

Series: *Colossians 2 – Truth Above All*

Title: "Do Not Tamper With God's Word" (Colossians 2:18-23)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 2/26/2012

Page 1 of 13

Let me call your attention once again to the Word of God given to us by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul in the book of Colossians, chapter two, beginning at verse eighteen. As always, I hope that if you are able to do so as you listen, that you will follow along in your own personal copy of God's Word. And so we begin in Colossians chapter two, 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, from whom all the body, 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)

Man-Made Doctrines: Foreign to Christ

Now, as we have said before, Colossians chapter two deals with Satan's triple threat to the individual Christian and to the church as a body. These three things are

Series: *Colossians 2 – Truth Above All*

Title: "Do Not Tamper With God's Word" (Colossians 2:18-23)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 2/26/2012

Page 2 of 13

a constant threat to your life and testimony as an individual Christian. These three things are a constant threat to the unity, peace, and purity of the church.

Let me also remind you that you cannot truly have unity and peace in the church unless you have doctrinal purity in the church. Today, and throughout the history of the church, people have tried to have unity and peace at the sacrifice of doctrinal purity. But Paul is telling us about the great dangers of taking such a course. It only results in a false unity, and a false peace.

Now, in previous messages we have studied the first two of Satan's triple threats. The first threat that Paul addressed is the threat of worldly philosophy influencing the thinking of the Christian and the church. The second threat that Paul warns against is the threat of legalism becoming an evil influence in the life of the Christian and the church. And now we have come to the third threat, which is the evil of man-made doctrines.

The common denominator in all of these devices or threats of the Devil is that they take the Christian and the church away from absolute and complete reliance on the person and work of Jesus Christ alone, and away from absolute and complete reliance on the authority of His written Word alone.

In our last message we saw that this warning against man-made doctrines is part of the Apostle Paul's great defense of the preeminence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ must have first place. Any time we add anything to Christ, we actually diminish Christ. We go out of the realm of God's light into the realm of Satan's

Series: *Colossians 2 – Truth Above All*

Title: "Do Not Tamper With God's Word" (Colossians 2:18-23)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 2/26/2012

Page 3 of 13

darkness. We go out of the realm of Christ's truth and into the realm of Satan's lies. We go out of the realm of Divine strength and into the realm of human weakness. We go out of the realm of obedience to Christ and into the realm of rebellion against His Lordship.

And that is most certainly true when we place ourselves in subjection to man-made doctrines. Notice verse twenty. Why, Paul says, do you act as though you were still living "in the world" – still living in the realm where those who promote these things seek to exercise power and authority? Christian, why do you submit to such things? When you became alive in Christ you became dead to those things. You became dead to man-made doctrines, and those things became dead for you. They have no life. They have no legitimate authority. Christ is your life. His Word is your authority.

The Supreme Authority of Scripture

Scripture declares this authority. Now, I am going to give you a number of passages that declare this, and I am going to give them quickly. But I would encourage you to go to our website, teachingtheword.org, and go to our broadcast page. Look for the message titled, "Do Not Tamper With God's Word." There you will find a complete transcript of this message that you can read and print. That transcript includes the specific references for the passages that I am about to give you. Now the passages I am going to mention are only some of the ones that

Series: *Colossians 2 – Truth Above All*

Title: "Do Not Tamper With God's Word" (Colossians 2:18-23)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 2/26/2012

Page 4 of 13

make these great points. You will find the same things echoed throughout the Word of God, from beginning to end.

- First of all, Romans chapter thirteen, verse eleven tells us that "there is no authority except from God," and all authority that exists is "established by God."
- In John chapter three, John chapter seventeen, Romans chapter three, and First Thessalonians chapter one, Scripture declares that God is the God of truth (John 3:33, 17:3; Romans 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:9).
- In Romans chapters two and three, and in Revelation chapters fifteen and sixteen, Scripture declares that God's judgments are true (Romans 2:2, 3:7; Revelation 15:3, 16:7).
- In Romans chapter one and in Colossians chapter one, Scripture declares that genuine knowledge of God is knowledge of the truth (Romans 1:18 and 25; Colossians 1:9-14).
- In John chapter fourteen, and in Revelation chapters three and nineteen, Scripture declares that Jesus Christ personally is the truth (John 14:6; Revelation 3:7, 19:11).
- In many places in Scripture, especially in John's Gospel and in his epistles, God the Holy Spirit, the author of all Scripture is declared to be the Spirit of truth (for example, John 14:17, 15:26, 15:13; 1 John 5:7).

