

Copyright © Two Journeys Ministry

Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

www.twojourneys.org

Please use in accordance with the copyright policy found at twojourneys.org

Overcoming Spiritual Intimidation, Part 2

Colossians 2:8-23

C.J. Mahaney: “Legalism is seeking to achieve forgiveness from God and acceptance by God through obedience to God.” [*The Cross-Centered Life*, p. 25]

Watched a variety show in which there was a plate spinner... he used long, very flexible rods and ceramic plates; he would begin by spinning one plate on a rod, then he'd add another, then another, then another... soon this amazing man was surrounded by a forest of spinning plates; the ones he'd first started spinning would begin to wobble and almost fall off... and he'd have to run around like a maniac trying to keep them all going while continuing to add more and more spinning plates

That is the picture of a legalistic lifestyle... seeing more and more of the Christian duties in the Bible, you begin to start adding more and more spinning plates to your Christian life

- A daily quiet time
- A long prayer time
- A concern for evangelism and missions
- Regular church attendance
- A ministry a church
- A healthy family life
- Faithfulness as an employee
- Scripture memorization
- Care for the poor and needy

Even worse is to be told by some pastor or teacher that you **MUST** do such and such or you're not really a Christian... soon you are trying to finish your Christian life through rule-keeping and personal effort

That lifestyle BULLIES you from all joy in the Christian life... Paul seeks to liberate us from that here

I. Complete in Christ

- A. Review: The Supremacy of Christ
- B. Christ is Complete, We Are Complete in Him
- C. Christ Head Over Every Power and Authority
- D. Gospel Truths Flow from This: How Full Are We in Christ?
 - 1. We are FULLY CIRCUMCISED (Spiritually)
 - 2. We are FULLY ALIVE
 - 3. We are FULLY FORGIVEN
 - 4. We are FULLY FREE from the Law
 - 5. We are FULLY TRIUMPHANT over Satan

II. Satan's Intimidating Voice: "You Are Incomplete!"

- A. Satan the Bully: Intimidates Us
 - 1. These special "religious people" come along and show us up
 - 2. Arrogantly they disdain our "simple faith" our "inadequate religion"
 - 3. Arrogantly they look down on our freedom and fullness in Christ and attack it
 - 4. Soon we can be intimidated into abandoning our secure position in Christ
- B. Satan Hates our Rich Fullness in Christ
- C. He Tries to Show Us Incomplete
 - 1. Satan's goal is to make us feel inadequate in Christ
 - 2. Then we will need to ADD something to Christ
 - a. Add philosophy... human wisdom and insights

- b. Add legalism... human religious works
 - c. Add mysticism... human religious experiences
 - d. Add asceticism... human religious self-denial
3. Add them all... and you LOSE Christ, lose assurance, lose joy, lose power

III. The Intimidation of Philosophy

Colossians 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

A. Philosophy Defined

1. Literally “love of knowledge”
2. Generally, human effort to craft meaning from the universe
 - a. Ultimate questions of being
 - b. Who am I?
 - c. Why am I here?
 - d. What is the meaning of life?
 - e. What will happen to me when I die?
 - f. What is right, what is wrong, and why should I do the right and avoid the wrong?

B. Philosophy’s Long, Sordid History

C. Philosophy’s Great Danger

1. Philosophy starts with man, man’s knowledge, man’s perspectives, man’s issues
2. Philosophy will eventually contradict God’s wisdom

D. Philosophy Defeated in Christ

IV. The Intimidation of Legalism

Colossians 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.¹⁷

These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

A. Legalism Defined

1. Seeking to pay for sin and to be made righteous by religious acts and outward obedience to the Law

C.J. Mahaney: "Legalism is seeking to achieve forgiveness from God and acceptance by God through obedience to God." [*The Cross-Centered Life*, p. 25]

Any attempt to rely on self-effort to either attain or maintain our justification before God

"After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" Gal.3:3.

John Piper's Two Definitions:

"First, legalism means treating biblical standards of conduct as regulations to be kept by our own power in order to earn God's favor. In other words legalism will be present wherever a person is trying to be ethical in his own strength, that is, without relying on the merciful help of God in Christ. Simply put, moral behavior that is not from faith is legalism.

The second meaning of legalism is this: the erecting of specific requirements of conduct beyond the teaching of Scripture and making adherence to them the means by which a person is qualified for full participation in the local family of God, the church. This is where unbiblical exclusivism arises."

