

装假的艺术——歌罗西书 2:16-23

The Art of Faking It——Colossians 2:16-23

Introduction、Outline

- **Scripture reading:** Colossians 2:16-23、Matthew 6:1-8; 16-18。
- **Metaphor:** When a baby eagle meets a duck, an ostrich, and a hummingbird...
- **Background:** Through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, the Colossian believers have already possessed the life of Christ. They should fly freely in the sky with the life they already have. However, a group of false teachers, who don't have the life of Christ, pretend to be spiritual, and tell the Colossian believers that their life in Christ is not complete, it is not enough just to have Christ, they must do this and that like the false teachers in order to enjoy the abundant life. Although the Colossian believers already had the life of an eagle, they were affected by these ducks, ostriches, and hummingbirds. They did not live out their freely soaring lives, rather they are dejected and blamed themselves for not being spiritual enough.
- **Connections:** In today's Christian circle, there are also pretenders. They not only pretend themselves, but also confuse and seduce true believers, making them think there is something lacking in their lives, and they are not complete enough. Then they are deceived into pretending and doing non-profitable and harmful things. We must recognize their tricks and beware of their traps in order to live out the full life in the Lord.
- **Outline**
 - Title: The Art of Faking It
 - A. Faking It with Legalism (vv 16-17)
 - Truth: 1. The foreshadowing role of the OT Law; 2. Made complete in Christ
 - B. Faking It with Mysticism (vv 18-19)
 - Truth: 1. The prideful nature of mysticism ; 2. Made complete in Christ
 - C. Faking It with Asceticism (vv 20-23)
 - Truth: 1. The useless value of asceticism; 2. Made complete in Christ

Faking it with legalism (vv 16-17)

Truth 1. The foreshadow effect of the Old Testament Law

- “food, festival, new moon, Sabbath day” : various regulations in the Law of Moses. Unlike the latter two ways of faking it, this kind of legalism can claim authority from the word of God! but.....
- “things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.”: Just as the shadow heralds the arrival of real people, the laws of the OT are used to foreshadow Christ. The law is the shadow, and Christ is the substance. The shadow is flat, black and white, and fuzzy, and the substance is colorful, three-dimensional, and clear. Once the substance is here, the shadow becomes obsolete. (More on this in the next sermon.)

Truth 2. Made complete in Christ

- “**Therefore**”: Connecting today's text with that of last time (vvs 9-15), the theme of the last sermon was that believers have a complete life in Christ; and this passage is based on this truth and reproves the mistakes that endanger the truth.

Insight/application: The most important basis for reprovng errors lies not in the error itself, but in the truth. Since Christians know that truth is important and precious, they are the ones who hold fast to and defend the truth. As we live by the truth, there will necessarily come times when we have to reprove errors in a proper manner. The New Testament is full of such examples, but reprovng error is not the focus in and of itself, the focus is to defend the truth.

Review truth: Made complete in Christ—We have complete regeneration (which gives us a new nature, vv11-12), complete forgiveness (which deals with the consequence of sin, vv13-14), and complete victory (which gives us power to conquer sin, v15)!

Conclusion: You have already possessed this complete life in the Lord. Therefore, don't be fooled by false teachers. They are all pretenders. You have the life of Christ in you, and it is enough to walk in a manner according to the Word of Christ!

Faking it with mysticism (vv 18-19)

Truth1. The prideful nature of mysticism

- “the worship of the angels, taking his stand on *visions* he has seen”: These are what they use to fake spirituality. They claim that through worshipping angels, they have seen mysterious visions, and they take delight and indulge in them. They describe to you vividly, under what circumstances, how they prayed, how they fell face down, how they saw wonderful supernatural scenes, how they really felt the presence of God, the power of God, and how they got direct revelation from God, etc. ...

Example: A short testimony video was once played in a church worship service, where a sister says she never had the Spirit-filled feeling since she'd become a believer many years ago. She heard that many find that feeling through speaking in tongues, and she really wanted to experience it. So, she prayed vigorously for speaking in tongues in a camp, and finally she managed to make some sounds which no one could understand... What she desired was mere mystical feeling.

- “**self-abasement**”: the original word is “humility”, the context here gives it a negative sense, that is, false humility, whose reality is being “inflated without cause by his fleshly mind”. There is a Chinese saying that "excessive humility is pride", but the problem is not the degree (the degree of Jesus' humility is unmatched, Philippians 2:6-8), the problem is true or false. False humility is pride.

Discernment: There are often very selfish motives behind false humility, such as for praise from others, or to make oneself look super spiritual. How to discern true or false humility? 1) whether it's according to truth; 2) whether it is genuinely from the heart. True humility is to put others before self, willing to be servant, obey God and serve others selflessly (Matthew 11:29; Philippians 2:3). The focus of true humility is God and others. The focus of false humility is self, self-centeredness, pride and arrogance.

- “**holding fast to the head**”: It highlights the figurative image that Christ is the head and the church is the body (cf. 1:18). There will only be life when the body is connected to the head, then the body can grow, and it is dead without the head. The relationship between the church and Christ is like this.

