



## Pilgrim Home Baptist Church

NT 260 2022 • CHRIST IS ENOUGH • COLOSSIANS 2:16-23 • 7/10/2022

### MAIN POINT

Christ did everything necessary for you to enter into a relationship with God, and Christ provided everything necessary to sustain your relationship with God.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Are you more appreciative of things that are given to you or things that you worked for?**

**How does the above question apply to the Christian life? Why do you think so many Christians try to work to sustain their salvation?**

“Salvation is through Christ alone.” Every Christian would agree with that statement. We are accepted by faith before the Father by virtue of Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf. What fewer Christians seem to have grasped is that just as we are saved through Christ, we are sustained by Christ. We move from grace-based salvation to works-based sanctification (trying to grow in our relationship with God by good works). In these verses Paul is writing to a group of believers who had lost their perspective in this area, and he urges them to rely on Christ to sustain them.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ COLOSSIANS 2:16-19.

In these three verses, Paul focused his attention on the implications of his teaching for Christian living. Here Paul discussed the Colossians’ relationship to the law (2:16-17) and to the

supernatural powers (2:18-19) which were so much a part of the false teaching. The tone changes in these verses. Two commands predominate (vv. 16, 18). They form the two reference points for discussion. The first section concerns asceticism (the practice of extreme self denial 2:16-17); the other, angel-worship (2:18-19).

**What was Paul referring to when he mentioned festivals and new moons?**

**How did these function in the life of an observant Jew? What role, if any, do they have in the life of a Christian?**

**In what ways are these a shadow of the things to come? What do these practices ultimately point to?**

**Read Galatians 5:1. How was following these false teachers causing the Colossians to submit to a yoke of slavery? Are we guilty of doing the same thing today?**

Just as we no longer need circumcision to enter a relationship with God, we no longer need the law to sustain our relationship with God. Christ has accomplished all that is necessary for us to have and continue in a relationship with God. Paul strongly discouraged the Colossian Christians to come under these regulations of the false teachers. Such things may appear spiritual, but spiritual life is a matter of relationship with Christ and the heart's commitment to Him. To consider these matters as necessary to the Christian life would undermine the work of Jesus. These things are a shadow in that they point forward to their fulfillment in Jesus.

**What did Paul mean when he wrote "let no one disqualify you"?**

**The false teachers wanted the Colossians to follow their version of the law. How does thinking we can please God by keeping the law puff us up?**

**What type of language does Paul use in verse 19? What is it evocative of? How is this a helpful verse for understanding spiritual growth?**

The phrase "let no one disqualify you" is a Greek term meaning "act as umpire against you." It could mean "let no one pass critical judgment against you," or it could mean "let no one deprive you of spiritual reward" because you have become distracted by a quest to follow the law or have spiritual experiences. Paul does not want Christians to be robbed of assurance and made to feel unspiritual, unfaithful, and in need of something extra—something more and higher than the cross. This quest for super-spiritual experience, like the legalism of the previous verses, fosters pride not Christlikeness. Christ is central. Not rules. Not experiences, but Christ.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ COLOSSIANS 2:20-23.

**Why do we have a tendency to keep a scorecard in the Christian life? How do these things cause us to submit to rules rather than Christ?**

**According to verse 22, where do these rules originate from? How do we distinguish human teaching from godly wisdom? How do we develop spiritual discernment?**

**How do legalistic rules intended to stop our sinful nature actually engage our sinful nature? Could you think of an example?**

It is sin to rely on anything but Christ for your sanctification. Paul tells the Colossians that relying on legalistic rules puffs us up and actually causes us to indulge the flesh rather than crucify it. Our salvation was earned by works, but not our works. Christ worked on our behalf to fulfill the righteous requirement of the law. We can add nothing to Christ's work. To try to add to Christ's work is to take away from it and indulge ourselves.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Legalism is the belief that we can earn God's acceptance or love by doing certain things or keeping certain rules. How is this toxic to the Christian life? What is the antidote to legalism?**

**We learned on Sunday, "if it doesn't save you, it can't sustain you." In what areas of your life are you most tempted to try to "earn" your sanctification through works?**

**When is a time we should limit our freedom as Christians? When should we embrace our freedoms? Consult Acts 16 or 1 Corinthians 9:20.**

**Read John 15:5. How do we sustain our faith? What does it mean to abide in Christ? What does abiding in Christ look like in the life of a Christian?**

## PRAYER

Thank Jesus for securing and sustaining our salvation. Pray that you would honor Christ's sacrifice by relying on His work instead of your own. Acknowledge that nothing we do could ever add to the finished work of Christ and pray that you would continue to turn to Christ for your spiritual growth.

## COMMENTARY

| COLOSSIANS 2:16-23.

2:16. Because God has completely reconciled believers to Himself, they are free from condemnation and from practicing customs required for God's covenant people in the past (Rm 8:1). Against this, the Colossian believers were apparently pressured by some in the church to observe Jewish dietary laws and holy days.

2:17. Paul used the words shadow and substance to contrast the incomplete nature of these former obligations with the fullness brought about by Christ. God instituted the dietary laws and holy days as a means to foreshadow the coming reconciliation in the Messiah. The actual contrast comes from Jewish eschatology ( what was to come) rather than a Platonic dualism (material vs. immaterial). This is another way of saying that He is the fulfillment of the law (Rm 10:4; Heb 10:1).

2:18. The word disqualify comes from the athletic arena where a referee determined that an athlete had violated the rules and was barred from further competition. This threat of disqualification relates to practicing spiritual disciplines imposed by the false teachers. Ascetic practices translates the word "humility," but in the context of the false teaching it most likely refers to harsh treatment of the body (i.e., self-humiliation). The worship of angels may be understood as worship improperly rendered to angels, or as worship of God performed by angels. "Ascetic practices" and "worship of angels" are joined, suggesting that through asceticism the participants believed themselves to be partaking in angelic worship. This worship was conducted through entrance into the visionary realm. Paul, however, identified these visions as egotistical delusions of a carnal mind.

2:19. Paul's point is that these false teachers had no real authority over the Colossian church.

2:20. Since believers have died with Christ (v. 11) to the elemental forces of this world, they are liberated from worldly rules. The word regulations means literally "obligation" (v. 14).

2:21. Paul quoted some of the purity and dietary laws imposed by the false teachers, who were judging and disqualifying believers.

2:22. These dietary regulations were merely physical and temporal because once food is consumed it is destroyed. Although the false teachers believed that their obligations promoted spirituality, Paul identified these regulations as human commands and doctrines (alluding to Isa 29:13).

2:23. Paul conceded that these regulations had a reputation of wisdom in that they appeared to provide enlightened spiritual understanding (1:9), but in reality these practices offered no help in dealing with self-indulgence. The term for "self-indulgence" or gratification may play on the word

“fullness.” This false philosophy promised a fullness of wisdom through severe asceticism, but it failed to achieve its intended goal.