

Contending For The Faith

Lesson #19 May 27, 2020 Spiritual Intimidation > Detours

Heretics claimed: "We have a higher, a broader, a deeper, a greater, and a mystical union with God. We have attained a humility and a piety that is unlike anything you have experienced. We have connected ourselves with the demigods and the sub gods, and we've climbed the ladder to the presence of the one true deity."

The believers in Colossae thought they received everything they needed at the moment of salvation. Jesus Christ was all they needed. However, certain false teachers were infiltrating them and bringing to bear on them a tremendous amount of intimidation. They began telling them they were a long way from having received everything God wanted them to have. There were more things for them to seek. There were higher levels for them to reach. There were deeper depths of spirituality. There was greater humility, greater piety, more things to experience, and the intimidation was mounting and mounting.

They were very tempted to say, "Hey, what is it?"

This caused them to feel like: spiritually they were left out and inadequate, like they had "not arrived." They began to think Jesus Christ was not enough. Were they wrong, and others right?

Spirituality, according to the false teachers, was something you pursued through four avenues: human wisdom or philosophy, legalism, mysticism, or asceticism.

The false teachers taught: True spirituality is found in:

- Christ plus human wisdom
- Christ plus keeping certain rituals and manmade laws.
- Christ plus certain visions and worshipping of angels; certain strange and wonderful, marvelous, deeper or higher experiences.
- Christ plus total self-abasement, total self-denial, total slavery of self to a life of poverty

Paul says they do all this to satisfy or indulge the flesh which leads to "spiritual pride."

- These 4 avenues are powerless to deal with evil desire and lust. Morally impotent

Quote: Heaven-born children gain nothing from earth-born religion.

Paul: The power for living the Christian life is to concentrate above.

Col. 3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. ² Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

Stop being earthbound. Don't keep looking for a new rule, a new ritual, a new vision, a new deeper experience, a new higher experience, a new kind of self-denial, etc.

Set your affections on Jesus Christ.

Col. 2:9-10a For in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him,

Paul, in Col. 1 & 2, lays down the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine of Christ's sufficiency.

Then a call to behave in accord with truth. Our behavior is based on clear, doctrinal foundation.

Note: Paul always goes from doctrine to behavior. He lays down great statements of truth.

Truth: What we do as believers must be based on solid doctrine: not on intimidation.

Don't be intimidated to do something that you know is not Biblical.

Paul wrote to the Galatians: "How could you possibly get caught up in Judaism again?

How could you get caught up in legalism? How could you when you know the Gospel?

You have departed from what you know is true, and that is incongruous.

Your spirituality is based on what you know, on solid doctrine."

Truth: When this principle is violated, trouble follows.

After the reign of Solomon, the kingdom of Israel split into two kingdoms. The northern kingdom of 10 tribes was ruled by Jeroboam the First, and the southern kingdom by Rehoboam.

- Jeroboam was afraid his people would not maintain an allegiance to him. If they were always going to the temple in Jerusalem to worship, they would keep their roots in the south.

- So, he decided he would build a couple of worship places up in the north.

I Kings 12:29 says he set one altar in Bethel and the other in Dan. [golden calves]

- The problem? God established His worship in Jerusalem, in the temple.

I Kings 12:30 It became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one, even in Dan.

And he made a house of high places, [a temple] he made priests of the lowest of the people, who were not of the sons of Levi.

I Kings 12:32 it says he did the same thing in Bethel. It had no business going on there.

- Source of religion > human wisdom > he devised in his own heart [I Kings 12:33]
- Col. 2:18-23 > commandments and doctrines of men

I Kings 13:1 Behold, there came a man of God [as a prophet]. He goes all the way out of Judah, to go to the north. So he goes out of Judah by the word of the Lord, comes to Bethel.

He arrives when Jeroboam is standing by the altar burning incense.

- He's worshipping God and burning his sacrifice. He is a bold young man.

I Kings 13:2 And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD: Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name;

and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee.

- Ultimate desecration for a Jew is to touch a dead body.

- To burn the bones of a dead person on an altar was to desecrate it and pollute it for good

Side Note: 300 years from now, a man, Josiah, is going to dig up dead bones and burn them all over your altar. [Read II Kings 23 for fulfillment]

I Kings 13:3 And he gave a sign the same day, saying, "This is the sign which the Lord has spoken" [prove it will happen] Behold, the altar shall be torn down, and the ashes that are on it poured out.

