen.

The word that best describes this is the word mystic, or mystical. Mysticism is seeking insight or knowledge into the mysteries that transcend ordinary human knowledge. They seek this mysterious information by direct communication with a spirit being that they interact with. Maybe it's an attempt to communicate with a dead person, or an angel, or some God-like being.

As a Christian I'd define mysticism this way: seeking to know Divine spiritual truth through sources outside Bible - looking for God's truth by looking in places other than the Bible.

Error #2 - Ignoring what the false teachers hide. 2:18-19

Just like there were 3 topics they promote, there are 3 realities they hide.

(Reality #1) - False teachers hide the fact that they appear large but have no substance.

[18] puffed up without reason.

The New American Standard = *inflated without cause.*

King James Bible = *vainly puffed up*

NET Bible = *puffed up with empty notions.*

The idea of inflated or puffed up is that they are proud. They boast in humility, and yet, under the surface, they are full of pride, and we know God hates pride (Proverbs 16:5).

So Paul says they are puffed up, inflated like a basketball is inflated with air, but he says they are inflated without reason. They have no reason to be inflated, but they are. They have no good reason for their arrogance. And

there is a term in our world today that I think fits the bill: They are full of hot air. That expression means they run their mouths, but what they say has no value or meaning.

(Reality #2) - False teachers hide the fact that they are sensually driven.

[18] puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind,

Paul says his prideful attitude and his actions are driven by his sensuous mind. Sensual means to gratify the senses - to feed your fleshly senses. Often sexual pleasure is connected to sensuality, but sensuality can be feeding your desire for power, fame, money, popularity, or a certain status you are after. The King James Bible, the NET Bible, and The New American Standard read *fleshly mind*.

Our flesh is God's description of our sinful human nature - that we have a bent towards sin. Our inner desires want what God has said is wrong. Christians have victory over the flesh. Christ has circumcised our hearts (Col. 2:11). We can resist our fleshly sinful nature through faith in Christ, but in our unregenerate lost state, we live to gratify to desires of our flesh. We live to satisfy ourselves. Paul says false teachers are driven by their flesh.

(Reality #3) - False teachers hide the fact that they have not held on to Christ.

[19] and 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.

The head of the body refers to Jesus. He is the head of the body, the church (Colossians 1:18.)

Hold fast means to remain tightly secured. For a Christian to experience all God wants for him or her to experience in this life, the job is quite simple: remain close to Jesus.

But a false teacher has not held on to Christ. A good thing to consider of someone who claims to be a spiritual or religious teacher: Is it really about Jesus? Do they really make much of Jesus? Do they really worship Jesus? Do they really believe in Him? Have they really placed all their hope in Him? Do you they really believe His Word? Do they live accord to His Word? Do they obey Him? Do they really honor His Word? Or is Jesus not the primary person, focus, or goal?

God does not want Christians caught up in false religions.

So what does God want for Christians? I think it's spelled out briefly at the end of verse 19. God wants His people to hold on to Jesus, to be knit together with one another, and to grow together with a growth from God. It's like God is telling us, "Hey Christians. Stick together. Focus on Jesus and I'll make you grow."