

Series: *Colossians 2 – Truth Above All*

Title: "Why Scripture Alone?" (Colossians 2:18-23, 1 Peter 1:20-21, 1 Corinthians 2)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 9/2/2012

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Today I want to call your attention once again to the great statement about man-made doctrines that we find in chapter two of Paul's letter to the Colossians. If you are able to do so, please turn with me in God's Word to Colossians chapter two, beginning at verse eighteen. Let us hear once again the Word of God given to us by inspiration through the Apostle Paul. Colossians chapter two, beginning at verse eighteen:

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 seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head [that is, to our Lord Jesus Christ], from whom all the body [the entire true Church of Christ], nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations — "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," which all concern things which perish with the using — according to the commandments and doctrines of men?

These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. (Colossians 2:18-23)

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The Nature of Counterfeit Revelation

In our most recent messages on this passage, we have been focusing on the warning that God has given us here against one of the most serious sins that any believer or any church can fall into, and that is the sin of inventing or propagating or accepting counterfeit revelation.

We have seen that counterfeit revelation is, in fact, the foundation of false teaching. Counterfeit revelation seeks to *add to* the Bible, or to *take away from* the Bible, or to explain the Bible in a way that sinfully places some other alleged revelation, *in authority over* the Bible.

Examples: Romanism and Mormonism

In the long history of the church, Roman Catholicism – with all of its pronouncements by popes and councils, and all of its accumulation of man-made traditions, and all of its alleged visions of Mary and all the rest – Roman Catholicism is the greatest originator and greatest promoter of counterfeit revelation in the history of the visible church.

In the past two hundred years, Mormonism has come to rival Roman Catholicism in the audacity of its counterfeits. Mormon theology is based on counterfeit visions, on false religious texts based on the testimony of false witnesses about the supposed existence of golden plates that supposedly contained the words of the *Book of Mormon*. In addition to this is their book called the

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Doctrine and Covenants which contains alleged special revelations to early Mormon leaders.

Beyond this, Mormonism is governed by the pronouncements of its council of elders, pronouncements which are said to have equal weight with earlier counterfeit revelations. And Mormonism practices a perversion of the Old Testament Jewish temple worship in its great and ornate temples in various cities around the world. Through all of these things Mormonism has likewise become a great originator and promoter of counterfeit revelation.

Those who believe in Mormonism believe one of the most tremendous and complex structures of theological falsehoods that has ever existed – lies about God and man, lies about sin and salvation, and lies about the person of Jesus Christ Himself.

And yet today we have some who call themselves Evangelicals, promoting the false idea that Mormonism is a Christian religion, and promoting the lie that Mormons and Evangelicals can Biblically work together in moral and spiritual causes.

All of this and much more, in the history of the church and in the present day, is the result of counterfeit revelation.

Let No One Cheat You

Dear friends, counterfeit revelation was the evil that was threatening the church at Colosse in the middle of the first century. That was why Paul, inspired by God, wrote these strong words of warning to them.

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Let no one cheat you of your reward in Christ, Paul says. Recognize these imposters for what they are – unbelievers. They do not possess the Head, Jesus Christ. Recognize their teachings for what they are – counterfeit revelation, intruding into those things which they have not seen, vainly puffed up by the mind of the flesh, teaching as the commandments of God what are, in fact, the doctrines of sinful men. Things that are rooted in the basic principles of this world, this sinful, dying world that is at enmity with God and Christ. Things that have an appearance of wisdom but are no wisdom at all. Things that are of no value for the true need of the Christian and the church.

Hold Fast to Christ and His Word

Reject these people and these things, Paul says. And how are we to do that? We find the answer in verse nineteen of Colossians chapter two.

First of all, we must be “holding fast to the Head,” the Lord Jesus Christ. We must *possess* Christ. We must be truly regenerated believers. That is where living and thinking within the boundaries of sound doctrine, and upon the foundation of sound doctrine, this is where it begins, with salvation in Christ.

And secondly, verse nineteen once again, we must grow, individually and as the body of Christ, “with the increase that is from God.”