Series: *Colossians 2 – Truth Above All*

Title: "Do Not Tamper With God's Word" (Colossians 2:18-23)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 2/26/2012

Page 5 of 13

- In John chapter sixteen, Scripture declares that the Holy Spirit's principal ministry is to guide the believer in the truth (John 16:13).
- In many places in the New Testament, Scripture declares repeatedly that the Gospel, "the power of God unto salvation," is the word of truth, the truth of Christ, and the way of truth (2 Corinthians 6:7, 11:10; Ephesians 1:13; Colossians 1:5; 2 Timothy 2:15; James 1:18; 2 Peter 2:2).
- In many places in the New Testament, Scripture declares that true believers in Christ have found the truth and believed the truth. Scripture likewise declares that heretics and unbelievers have missed the truth and denied the truth (1 John 2:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Ephesians 5:9; 1 John 3:19).
- Hebrews chapter four, verse twelve declares to us that "the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner (or critic) of the thoughts and intents of the heart." And therefore, the next verse tells us, "all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." God's Word does that. God's Word has the authority to do that. God's Word is the standard by which every human being and every church will be judged in every thing.

Series: *Colossians 2 – Truth Above All*

Title: "Do Not Tamper With God's Word" (Colossians 2:18-23)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 2/26/2012

Page 6 of 13

- And lastly, First Timothy chapter three, verse fifteen declares that the Church, the true Body of Christ, is the pillar and ground of the truth – as long as it stands upon the Word of God alone.

Do Not Add, Do Not Subtract

Now, why am I emphasizing all of this? I am emphasizing it because these things are the basis for another key principle that we find in the pages of the Bible from beginning to end. God says, over and over again, "Do not tamper with My Word." Do not add to it, do not take away from it. Sinful man, finite man, little man, you have no right to do that. You have no authority to do that.

Deuteronomy chapter four, verse two: "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God..."

Proverbs chapter thirty, verses five and six: "Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar."

Matthew chapter fifteen, beginning at verse six: "Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' "

Series: *Colossians 2 – Truth Above All*

Title: "Do Not Tamper With God's Word" (Colossians 2:18-23)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 2/26/2012

Page 7 of 13

Revelation chapter twenty-two, beginning at verse eighteen: "For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

Scripture is the authority. The only authority. The absolute authority. Do not add to it. Do not take away from it. This is the commandment of God.

And so we must ask the question: How are the Christian and the church to deal with those who add to God's Word, and take away from it? How are the Christian and the church to deal with those who invent man-made doctrines that corrupt and pervert the pure Word of Truth? Scripture tell us two things.

First of all, we are to rebuke and reject those who teach man-made doctrines. This is how Paul puts it to Titus, in Titus chapter one, beginning at verse ten:

For there are many [who are] insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers...whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain...Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they [those who would be drawn away by these things] may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to...commandments of men who turn from the truth. To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving

Series: *Colossians 2 – Truth Above All*

Title: "Do Not Tamper With God's Word" (Colossians 2:18-23)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 2/26/2012

Page 8 of 13

nothing is pure [not even the Word of God]; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable [that is detestable], disobedient, and disqualified for every good work. (Titus 1:10-16)

That is the negative. We must not compromise with or tolerate such people in the church. But then there is the positive side of the answer. The positive is that we must cling to the truth. We must be immersed in the truth. We are to make the truth part of our very being. That is the sure way to guard against man-made doctrines. You learn how to recognize and reject counterfeits by studying the genuine article.

We find this principle stated for us all the way back in the book of Deuteronomy, chapter seventeen. Moses was giving God's final instructions to the nation of Israel before they entered the land that God had promised to them. This is what God said to them through Moses, beginning in verse fourteen. He said, the time will come when you will want to have a king to rule over you. When that time comes, look to the Lord your God to choose the king. The king will have no authority of his own. He is not the source of authority. I, the Lord, am the Source of authority. I will give the king the authority to rule over you.

The basis of that authority will be obedience to My Word. As long as the king remains true to My Word, it will be well with him, and well with the nation. But if he does not remain true to My Word, he will face the consequences and the nation will face the consequences.

Series: *Colossians 2 – Truth Above All*

Title: "Do Not Tamper With God's Word" (Colossians 2:18-23)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 2/26/2012

Page 9 of 13

And then notice Deuteronomy chapter seventeen, beginning at verse eighteen. God says this through Moses:

Also it shall be, when he [the king] sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel. (Deuteronomy 17:18-20)

Dear friends, as it was to be for the kings of ancient Israel, so it must be for us today. So it must be for the pastor, the elder, the deacon, the Bible college or seminary professor, the Sunday school teacher, and the parent bringing up and teaching your children in your home. So it must be, even for the child.

