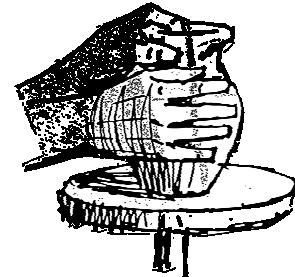


His Workmanship: Westside

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.”
—Ephesians 2:10



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Isaiah 64:8

Pulling the Weeds of Legalism, Colossians 2:16-23, part 2,

Last week we learned that legalism can be rooted out by focusing on two truths of Col 2:9-23: Remember our legal standing, Col 2:9-15, and Resist the lures of legalism, Col 2:16-23.

1. Remember Our Legal Standing.

The best defense against a performance-based faith is to remember our legal standing before God.

A. We are complete, Col 2:9-10. *“You are complete in Him, Who is the head of all principality and power,”* Col 2:9. If you have trusted Christ for forgiveness of sins and been baptized into Him, then there is nothing lacking in your relationship with God. There’s not some extra blessing you need. You have everything you need in Christ; you do not need more than what you already have!

B. We are alive, vs. 11-13. *“In Him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by men’s hands, but with the circumcision done by Christ, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through faith in the power of God, Who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ.”* When we were baptized, our old identity (self) died with Christ. That’s our spiritual circumcision. When we come up out of the water in baptism, we show

that just as Christ was raised from the dead, so, too, we will be raised to a new life. Remembering that our old sinful self is dead and buried with Christ gives us a powerful motive to resist sin. We can keep sinful desires from controlling us by treating them as if they are dead. Paul provided a practical game plan to use in order to live with the freedom that Christ has promised us: *“In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer your body parts to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer your body parts to Him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace,”* Rm 6:11-14.

C. Our sins are forgiven, Col 2:13-14. In Christ, we’re not only complete and alive, but our sins have been taken away: *“He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross.”* Notice that Jesus forgave all our sins. That means every single one, even those that you have a hard time forgiving yourself for. The *“written code”* is the law of Moses. Jesus not only

took our sins to the cross, He also took the law and nailed it there, forever out of the way. The law was against us and stood opposed to us, because all it could ever do was point out our sinfulness. Paul said that he *“would not have known what sin was except through the law,”* Rm 7:7. The written code was like a handwritten ledger (account book) of our trespasses against the law. In Bible times, records were often kept on parchment, and the writing could be washed off. Paul said that our sins have been wiped away, erased. Our rap sheet has been canceled.

D. We have victory, v. 15. We have completeness in Christ, we have new life, and our sins have been forgiven—and our legal standing involves one more thing: we have victory: *“And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”* The word for *“disarmed”* is literally *“stripped,”* as in stripping a defeated enemy of armor on the battlefield. The powers and authorities of this evil world stripped Christ of His clothing and popularity, made a public spectacle of Him on the cross, and thought they had triumphed over Him by putting Him to death. Little did they know that the victory actually belongs to Jesus. Evil no longer has any power
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"But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?" —Galatians 4:9 from p. 1

over us because Christ has stripped Satan's weapons from him. The devil is disarmed. The only power he has is what we give him when we allow him to deceive us and create fear in our lives.

The cultural background to this verse is rich with meaning. After winning a war, the Romans would bind their vanquished foes together by the hands and march them single file back to Rome where they would have a huge parade. Thousands of Romans would line the streets to watch this "public spectacle." At the front would be the conquering general. Following him would be those soldiers who had acted heroically in battle. The rest of the army would follow. And then at the rear of the procession would be all those who had been conquered. As they would march past the crowds, the people would jeer at them, cast insults, and even throw things. Woe to a prisoner of war at these public spectacles!