Where do we find this “increase”? Where do we obtain it? Where do we learn of it? Where do we find the continuing supply of nourishment that will feed the

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body of Christ and keep Christ's true church from error? We find it only in one place: the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God, which will never pass away, forever settled in Heaven.

Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul as he departed from the Ephesian elders in Acts chapter twenty. First, he warned them. He said,

For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. (Acts 20:29-31)

And then Paul says this. He gives us the same answer, the same safeguard. Acts twenty, verse thirty-two:

So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

This is the answer, dear friends. And when we began this part of our study of these verses, I promised you that after we had examined many of the evils of counterfeit revelation, this is where we would end up. We would turn from all the counterfeits once again to that which is genuine and eternal. The authentic Word of God is the only sure safeguard against counterfeit revelation, and the evil

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bondage of man-made doctrines that follow the entry of counterfeit revelation into the church.

Some of you have heard me say this before, but I believe it bears repeating: Christian, you will only be able to identify and reject counterfeit revelation if you become more and more intimately familiar with God's genuine revelation. You will only be able to discern and reject the counterfeits of Satan, if you read and study and feed upon the Word of God.

Why Scripture Alone?

Now, I can say these words to you, and you may agree that they are true. But do you understand why this is true? Can there be any more important question for the believer in Christ than that question? Why is the Word of God so vital? Why is undivided loyalty to the Word of God essential? Why must we bow the knee to the authority of this Book, and to no other?

Dear friends, in the time we have remaining today I want to answer those questions from this Book, because it is apparent that many who call themselves Evangelical Christians today are not really sure of the answer, and the sad fact is that many are not hearing the answer from their church pulpits.

Why must we bow the knee to the authority of the Bible, and to no other book, to no other person, to no other authority? Why the Bible alone? We can sum up the answer in two statements. Number one, we must bow the knee to the authority

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of the Bible alone because only the Bible is the Word of God and not the word of man. And number two, Christians must not bow to any other authority because only the regenerated people of God can truly understand and properly handle the written revelation of God.

Let me call your attention to two passages of Scripture that are the most direct and forceful statements of these two great facts.

The Only Supernatural Book

First of all, let me call your attention to Second Peter chapter one, verses twenty and twenty-one. Please turn there with me if you are able, Second Peter chapter one, verses twenty and twenty-one. Peter writes this:

[K]nowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:20-21)

Peter is making an essential point here about the nature of Scripture. Notice how Peter says it — “Knowing this first, that no *prophecy* of Scripture...” Prophecy is a part of Scripture, so what is true of prophecy is true of Scripture as a whole. “Knowing this first,” he says, “that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

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Rome and the cults lift verse twenty out of context. "No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation." Period. They declare that it is dangerous for people to try to understand the Bible for themselves. So there is only one safe thing to do, they say. Go to their authorities. Go to their leaders. Do not look at Scripture for yourself. Only they can interpret the Scriptures for you.

But Biblical Christianity proclaims the universal priesthood of all believers, not just a certain class of men or women who are called priests or who are the leaders of a cult.

You see, it all comes down to this: Do you believe that the true church, the true body of Christ, should stand in judgment over the Word of God, or do you believe that it must be judged by the Word of God?

You see, Second Peter chapter one verse twenty is not God's complete thought. Verses twenty and twenty-one form a single thought, and verse twenty is not complete without verse twenty-one.

The word "for" at the beginning of verse twenty-one links the two verses together. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for [because] prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." Verse twenty-one explains verse twenty.

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Let me draw your attention to another important word in these verses. The Authorized Version and the New King James both use the word "is" in verse twenty. "No prophecy of Scripture *is* of any private interpretation." Some other translations render it "comes" or "came about." Those words are closer to the original, but they still do not give the full impact of what God is saying to us. In the original language, the word actually speaks of how Scripture "originated", or "came into existence."

Another word we need to understand more carefully in verse twenty is the word "interpretation". This is the only place in the entire Bible where this particular Greek word is used. The word in the original language has to do with "determination" – the way in which something is determined to be true or not true. So the idea of verse twenty is this: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture originated as the result of any private determination of what is true or not true."