- **“Joints and ligaments”**: do not refer to individual believers as members of the body, but to the connections that tie the body parts together. The parts are connected together in an orderly manner through the joints and ligaments to form the entire body. In the original Greek, the same word also appears in Colossians 3:14 and Ephesians 4:3 (translated as "bond"), where *love* is a bond in the former verse and *peace* is a bond in the latter. Therefore, love, peace, and all other related spiritual qualities, such as humility, submission, as well as various forms of serving one another, etc, these are the "joints and ligaments" mentioned here. Joints and ligaments are the necessary structure for the connection among body parts, so these important spiritual qualities are also necessary qualities for the connection of the lives of brothers and sisters in order to live out the complete life in the head, Jesus Christ.
- **“From whom (head)...Being supplied and held together”**: The nutritional supply needed for whole body growth is from the head. For the body to grow, each body part must be held together by the joints and ligaments of spiritual qualities, hold fast to the head Christ, and get all the nutrients needed for growth from Him.
- **“grows a growth which is from God”**: Emphasize that the growth comes from God, it is the life of progressive sanctification where God gradually grows us. This is the growth of God, not the growth artificially defined by the false teachers, such as what visions they see, what rules they abide by, etc. God gives us growth from the inside out.

Application: Once again, we see how important church body life is! Please keep the image of the body in your heart. Many people talk about growth as *I want to grow, I want to be sanctified, and I want to be more like Christ*, but the image of the body tell us that growth in the Lord is a matter of the entire body, it is each body part held together to the body and grows together into the stature of Christ! How to live out the completed life in Christ? Be connected to the body! If you are not in this organic connection, you will not only fail to grow, but you will also easily fall into the traps of heretics. Because you have not lived out a complete life, you will want to find fulfillment from other sources, and false teachers will have opportunities to take.

Faking it with asceticism (vv 20-23)

Truth 1. The useless value of asceticism

- **“Submit”**: Original Greek is “*dogmatizo*”, corresponding to the English word “dogma”, meaning dogmatic, rigid and man-imposed regulations. The verb tense indicates these dogmas are not imposed by others, but by themselves. God does not have these requirements at all. Those people who don’t know the truth impose suffering on themselves and are proud of it.
- **“severe treatment of the body”**: the essence of asceticism is severe treatment of the body. In two thousand years of church history, there are always people who equate poverty with spirituality, claiming the poorer materially, the richer spiritually. The Bible gives no support to this error. Abraham, Solomon, and Job were all rich people, but they are also great godly men.

Example: Anthony the Great lived by himself in a desert for years, Simeon Stylites lived on a small platform on top of a pillar for decades, Martin Luther before saved, the Catholic Church today still does not allow priests to marry. Some Christians think they can obtain a higher spirituality by not eating, not sleeping, fasting and praying for the whole night.

- **“destined to perish with use”**: The material world defiled by sin is heading for corruption (Romans 8:21; 1 Corinthians 15:42). So, what's wrong with denying the flesh? Answer: The focus of their life is all on the material realm. Whether indulgence or abstinence, the essence is the same, for they both define life in relationship to the material world. They are trying to use these things to improve their spiritual life. Although the way they use them is by not using them, they are still using them in essence. Paul says, are you trying to use these perishable things to achieve an imperishable soul? They're useless.
- **“in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men”**: It's not the truth revealed by God, but it's made up by people who fake it. No matter how good it may appear, you simply cannot find any support in the Bible. This is the bottom line for Christian living, to discern what is from the Bible and what is from man.
- **“Have the appearance of wisdom”**: Only empty appearance with no substance. They may look wise and impressive, but in fact, their wisdom is a false wisdom that exalts themselves and belittles Christ. The ways they fake wisdom is expressed in the following three phrases:
 - “self-made religion”**: it is not a worship in Spirit and in truth, but in their own imagination, showing off unique worship experiences to impress others
 - “self-abasement”**: Faking humility in order to show an appearance of extraordinary spirituality to impress others
 - “severe treatment of the body”**: A major dilemma for humanity since ancient times has been physical suffering. If anyone can make themselves suffer and pretend to be enjoying themselves, he will definitely impress others.
- **“no value against fleshly indulgence”**: The definite conclusion is that asceticism is useless for sanctification. They desperately want to restrain their physical desires, but the fact is their physical desires are running wild. The "flesh" refers to all sinful desires, including pride, and underneath the appearance of godliness is the superabundance of pride hidden in their hearts.

Truth2. Made complete in Christ

- **“have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world”**: You have already died with Christ, and now Christ lives in you. Christ is your Lord. Live in Him and you will enjoy a full and complete life. No matter what tricks the heretics use to deceive people, Paul always came back to this point: You already have the life of Christ and you have reached the highest plane! Why do you follow those who are on much lower planes? You have the life of an eagle, why live at the height of ducks, ostriches, and hummingbirds?

Summary Application: Don't be intimidated by the appearance of fake godliness that anyone puts on the outside so as to follow them and deviate from a complete life in Christ. It is necessary to clearly discern what comes from man and what comes from God. The godliness of many people is faked to be seen by others. True godliness only cares about pleasing God, and God sees our hearts. The core of all faking arts is external expressions, boasting in the flesh, and having an appearance of godliness. We must beware of these traps, and live out the complete life of Christ in a church body closely holding fast to the head in accordance with the teachings of the Bible!