Paul described a public triumph march in 2 Cor 2:14-16. The people at Corinth were sufficiently acquainted with the nature of a triumph procession, one having occurred in the city when all Achaia had been defeated in about 200 B.C. A triumph was not granted by the senate unless the general had gained a significant and decisive victory. The general was usually clad in a rich purple robe, interwoven with figures of gold, setting forth the grandeur of his achievements; his boots were beset with pearls, and he wore a crown, which at first was of laurel, but was afterwards of pure gold. In one hand he had a branch of laurel, the emblem of victory; and in the other, his shattered spear. He was carried in a magnificent chariot, adorned with ivory and plates of gold, and usually drawn by two white horses. (Other animals were also used: when Pompey triumphed over Africa, his chariot was drawn by

elephants; that of Mark Antony, by lions; that of Heliogabalus, by tigers; and that of Aurelius, by deer.) His children either sat at his feet in the chariot or rode on the chariot horses. Musicians led the procession and played triumphal pieces in praise of the general; these were followed by young men, who led the sacrificial animals adorned with ribbons and garlands. Next followed carts loaded with the spoils taken from the enemy, with their horses and chariots. These were followed by the kings, princes, or generals taken in the war, in chains. Then came the triumphal chariot, with the people strewing flowers and shouting, "Io, triumphe!" The triumphal chariot was followed by the senate or town officials; and the procession closed with the priests and their attendants. They then passed through the triumphal arch, where the prisoners of war were slain. During this time all the temples were opened, and every altar smoked with offerings and incense. The city would be filled with various odors—perfumes, incense, burning sacrifices, burning bodies.

Paul likened this aroma to the name and salvation of Jesus, as ointment poured out, a sweet savor diffused in every place. To some, the gospel is a savor of death unto death. They reject it to their ruin. To others, the gospel is a savor of life unto life: as it made us alive at first when we were dead in trespasses and sins, so it makes us more fully alive and will end in eternal life. Paul had a triumph (but of a widely different kind) over Corinth; his triumph was in Christ, and to Christ he gave all the glory. His sacrifice was of thanksgiving to his Lord; the incense offered caused the savor of the knowledge of Christ to be wafted in every place. As the smoke of the victims and incense offered on such an occasion would fill

the whole city with their perfume, so the odor of the name and doctrine of Christ filled the whole of Corinth and its regions; and the apostles appeared as triumphing in and through Christ, over devils, idols, superstition, ignorance, and vice, wherever they came. A believer's triumphs are all in Christ. To Him be the praise and glory of all; the success of the gospel is a good reason for a Christian's joy and rejoicing.

In the cross Jesus turned His captors into captives, displaying them in His victory celebration. The Colossians had participated in that victory, and so have we. We don't have to follow false teachers, and we don't have to succumb to sin or fear Satan. Jesus is the victor, and He has triumphed at the cross. "Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor 15:54-57.

2. Resist the Lures of Legalism. The best way to pull the weeds of legalism is to remember our legal position before God: we are complete, alive, forgiven, and victorious. But we must also resist the lures of legalism. "I shall ask you one simple question: Did you receive the Spirit of God by trying to keep the law or by believing the message of the gospel? Surely you can't be so idiotic as to think that a man begins his spiritual life in the Spirit and then completes it by reverting to outward observances!" Gal 3:2-3 [Philips]. We must be vigilant or we'll lean toward legalism on a daily basis. Paul gave us three warnings so that we can avoid being idiotic or foolish.

A. **Refuse to judge by externals,** Col 2:16-17. "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration, or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the
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Psalm 133:1

God makes my heart clean in 2015 “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” —Ps 51:10

Weeds of Legalism, from p. 2
reality, however, is found in Christ.” Whenever we see the word “therefore,” we should always ask what it’s there for. Paul was drawing a conclusion based upon what he had just written previously. Since Jesus has done what is necessary for our salvation (because He made us complete, alive, forgiven, and victorious), we shouldn’t let other people evaluate our spiritual life by their external standards. Food restrictions, special diets, observance of ceremonies and holy days rose out of specific practices in the Old Testament. Religious festivals were annual, New Moon celebrations were monthly, and the Sabbath was weekly. But because Christ has come, special diets and obligatory days are no longer necessary, because every Old Testament feast looked forward to Christ—and because He fulfilled them. They were just shadows of the reality that is fulfilled in Jesus. “The law was only a shadow of the good things to come, and not the exact image of those things—not the realities themselves,” Heb 10:1.

