

## Crossville Church of Christ

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# COMPASS

Using God's Word to Chart The Course  
Of A Congregation

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### Elders:

Frank Bohannon  
Jiggs Killgore  
Jonathan Loveday  
Larry McDuffee  
Brian McLaughlin  
Jon Tatum

### Deacons:

Jim Bell  
Charles Evans  
Kyle Fairman  
Dale Hennessee  
Mike Isaacson  
David Kerley  
Doug Loveday  
Greg Maxwell  
Don Napier  
Tom Parham  
Mark Roberts  
Roger Smith  
Jason Wyatt  
Jerry Wood

### Ministers:

Barry Kennedy  
Ken Mears

### Missionaries: (India)

Don Iverson  
Jim Waldron

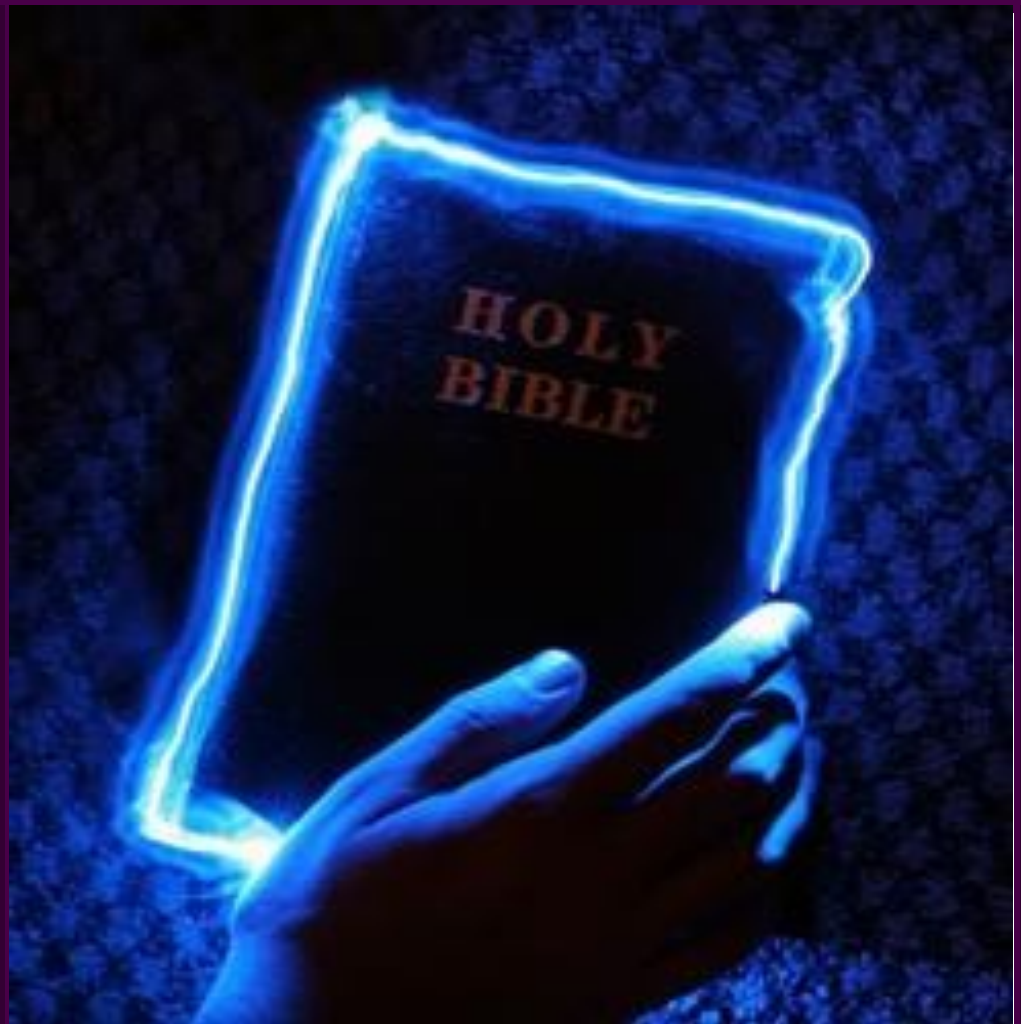
### Service Times

Sunday Bible Study	9 AM
Sunday Worship	10 AM
	6 PM
Wednesday	6 PM

### OTHER ACTIVITIES:

<b>Ladies Bible Class</b>	
Tuesdays	11AM
<b>Prayer Meeting</b>	
Tuesdays	10 AM
<b>Joyful Generation</b> (Youth Devotional & fellowship)	
1st Sunday	7:00 PM

February 22, 2015



**“God is a Spirit: and they that  
worship him must worship him  
in spirit and in truth”  
(John 4:24).**

# PAUL'S CONDEMNATION OF WILL-WORSHIP

Wayne Jackson

The church at Colossae was troubled by a heretical movement that seriously compromised the integrity of the Christian gospel. It was a conglomerate mixture of Judaism, asceticism (radical self-abuse), and proto-Gnosticism. For an extended discussion, see Lightfoot (1892, 71-111).

One aspect of the heresy depicted by Paul was this: *Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility [falsely motivated], and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh*" (Col. 2:23).

Of special interest for this study is the term "will-worship." It is from the compound Greek word ethelothreskeia, which has two roots, ethelo, "to will," and threskeia, which has to do with "religious worship."

