



Christ Over All
Part 4 – Stop Trying to Earn Your Salvation
Adam Donyes and Shay Robbins

Shay Robbins: My name is Shay Robbins and I'm here with my pal, Adam Donyes. We're going to tag team a message in our series *Christ Over All*. The message is titled *Stop Trying to Earn Your Salvation*.

I was reading a study from the Pew Research Center this week. It was a study that was done in 2017. The study stated that in 2017, 72% of Americans believed that when they die, they would go to heaven based on being a good person. Believe it or not, ten years prior to that, in 2007, the same survey that they did reflected essentially the same thing; it was changed by two percentage points to 74%. It's interesting to me that that standard has been holding, as much as our world has changed in that 10 year period. Even more interesting is that in that number of Americans in 2017, many of them considered themselves atheists and agnostics. There is an innately, deeply ingrained belief that there has got to be something better than this; there has to be something after this life on earth.

Today, that's what we are going to unpack. We're going to talk about the difference between a relationship and religion, the difference between righteousness in Christ and self-righteousness. To do that, we're going to go to Colossians and start in Chapter 2: 11.

Colossians 2 – ***11 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands...*** What a way to start. If you're wondering why Ted and Travis ended on Verse 10 last week, Verse 11 is why. Adam, I would like to actually Farkle to see who the Lord would have teach this passage.

Adam Donyes: Alright.

Shay Robbins: Here we go... You win!

Adam Donyes: Alright, let's cut to the chase... Some of you got that. ***11 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ...*** Just so you guys understand, the circumcision is in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, or the Torah, the Jewish religious law. If you were born into a Jewish family, the law was that you would be circumcised on the eighth day of your life, indicating who you belong to in God. So, even if you were circumcised, you would be known as God's people, but thankfully – and all the older men said amen – that's no longer a requirement; that's something that's through the heart. Jesus is now focused on the heart of circumcision rather than the physical circumcision. He's more concerned with what's going on with the inward than what's going on with the outward.

The cross reference here is Galatians 5: 6, which says in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything except for faith working through love. Paul is saying, “Stop trying to do these works and thinking that what you look at on the outside has anything to do with your standing before God. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ.”

Talk about this being ruled by flesh. When you woke up this morning, I didn’t have to remind any of you to go sin today. I didn’t have to remind you to have bad thoughts. I didn’t have to remind you to do anything bad. You are naturally going to do that in your flesh. So, what Paul is referring to is the circumcision of the flesh, dying to yourself. That’s what matters, that you would turn your heart over to Christ and allow him to circumcise your heart in the inward and not worry about the outward.

Going on, it says, ***12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.*** This is so important to understand that Christ is doing this work through faith. It’s called heart transformation. When our heart is transformed, the behavior modification follows. Rarely will behavior modification lead someone to heart transformation. A list of do this and don’t do this doesn’t usually lead people towards wanting to follow Jesus. But when we have given him our heart and our heart is transformed, the behavior shortly follows.

Saint Augustine of Hippo put it this way: *“For grace is given not because we’ve done good works, but in order that we may be able to do them.”* So, we have to be careful about puffing ourselves up, thinking we are doing these good works and we’re awesome, look at me. Christ in us is the only one that enables us to those good works. Every other religion or worldview out there believes that you get into heaven or you help your view with God by doing good works. “If I just do more good things.” “If I just do more evangelism.” “If I do more study.” “If I do more prayer time.” That’s the opposite of the gospel.

I love to take Mormons to the passage in Isaiah 64: 6 because they love scripture. They know scripture. And this is what Isaiah 64: 6 says, ***All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.*** Its church, so I won’t tell you what that filthy rag is referring to, but it has to do with the female gender. He’s saying even your righteous acts are like a filthy rag. Even the good works you do that are motivated to elevate yourself. In God’s sight, those are filthy rags. He doesn’t want your efforts and your works; he wants your heart.

David eludes to this is Psalm 51 – ***16 For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.*** God wants your heart, not your works.