In fact, it would be closer to the original language to say it like this: "Knowing this first, no prophecy of Scripture originated in the human writer's own personal determination of what is true or not true."

And if we say it in that way, we see better how it connects to verse twenty-one: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture originated in the human writer's own personal determination of what is true or not true, for this reason, verse

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twenty-one – that prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

And as we see it in this light, it connects us back to what Peter has already said in verse nineteen: “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, *which you do well to heed...*”

That is why we must bow the knee to Scripture as our sole authority. Scripture is not a mere collection of the words and ideas of men. It did not originate in man’s understanding of things. The Bible is not the record of man’s views, man’s perspectives, or man’s interpretation of events. Man did not decide what is true and what is not true. “Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

The word that is translated “moved” is better yet translated, “driven along.” Driven along. Driven along by an outside force.

The men who wrote the words of the Bible were driven by God the Holy Spirit. He came upon them. God took hold of them. He gave them the thoughts. And without obscuring their personalities in the writing, God gave them the very words to write. The words are His words. It is never, "this is what I, the human writer, have to say" but it is always “thus saith the Lord.” It is never, "these are my words to you," but always “the burden of the Lord” – “the word of the Lord came to me” – and so on.

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And so this is the first part of the answer to our question. This is why we must bow the knee to the authority of the Bible, and to no other book, to no other person, to no other authority. This is why we must say, "Scripture alone." The Bible is the only Book in the entire world that is the Word of God and not the word of man.

Only the Regenerated Truly Understand the Book

And that brings us to the second part of the answer: Only the regenerated people of God can truly understand the Word of God. Only a supernaturally regenerated people can understand and properly handle the only supernatural Book. Only people who are indwelt by the Divine Author of the Book, can properly understand and handle the Book that He has given us.

Turn with me, please to First Corinthians chapter two. First Corinthians chapter two, verse nine. This is what we find:

But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed them to us [regenerated believers] through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

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Now we [believers] have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

But the natural man [the unsaved man] does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For "who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:9-16)

No one can truly believe and truly understand, that this is the Word of God, unless he is already a Christian. Genuine understanding of that fact does not come first. New life comes first. The Holy Spirit comes first. He regenerates you. He makes you alive in Christ. The Holy Spirit indwells you.

God makes you a Christian first. Then He really begins to illuminate the Bible for you. If you really believe and really understand that this is the Word of God, that understanding comes from no other source but God the Holy Spirit.

The non-Christian may say that he believes this is the Word of God. But the fact is that the non-Christian doesn't even know what it means to say that the Bible is the Word of God.

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Notice verse twelve – “Now we [we who are Christians] have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.” But here again is the contrast, verse fourteen: “But the natural man [the unsaved man] does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them.” He is utterly incapable of knowing them. Why? “Because they are spiritually discerned.”

The non-Christian completely lacks the power to understand and interpret this Book, because he does not have the power of spiritual perception that comes only from the indwelling Holy Spirit. Unless the Author of the Book has regenerated you, unless He is dwelling in you, it is impossible for you to handle this Book properly.

And the way to handle this Book properly, the greatest safeguard against counterfeit revelation, is to remember this one thing: “Scripture interprets Scripture.” Scripture interprets Scripture. Notice verse thirteen – “These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches” – notice – “comparing spiritual things with spiritual” – literally, “comparing things from the Spirit with things from the Spirit” – in other words, comparing Scripture with Scripture.

Only the regenerated people of God can do this. Only God’s own people can truly understand and properly handle the only supernatural Book, the Word of God.

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For these great reasons, dear friend, we must cling to God's genuine revelation over and against all counterfeits. The salvation of lost souls and the welfare of Christ's church depend upon this. Never let anyone cheat you of that which is yours in the vast treasure house of the Word of God alone.

About the Broadcast

The Scripture-Driven Church airs each week across the United States and around the world. Our goal is that of the Great Commission: to preach the Gospel to the world, and to equip believers to stand upon and live by the sole authority of God's Word, to the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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of His inspired, infallible, inerrant Word.**