

## DON'T BE JUDGED—AND DON'T BE DISQUALIFIED FROM YOUR PRIZE! (Colossian 2:16-19)

I want to start off this morning with a Bible trivia question. Here it is: Who was the **very first** false prophet? Before you answer, I think it is important to understand **what I mean by** a false prophet. I think you'd agree that there are at least **two types** of false prophets: 1) One category of false prophets is those that **promote a false "god."** Some of the more "famous" false gods in the Bible are Ashtoreth, Baal, and Dagon. 2) Another category of false prophets is those that teach error—**false things—about the One and Only true God.** Jesus Himself teaches us about that in Matthew 24:5 "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."

Back to the question I gave you earlier: **Who** is the very first false prophet? And the answer is...**Satan himself!**

**How** was Satan a false prophet? He taught **false things about** the true God! Genesis 3:4 "And the serpent said unto the woman, **Ye shall not** surely die..." It's pretty safe to say that when you **call God a liar**, you are **teaching false things** about God!

But—if you think about it—Satan promoted **false gods**, too! Genesis 3:5 "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and **ye shall be as gods**, knowing good and evil." Satan was obviously **promoting false gods** by telling Adam and Eve that they could **become their own gods!**

So false prophets **began with Satan**—and it's pretty safe to say that false prophets will be **around as long as Satan is!** **How long** will that be? At least **1007** years, right? **Why** that number? Satan will be very active during the seven years for the Tribulation, then bound for 1000 years during the Millennial reign of Christ, then released for a short time before being permanently cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10)!

So if false prophets **began** with Satan—and will **not end** until Satan ends—then we need to **be reminded and warned** that there are false prophets **now!** The Bible gives us numerous warnings about false teachers—and some of those warnings are found in the book of Colossians! If you are not there, please turn to Colossians 2.

--In Colossians 2:4, Paul tells them that he does not want them to be "beguiled"—meaning deceived—with enticing words.

--In Colossians 2:8, Paul warns them not to be "spoiled"—not to be carried away captive—through empty and deceitful philosophy.

--In Colossians 2:10, he reminds them that they are complete in Christ—and elaborates on what that means in verses 11-15.

--And that brings us to verses 16-23 where we see **some of the specific teachings** that Paul was fighting against. Please follow along as I read verses 16-23. In vs 16 we have "Let no man therefore judge you"—don't be judged; and in vs 18 we have "Let no man beguile you"—meaning "disqualify you"—thus the title of the sermon.

Before we start in on our outline, it is important to keep in mind that Paul **does not "spell out"** exactly what the false teaching was that he was warning against. He **doesn't give it a name**—and he doesn't list the characteristics, per se. But we have enough of a description to know that the same false teaching is still happening today—and so the **warning is for us** as much as it was for the Colossians!

### **1. Resist being condemned by—and condemning others—regarding rule-keeping**

Notice again what it says in verse 16 "Let no man therefore judge you..." I want to stop right there. What does God through Paul **mean** when He says that? How do **you stop someone** from judging you? Do you **carry around a sign**—or wear a hat—that says, "**Don't judge me**"? Or—as soon as someone begins to challenge you regarding what you are **saying or doing**—are you supposed to say, "Don't judge me"?

**That's not** what it means, right? So **what does** it mean?

It means this: Don't let anyone **condemn you** regarding rules about eating, drinking, or how you observe certain days on the calendar! **MacArthur** referred to it as **intimidation**. False teachers were trying to intimidate these believers into thinking that the way to **become spiritual** was to keep certain rules!

What is that called? **Legalism**, right!

#### A. The definition of legalism

**What** is legalism? Some of you are familiar with that term; others are not. Is **obedience** to God's commandments legalism? No; it's not! Jesus said in John 14:15 "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Jesus also said in Matthew 7:24-27 that the **difference** between a wise man and a foolish man is that the **wise man hears—and obeys**—what God says whereas a foolish man just hears—and **doesn't obey!**

So **obedience is not legalism!** And me **teaching you** what God wants **you to do**—and exhorting you **to do it**—is not **legalistic preaching!** So **what is** legalism? Simply this: The teaching that salvation—or spirituality—is dependent on **you keeping rules**—many of which are manmade!

#### B. A description of legalism

Back to vs 16. Here we have a description—although a little vague—regarding the legalism Paul was warning the Colossian believers about. Was he referring to the **dietary laws of the Bible** that applied to the Jewish people—or was he referring to **manmade additions** to those laws? We don't know for sure, do we?

And then he talks about holydays...and new moons...and sabbath days. Again, we don't know if he is talking about the **Jewish calendar** in particular—or what **people had added** in the way of rules. Let's not forget the Pharisees had so **distorted the Sabbath** that they thought it was **wrong for Jesus to heal** someone on that day!

What does legalism **look like now**—in 2025—in Necedah, Wisconsin? Where do we start—and how much time do we have? Here are **a few** of the many ways **we are judged**—or the way we **judge others**.

1) Whether you realize it or not, **we are judged** because we don't pray to Mary...or use a rosary...or confess our sins to a priest! We are—according to some—**not spiritual** because we don't do those things! Are those things commanded in the Bible? **No; they are manmade** rules—and most of us don't care that people judge us in these areas!

