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[00:00:02] That this is number 12 of the series of our studies which are being recorded on the Epistle to the Colossians. We are still in this epistle to the Colossians. And this great subject in chapter two now awaits our investigation. And it's very searching. It's full of problems. And we are only hoping that at least we'll be able to bring a few of its treasures to light. It's a solemn subject because it's dominated by the idea of deception and an emphasis upon the need for watchfulness. We find the anticipation of it in chapter one, verse 20, when the apostle says, warning every man. A warning is given when there's danger. He then begins to put his finger on the danger and he says, verse eight, Beware. That, again, is a warning. And then in verse 18, Let no man beguile you. He's bringing it now to a point. So there's some danger that we've got to watch. Now, if you look right down this list, you won't see any what you might call flagrant sins. Some of the lists of sins that are mentioned even in the epistles contain some terrible statements. But there is no immorality here. There is no crime. It's all in the realm of the mind. And. Religion worshipping angels. Worship comes into it. When you come to think. Wisdom is mentioned very early in the scriptures. Very first occurrence of the word wise comes in Genesis three. And when she saw. This fruit that was forbidden was good for food.

[00:02:13] A pleasant to the eyes. And could make one wise. You see. So there's a sneer about this searching and seeking wisdom. And if it's within. The limits of the revealed will of God. It's the one thing that can take us right out of our sphere. Into the unknown. And then we are drifting and we are lost. And this, the Redeemer stretch out for us. You see, he says in a very difficult verse, verse 18, Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels intruding into those things which he hath not seen. Now, what's all that about? We only just get it, don't we? You remember a church in the Book of Revelation is commended. You have not known the depths of Satan. So there are deaths that tempt us and some go exploring them. And they never come back. The scripture indicates that if a man like Adam, fresh from the hand of God. Without having fallen into sin. And so. As it were, put his reason into bondage. If he could be trapped like that, how easy it must be for the rest of us. Who have already got the taint about us. And before we know anything about good or evil, right or wrong, wise or foolish, we're using words, arguments and listening to things that

have already put our feet in the wrong direction. Was is only one way friends, and that is to accept the fact.

[00:04:08] That Christ is the wisdom of God as well as the righteousness of God, as well as the salvation of God for us. It's wonderful to read. How fast human minds have gone. To this day. Plato, Socrates, Aristotle. Just to mention three. Are still towering giants. A thought. I don't know whether you know much about them. I don't. I've only dipped into them. But I know full well they beat most of us with regard to their ability to reason. And yet is a tragedy. You think of the mind of Aristotle? All these researches. He came to this conclusion and it's put in words that God. Is an unknowable thing. And you wouldn't think the philosopher would get as far as that. Well, he's right. Because when he said thing. He said, I cannot find a person. I can only see a force. You call it God? If I call it the law of gravitation. I mean, a scientist gives has got these little idols the same as everybody else. And if you ask for a strict definition of the law of gravitation or the law of cohesion. You're basically told that cohesion is the force that binds things together. Well, you know that before you start, if the word cohesion means anything. And so we do so need. To be guided. And the guidance here is take your stand at the Cross of Christ. An approach. All these things. From the point of view of redemption.

[00:06:08] That's more or less the covering for most of our search. We start with a need for and we start with a consciousness of redeeming love. I. Then we go step by step. With a word that's been given to us. Aristotle has left behind the syllogism, if you know anything about logic. You know that if you've got a syllogism, it's practically unanswerable. But the only trouble about it is. If you've got one part of that syllogism which isn't true, your logic will lead you wrong. Logic will never leave you or lead you. Right? If one of its premises are wrong. Have you ever got into a tangle adding up a column of figures? You ended up this way, you ended up that way. It doesn't come right. Or somewhere in that column you said three and two make six. And you haven't spotted it. And all the proofs you bring only make it worse. Now, you see, we're in such a position that we cannot be sure. That the first thing we say when we were arguing is absolutely true. And if it isn't, then the better we argue, the worse we should be. So we should be. Proving evil is good and darkness is light. And that's what's happening. So here we have the stress upon the need for not merely wisdom, but a right kind of wisdom. A clarified cleansed. Redeemed wisdom. You know, in the epistle of James. He draws attention. There's two kinds of wisdom to remember, he says, if you notice.