Elements of Legalism:

1. Using the Mosaic covenant as though it is the covenant between you and God.
2. Attempting to be justified by one's own works.
3. Attempting to be sanctified by one's own works
4. Suggesting that our worth or worthlessness, our self-esteem and self-satisfaction or lack thereof, rest on our own works.
5. Any attempt to please God judicially, or any supposition that our sin as believers has resulted in his judicial displeasure. [Any post-salvation attempt to maintain our judicial standing before God through good works, covenant faithfulness, merit etc..]
6. Teaching that we conform ourselves to our judicial standing in Christ (righteous and perfect) by our own works.
7. Attempting to attain godliness by a systematic change of behavior
8. Obedience that does not spring from a renewed heart

1. As of an unbeliever who has no renewed heart
2. As of a believer who has a renewed heart but whose righteous behavior does not spring from it.
9. Any supposition that externally righteous acts have any value on their own, even as conduct that prepares the way for either 1. A renewed heart (preparationism as regards justification), 2. The softening or further renewing of an already renewed heart (preparationism as regards sanctification. Note Romans 12:2-Transformation occurs through the renewing of the mind), or 3. Any other work of the Spirit.
10. Suggesting that faith is irrelevant in the accomplishment of some (or all) good works.
11. Trying to be justified by works that are created and inspired by the Holy Spirit. 12. Attempting to gain assurance of salvation solely or primarily on the basis of the sign of outward works
2. Jewish legalism = Law of Moses... beginning with circumcision, followed up by a full submission to the entire Jewish way of life
 - a. Dietary regulations... not eating pork, not eating meat sacrificed to idols, not eating anything forbidden in the Law of Moses
 - b. Religious festivals: three times a year the Jews were required to appear in Jerusalem; New Moon celebrations also required
 - c. Sabbath: long history of controversy in the Christian church, especially since it is the only one of the Ten Commandments not repeated in the New Covenant... but this one verse (along with Romans 14) frees Christians from Sabbatarian legalism

B. Legalism's Long Sordid History

1. From the moment Cain sought to offer God an offering He had not commanded, we have tried to make up our own religion and save ourselves by it
2. Jews constantly misunderstood the Law of Moses, thinking they could pay for sin by obedience
3. A constant theme in human history... O how we long to save ourselves by our own good deeds
4. New Testament: the Judaizers plagued Paul's footsteps from town to town
 - a. Jerusalem council on circumcision arranged to combat this teaching

Acts 15:1 Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved."

b. Peter's stirring speech

Acts 15:7-11 Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. ⁸ God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? ¹¹ No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

c. Council's landmark decision: Gentile converts were NOT required to keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved

d. Paul: Whole book of Galatians written to combat this error: that simple faith in Christ's death on the cross and His resurrection was insufficient to save us from sin

Galatians 3:10-14 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." ¹¹ Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." ¹² The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." ¹⁴ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

5. Roman Catholic legalism developed over centuries as a works religion came to replace the grace Christ bought us

a. Justification by faith alone was forcefully DENIED!!

b. The keeping of the sacramental system, with all the traditions of the church, was seen to be essential to the Christian life

c. Without water baptism by an ordained priest of the Roman Catholic church, there was no salvation

6. The Reformation freed us from this... but still legalism remains a powerful force

7. Legalistic groups flourished among the Protestants as well as Catholics after the Reformation

- a. Some groups practice extreme separation from the world, and will discipline any of their members who do not conform to those standards... the Amish practice shunning of their members for worldliness based on traditional rules and regulations arbitrated by their elders
- b. Other groups designating themselves fundamentalist are open to the charge of legalism by disciplining members based on dress or other matters of what they call worldliness
- c. One such group would not do any mission work with us because we are a Southern Baptist church, and in their view they reject all SBC churches because we don't practice this kind of strict separation from the world

C. Legalism's Great Danger

- 1. Legalists are rarely satisfied with simply their own legalism... usually they want you to follow their lead... they want to JUDGE you

Vs. 16 "Don't let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink..."

There is the intimidation factor... it causes you to turn away from pleasing God to pleasing a human audience

- 2. Two-fold danger: either arrogance or despair
 - a. Arrogance if you think your obedience to the Law is GOOD ENOUGH to save you
 - b. Despair if you think your obedience is NOT GOOD ENOUGH
 - c. Either way, you're looking to yourself rather than to Christ... Christ is stripped of His glory
- 3. "Don't let anyone judge you..." means don't be intimidated
 - a. Obviously, we have NO CONTROL over whether or not someone judges us
 - b. BUT what Paul is really saying is
 - i) Don't take their judgmentalism to heart
 - ii) AND don't let the legalists take control of the church so that people are excluded based on these issues

D. Legalism Defeated in Christ

Vs. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

1. Christ's blood, shed on the cross, is the only way to wash away our sins
2. Christ's righteousness, imputed to us by simple faith is the only way to stand blameless before God's holy eyes on judgment day
3. The ceremonial laws (like the sacrificial system, the eating laws, the temple worship, the annual pilgrimage, and (I believe) the Sabbath, were meant to point us to Christ... they were shadow, and now that they have been fulfilled in the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, their time of binding our behavior is over

Hebrews 8:5 [Levitical priests] serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven.

Hebrews 10:1 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming-- not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.

The REALITY has always been heavenly... the reality is Christ!!

Having come into the New Covenant, the time for the shadow is over

4. Knowing this frees us from the whips of a wounded conscience and from the faithless judgmentalism of legalists

1 Corinthians 4:3-4 I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. ⁴ My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.

Illus. I love the boldness of Martin Luther, who courageously freed himself from legalism in every way... including marrying a former nun just to annoy the Pope!

V. The Difficult Case of the Sabbath

A. The specific issues Paul lists: eating regulations and the Sabbath

1. "What you eat or drink" refers Jewish dietary regulations AND/OR meat sacrificed to idols

Mark 7:19 Jesus declared all foods "clean."

- a. Other passages: Paul goes into much more detail on the eating of ceremonially unclean foods or the eating of meat sacrificed to idols

1 Corinthians 8: idols cannot contaminate food, and food cannot contaminate our souls; you are free to eat anything you want

BUT don't use your freedom so openly that you hurt a weaker brother or sister

- b. “drink” perhaps is referring to drinking of wine
 - i) Again, a matter of Christian freedom...
 - ii) BUT there are significant warnings both personally (the danger of drunkenness) and corporately (the danger of causing other people to be offended or to stumble)

2. Much more difficult: the case of the Sabbath

Colossians 2:16 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.

- a. Paul clearly mentions the issue of the Sabbath in conjunction with other Jewish calendar days based on the Mosaic covenant
- b. BUT many Christians have struggled over this issue of the Christian observance of the Sabbath

Eric Liddell, “Chariot’s of Fire”: refused to run on Sunday, because he believed that the Ten Commandment prohibition against working on the Sabbath was transferred to Sundays for Christians

The Puritans in 17th century England fought against the “Book of Sports,” a declaration issued by King James I in 1617; it listed sports that were permissible on Sundays; the Puritans were, for the most part, strict sabbatarians, restricting all their activities on Sundays to religious observances and acts of mercy

- c. Sabbatarians tend to argue that Sabbath observance originated at creation with God’s resting on the seventh day, and was a lasting ordinance for the human race
- d. They also point to the lasting nature of the Ten Commandments, nine of which are indisputably still binding on Christians in the New Covenant

3. How to resolve this issue:

B. The Fourth of Ten Commandments

1. What the Commandment Says

Exodus 20:8-11 “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

2. The “First Table of the Law”: On Right Worship of God

Commandment #1: The Object of Worship—the only true God

Commandment #2: The Mode of Worship—not with physical representations

Commandment #3: The Manner of Worship—reverence for the holy Name of God

Commandment #4: The Time of Worship—the Sabbath day

3. The Question: Is this commandment still binding on Christians today as all the others seem clearly to be?

C. Man’s Sinful Response: Two Extremes

1. License: Ignoring the Sabbath issue as a thing of light consequence

2. Legalism: Making an abundance of laws to strangle it to death

3. One other sinful response: grudging, irritable obedience

Malachi 1:13 And you say, 'What a burden!' and you sniff at it contemptuously," says the LORD Almighty.

D. Hebrews 4: Entering our Sabbath rest in Christ

1. Paul says in Colossians 2 that the Sabbath was merely a shadow; the reality is in Christ

2. Hebrews 4 tells us we have already entered our Sabbath rest FOREVER once we come to faith in Christ

Hebrews 4:9-11 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; ¹⁰ for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

Hebrews 4:3 Now we who have believed enter that rest

3. What is left, then, is not a covenant requirement like for the Jews in the Old Covenant, but a practical matter of corporate worship and weekly refreshment

E. Is the Sabbath a “Perpetual” Regulation?

1. The Sabbath was not clearly observed by anyone before the Mosaic Covenant was issued at Mount Sinai

2. Exodus clearly speaks of the Sabbath as the sign of the Mosaic Covenant; since we are not under the Old Covenant, then its sign is no longer binding on us

Exodus 31:16-17 The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. ¹⁷ It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested."