First we focus upon the term ethelo, "to will." Some suggest that it conveys the impression of "to seize with the mind," to have resolve or determination regarding a purpose, with perhaps an impulsive inclination—as opposed to a well-calculated deliberation (cf. Thayer 1958, 285-286). In classical Greek ethelo was used as a prefix in various compounds which suggested the idea of voluntary action, as in a voluntary agent, or running voluntarily into danger (Vincent 1972, 912).

The writer interprets the meaning as "self-chosen worship."

Famed scholars of Greek papyri, Moulton and Milligan, suggested that the particular form used in the Colossian text was coined by Paul himself (1930, 181). There appears to be a general consensus among scholars as to the significance of the term. We cite the following testimony for those who do not have access to the many tools that address this issue.

The Geneva translation (1557) renders the word as "voluntarie worshipping," with the text using "voluntarie" in the sense of "arbitrary." The same version in the 1560 edition has this marginal note: "Such as men have chosen according to their own fantasy" (Hastings 1902, 923). In other words, it is a self-contrived worship. It is "worship originating in the human will as opposed to the Divine, arbitrary religious acts, worthless despite the difficulty of performance" (Orr 1939, 3085).

J. B. Lightfoot called it a "self-imposed, officious, supererogatory service" (204). F. F. Bruce declared that such stands in contrast with the spiritual service which true Christianity enjoins in harmony with the will of God, "good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:1-2), this "would-be-religion" is a "self-made cult" (1984, 128).

Even John Calvin called this worship one "which men choose for themselves at their own option, without authority from God" (1965, 202). J. H. Thayer depicted will-worship as: worship which one devises and prescribes for himself, contrary to the contents and nature of the faith which ought to be directed to Christ (168).

W. E. Vine characterized the ambitious action as "voluntarily adopted worship, whether unbidden or forbidden" (1952, 236). Vine was following the work of Cremer (1895, 733). In the words of another, it is "a form of worship which a man devises for himself" (Carson 1979, 79), a "self-made religion" (Mounce 2006, 1131). Everett Harrison described it as a worship "not prescribed by God but only by (the will of) man" (1971, 72).

In the work edited by Kittel, Schmidt said will-worship is a "cultus which is freely chosen, which is not commanded or forbidden" (Kittel 1965, 159). In other words, it may not be commanded (i.e., authorized), and is not explicitly forbidden, so that if used such is innovative. Lenski says it is "a self-chosen worship that is willed by the will of those who want it and not a type of worship that is willed by God" (1937, 144). The "devotion was not authorized or commanded by Jesus Christ but was stimulated by the dictates of an unregenerate heart" (Pinnock 1985, 195). >OVER>

The British scholar, Nigel Turner, suggests it is a form of religion “which fails to maintain the true object of worship and in place of Christ selects its own objects.” He calls it an “uncontrolled worship.” It is a worship of “free choice” rather than that of divine choice (1982, 493). The respected work of Balz and Schneider defines ethelothreskia as “self-chosen worship, superfluous worship” (1990, 381). Another scholarly source describes the error as “self-made religion, do-it-yourself religion, idiosyncratic religion” (Danker et al. 2000, 276; see also Hendriksen 1979, 132). Ellicott asserted the term clearly reflects “an arbitrary, self-imposed service” (1978, 181).

### Modern Innovators

Contrary to the censure of will-worship by an inspired writer, there is the modern sectarian harangue that “God has spelled out no formula for the worship of Himself” (Blakely 1987, 14). Or the absurd notion that “in no case did they [the apostles] give directives for corporate worship” (Blakely 1988, 37). Accordingly, an absurd variety of changes have been proposed to accommodate a new smorgasbord species of “Christian” worship, e.g., the many innovations of Catholicism, Protestantism, and certain apostates within the body of Christ.

For instance one writer asserts: It would NOT be a sin or unscriptural to have “meat and potatoes,” “pie and ice cream,” or any other healthful, helpful food “on the table” as an aid in worship (Winder n.d., 123).

Others have argued that the communion may be offered on any day of the week; the issue is immaterial (Hook 1984, 17). More recently (December, 2006) there were those brash and infamous sermons presented by Rick Atchley of the Richland Hills church (Richland Hills, TX) in which the announcement was made, and the case asserted, that the Lord’s supper and the use of instrumental music would be incorporated into a Saturday service for those who chose to worship in this fashion. Their philosophy is: Just elect your own format for the communion service and the congregational music! (For a refutation, see Miller 2007).

Similar innovators could be multiplied to the point of boredom. All such departures from biblical truth ignore the Savior’s mandate that worship must be in harmony with the sacred pattern of truth (Jn. 4:24; 17:17).

### Traits of Will-Worship

Underlying the apostasy of will-worship are several godless dispositions.

1. Will-worship is arrogant and autocratic. It reflects the self-inflated attitude of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who devised a worship format “of his own heart” through which he “made Israel to sin” (1 Kgs. 14:16).
2. Will-worship is a form of rebellion. It is reminiscent of those days of Israel’s judges when every man did what was right “in his own eyes” (Judg. 17:6).
3. Will-worship is enslaving; a sense of self-determination is corrupting, intoxicating, and ultimately destructive.

Albert Barnes, the Presbyterian scholar, commented upon the disposition of those who argue on behalf of will-worship.

A large part of the corruptions of religion have arisen from this plausible but deceitful argument. God knew best what things [were] most conducive to piety for his people to observe; and we are most safe when we adhere most closely to what he has appointed, and observe no more days and ordinances than he has directed (1957, 271).

Prepare for judgment, all you who labor under the illusion that you may adjust God’s pattern of worship to suit your carnal passions!