I tell young people this all the time. When you’re trying to fix yourself, it’s like putting a Band-Aid on a gunshot wound. When someone is shot, they don’t put a Band-Aid on that gunshot wound; they go to the hospital to get surgery because they need a physician. We too need surgery from the Great Physician. I try to use this language in my home all the time with my two boys. I have an eight-year-old and an about to be a six-year-old in a week. I use this language all the time because I think language matters. And what we say at home and how we communicate to our children is so important.

I caught two of them on video this last week and they had no idea I was filming it so it would be authentic for you guys. Check out these little 30 second clips. [Videos play]. So, both of my boys... They didn't know they were being filmed. They know the only reason Daddy loves them is just because God gave them to me. Not based off anything they have done, grades they've brought home, chores that they have accomplished. I love them just because. And your Father loves you just because. And that is what he's talking about when he says we are saved with him through faith, Shay.

Shay Robbins: That's right. Colossians 2 picks up in Verse 13 under this theme of through your faith...

13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh... This is our starting point. In fact, we are all born into this world into inequity, in sin we're broken. And it's important for us, as those who have been following Jesus, to remember where we've come from. Some of us may be walking in the darkness of sin right now. Some of us may need to turn around and look and remember what that was like. When we do that, it gives us a fresh perspective of how good God's grace is.

As I reflect upon my past, it's a walk down a horrific memory lane. It's full of shame and guilt and sadness. And when I'm entertaining sin, today, yesterday... When I'm entertaining, it is good practice to remember the mess that it makes in our life. I am well acquainted with the darkness of walking around with a heart that's just dead. On the outside, I acted like I was fine, but there was a constant nagging at my soul that what I was doing was making a mess of my life. No matter how hard I tried, there was nothing that I could do to clean up that mess. I couldn't love God. I couldn't love his Word. I couldn't respect people because I couldn't help from making decision that were selfish and ultimately hurt every other relationship in my life.

But watch what God does. I want to read the rest of this scripture. ***...He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.*** This passage gives us sequence of the deeds done by God. When we get carried away or caught up trying to clean things up ourselves, we need to be reminded of the deeds that have been done by God on our behalf.

God made us alive together with Christ. The question is, **how did he do it?** He did it in a legal setting, in a cosmic courtroom where the chief justice of the cosmos performed a legal action that set us free and he did it this way:

First of all, **He forgave us of all our sins.** We bring our debt before him and he wipes it away... clean. **God canceled the record of debt.** Each one of us has a record of debt that records every wrong that we've done in our entire life. Every little white lie. Everything done behind closed doors. Everything is recorded and nothing is hidden from God, yet God cancels out that record of debt. **He also set aside the record of debt.** And finally, **He nails it to the cross.** When Jesus stretched out his arm, breathed his last breath, he yelled out "Tetelestai," It's finished. It's over with, it's done for. Your record of debt has been

shredded and you've been made righteous through Christ. Mankind is raised with Jesus into new life through faith.

Adam Donyes: That's so good. Mankind gets new life in Jesus and Jesus alone. Continuing on in Colossians, it says, **16 Therefore...** Anytime you see the word *therefore*, you have to ask what is the therefore there for? So, it's literally referring back to everything we just look at in the previous chapters that Ted and Ted and Travis shared on. He's going back and he says now that you've heard all of this and it is through Christ alone, pay attention now, ***...no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink...*** Literally, Paul is getting rid of the legalistic mindset. He's getting rid of "Hey if I just do enough good things and my good deeds outweigh my bad deeds, I'll be in heaven" Or "Where can I ever possibly take care of these good deeds?" Or "Maybe if I go to church, I'm going to do good." "I lied this week at work." You play this scale game, and he's saying, "No, no, stop." This isn't the legal system, these aren't scales. Jesus gets rid of all this. It's not about your good deeds outweighing your bad deeds. We just say, in Isaiah in 64: 6, that we can't outweigh those. We can't do it on our own. It's through Jesus. Don't let anyone judge you. Don't let legalistic people discourage you and deter you from walking with Jesus.

...or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day... I love this, and Ted eluded to this last week. If you know if you are a Leo or a Pisces or an Aries, shame on you. You shouldn't care about any of that horoscope stuff. That's a new moon type of stuff. Forget about the enneagram numbers. I don't care what number you are. The only number I care about is 777; that's the only number, and the number you are in Christ is one. You are one of one in Jesus.

