

## **COLOSSIANS: THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST**

### **2:16-23 Warning Against Legalism**

*Over the past weeks we've seen Paul build this incredible case for the supremacy of Jesus Christ over all things created, both in heaven and on earth. Whatever the heresy was which found its way into the church in Colossae, Paul debunks it by building a strong case for Jesus as the ultimate authority and ultimate judge over His children. As we come to this particular section of the letter, we find it beginning with a "therefore...". Let's dive in and find out what the "therefore" is there for.*

**Read Colossians 2:16-23** (in a few different translations if you can)

1. In these verses, Paul is warning the Colossian folks about the fraudulent nature of legalism. What is legalism? As a group, come up with a good working definition.

2. So what's the danger of legalism? I mean, don't rules kind of keep people in check?

Read Matthew 23:23-27. How does Jesus feel about the legalism of the Pharisees, the most righteous (at least outwardly) of all the Jews?

3. Re-read verses 18-19 from the New Living Translation below, which helps us really grasp what Paul is saying:

*“Don’t let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels, saying they have had visions about these things. Their sinful minds have made them proud, and they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For He holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it.”*  
(NLT)

According to what Paul says here, why should you resist those who try to push their own ideas of self-righteousness on you?

During his sermon on these verses, Pastor Dan referred to this as a warning against idolatry (the worship of angels being a good example). He also defined sin (idolatry) as making good things the ultimate things. Talk through what idolatry in our day looks like...and wrestle with the question: Am I guilty of it, too?

4. Now re-read verses 20-23 below (taken from the New Living Translation as well):

*You have died with Christ, and He has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as, “Don’t handle! Don’t taste! Don’t touch!”? Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them. These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person’s evil desires.* (NLT)

What is the fallacy about living a life steeped in legalism?

Look up Romans 8:1-4. According to these verses and verse 20 above, from what have we been set free? How free are we? Based on what?

***Close this study with a prayer of thanksgiving for the grace and mercy we have through Jesus Christ.***