It is relatively easy to judge by externals. If there’s something you’re not supposed to eat and you avoid it, then everything’s kosher (no pun intended). If you attend when you’re supposed to attend, then you must be doing OK. If you kneel when you pray, then you must be close to God. We must be alert to make sure we’re not evaluating what we’re doing (or what others are doing) according to external standards. B. Reject false authority, vs. 18-19. “Do not let anyone who delights in false humility

Discipleship Here At Home

and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head, from Whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.” The word “disqualify” means “to declare unworthy of a prize.” It’s the idea of an umpire who is calling you out because you have not obeyed the rules. But the Greek word here, *katababeuo*, is even stronger—it means “cheat, defraud”; literally *brabeuo*—rule, or award a prize + *kata*—against, or “rule against.” Other translations render it “beguile,” “deceive,” “rob,” “take [reward] from,” “fraudulently deprive.” Paul described these people in four ways:

- a. They have a false humility. They present themselves as humble and holy, but in reality they are filled with spiritual pride and superiority. Zeph 3:11; Lk 13:15.
- b. They worship angels. Their focus is on other spiritual beings rather than on Christ. See Heb 1-2, esp. 1:4-6.
- c. They have seen visions (unseen things). They love to intrude into things occult or things where they have no business. See Deut 29:29; Job 11:7.
- d. They are puffed up with idle notions. Their fleshly, sensuous experiences give them big heads but not burning hearts. They are fascinated with “religious mysticism.” See Jer 29:8; Ezek 13:3.

As a result, because of their subjective bias and experiential expressions, they had actually become disconnected from the Head. They were severed from any hope of spiritual vitality because they were not getting their orders from Christ. We must make sure we are not seeking experiences that do not correlate with Christ’s reality. Our focus is to be on Jesus.

C. Repudiate religious rules, vs. 20-23. Finally, if we want to pull the weeds of legalism, we must also repudiate men’s
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PRAY FOR healing, protection, help

- **Tracy Corray**—broken bone in foot; cast for another week, then boot 3 weeks
- **Judy Sartin**—hairline fracture in left foot; ortho shoe
- **Jonathan Hadders**—fractured rib, acute pain
- **Judy Strand**—broken arm, post-surgery pain
- **Sheryle McNeill**—pinched nerve
- **Ernesto Gonzalez’s father Fidencio**—stage IV lymphoma, began chemo last week
- **Linda Szymanski’s mother**, age 88—broke ankle in fall; rehab post surgery
- **Letha Fink’s brother Kenneth Morrison** of GA—liver disease, recent diagnosis of neuro-muscular disease
- **Charos’ neighbor Evelyn Velasquez**—cancer
- **Kaylee Chavez**—age 10, cancer, has returned home (temp housing in Memphis until Nov)
- **Bill Dennis**—home recovery following rehab
- **Sandra Perry**—diabetes complications; back on oxygen; port to be inserted soon for dialysis
- **Larry Campbell’s FL partner Terry Hargadine’s wife Michelle**—cancer
- **Kayla Knighten, Christine Adams’s daughter**, needs our prayers; **Judy Strand** requests prayer for her son **Joe**; pray **Ed’s son Rodney Schulz** and Sheryle’s daughter **Tiffany** receive the gospel
- **Sylvia Chapman, Brett’s grandmother**—third stage pancreatic cancer; Brett’s grandmother **Sue**, and Aunt **Bonnie Doss**—cancer returned
- **Brittany Tope’s mother**—breast cancer, improving; grandmother—on dialysis

CHRONIC CONDITIONS

- Logan Corray**; **Addison Tope**; **Christian Harrod**; **Rocco Jr.**; **Pat Wilkes**—asthma
- Autumn Hadders**—epilepsy; celiac disease
- Kirk Johnson**—MS
- Menards**—**Lloyd** diabetes, Alzheimers; **Virginia**, blindness from macular degeneration
- Cheryl Reames**—fibromyalgia; diverticulitis
- Judy Sartin**—rotator cuff injury; spinal stenosis
- Judy and Mike Strand**—hepatitis trtment
- Lynda Szymanski**—COPD, lung weakness

Welcome Please welcome **Delmar Hice**, Pat Campbell’s father, who will be living with the Campbells and working as part of this church.