Now all you people that love the enneagram, I know that it's gospel centered; I understand. I get it can be used as a gospel tool. My point is we should be less concerned about what horoscopes and personality tests and all those things say about us and more concerned with what God's word says about us, period. This is truth. I tell people all the time. There's one letter that separates the word world and word and it's the letter L – lies, lies, lies. Truth, truth, truth (Bible).

17 ...things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. It's not found anywhere else. John 14: 6 says, "I'm the way, I'm the truth, I'm the life; no one shall come to the Father except through this name (Jesus)." It's not up for debate. It doesn't matter if Oprah says that's your way and this is my way... Nope. There is one way, period.

18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind... The cross reference here is Romans 12: 2, "Don't conform to the patterns of this world, but be transformed." How are you transformed in your way of thinking? Not Fox and CNN. You are transformed by this Word of God. **19 ...and not holding fast to the head...** When you lose connection with the Word of God, you lose connection with the Father. ***...from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.*** So, it is so important that we are anchored in the gospel, which says you and I deserve death, but through the cross of Christ, we don't get what we deserve. That's what the good news... the word *gospel* literally means *good news*. That's what the good news is. Even though you and I deserve to go to hell, we don't have to through Jesus Christ.

Amen? That's the great news. I tell my young people all the time and Shay will finish it for me. If it don't match the word...

Shay Robbins: Forget what you heard.

Adam Donyes: I don't care what any politician or anyone else says. What does scripture say? And you know what's great about following the Word? It never changes. The news stations you watch, they'll change. Politicians, their opinions will change. Health care, it'll change. Everything around you will change, but do you know what will never change? It's the consistent anchor of God's word. It will not change. It's so important I point my kids back to this. Even as parents and grandparents... Maybe you're a grandparent and your like, "Man, I missed that opportunity with my kids." Now you have grandkids. Or if you're a parent, you've got kids. The communication you have at home impacts the way they see the gospel and Jesus. What I mean by that are things like this:

What we reward. So, we're like, "If you get good grades, you're going to get..." What if you're not a 4.0 student? And now your teaching them work-based ideas. I think kids should be rewarded, but you need to be communicating the gospel when you reward those things and say, "You did a great job with chores, but I want you to know that the gospel has nothing to do with you earning anything. You can't earn that salvation; it's a gift that is freely given."

What do we applaud? So, my eight-year-old was devastated two weeks ago when the Clippers lost. He was balling, crying... We don't let him stay up that night, so he checks the scores right when he wakes up. He didn't want to go to school. He was a wreck. My wife says, "This is ridiculous. He's worshipping the Clippers." I said, "I'm with you, but I actually like that he cares." This generation can be so apathetic; I like that he actually hates losing. That's good not to be apathetic. So, I waited for him to come home from school and I sat him on the porch and said, "I actually love that you care so much. That's passion; you should care. But I don't want you to put your hope in something that will fail you because Hebrews 13: 5 says, "Jesus will never leave you, nor forsake you." And you'll quickly learn that any San Diego team you like will forsake you often."

Shay Robbins: Let's add Chicago to the list too.

Adam Donyes: And I pointed him to Jesus in that moment. Don't put your hope in sports teams, put your hope in Jesus. Be passionate about things, but they will let you down time and time again.

What we value. Christmas comes along and now we have Elf on the Shelf and Santa and he's making a list, checking it twice. That's not the gospel. Shay just told us he made the list and he cancelled it on the cross. It's not whether you are naughty or nice; we're all naughty. All of us are naughty, every single one of us. If you don't think you are, just wait a second and I'll come polish your halo later and watch you ascend into heaven, okay? We're all naughty. You wouldn't let me project any of your thoughts this week up here for everyone to see. None of us. So, this idea of... I'm not saying we can't celebrate traditions, but in those moments, we get to point our kids back to the gospel.

What or who we praise. There was a picture that was literally just taken yesterday. I was coaching a scrimmage with my team and I was standing with my arms crossed. A friend of mine caught it. My eight-year-old was about five feet behind me in the exact same stance. I didn't know it. So, you think they are not watching us? The way you behave and the way you act has a far greater impact than anything you say. So, what you praise... If you're whole day is ruined because the Chiefs lose tomorrow night... That's showing them where our hope is, so we get the chance to have these gospel conversations all the time.