3. The New Testament display of corporate worship does not uphold the Sabbath as the day in which Christians met; rather again and again the day was the first day of the week, not the seventh
 - a. Jonathan Edwards, in his work "The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath," notes that nothing in the fourth Commandment specified what day of the week the Sabbath should be... just a cycle of six work days followed by a seventh day of rest
 - b. Christian practice almost universally: worship on the first day of the week
 - c. Foundation: Christ's resurrection

John 20:1 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.

John 20:19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"

b. other statements

Acts 20:7 On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

Revelation 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet

- d. First day of the week became "The Lord's Day", commemorating a NEW CREATION
 - i) The Seventh day Sabbath looks BACKWARD at God's completion of the present heavens and earth
 - ii) The first day of the week commemoration looks forward to the New Creation, of which Christ's resurrection body is the first fruit

Isaiah 65:17 "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind."

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

1 Corinthians 15:49 And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

F. Practical Considerations

1. It is essential and reasonable for the people of God to have a specific day of consecrated corporate worship
2. Such is openly commanded in the New Testament

Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

3. Such a day must be universally set and agreed upon
4. Following the practice of the New Testament, the first day of the week is our time
5. BUT what about the central prohibition: do not do any work
 - a. The reason was physical and spiritual... for the benefit of the human race

Mark 2:27 "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

- b. Spiritually: it showed submission to God the King and gave the Jews time to consecrate themselves to Him week after week; to worship Him, to study His word, to pray, to seek Him
 - c. Physically: it was to provide refreshment for the body
 - d. These are still issues today
6. So, how should we fulfill the spirit of this command?
 - a. Sacrifice for a Greater Pleasure

Isaiah 58:13-14 "If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, 14 then you will find your joy in the

LORD, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob." The mouth of the LORD has spoken.

1. Keep yourself from "doing as you please"
2. Learn a new and deeper pleasure: delighting in the Lord Himself

Psalm 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.

1. Personal holiness

Hate sin more, and keep more diligently from sin than usual

2. Corporate worship

Assemble gladly with the people of God for public worship and the hearing of the word

3. Family worship

Gather with your family (as you are able) for family worship and mutual edification

4. Be not passive, lazy, or listless... but SEEK THE LORD
ENERGETICALLY

works of mercy works of piety works of necessity

C. Cases of Conscience

Romans 14:5 One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

Romans 14:23 ...everything that does not come from faith is sin

Deep question... room for godly disagreement

No room for judgmentalism

What about "lawful pleasures" that are not focused on Christ (i.e. secular pursuits)

Watching the Super Bowl

Going to a restaurant

Shopping

Simple question: which would you rather do, and why????

My basic approach: God is CONSTANTLY after our hearts, constantly interested in our motives; if on a Tuesday or Friday or any other day He desires that we seek Him in prayer or serve Him in some way and we choose instead to watch a ballgame or go to a restaurant or go shopping, we have spurned Him for something lower... and that is sin... the day of the week is not the issue

VI. Applications

- A. How to defeat legalism: stop spinning those plates to earn God's favor

1. Legalism: Keep adding duties and obligations, trying to please God through obedience
2. Fight it by going back to the cross... justification through faith alone
3. I cannot be any more complete than I am, any more forgiven than I am, any more of a son or daughter of God than I am
4. Seek to live a life motivated by love for God not fear of Him

B. Call the Sabbath a Delight

Isaiah 58:13-14 ... if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the LORD

1. Seek to make the Lord's Day a time of spiritual refreshment without making it a legalistic nightmare
2. Principle of sacrifice: be willing to give up some lawful pleasures so that the Lord can become your delight
3. Trade what's good for what is best... develop your love relationship with Christ by spending time with Him, reading the word, walking in the woods, singing praise songs
4. Experiment with some things
 - a. Wives: Trying taking a day off from cooking by preparing meal ahead of time... not because you MUST but because you are willing, and because you want to develop your love relationship with God
 - b. Try some new things as a family to make God the center
 - c. If you usually watch NFL football, try sacrificing the game one Sunday and spend the three or so hours you would have spent on it walking in a wooded field praying and singing and reading psalms with your family (or alone if you're single)
 - d. Discover Christ again... seek a renewed spirit in Him... not because the lightning bolts from Sinai will hit you but because you want His love more than you want anything else you could do with the day
 - e. Fight the legalistic mentality of EVERYTHING YOU MUST NOT DO, and see instead everything you now GET to do in Christ... trading worldly pleasure for heavenly ones