Travel **Kory Tope** is preaching for the Poudre Valley church this morning. **Sarah McMurray** is in LA, then IL for work. The **Reameses** are in Loveland through 9/9. **Kenny** and **Wendy Boyd** will be out of town 9/11-13. **Ed Schulz** is in IL through 9/15. **Mina Gonzalez** is traveling with her mother in Japan until 9/14. The **Wilkeses** are visiting family in NC and SC to 9/24. **Monica** and **Brandon Thompson** return from IL Mon. **Larry Campbell** is in FL for work till 9/11.

Moving **Terry Smith** will move to SC next week.

Pull the Weeds of Legalism, from p. 3

religious regulations. "Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: 'Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!?' These all perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility, and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence." The false teachers focused on personal denial as the way to curb their appetites. This seems good on the surface, because we agree that we all need discipline in our lives. But they were teaching that these disciplines were necessary for fellowship with God.

According to the history of the Roman church, Anthony, the founder of monasticism, never changed his vest or washed his feet. He was outdone, however, by Simon Stylites, who spent the last 36 years of his life on top of a fifty-foot pillar. He mistakenly thought that if he withdrew from the world then he would be truly spiritual. Today in Mexico some people climb stairs on their bloody knees in order to pay homage to the Virgin of Guadalupe. In other countries, men carry crosses and are nailed to them at Easter. Around the world, people fast during Lent.

Paul told us that we don't belong to the world anymore. We don't get to heaven by following a list of do's and don'ts. We cannot earn God's favor. Charles Spurgeon said, "I have found, in my own spiritual life, that the more rules I lay down for myself, the more sins I commit," Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching and Preachers, p. 235. Paul put it this way: "ordinances ... are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh," Col 2:23.

Regulations, though they may look and sound good, "lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence." Rules don't abolish the appetite because they [perversely and ironically] feed the flesh. Why is that? Because no matter how hard we work, we can't force sin out of our lives through devotion to man-made dictates. We need God's power working within us. It's His grace, not a regimen of rules and activities, that works real life change. Once grace is understood and embraced, it will lead to commitment. But required commitment and rule-keeping always leads to legalism. Instead, grace is what teaches us to deny ungodliness, lust, and worldliness. Grace teaches us to how to live in this present world. "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled [soberly], upright, and godly lives in this present age," Tit 2:11-12.

So, then, how is your life in Christ? Is it focused on yourself or on Christ? Are you a list-keeper or a grace-giver? Is your faith anchored to personal experiences or on the Word of God? Has your response to Christ set you free or tied you up? Living in Christ is no longer focused on me, myself, what I do, or what I don't do. It is focused on Christ. Living in Christ is what has been done for me, a glad response to Christ's life. It's not spelled D-O, but rather D-O-N-E.

Rules are like religious training wheels that keep us from tipping over. But they're also confining because they keep us from breaking free. Do we construct a cage for those who don't think the same way we do? Be careful, because we may end up in bondage ourselves.

When Jesus died on the cross, He said, "It is finished," Jn 19:30. The price has been paid. The debt has been erased. We are complete in Christ. We are alive. Our sins are forgiven. And we have the victory!



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Assembly Schedule

Sunday

Bible classes	9:00 am
Morning assembly	10:00 am
Afternoon assembly	1:30 pm

Wednesday

Bible classes	7:30 pm
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Sunday morning

- **adult Bible class**, "The Gospel According to John," Jonathan Hadders

- **Sermon**, "Liberty in Christ (part 3)," Jim Reingrover

<p>Gospel meeting—Smoky Hill Sept 11-13 Stephen Garrett preaching: Fri, 7:30 pm, "Eyes on Jesus" Sat, 5:30 pm, "Who's Your Zacchaeus?" Sun, 5:30 pm, singing</p>