I Kings 13:4-5 "And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, who had cried against the altar in Bethel, he put forth his hand from the altar, and said,

'Lay hold on him.' [seize him] And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up so that he could not pull it in again to him." "And immediately the altar was torn down, and the ashes poured out, exactly according to the sign which the man of God had given to the word of the Lord."

➤ God says, "You don't invent your own worship; you obey My statues and commands."

I Kings 13:6-7 And the king answered and said unto the man of God, 'Entreat now the face of the Lord thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored.' And the man of God besought the Lord, and the king's hand was restored to him and became as it was before. And the king said to the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward.

➤ Eating together in the ancient world = sign of solidarity

➤ Perhaps the King assumes the healing of his arm has restored him wholly to God's good graces or the prophet's willingness to share fellowship with him will neutralize the divine rejection implicit in the oracle against the altar.

I Kings 13:8-10 And the man of God said unto the king, If thou will give me half your house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place:

⁹ For so was it charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou came.

¹⁰ So he went another way and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel.

➤ I have one commitment in my life: obey the Word of God.

I Kings 13:11 On the way, he ran into another prophet.

Now there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel; and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they told also to their father. [Maybe he thought: Why didn't I have the courage to do that?]

I Kings 13:12-16 Which way did he go? And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the donkey. And he rode out and went after the man of God. He found him sitting under an oak.

"Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" "And he said, 'I am.'

"He said to him, 'Come home with me, and eat bread.'"

"He said, it was said to me by the Word of the LORD Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest.

Consider: He resists temptation by repeating the Word of the Lord! - That settles it.

Watch how he's intimidated.

I Kings 13:18 He [old prophet] said unto him, I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spoke unto me by the word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him.

Come to my house. No, God said not to. But an angel came to me and told me you are supposed to. How intimidating!

Consider: Someone says to you, "Oh, I know the Bible doesn't talk about that, but I had a vision. I had a direct word from the Lord. An angel came to me."

Recall: Gal. 1: "If an angel comes and preaches anything other than what you know to be the Word of God, let him be accursed." That is a devil dressed up as an angel of light.

The young prophet is now in the dilemma of accepting the known Word of God revealed or believing that God is speaking through somebody else's experience. What did he do?

I Kings 13:19 "He went with him, and ate bread in his house, and drank water."

He acted in direct violation of God's Word.

Remember: The young prophet was not afraid of the King. He would not accept a reward. He refused to be persuaded by the King to disobey God.

BUT Now: he was intimidated by an older prophet who was also a true prophet, who said an angel told him this. He forsook what he knew was the truth of God and opted out for experience.

People are turning away from the clear Word of God. They are buying someone's vision and someone's experience as a criteria for truth even when it is not in Scripture. What happened?

I Kings 13:20-22 And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the LORD came unto the prophet [old] that brought him back: ²¹ And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the LORD, and hast not kept the commandment which the LORD thy God commanded thee, ²² But camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which the Lord did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcass shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.

I Kings 13:23-24 It came to pass, after he had eaten bread, after he had drunk, he saddled for him the donkey, that is for the prophet whom he had brought back. And when he was gone, a lion met him in the way and slew him and his carcass was cast in the way, and the donkey stood by it, the lion also stood by the carcass.

- The lion didn't eat the body nor attack the donkey.
- The lion was a divine agent of judgment. God took the life of that prophet that fast.
- He set somebody else's experience or word over what he knew was the Word of God.

Do not be intimidated by the people who want to tell you: you're missing some experiences.

How did this happen? I Kings 13:26 "And the prophet who brought him back from the way heard it. He said, 'It is the man of God, who was disobedient to the Word of the Lord.

Therefore, the Lord has delivered him to the lion, which has torn him and slain him.'"

Note: Young prophet was punished even though he had:

- Withstood the wrath of the king
- Shunned the lure of riches
- Obeyed until he was deceived > intimidated to believe a lie

His disobedience was inexcusable:

- God's revelation was plain and simple. Yet he exchanged what he knew to be true for a lie.
- The man of God compromised his earlier rebuke. He had earlier denounced disobedience. He became an example of disobedience.

Note: The lion did not eat him or attack the donkey. Why?

I Sam. 15:1-3 Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. [Amalek = type of our flesh] Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and donkey. [Refer to Deut. 25:17-19; Deut. 9:4-5; Deut. 12:29-32]

I Sam. 15:8-9 And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

- Terrible mistake: Disobeyed God's clear Word: Partial Obedience

I Sam. 15:13 And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.