[00:08:04] The epistle of James Chapter three. He says in verse 15, This wisdom descendeth not from above. So there is a wisdom that comes from above. But this wisdom descendeth not from above, but his earthly, sensual, devilish. But it's wisdom. And you might remember there's a mighty being described in the book of Ezekiel. He was perfect in wisdom. And yet he was an antagonist of the things of God. And again, he says in this same chapter, verse 17, But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good and good fruits without partiality. Without hypocrisy. So there's two different types of wisdom that are mentioned. While we have James, there's another one in chapter 122. But be ye doers of the word, not hearers only deceiving your own selves. I'll give you the word Paralogism. Now the word para like coming in parallel lines means alongside, and the guisarme means to argue. Arguing yourself on one side. You'll catch yourself doing it. You'll catch others doing it. Especially if your inclinations are in one direction. And the word of God seems to point in another. You'll suddenly find a person diving for a concordance to try to find some verse that will get him out of the scrape he's got in. Arguing yourself on one side or what a subtle thing this is what it evil it can be. What a blessed thing to think is that this epistle to the Corinthians has pointed us to the fact that Christ is a wisdom.

[00:10:09] Don't forget it. I seek to walk in harmony with him. Leave the rest alone. Well, now you look at this chart. We've looked at it before, and it's going to be before us again. You'll see that it starts with plausible speech. He says. In verse four. And this I say that lest any man should be guide you with enticing words. Plausible speech. And philosophy. Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world. And not after Christ. When you get down to the bottom of the chart and the chapter, verse 20. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, you haven't been argued out of him, you see. This is so vital. That it's associated with the death of Christ and resurrection on new ground. If he be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world. Why? As though living in the world are you subject to ordinances? And at the very end, verse 23, not in any honor, but to the satisfying of the flesh. That's all it does. So here we have a very, very difficult passage before us. It was evidently one that was very much needed for such a spice to be given. Now we compare this with earlier things. When Paul wrote the epistle to the Galatians.

[00:11:46] He didn't deal so much with speculative wisdom, philosophy. He was dealing with the imposition that was being put upon that church by the religious observances. Of those who had been Jews, who had become Christians, who nevertheless still brought with them all the various observances and ceremonies of the law. And these were obsessing that to such an extent that he had to say, Christ your prophet, you're nothing if you're justified by law, you're fallen from grace. Well, now we still got in this this chapter reference to observance is verse 16. Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink or in respect of the holy day or of the new moon or of the Sabbath days. They're still there. But this is being approached more from the philosophic side. So whether it be the. Jewish emphasis upon ceremony and ordinances, or whether it be the more refined. It all comes to the same thing. We don't want to be blatant. We don't want to be coarse. But there's an insidious refinement that can come from beneath and not from above. I think I've mentioned before of the bishop of Durham's statement. And that in ordaining a preacher, he will be far happier, ordaining a man who said. Praise him for his grace and favor. Then the man who said praise him for his grease and fever. When they're so refined that there wouldn't be much left for the time he refined it, you see? So here it is.

[00:13:36] Now, once again, let me draw your attention that after these three statements, the philosophy, the traditions of men, the rudiments of the world is a corrective. Not after Christ with a supplement. For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Now that word bodily don't pass it over quickly. I'm now going to read a little bit. This is such a subject that. It's not quite within my scope. I'm just going to read a little bit, which I've already written. I suppose I'm permitted to do that. And I'll read these words. Philosophy is mentioned, but once in Scripture. I stopped for a minute. Philosophy is mentioned once. Art is mentioned once. Science is mentioned once. In the worship at Athens, where people still go to see some of the finest examples of the sculptor's art. Paul puts it on one side. Here philosophy. Put on one side and the oppositions or antithesis of science falsely so called are mentioned in Timothy. Now. That's very strange, isn't it? Because at one point of view, they ought to be the very crown of things. And there could be. I might be, but they're not. They could be used by the God of this world. And are used by the God of this world as a veil. To prevent them from seeing what a need there is. First of all, for the thing which is foolishness, abhorrent in the minds of some. But the apostles had to take the line.