The last thing I'll say before I pass it over to Shay is Christianity is not listianity. It is not a list of dos and don'ts. It's we can't do it and so Christ did it on our behalf. He lived the life we all should have lived and died the death we deserved to die. So, don't exhaust yourself trying to check off all these boxes. That's called legalism.

Shay Robbins: When I was going through Adams notes earlier this week, I had to ask him, "What does listianity mean?" He's like, "That's a made-up word." I was thinking it was some sort of Greek term; I hadn't run into before. He's on a different level over here.

Alright, let's start in Verse 20 – ***20 If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 21 "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" 22 (which all refer to things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? 23 These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.***

So, the religious leaders of the day running around the Colossian church were practicing asceticism, which essentially was just this hardcore version of self-righteousness. Unlike the unchanging word that Adam mentioned, self-righteousness changes through the ages. It looks a little bit different, but we still have the possibility of falling into the same trip.

Let me state it this way: **The dos and don'ts of self-righteousness and self-glorification represent a trap that we can all erode into.** So, that 72% that I was talking about is living in that belief system. For those of us who have been transformed by the gospel and place faith in Jesus, we still have the capacity in our nature to drift into those dos and don'ts, practicing religion and earning our own way into the favor of God. Romans 1: 25 lays it out really simply and helps me understand. It says, "For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator who is blessed forever." You see, natural human nature is to take God off the throne and put ourselves on it. That is our default mechanism.

It's important for us to realize what our mechanism is and then what we need to be aware of. **What are the elemental, spiritual "forces" of today?** What do we need to be aware of? I've got a list. It's not comprehensive, but it's enough to get us thinking.

Aiming to be a good person. That's the general thought. If I can be a good enough person, when I die, surely something good is going to happen to me. It's easy believism.

Comparing ourselves to others. This is pretty commonplace. You find somebody who is more retched than you are and then you compare yourself to them and feel pretty darn good about yourself, right?

Adam Donyes: I do that with you all the time, Shay.

Shay Robbins: I'm glad to be somebody's standard. When I find myself comparing or being critical in my mind, that should be a red flag waving in my spirit that I'm eroding into self-righteousness.

Giving publicly. Serving publicly. Giving and serving are both amazing things. They are good things that flow out of a heart that loves God. But to do so publicly and to do it for the favor of man is to do it with a sour heart.

Cleaning yourself up. This is one that is so real to me. In my 20s when I was on the verge of kind of taking that leap of faith, I was hiding all of my sin. I knew it was wrong. I knew I needed God to clean it up, but in kind of last ditch effort, so as to not shame myself in front of all my new Christian friends, I tried to clean myself up by creating a list and, one at a time, crossing off this list of wretched things that I was doing. The only problem was when I crossed off one or two, another three would pop up. I found that I was spinning my wheels, unable to manage my own sin. If you are there, you know what it feels like. It's wearisome.

Managing public perception. When you put on your best face in front of influential people or perhaps when you're out in public in general. The reality is that God knows who you are behind closed doors, your true self. In fact, integrity is, just by definition, who you are when no ones looking. That's the real you.

When Bible reading, church attendance, philanthropy, busyness all become check boxes in your pursuit of goodness... You've eroded into religion. You can do a lot of great things with a misguided heart.

I want to share a story and then hand it off to Adam to close. I got to meet an amazing young man this summer. His name is Andrew. His mom had signed him up to come to camp. Last spring, she called, and she was wanting to pull him out. We got on the phone and we began to talk and process what she was thinking, why she wanted to pull him out. She explained that Andrew, as an 11-year-old, was pursued by a homosexual 11-year-old at school this year.

That pursuit turned into bullying and that bullying turned into a broken heart. Andrew began to question his own sexuality and his own gender. His mom went into protection mode, obviously. She pulled him out of the school. Dad was not in the picture. They had just recently gone through a divorce and he kind of stepped out of Andrew's life. So, you have this momma who goes into protection mode. She's doing everything she can to protect and heal up her son's broken heart.