Pastor, elder, deacon, Christian teacher, Christian parent, Christian child – you must read the Word of God all the days of your life. You must be careful to observe, to obey, all that is written in it.

Why? So that your heart may be right. So that your heart may be right before God. So that your heart may be right before your fellow Christian. So that your heart may be right before the unbelieving world. So that you will not seek to establish your

Series: *Colossians 2 – Truth Above All*

Title: "Do Not Tamper With God's Word" (Colossians 2:18-23)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 2/26/2012

Page 10 of 13

own authority and your own doctrines. So that you will not turn aside from the pure Word of God to the right hand or to the left. So that it might be well with you individually. So that it might be well with your family. So that it might be well with your church. So that it might be well with the school or college or seminary where you may teach. So that it might be well with your nation, because of the influence of the Word of God on the nation through you.

Postmodern Evangelicalism's Low View of Inerrancy

Now, this brings us face to face with a very significant problem in the church today. And unfortunately it is a problem that many pastors and church leaders simply do not want to face. Here is the problem: In our time, and in fact for more than a hundred years, most Evangelical churches and pastors have taken the position that the Bible we have in our hands today is not free from error. They are saying that Scripture was only free from error in the original manuscripts.

Now, this raises a very critical question: How can we obey God's commandment to adhere to His pure Word, His commandment not to turn away from it to the right hand or the left, if God has not faithfully preserved His inerrant Word for us? How can we possibly know when we are adding to or taking away from God's Word unless there is an inerrant standard? The only way that Scripture can have absolute authority is if Scripture in the original languages is still absolutely free from error.

Series: *Colossians 2 – Truth Above All*

Title: "Do Not Tamper With God's Word" (Colossians 2:18-23)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 2/26/2012

Page 11 of 13

But today, what will you find in the doctrinal statements of most Evangelical churches? You will find a very low view of inerrancy. You will find statements that the Bible was only inerrant when it was originally written thousands of years ago.

Now what are the implications of such a statement? The only possible conclusion of such a statement is a great and deadly falsehood – the Satanic falsehood which says that we do not have the inerrant Word of God in our hands today, because the text has been corrupted over the centuries. Dear friends, Scripture itself tells us that this is a lie. But today this has become the accepted position of the vast majority Evangelical churches and institutions.

And what are the results of such an ungodly position? One result is that for the last 130 years scholars have produced an avalanche of Bible versions that are based on counterfeit, corrupted source texts. Another result is that much of the church no longer preaches with Divine authority, because it no longer believes that we have uncorrupted Scripture in our hands. And, because of these two things we have seen yet another deadly result, and that is the proliferation of man-made doctrines. The moment you begin to accept the false notion of a less-than-inerrant Bible, at that moment you open the door to the Satanic evil of man-made doctrines.

Dear friends, in order to truly understand the evil of man-made doctrines, we must truly understand the great truth of the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture. Throughout history – from the first temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden as recorded in Genesis, to the temptation of Christ in the wilderness as recorded in the

Series: *Colossians 2 – Truth Above All*

Title: "Do Not Tamper With God's Word" (Colossians 2:18-23)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 2/26/2012

Page 12 of 13

Gospels, to the final deception of mankind by the Beast and False Prophet as prophesied in Revelation – through all time, Satan's primary attack has been and always will be upon the inerrancy of the Word of God. And in the past 130 years Satan has greatly intensified that attack.

So in order to put up, and keep up, a solid battle front against Satan's threat to the Christian and the church that comes in the form of man-made doctrines, we must first of all have the great doctrine, the great truth, of God's providential preservation of the text of Scripture in the original languages firmly fixed in our minds.

Jesus Christ is Lord, and His authentic Word is inerrant. God Himself has preserved it without error in the original languages. We cannot add to or take away from Christ. We cannot add to or take away from His Word. But that is exactly what the church has dared to do with the text of Scripture itself during the past 130 years. One of the main ways in which Satan has put his attack on inerrancy into action has been by deceiving the church into using counterfeit, corrupted source texts to produce corrupt translations of the Bible that diminish the person and work of Christ, and open the door to man-made doctrines that lead souls to Hell.

Now this raises two questions that we must answer. First, how do we know that God has preserved His Word without error in the original languages? And secondly, how and why did the Evangelical church's view toward the inerrancy of Scripture change over the past 130 years? And so as we continue our consideration of the evil

Series: *Colossians 2 – Truth Above All*

Title: "Do Not Tamper With God's Word" (Colossians 2:18-23)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 2/26/2012

Page 13 of 13

of man-made doctrines in our next message, the Lord willing we are going to answer those questions.

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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