[00:15:30] God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's where He started. That is really the wisdom of God. So I've got here philosophy is mentioned, but once in scripture, only to be set aside as vain and deceitful. Philosophers are mentioned in the acts of the Apostles, the Epicureans and the Stoics. The Epicureans were a set of philosophers who were out for happiness as the goal of human life, and they started quite innocently. Happiness. But we've all been saying to one another, Happy New Year. Always wishing people happiness. But that's not a goal, friends. You may purchase happiness at too great a price. Righteousness may not be a very happy state sometimes. Happiness, but this led to just having a good time. Just living for the present, just to enjoy yourself. That's all it amounted to. And the Stoics. They took the other line. They endured set their face against all sorts of difficulties and stretched on the rack until it broke and they became skeptics. And Shakespeare has put his finger upon the point. And he said. Something about philosophy. Is rather set aside when you've got the toothache. I haven't quoted him correctly. Stoicism. They are mentioned in the scriptures. But that ignorance is exposed by the apostle who speaks in the very same chapter of the unknown God whom they ignorantly worshiped. Fancy. L'école du. Called a seed picker or a babbler in the marketplace of Athens.

[00:17:26] The center. The university Center of the world telling them they're ignorant. But he was right. For all the wisdom in the world piled on top of one another. Let them know where. Except a disaster. To the believer in Christ philosophy can contribute nothing. All that approximates to truth in philosophy is found without admixture in the Scriptures. Philosophy is a part of the wisdom of this world that comes to naught. It shouldn't be. Philosophy ought to be a light and a lamp and a guide. But you see, if man's reasoning power is already blighted by sin, that very thing is an ultimate danger to us all. Then again, another feature when writing to the Colossians and warning them of the emptiness of philosophy, the apostle places. In contrast, the fact that in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Here is a truth which, when once perceived, turns all other so-called light into midnight darkness and writes folly across the wisdom of the world. We read the word bodily here, but how many of us have appreciated its full significance after we have followed with amazement the speculations and the reasonings of ancient wisdom? To discover that the quest for God or the absolute leads us at length to a frozen realm of abstract ideas. It is then that we realize

with renewed joy and peace, that in Christianity, all doctrine and all revelation of the Godhead is personal. God is seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

[00:19:20] The word was made flesh. God who is invisible is made known by Him. Who is the image of the invisible God. And so I think that's a point that we could well ponder that God's answer to the groping after wisdom is to send his son. And we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Well, that's the difference between one and the other. Now let's take this a stage further. Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit. The words vain deceit are put out of their grammatical order not because of a mistake, but because there's a reason. It's to emphasise the vanity. And the deceitfulness of human philosophy. We would put it vain, deceitful philosophy. This puts it philosophy and vain deceit. It's a figure of speech that's known. It's called Hendiatris. A very easy example is I am the way, the truth and the life, not three things. I am the true and living way. So the stress is that philosophy here is a vain and deceitful thing. Now the word vain is the word that means empty. So it's immediately contrasted with the word fullness. In verse nine and the word complete in verse ten. So if you've got any sense at all and you've been wakened up to see that in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and you are filled to the full in him, and then you're made aware that this philosophy is empty.

[00:21:24] Qualitatively what was said in the Old Testament. You've turned away from the fountain of living waters and you've hewn out cisterns, empty systems in which there is no living water. That's what happens. And then we get. The. Corrective verse eight. And not after Christ. But of course, there are other things mentioned. There's three. There's. There's philosophy. There's the tradition of men. Our tradition is something which is handed down and all tradition is not necessarily false or not necessarily true. The only thing about it, it has got an element of antiquity about it. And the fear is that if you were sitting listening to somebody. At this present moment speaking, you would receive it more or less as it is given. But if that could be preserved for 2000 years and 2000 years time, they could hear me speaking. Some people would say, Oh, that must be true. That's 2000 years ago when he said it. It makes no difference whether it's 2000 years ago or yesterday. Truth is, truth or falsehood is a falsehood and tradition. The biggest difficulty about tradition is that it crosses against cuts through the revelation of the Word of God again. So you remember our savior accused the Pharisees in his day. They made void the Word of God that they may keep their traditions. So we're living in a

very difficult world, aren't we? We've got this vain, deceitful, speculative philosophy. It's still there. Philosophy is probing to discover the ultimate reality.

[00:23:26] The ultimate reality behind the screen of visibility. And are using some words. And it all found for you and for me in the face of Jesus Christ. That's too simple for the busy. And here we've got two traditions of men, and they come with all this overwhelming weight, in their words, because it was uttered by Saint somebody in the year 360. And because it was uttered in the year 360, it becomes necessarily true for us in 1960. But if it wasn't true in 360, it's still not true now. So. While we will not throw tradition overboard because it's tradition, we will do the same with it as we do with everything. Bring it to the test of the Word of God. And if it's not in harmony with that, well, our venerable. It may be it's a lie and it's unsafe. And then the rudiments of the world. The word rudiment is translated elsewhere. Elements. And is the word that means little footsteps. The ICBC. Of the world's doctrine. Those elementary things that we're all supposed to endorse without proof. I don't know whether you know them. There are some. I suppose, one of the elementary. Principles of the world is expressed in the words business is business. Or you must look after number one. And if you don't act on those lines, you're out of it. You shouldn't be out of it. And so we've got these three things, philosophy, which is empty tradition.

[00:25:29] And the rudiments of the world. Now, when writing to the Galatians, the rudiments of the world. All these elementary things referred largely to the Mosaic law, which was now passed, which was still being imposed upon us. But here we come into another sphere of things. Other traditions coming in. Usurping the authority and prerogative of Christ. In Matthew 15. You might just notice the way in which our Savior spoke about this question of tradition. It's written there for our guidance. Matthew 15. Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem saying, Why did I disciples transgress the tradition of the elders, for they wash not their hands when they eat bread? You must not misread that. It doesn't mean to say that if we are going to be God's children, we should never wash our hands. That would suit some boys. I know, but they do grow up eventually. There's no idea that you've got to be a holy man like a fakir in India and never wash yourself. But this was a continual, scrupulous washing of the heads. To such an extent that it became an obsession and took away from reality. But our Lord didn't discuss that with him. He simply turned it back on them and said, But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God

by your tradition? How did they transgress the commandment of God? He says. For God commanded it. He commanded, saying.

[00:27:23] Honor thy father and mother. And he that cursed father or mother let him die. The death. That's the law. But you say whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, it is a gift or corban. By whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me. And on and off his father or his mother, he shall be free. Now, I don't know whether you see what that is, but you see, if a person said, Well, I'm not going to contribute anything to my parents upkeep. I know what I'll do. I'll say very piously. All that I possess, I've devoted to the Lord. Well, if I've devoted all I've got to the Lord, I can't give any body to my parents. Anything to my parents. The Lord said, Oh, you hypocrites. That's what you're doing. You call it Corban. It's a gift, and therefore I can't obey that law. So he said. An honor, not his father or mother. Thus he made the commandment of God of none effect. By your tradition or a tradition will do that. You see, it's an evil. It makes people hypocrites. It blinds their eye to truth and turns them aside. Well, then we have. The religious element. The treasured traditions of the rudiments of the world and the religious element that comes in the form of ceremony. That's further down. Are you? If you go back to Galatians, you'll see how the Apostle refers. There, too, this obsession. Of observing days. We've quoted it from Colossians, but it is up against it in Galatians.

[00:29:16] Chapter three, verse three. Are you so foolish having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Then he. Chapter four. Verse eight. Howbeit. Then when he knew not God, he did service unto them, which by nature. Are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God. How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto you desire again to be in bondage? He observed days and months and times and years. I'm afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you Labour in vain. You see, Sir Paul looked a bit worried. Seriously. If they became so involved, he called these things weak and beggarly elements. So in Colossians chapter two, the passage we've already read. Let no man therefore judge you in meat. This is verse 16 or in drink or in respect of a holy day or of the new moon or of the Sabbath days. But what we didn't read was his argument and his answer verse 17, which are a shadow. They are shadows of things to come. Well, that's all right. But the body now hear the word body is used in contrast with the word shadow. The body. The reality is of Christ. What if the reality is come. You don't need still to be chasing

shadows. Tell me. He would say, What benefit will you get from all these observances that you don't get in its fullest sense if Christ himself.

[00:30:59] Thou Christ are all I want more than all in thee I find. We can well say here. So it's shadow over against substance. And then we notice. The next corrective. We've got to look at these other features in verses, but look at the correctives. We do well to keep them strongly in mind. He is the head of all principality and power. And the next thing is. You died and are buried with him. That is verse ten. He's the head of all principality and power. A who was circumcised with a circumcision without hands in the putting off of the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ buried with him. And raised with him verse 13, and you being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh hath he quickened together with him having forgiven you all trespasses. So the corrective there is again. Not all these ceremonies, observances, circumcision, baptism, whatever it may be. But what they speak of, we have to look at that again. And then we have the handwriting of ordinances blotted out. And he says the corrective verse 17, these are shadows. The reality is of Christ. And then again, he's back again on the mind of the flesh. And once more he comes in verse 19 to the corrective and not holding the head to hold Christ as head. Having received Christ as Lord, walk ye in Him.

[00:32:53] Christ the head. And then the final corrective is a reference to its failure at the end of verse 23, which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship and humility and neglecting of the body, not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh. And one of the points is you don't see it in the English. But this word satisfying. Is a word that indicates fullness. You've got all the fullness that you need in Christ and what you're doing. You're filling up the poor old flesh instead. The very humidity you're practicing is only making you more proud. Terrible, isn't it? You could be proud of you. Humidity. You could be boasting of it. I wonder what we do not boast of friends. You know, there was a dentist. He knew human nature. He told practically everyone that went to him. He said, you know, I've never, never had never seen such a tooth as that. Oh, my. He went up in the world. That man did. Everybody went to him. And that's only symptomatic of the type of minds we had. Satisfying the flesh by neglecting the body. God never told anybody to neglect their body. But isn't it strange you can neglect your body to satisfy the flesh? You will most want to quote Shakespeare, don't you? Oh, what fools these mortals be? I

wonder whether angels sometimes weep. When I see what we do. Well, I want to come back over this piece by piece.

[00:34:35] As you'll see, it's not easy. But we've looked just in passing at the general line of teaching. Beware. I'd like to focus attention once more on verse 18 to show you what the danger is. There is no danger of losing your salvation. There is no danger of losing your life. Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Jobe was handed over to Satan. You could touch his body. You could touch his possessions. But you mustn't touch his life. That belongs to God. Never is in jeopardy. But you could be beguiled of your reward and that will satisfy Satan as far as he can be satisfied. And I mentioned before I mention again that the word beguile in verse 18 includes the word prize that we have in Philippians three. In Philippians three, we have the prize of the high calling of God, and the word for prize is the word bribe. Bribe. And the word to beguile of your reward. Here is the word Cata vorobyovo bribe. So there's an endeavor to sidetrack, to trip up, to spoil. We shall find that the word spoil, as we've got it in verse eight, is to as used in old Greek to strip a man of his armor. Sally McCarthy. That's what Satan would do. He would strip you of your armor. With all this philosophy and vain deceit. Now stripped of armor. We are prey and we cannot fight the good fight of faith. We cannot stand.

[00:36:27] So although we don't want to emphasize unduly the dangers we face. It's so written in this book and put so much in the middle that we'll have to give it another consideration. Next will be together. We should have to go down this list a bit more in larger strides and see some of the other features that are mentioned. For the moment. I think we'll leave it there. I'll repeat what we said at the beginning. That wisdom enters into the story as early as Genesis three. When she saw it was good for food. Pleasant to the eyes. Something to make one wise. Now I'll put over against that. Something else that makes one wise. The apostle Paul said, writing to Timothy from a child. Thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. If we are really wise, the one object before us will be related to salvation. And we leave all these other exploring things until the day dawn and we shall be free from the shackles of sin and the flesh. But if we will go out into these realms, we mustn't be surprised. Sometimes if we meet a stronger power than ourselves and we are crippled. By so doing. I, the Lord, give us grace to remember that the Scriptures

have been given not only for doctrine but for correction. For warning as well as for bestowing blessing. And happy are we if we give an ear to both. Keep an even balance.