So, together, this mother and son set out to go through counseling and putting himself in protective environments and staying home. Everything they did had no positive result. She called up the camp thinking, I cannot send him to camp because I can't protect him there.

I listened compassionately, but I explained that there was no better place in the world for her to send her little guy who is struggling with his masculinity than Kanakuk K1 this summer. She took a leap of faith and she sent that little boy.

He ran around the Ozarks for two weeks with some of the most amazing godly counselors who loved him and cared for him and showed him what it is to be a godly man, both strong, tough, and tender. On the very last night at camp, Andrew accepted Christ and it changed his life. The following morning, his mom picked him up and they drove home to Dallas, Texas, seven hours in the car. She called me the following Saturday. I rarely answer my phone on opening day, but I felt led to do so. I got on the phone with her and she explained, and she was elated.

She said, "I have my son back. He's been transformed." She said that he talked her ear off for seven hours all the way down to Dallas and told her that he had accepted Christ at camp. His mom asked him what it was like. This is Andrew's quote: "It was like all the power of the universe came inside my body." She said, "What do you mean by that?" He said, "It was a combination of love and forgiveness." That's what drives a man or woman to change their life. It is transformation that's birthed out of love and forgiveness.

Adam Donyes: When I first became a believer, my mom would always say, "You're such a good person, son." I'd say, "Mom, I'm not good." She was like, "What are you not telling me? What do I not know?" I said, "Mom, there's nothing good in me apart from Christ." Anything good, even the Bible says when the rich young ruler approaches Jesus, "There is only one who is good. Why do you call me good?" That good being Jesus.

I think there are three types of people in her today. I think there is the person that feels like their bad deeds are so grievous and so unforgiveable that they're living in shame and guilt and they just can't get to a place of realizing Jesus has forgiven them.

Then there's the person that thinks they are high and mighty and they're very spiritual. They don't celebrate Halloween and they don't drink a glass of wine. They are very legalistic. Jesus called those people pharisees. Those are the people you polish their haloes because they think they are better than everybody.

But then there's the person in this room that knows it has nothing to do with that. It has everything to do with Jesus. And regardless of how you walked in here today, Jesus' grace is enough. The reality is that Jesus walked this earth and he lived the life you and I should have lived, but we didn't. Because we didn't, he died the death all of us deserve to die. And on that cross, he took your sins, my sins, and all our sins and even our righteous acts trying to please him, he took that on the cross. He was buried and after he was buried, he defeated death, so you and I never have to taste it. And he was raised again from the dead and now he's sitting on the right-handed throne of God and he will come back for those who trust him and for those who believe.

Romans 10: 9-10 says that if you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that what I just told you is true, that Jesus died on the cross for your sins, all of your sins... There's no past, present, or

future sin of yours that has more power than the cross of Jesus Christ, none. If you believe that, it says you will be saved, that you will spend eternity with Shay and me, worshipping Jesus and not based off of anything you've done, no list you've checked, no good deeds you've done, no legalism you followed, but by his grace through faith alone that you will be in heaven.

If you've never made that surrender, if you walked in here today and said, "I've been trying to keep up and do all these good works..." If you've never surrendered your heart to Jesus, Shay and I both would tell you it is the best decision. Ahead of getting married to who I got married to, the best decision I've ever made in my life was giving my life to Jesus. I haven't regretted one day, and I haven't looked back.

If you've never made that decision, we have a prayer room that's right here between the curtains. And we have a prayer team that would love to talk to you about joining us in heaven one day and what that would look like.

Father God, thank you so much for the freedom from works, that we don't have to exhaust ourselves. Jesus, your word says come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest for your tired souls.

Lord, I sense there are tired people in this room. Would you free them by the freedom of the gospel? Would you free them by grace? Would you free them from works? Would you free them from bondage of shame and guilt? God, I just lift them up to you and just pray. Even if they are right now sitting in their chair debating whether or not they should walk over to that prayer room, God, I pray you would give them the courage to walk in the freedom you give us through the cross.

Be with this church family. Be with this community. It's in the mighty and matchless name of Jesus I pray. And all God's people said... Amen.