"Samuel said, How come I hear the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen?"

I Sam. 15:20 "And Saul said to Samuel, [Wait a minute. I have obeyed the voice of the Lord] I went the way which the Lord sent me, and I brought Agag the king of Amalek, and utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD THY God in Gilgal.

What is the response? I Sam. 15:22, "And Samuel said this, 'Has the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifice as much as in'" - what? - "obeying the voice of the Lord?

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, to hearken than the fat of rams."

I Sam. 15:23 To rebel against God's Word: For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

God's Word admonishes us: Keep Making Spiritual Progress

Heb. 6:1 Let us go on to maturity.

- If you are not making spiritual progress, you are an open target for the enemy to attack and destroy!

Col. 2:4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

- Deceptive words = persuasive arguments of a lawyer
- We must continue to grow in our knowledge of spiritual truth.

Col.2:5-7 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

⁶As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: ⁷Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Army > v. 5 Order and steadfastness are military terms

- We should make progress in discipline and obedience like soldiers on the battlefield.

Pilgrim > v. 6 Christian life is a pilgrimage; we must learn to walk

Col. 1:10 Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Col. 4:5 Walk in wisdom...redeeming the time

Eph. 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Eph. 4:1 Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

Eph. 4:17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

Eph. 5:2 Walk in love...

Eph. 5:8 Walk as children of light:

Eph. 5:15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

Truth: We are to walk in Christ the same way we received Christ: by grace through faith

Tree: v. 7a Rooted = agricultural term = once and for all having been rooted
We are not to be a tumbleweed that has no roots and blows about by "every wind and doctrine."
[Eph. 4:14]

We are not to be a transplant that repeatedly moves from soil to soil. Once we are rooted by faith in Jesus Christ, there is no need to change the soil. The roots, which draw up the nourishment so the tree can grow, provide stability and strength.

Building: v. 7b Built up is an architectural term. It is in present tense = being built up.
At justification, we are put on the foundation and then grow in grace and knowledge.

School: v. 7c It is the Word of God that builds and strengthens.

Satan has a difficult time deceiving a believer who is obedient to "study to show thyself approved, a workman that needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth."

River: v. 7d Abounding suggests the picture of a river overflowing its banks. We first drink the "water of life" by faith and He puts within us an artesian well of living water. [John 4:10-14]

- The artesian well should become a river of living waters [John 7:37-39] that grows deeper and deeper.

Consider: If my spiritual roots are deep in Christ, I will not want any other soil.

If Christ is my sure foundation, I have no need to move.

If I am studying and growing in the Word, I will not be easily enticed by false doctrine.

If my heart is overflowing with thanksgiving, I will not consider turning from the fullness I have in Christ Jesus.

Eph. 3:19 And to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Col. 2:18a "Let No Man Beguile You of Your Reward"

Beguile = declare unworthy of a prize

- athletic term: the umpire disqualifies the contestant because he has not obeyed the rules. The contestant does not cease to be a citizen of the land, but he forfeits the honor of winning a prize.

- refers to discouraging (misleading) believers, diverting them from their full potential for receiving their *unique glorification*
- *katabrabeúō* 2596 [*katá*, "down, according to," which intensifies 1018 /*brabeúō*, "acting as an umpire") - properly, a judge (*arbiter*) making the *wrong call*, *depriving* someone of their rightful prize and reward [used only in Col 2:18].

Col. 2:18-19 Let no one beguile [keep defrauding] you of your prize [reward], by delighting in self-abasement [voluntary humility] and the worship of angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, [intruding into those things which he has not seen] inflated without cause by his fleshly mind [vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind] And not holding fast to the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increases with the increase of God. [grows with a growth which is from God]

- Their "Christian religion" is not connected to Jesus Christ.
- They have powerful spiritual experiences, but NOT Jesus Christ.

The false teachers in Colossae had visions and made contact with angels. In bypassing the Word of God and the Spirit of God, they were opening themselves to all kinds of demonic activity—because Satan knows how to give counterfeit experiences to people [II Cor. 11:13-15].

- The word translated "intruding" was a technical term used by the mystical religions of that day. It meant "to set foot in the inner shrine, to be fully initiated into the mysteries of the religion."

There is a fascination with "religious mysticism" that attracts people. Learning mysteries, being initiated into the inner secrets, and having contact with the spirit world all seem exciting.

But these practices are soundly condemned by God.

Truth: No Christian has to go through any initiation ceremony to get into the presence of God.

Heb. 10:19 We may have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."

