

Preached on October 8, 2003 at Changed By Grace Community Church, Jacksonville, FL © 2003. All rights reserved.

***How Are We to Respond to Halloween?***  
***Ephesians 5:6-7***  
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**INTRODUCTION**

1. Every year we are faced with the holidays — whether we will participate or not.
2. This year is no different.
3. With “more than 50 million” people celebrating Halloween, the pressure to conform is even greater. (Steve Russo, *Halloween: What’s a Christian to Do?*, p.13).
4. So to begin our study tonight, I want to pose a question: “Who are we to listen to?”
5. Every year the world tells us that there is nothing wrong with Halloween. It’s something fun for the kids.
6. But is that true?
7. The word “Halloween” actually has its origins in the Catholic Church.
8. It comes from a contracted corruption of All Hallows Eve. “It is the glossing of the name Hallow Eve that has given us the name Hallowe’en” (Ibid., Russo, p.11).

9. Steve Russo, writes, “All Saints’ Day was designated by Pope Gregory IV in A.D. 835 and was placed on the early church calendar to pay honor to all the saints who did not otherwise have a feast day reserved for them. About A.D. 900 the church recognized that All Saints’ Day had not supplanted the pre-Christian customs, so in an attempt to get closer to the original intent of the festival it declared November 2 as All Soul’s Day. November 2 was set aside in recognition of the souls of all the faithful departed who had died during the previous year. The church also redefined the belief that the spirits of Sanhain, once thought to be wild and powerful, were now said to be evil as well. It was also maintained that the gods and other spiritual beings of traditional religions were diabolical deceptions. It was taught that spiritual forces that people experienced were real, but they were manifestations of the devil - the prince of liars - who misled people toward the worship of false idols. Thus the customs associated with Halloween now included representations of ghosts, skulls, and human skeletons (symbols of the dead), the devil himself, and other malevolent evil creatures such as witches” (Ibid., pp.11-12).
10. In ancient Ireland, “these customs were widely practiced” thus making its origins in the “ancient Celtic (Irish, Scottish, Welsh) harvest festival” called Samhain (sow-en). It was on October 31<sup>st</sup> that summer officially ended “and the last day of the year.”
11. “As the power of the sun waned with the onset of winter, people were afraid that life itself, and not just the year, was coming to an end” (Ibid., Russo, p.9).

12. This day, named after one of their deities, Samhain (sow-en), “the Lord of the dead,” was on October 31<sup>st</sup>, the eve of their new year.
13. It is during this time that they “paid tribute.”
14. Their high priests, the Druids, taught “worship of things in creation, earth, sky, fire, trees, animals, and the like.”
15. They even taught “that on this night, the souls of the wicked dead inhabited the bodies of living people” (Heroes of the Faith, p.184).
16. “The Druids customarily lit great fires on Halloween...for the purpose of warding off these spirits” (Southwest Radio Church, p.1).
17. Food and drink were required and left outside “to placate the spirits” (Ibid., p.3).
18. Later costumes were worn in “exchange for offerings of food and drink. This practice, called mumming, evolved into our present trick or treating” (Ibid., p.3).
19. The use of the pumpkin was an invention “of the American Indian.” Before as in Europe, a ‘turnip’ was used” (Ibid., p.3).
20. It was “carved” with faces, “lighted and carried” by those seeking to placate the spirits.

