

Stay Out of the Ditch

Col. 2:16-3:4

INTRODUCTION: As you drove here today - for every mile you traveled, there were two miles of ditch, one on each side of you.

Life is like that. There's ditches on both sides. The enemy can't get you off the path God put you on, but he can do his best to get you in the ditch... a place where you may spin your wheels but you aren't going anywhere.

BTW, Have you noticed that when you see a two wheel drive stuck on the beach, that some states are more represented than others. I've noticed that.

Many of you today are on that **narrow path**. Satan has in large part lost the ultimate battle for your soul. He cannot get you on the broad road again. God who began the good work, is going to complete it.

He can't get you on another road. So, he has modified his tactics. If he can't get you on a different road perhaps he can get you in a ditch. Thus, he has dug two deep, muddy ditches alongside your path - hoping to get you trapped in the **quagmire of confusion**, halting your progress toward being a man or woman of God.

CONTEXT: The same was true of the church at **Colassae**. They were on the narrow path. Yet on either side of them, there was a deep trench. To the right, the ditch of the **Legalist Judaiser** to the left the ditch of the **Arrogant Gnostic**.

You will find that throughout human history, Satan's arsenal has been limited. Not because he lacks the resources, but simply because the old weapons serve him best. In each generation he slaps a new coat of paint on them, gives them a new name and wages war once again.

The spirit of the Judaisers and the spirit of the Gnostic is still alive and well - you face it every single day. It seeks to influence you spouse, your children, your grandkids.

CONTEXT: Each of Paul's letters turn on a **hinge**, a transition where he moves from doctrinal instruction to practical application and implication. It's typically marked by the word, "THEREFORE".. as if to say, "now, based on all we've learned.. how ought we to live". We find the Colossian "therefore hinge" in **chapter 2, verse 6**.

TEXT: Colossians 2:6-7 (ESV)

⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so **walk** in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

In other words, stay on the path. There is not a better path, stay on this one. **Don't seek to walk a different path, seek to walk this one better.** Seek to know Christ, sink your roots deeper into who Christ is, build your faith stronger. ESTABLISH your faith.

Colossians 2:8 (ESV)

⁸ See to it that no one takes you **captive** by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

That word "Captive" speaks of Prisoners of War (POW's). In Paul's day, the POW would be enslaved and turned into an instrument of profit. So he warning you, "See to it that you don't become a prisoner of war, thus enslaved to the enemies agenda".

How will they try to take you captive?

- **Philosophy** - That word means a lover of wisdom. It will come to you as insight, knowledge.
- **Deceit** - They will lie to you. They will tell you things that are not true to enslave you.

Both the so called, "**wisdom**" and the "**deceit**" will be counter to knowledge of Christ.

The Paul begins his first attack against the Judaisers....

1. A Warning Against the Judaisers

Colossians 2:9-15 (ESV)

⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. ¹¹ In him also **you were circumcised** with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,

Notice how Paul **correlates the obedience of Jesus** with that of the Colossians.

Circumcision was the covenant sign of God with His people. It was on the male reproductive organ for a reason. The moment of greatest intimacy was not to be divorced from the covenant with one's God. It was a sign for Ethnic Israel, Abraham's descendants.

These Colossian Gentiles would not have been circumcised. So the Judaisers would come in and say, "Don't you take your faith seriously?" I mean, "It's wonderful that you have followed Jesus, but you still need to keep the law of Moses"

Now the **Jerusalem Counsel** had addressed the issue in **Acts 15**, stating that Gentile believers did not need to adopt the rite of circumcision. As a matter of fact Paul warned that if they do become circumcised in order to validate their faith, Christ is of no value to them. They are adding LAW to GRACE.

That did not dissuade the Judaisers... They continued their campaign.

But here - Paul shows that these Gentile Christians are so identified with Christ by faith, that JESUS CIRCUMCISION was applied to their credit... do you see?

12 having been buried with him in baptism,

Do you see that - Jesus death was in a sense, your death... baptism is a beautiful picture of identification with Christ. You identify with Him because he has so identified with you. That is why the **mode** of your baptism (immersion) ought to symbolize the **meaning**.

12b. in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

So - Jesus's circumcision was YOUR circumcision, Jesus's death was YOUR death, Jesus's resurrection - was YOUR resurrection.

13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us **all our trespasses**,¹⁴ by **canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.**

Think of that - the charges against you are completely and totally satisfied.

14b. This he set aside, **nailing it to the cross.**

Jesus took all of your sin on Himself. **1 Peter 2:24 (ESV)**

²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree...

Somehow, God took everything that separated you from Himself and placed it on Jesus. And IN CHRIST all of your sins were judged.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin...

15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

Think of all of the things that you are ashamed of, the things that embarrass you - Jesus took them on Himself and eradicated them on the cross.

The Legalist has the AUDACITY to say - what Jesus did was really swell... but it was by no mean sufficient... if you really want to be right with God, you need to follow my

list.

Colossians 2:16–17 (ESV)

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

The LEGALIST brings bondage.

The CROSS brings freedom.

Here is what I've found - God gives all of us a bible that we are know and obey. Primarily, the Bible speaks to third level issues. Here is what I mean.