Heb. 4:16 We may "come boldly unto the throne of grace."

Heb. 1:14 The angels are "all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

Of course, all this mystical ceremony was wrapped up in a false humility that was actually an expression of pride. "I am not good enough to come directly to God," the gnostic would say, "so I will start with one of the angels." Trying to reach God the Father through anyone or anything other than His Son, Jesus Christ, is idolatry.

John 14:6; I Tim. 2:5 Jesus Christ is the one and only Mediator between God and man.

The person who worships through angels or saints now in heaven does not prove his humility, for he is not submitting to the authority of God's Word. Actually, he reveals a subtle kind of pride that substitutes man-made traditions for the Word of God.

Col. 2:18 "His unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions."

- The gnostics, interested primarily in "deeper spiritual knowledge," ignored God's truth.
- Their "inner secrets" gave them big heads, but not burning hearts or submissive wills.

I Cor. 8:1 "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up."

True worship always humbles a person. The mind is awed by the greatness of God; the heart is filled with love for God; and the will is submitted to the purpose God has for your life.

When Job met the Lord he said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes" [Job 42:5-6].

Peter fell before his Lord and said, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" [Luke 5:8].

Isaiah saw the Lord and confessed how sinful he was [Isa. 6].

When John saw the risen Christ, he fell at His feet like a dead man [Rev. 1:17].

The cheap familiarity with which some people approach God in prayer, or talk about Him in testimony or conversation, sometimes borders on blasphemy.

Tragically, this "vain religion of the puffed-up fleshly mind" is but a mere substitute for true spiritual nourishment from Jesus Christ, the Head of the body, His church.

If a believer does not draw on the spiritual nourishment that comes from Christ and other Christians, he becomes weak. The false teachers were not holding to the Head, and therefore they were spiritually undernourished, but they thought they were spiritual experts. The false teachers were anxious to win converts to their cause, but the spiritual body grows by nutrition, not by addition. Every member of Christ's body, including the "ligaments and sinews" (joints and bands), is important to the health and growth of the body. It is through worship, prayer, and the Word that we draw on the spiritual resources of Christ. All of us must be part of a local church where we can exercise our own spiritual gifts (Eph. 4:11-17).

I Cor. 12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

But it is possible to be in a local church and not draw on the Head and the nourishment of the spiritual body. The false teachers in Colossae sought to introduce their teachings into the local assembly, and if they succeeded, they would have caused the spiritual nourishment to decrease instead of increase.

Truth: Unless the members of the local assembly abide in Christ, yield to the Spirit, and obey the Word, they cannot experience the life of the Head, Jesus Christ.

The true Christian glories in Christ, not in his own experience. He follows the Word, led by the Holy Spirit. As he abides in Christ, he experiences blessing and fruitfulness.

He seeks no other experience than that which relates him to the Head, Jesus Christ.

Don't let anybody keep telling you you're disqualified from attaining the prize because you didn't attain the higher knowledge, because you didn't have this special kind of self-abased pious humility, because you don't have that higher knowledge of the various angels, because you've never had super visions. They are inflated by their own fleshly minds.

They're not holding fast to the Head which is Christ. They've said, "It's Christ plus my visions; plus my experiences with the angels; plus my deeper experience, my higher experience."

Running For The Prize: The apostle Paul frequently uses the metaphor of the Christian running a race. He repeatedly tells us to run that we may obtain, bidding us to strive, and at other times to agonize. He speaks of wrestling and contending.

I Cor. 9:25-27 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receives the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. ²⁵ And every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things. [trains with strict discipline] Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

²⁶ I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beats the air:

²⁷ But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection:

- Paul did not let his body master him. He walked in the Spirit not the flesh.
- A believer's body is naturally uncooperative so the only way to effectively run is to abide in Christ with our minds on the things of the Spirit.

²⁷lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

[disqualified = adokimos = failing to pass the test, unapproved]

II Tim. 2:5 And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. [according to the rules]

Heb. 12:1-3 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience [endurance] the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Phillips: Put up with your share of hardship as a loyal soldier in Christ's army. Remember:

1. No soldier on active service gets himself entangled in business, or he will not please his commanding officer.
2. A man who enters an athletic contest wins no prize unless he keeps the rules laid down.
3. Only the man who works on the land has the right to the first share of its produce.

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Everyone wants to be successful until they see what it takes.

Col. 1:9-14 desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; ¹⁰ That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; ¹² Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: ¹³ Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

¹⁴ In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: