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**“Limited by Legalism”
(Colossians 2: 16-23)**

Specific Legalisms in the “Colossian Heresy”

The goal of feeling “right with God”

1.--Diet Restrictions (2:16)

2.--Obsessive observation of religious days of obligations (2:16)

Specific Legalisms in the “Colossian Heresy”

The goal of having a mystical vision

3.--Aestheticism (2:18)

4.--Angel Worship (2:18)

Problems with the Colossian Legalisms

- The visions are not tethered by reason or God's Word (2:18)
- Focused on the "shadows" (methods) and not the "substance" (Christ) (2:17)
- Ineffective to curb human vices ("sarx") (2:23)
- Used to manipulate others via shame (2:16)

Problems with legalisms in general

- A tendency to puff ourselves up (2:18)
- An “us vs. them” mentality (2:18 “let no one disqualify you”)
- Lack of joy and spying on your neighbor
- “acedia”: a “restlessness” in our souls
- An inner emptiness without a personal relationship with God

“Legalism exists when people attempt to secure righteousness in God’s sight by good works. Legalists believe that they can earn or merit God’s approval by performing the requirements of the law.” A legalist believes that their good works and obedience to God affects their salvation. Legalism focuses on God’s laws more than relationship with God. It keeps external laws without a truly submitted heart. And legalism adds human rules to divine laws and treats them as divine.

Christianity.com

Some Modern Day Legalisms

- Quid pro quo **gift buying** (“cultural expectations”)
- Revenge** as justice (“moral delusions”)
- Trending **bigger and more expensive** (“mystical visions”)

- Is our “consumer culture” a form of “angel worship”?

Despite the problems with legalisms, why do we continue to embrace them?

- Gives us “a track to run on” which reduces stress
- Gives us a false sense of being “right with God”

A False Sense of Being Right with God

In Luke 18:9-14, Jesus tells a story about a Pharisee and a tax collector praying in a temple that illustrates both a legalist's faults and the right attitude of faith.

The Alternative: Freedom in Christ

What to avoid:

--Avoid making rules just to show your authority

--Don't allow others who have their own "agenda" shame you into doing what they want you to do. Instead, stay focused on Jesus and His directions for you

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

(Ephesians 2:10 NIV)

The Alternative: Freedom in Christ

What to do:

- Accept Jesus as Lord and Savior of your life
 - Focus on the “substance” not the “shadows” (2:17)

- Follow God’s directions for your life:
 - The Holy Spirit “lays it on your heart”
 - Consistent with Scripture
 - Surround yourself with godly counselors to confirm your calling
 - Make haste slowly
 - Pray continually

The Benefits of Following the Rules/Laws

- Rules exist for our good:
 - Keeps us from going astray (“sarx”)
 - A “double hedge” from temptations
 - Helps society run more smoothly
 - Don’t waste time and money dealing with penalties

The Limitations of the Rules/Laws

But . . .

--Rules/laws cannot make us righteous: they can only reveal when we are not

--Being “justified” by the blood of Jesus as your Savior and Lord DOES declare you righteous (by being joined to Christ’s righteousness)

“The Center Holds”:

Stay rooted in Jesus to grow stronger in the Lord!

The Closing Song

The Lord blesses us with the gift of song!

Announcements

--A short Trustees' & Elders' Meeting after the service

--Prayer request: one or two more helpers with the Power Point presentations

Benediction

*The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.*

Numbers 6:24-26