- **Dress Modestly** - but it doesn't give you specifics, skirt lengths, one piece versus two piece, ect. You are to use discretion. What may be modest at the beach, would be immodest at a funeral.
- **Let no unwholesome speech come out of your mouth** - But it doesn't give you a list of words that you cannot say.
- **Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the spirit** - But it doesn't forbid drinking.
- **It is not anti sex** - it says enjoy sex in the context of a committed marriage.

So it gives you categories of wisdom not a book of rules. So in each circumstance we have to make decisions. Legalism - is when we take our **SPECIFICS** and make them **RULES** for everyone else.

- I can't were that, so you can't wear that.
- I can't say that, so you can't say that.
- I can't drink that, so you can't drink that.

OR we take **METHODS** and make the **MANDATORY**

Some church do this with MUSIC. It may be southern Gospel or it may be Top 40 Christian. Truth is Paul never heard either of them on this earth. But we will get the idea that THIS is what really spiritual people listen to.

Some cultures are worse than others...

ILLUSTRATION: When Julie and I went to Israel all you could eat on the Sabbath (Saturday) was the previous days left overs. The **elevators** stopped at every floor... because if they pushed a button that constituted work. Then there was a Gentile elevator that didn't stop on every floor. Ironically, if a good Sabbath keeping Jew saw us Gentiles get on the elevator they would jump on, ask us to press their floor... I guess they figured we were going to hell anyway so they might as well take advantage.

LISTEN - at the right hand of God Almighty my Sabbath keeper is seated.

Not only is there a Warning Against Judaisers...

2. A Warning Against Gnostics

Colossians 2:18–19 (ESV)

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.

MODERN DAY GNOSTICISM:

The gnostic believes that Salvation came through **gnōsis** (“knowledge” in Greek), and it was Jesus Christ who brought this knowledge into the world as a messenger of the Supreme Being. Jesus was divine, but since the flesh was evil, he wasn’t really incarnate. Gnostics believed him to be a purely spiritual being who came to save souls **from their entrapment in bodies**. He appeared to have a body, but didn’t; he seemed as if he was crucified and died, but he really wasn’t and he didn’t. All of these were common gnostic teachings.

Gnosticism had many effects. In **1 Corinthians 11** we read this enigmatic passage where women are tossing off their head coverings in Church? It seems bizarre and we assume that must have been some bizarre ancient tradition. But actually it was one of the effects of Gnosticism.

Gnostics considered the pure spirit trapped in the human body to be **androgynous**, neither male nor female. Gnosticism taught that we are to seek to be freed from the confines of our gender. Thus, the Corinthian women threw off their head coverings or shave their heads entirely to eliminate the gender distinction.

Now, perhaps you see how a form of Neo- Gnosticism has reemerged.

- **The Elimination of gendered pronouns—**

Saul Alinsky author of *Rules for Radicals* who described Lucifer as the original radical wrote - *“He who controls the **language** controls the **masses**”*.

It shouldn’t surprise us that there are **Neo-Gnostic** attempts to modify language away from gender specific pronouns. Ze, rather than He or Her. Why? Gender distinctions are bad. How do they know this? It’s certainly not traditional science.. no, it’s a higher knowledge they say. You either get it or you don’t.

We all know people who believe such things. Please understand, this is not some new hip approach. They are simply falling for a 2000 year old heresy that the enemy has repackaged for gullible Americans.

Abortions Advocacy - In Reproduction, the contribution of each gender is considerably different. The Gnostic seeks to abolish this difference, thus an emphasis on Abortion, to level the playing field between the genders.

Presidential candidate Joe Biden has said if your 8-year-old child wants to be transgender to make life easier, “they have a right to transition and there is no reason for you to deny it.”

Folks that is the pinnacle of insanity. Paul confronted that sort of thing directly and I will as well.

PAUL CLOSES HIS CASE AGAINST LEGALISM AND GNOSTICISM IN VERSE 20

Colossians 2:20–23 (ESV)

20 If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— 21 “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” 22 (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? 23 These have indeed an **appearance of wisdom** in promoting **self-made religion** and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION:

ILLUSTRATION: Friday I met a man, nice guy, who was a Deacon in the Russian Orthodox Church. They put on long golden robes, wear big golden hats, and walk up and down the aisle at church every Sunday morning waving a golden censer filled with burning incense. He said, “I just feel so close to God in that moment”.

Paul would say - it matters not how you feel... it was of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

ILLUSTRATION: There was a lady who attended my previous Church several years ago and she moved away to a Church that was just known to be dead and lifeless. I knew her pretty well so one day I asked her - why did you go there? I mean I understand if God lead you somewhere but why move to a dead church? I’ll never forget what she said - well Pastor I visited with some of my family and as soon as I walked in I caught the scent of cool-aid and cookies... and I remembered growing up in a church like that and I guess I got sentimental. **WELL ARE YOU GROWING?** Are you being rooted in the faith? Are you being built up in the faith? Are you being established in the faith? NO - but I’ve got kool aid and cookies.

Sentimentality is DEAD without the WORD OF GOD.

Do you know what changes the heart of man? The Spirit of God through the Word of God... NOTHING ELSE.