

**“Mysticism & Legalism”**

• HANDOUT •

Review:

► In this lesson, Paul confronts another aspect of the Colossian Heresy. This will involve both mysticism and a form of legalism that robs us of our freedom we have in Christ.

**The strange Mysticism of the Colossian heresy and how it is connected to Legalism ...**

Colossians 2:18-19 • 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.

Q: What is the issue of “pious self-denial?”

► It is understood in two basic ways:

1.

2.

Q: Were these false teachers actually instructing believers in Colosse they were to worship angels?

Q: What is wrong with this teaching?

► **Perhaps the strongest statement against this teaching comes from John in Revelation.**

► Revelation 22:8-9 • I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, "Don't do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!"

Q: Verse 19 of this scripture passage states the sinful minds of the false teachers made them proud. What is the significance of this statement?

Q: What does Paul say about these “visions” that the false teachers were claiming to experience?

Q: What does the scripture say holds the Christian church together?

**Paul takes a deeper look into the ramifications of Legalism & Asceticism.  
[This constitutes Paul's fourth and final warning against  
Man-made rules as the means of gaining favor with God.]**

Colossians 2:20-23 · 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.

Q: Much of what Paul describes in the above verses is called Asceticism. How would Asceticism be defined and what its goals?

Q: What do the rules: "*Don't handle! Don't taste! Don't touch!*" represent?

Q: Even though we are saved by Grace, doesn't the Christian Faith have a basic legalistic foundation?

Q: What does it mean that "*we have died with Christ?*"

Q: What did Paul mean when he said "these things deteriorate with use?"

Q: What would be a good way to summarize this passage?

Q: Does this mean that we have the freedom to act however we wish without any rules to guide and provide boundaries?

► Paul put it this way in his letters to the Romans and Corinthians:

Romans 6:1-2 · What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?  
2 Corinthians 5:17 · Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

**Leaving behind the issues of Mysticism and Legalism,  
Paul turns to a new subject:  
The Practical Root Principles of Christian Life ...**

Colossians 3:1-4 · Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

Q: What is the “new life” of the Believer, those who are Christ followers?

Q: The scripture says to “set your sights” on the things of heaven. It comes from “*zeteite*,” which is the same root word that instructs us “to seek” and it is written in the *imperative* tense. What does that tell us?

Q: What rationale does Paul use for changing one's focus from life on earth to the promise of heaven?

Q: Will the Christian always be “hidden in Christ?”

**This is the revealing of the children of God Paul wrote about in Romans:**

Romans 8:17a; 19; 22-23a · And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory..

**Paul now summarizes the actions Believers are to take  
in the light of everything he has stated thus far ...**

Colossians 3:5 · Therefore put to death, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

Q: How does Paul define a person's earthly nature?

Q: What does it mean to “put to death whatever belongs to one's earthly nature?”

Q: Overall, what does this catalog of sins have in common with each other?

Q: How do they differ from each other?

	Name of the Sin	Greek Name	Meaning
1	Sexual immorality	<b>Porneia</b>	
2	Impurity	<b>Akatharsia</b>	
3	Lust	<b>Pathos</b>	
4	Evil Desires	<b>Epithymian kaken</b>	
5	Greed	<b>Pleonexian</b>	

Q: In what way would “Greed” [Pleonexian], as defined above, be defined as “idolatry?”

**Paul quickly states the consequences of continuing to choose to continue to sin while still expecting to maintain a relationship with the Lord ...**

Colossians 3:6 · Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

Q: What is the consequence of choosing to continue to sin?

Q: How should we understand the “wrath of God” as Paul used it in this passage?

**Paul begins to reason with the Colossians regarding their conflicting lifestyle. This is where we will pick up the study next time.**

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**Next Time ◆ Lesson #6**  
**“Lifestyle for the Christian”**