21. The Satanic church recognizes this holiday as a time for marking “the end of the witches’ year. It marks the beginning of death and destruction associated with Winter. At this time the power of the underworld is unleashed, and spirits are supposedly freed to roam about the earth. Occultists consider Halloween the best time to contact spirits” (Fact Sheet, Focus on the Family).
22. Halloween is more than “dressing in a costume and marching from door to door collecting goodies,” It is a celebration of death and destruction.
23. For example, in the October 28, 1990 edition of the Jacksonville Time’s Union, it reported that “there are as many as 60 witches’ covens around Jacksonville.” These witches’, according to the report, “use Halloween as the occasion for ‘prayer and fasting against the Christian faith.’”
24. So the question I again ask you “Who are you listening to?”
25. There will always be someone who will come along and say that practicing evil is alright.
26. But what does God say?
27. We may say we want to listen to God but what do our actions reveal?
28. Read Ephesians 5:1-13

## I. Stop Listening to the World's Philosophy (v.6a)

### A. Their Words Are Deceptive

“Deceive” Gr.apatao (pres.act.imp.), “to cheat, mislead, beguile” (BADG/Strong's).

It is used two other times in the NT; in 1 Tim.2:14 of Eve being deceived by Satan and leading the whole race into sin and in James 1:26 for the one who thinks he is religious but cannot bridle his tongue. In both cases they have been ‘misled or deceived.’

#### 1. They question God's existence

- a) Ps.14:1 - “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good.”
- b) Ps.10:4 - “The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts.”
- c) Rom.1:28 - “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting.”

#### 2. They question God's absolutes

- a) They question truth

- (1) John 18:37-38 - "Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." 38 Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "I find no fault in Him at all."
  - (2) Rom.1:25 - They "exchanged the truth of God for the lie."
- b) They question morality
- (1) 1 Thess.4:1-5
  - (2) Rom.1:26-27 - "For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. 27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due."

## B. Their Words Are Empty

“Empty words” is Gr.kenos, “empty, vain, devoid of truth” (Thayer). Hodge says they are “empty words; words which contain no truth.” They are “speculative and misleading arguments” (Hindson/Kroll), “without content, basis or truth” (BADG)

John Gill says, “With vain philosophy, vain babblings, with foolish and filthy talking; suggesting that these were not sinful the apostle had condemned; or that they were small sins, the frailties of human life; and that God would take no notice of them, and they might continue in them with impunity: such deceivers there were, doctrinal and practical ones, who lay in wait to deceive men with such vain pretences; and there was danger of being carried away with their error; for the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, and is easily taken in such snares: wherefore the apostle cautions against such deceptions, adding” (John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible).

### 1. It is worldly opinion - Col.2:8

“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”

“Paul describes the means the false teachers would use to kidnap the Colossians as philosophy and empty deception.

Philosophia (philosophy) appears only here in the New Testament. As already noted, it means ‘to love wisdom.’ It is used here in a much broader sense than the academic discipline, since ‘philosophy is not reducible to the Judeo-Gnostic speculations about which Paul warned the Colossian Christians’ (Mark M. Hanna, *Crucial Questions in Apologetics* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981], ?p.? 11).

Historian Adolf Schlatter noted that ‘everything that had to do with theories about God and the world and the meaning of human life was called ‘philosophy’ at that time, not only in pagan schools, but also in the Jewish schools of the Greek cities’ (*The Church in the New Testament Period* [reprint, London: SPCK, 1955], pp. 150-54).

The first-century Jewish historian Josephus wrote, ‘There are three philosophical sects among the Jews. The followers of the first of whom are the Pharisees, of the second the Sadducees, and the third sect who pretends to be a severer discipline are called Essenes’ (*Jewish Wars* 2.8.2).

Thus, the term philosophy was broad enough



to encompass religious sects. The use of the definite article with philosophia shows that Paul was referring here to the specific beliefs of the Colossian errorists. Most likely they used it to refer to the transcendent, higher knowledge they supposedly had attained through mystical experience.

Paul goes on to describe this philosophy as empty deception.

Lightfoot wrote, ‘The absence of both preposition and article in the second clause shows that [empty deception] describes and qualifies philosophia’ (St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon [1879; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959], p.178).

He translated the phrase, ‘Through his philosophy which is an empty deceit’ (P. 178).

Although the false teachers at Colossae considered their view the epitome of wisdom, Paul dismisses it as empty deception.

The philosophy of the Colossian false teachers was not what it appeared to be. It sounded good and seduced the minds of those deceived by it, but it was a vapid illusion. There is no value in such speculative human philosophy, no matter how deeply and profoundly religious it sounds” [MacArthur, J. (1996, c1992). Colossians. Chicago: Moody Press.].

2. It is foolishness with God - 1 Cor.3:19

“For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.”

**II. Listen to God’s Word (vv.6b-7)**

“As a child of God we are not to derive our wisdom from the world but from God and His Word. The world will constantly seek to justify its existence and lifestyle and will always deny any consequences for it.”

A. Because God is Going to Judge the World (v.6b)

1. Unbelievers justify their lifestyle (vv.3-4)
2. Unbelievers say that God will not judge them for it (v.6)
3. But the Bible teaches that God will judge the world
  - a) Acts 17:30-31 - “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”
  - b) Ps.9:1-8 - “I will praise You, O Lord,

with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works. 2 I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High. 3 When my enemies turn back, They shall fall and perish at Your presence. 4 For You have maintained my right and my cause; You sat on the throne judging in righteousness. 5 You have rebuked the nations, You have destroyed the wicked; You have blotted out their name forever and ever. 6 O enemy, destructions are finished forever! And you have destroyed cities; Even their memory has perished. 7 But the Lord shall endure forever; He has prepared His throne for judgment. 8 He shall judge the world in righteousness, And He shall administer judgment for the peoples in uprightness.”

B. Because You Are Not to Be Like the World (v.7)

1. Therefore you are not to listen to what they say and do what they do (“therefore”)
2. You are not to partner with them
  - a) Do not fellowship with them

(1) Eph.5:11

“Fellowship” translated “participate”  
(NAS) Gr.sunkoinones

(Pres.act.imp.), “to join in fellowship with someone, to have part in a thing” (Rienecker). “The word refers to a joint-participation between two or more individuals in a common interest and a common activity” (Wuest)

- (2) Num.16:26 - “And he spoke to the congregation, saying, ‘Depart now from the tents of these wicked men! Touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins.’”
- (3) Prov.1:10-16 - “My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent. 11 If they say, “Come with us, Let us lie in wait to shed blood; Let us lurk secretly for the innocent without cause; 12 Let us swallow them alive like Sheol, And whole, like those who go down to the Pit; 13 We shall find all kinds of precious possessions, We shall fill our houses with spoil; 14 Cast in your lot among us, Let us all have one purse”— 15 My son, do not walk in the way with them, Keep your foot from their path; 16 For their feet run to evil, And they make haste to shed blood.”
- (4) Ps.1:1 - “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the

ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful.”

- (5) Rom.16:17-18 - “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. 18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.”

b) Expose their sin

- (1) Eph.5:11

“Expose” Gr.elegcho, “to reprove or rebuke” (Wuest).

John Wesley said, “Reprove them. To avoid them is not enough” (Wesley’s Notes on the Bible).

- (2) Tit.3:10-11 - “Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.”

“The fact that there is a ‘first and second admonition’ gives an

indication that there is to be a reproofing.”

## CONCLUSION

1. So I ask again, “Who are you listening to?”
2. Are you listening to those who say it’s ok to do evil and that God will not hold you accountable for it?
3. 1 John 2:15-17 says, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”
4. I want to close with this final thought concerning Halloween or any type of evil.
5. Steve Russo make an insightful statement when he says, “One of the most appealing ways evil can appear to be innocent is when it’s portrayed as being fun and entertaining, such as Halloween. Movies, cartoons, costumes, books, music, and games can sometimes have an element of wickedness that seems to ‘bait and hook’ your interest. And there’s no doubt that this kind of evil sells...When evil comes packaged in the form of entertainment or recreation, it disarms us to its dangers and to the truth that we are playing with spiritual fire. And playing with fire you can get burned!” (Ibid., p.38).