2) Here's another—and this may surprise some of you—especially those of you who have not attended a lot of other Baptist churches. There are some churches like ours that teach all ladies (and girls) **have to wear a dress—or a skirt—to church!** Is that in the Bible? No; it's not—it's a **manmade rule!** Those that teach this so-called **requirement** do so based on Deuteronomy 22:5—a commandment God gave to the Jewish people that is not relevant for believers because we are not under the law!

3) Here's a third—and this one strikes a little closer to home: you are **only spiritual** if you use the **King James Bible!** Is that true? No; **that's a manmade rule!** There is no verse in **any Bible**—even the King James Bible—that says, "Thou must only use the King James Bible!" Is it a **good** translation? Yes, it is—but it is **not the only** good translation! Can you have the King James Bible **as your favorite?** Of course! But don't look down on those who **use a different version**—unless, of course, you want to be a legalist!

#### C. Declarations against legalism

Is God **against** legalism? That's one of those "duh Pastor" kinds of questions, isn't it? Although God doesn't specifically say, "I am against legalism," there are a number of declarations God makes **against the attitudes** that are underneath legalism.

1) First, to promote that law-keeping makes you "spiritual" **undermines the teaching** that the law was nailed to the cross! Although Colossians 2:14 doesn't specially say **the law** was nailed to the cross, we know from Ephesians 2:15—a verse we spent some time on last week—that it was!

And let's not forget a very important word here in vs 16: **"therefore."** What is the "therefore" there for? It is to point out the reason **not to let yourself feel condemned** by a legalist! And what is the reason not to feel condemned regarding eating and drinking and holy days? Because **the commandments** concerning those things have been **nailed to the cross!**

2) Second—along those same lines—to promote the idea that law-keeping makes you spiritual is **to put manmade laws above God's law!** How so? If **God's laws** were nailed to the cross—but **manmade laws** are still binding—that makes **manmade laws greater than God-declared laws!** And Jesus, of course, rebuked the Pharisees for that kind of thinking! Mark 7:8-9 “For **laying aside the commandment of God**, ye **hold the tradition of men**, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. <sup>9</sup> And He [Jesus] said unto them, Full well ye **reject the commandment of God**, that ye may **keep your own tradition**.”

3) **Legalism neglects the heart!** Jesus gave a scathing rebuke to the Pharisees for their emphasis on being clean in appearance on **the outside**—but being full of uncleanness, hypocrisy, and iniquity **on the inside** (Mt 23:27-28)!

4) Lastly, **legalism promotes pride!** Think of the Pharisee and publican praying in the temple. What did the Pharisee say to himself? **Luke 18:11-12** “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” He obviously had forgotten that God hates “a proud look” (Proverbs 6:17)—and that “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6)!

#### D. Decision regarding legalism

In the Greek, the verb “judge” is in the **present tense** (meaning continuous action) and in the **imperative mood** (meaning a command). The idea, then, is “Stop letting these certain ones keep judging you.”

([https://www.preceptaustin.org/colossians\\_216-23#2:16](https://www.preceptaustin.org/colossians_216-23#2:16)).

So we need to decide **not to feel condemned**—not to be intimidated by—those who judge us by their manmade rules. But we also need to treat others the same way and **not judge them** by our “pet” rules or standards! **Romans 14:4a** “Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth.” God is our master—He is the One we each individually answer to—not to us and our rules!

That was the easy one! Now we come to verse 18 which many suggest is the most **difficult verse** in the whole book. In fact, one commentator—unfortunately I failed to write down who it was—suggested that the meaning of nearly **every word** in this verse is the subject of debate!

But rather than go through each word—and explain the possible meanings of each word—then give you “my take” on what it means, I’m going to give you what I think it **means up front!** Two other things we need to keep in mind: 1) **The original readers** of this letter would have **understood what Paul was referring** to much easier than we do; and 2) Paul may have used some of the **language and words of the false teachers** in a sarcastic way—and to drive home his point!

## **2. Remain “reward-worthy” by rejecting false teaching**

### A. Remain “reward-worthy”

We see that in the phrase “Let no man beguile you of your reward...” We saw the word “beguile” in verse 4 where it meant “deceive.” Here in vs 18, it comes from a different Greek word—and has a different meaning.

It means to **defraud**—to cheat you out of something—or **disqualify** you. From **what?** Your **reward!** **What is the reward** that they—and us—can be disqualified from? Enjoying **the blessings** you have in Christ now while **on earth**—and hearing, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” when **we get to heaven!**

**How** would you be disqualified from having those things? By **believing and following** the teachings of the false teachers! If you believe what they are promoting—**that Christ is not enough**, and you need to worship angels—you will be worse off—not better!

### So we need to... B. Reject the teachings of the false teachers

What did they teach? Paul points out three things in vs 18; four if you count “not holding the Head” (vs 19).

**1) They promoted a “voluntary” humility.** It was something they desired—something they delighted in. So what’s wrong with **desiring** humility? Nothing at all—if it is **true** humility! But it wasn’t! How do we know? Because the end of the verse says “vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind!” To be “puffed up” means to be proud—and a **fleshly mind** is one that is controlled by your sin nature—not the Holy Spirit!

In vs 23, humility is mentioned again. But it was a “shew” of wisdom and humility—not the real thing!

And in vs 23 we learn this humility involved “neglecting of the body.” Although Paul doesn’t elaborate on how they neglected their bodies, whatever they did made them proud instead of humble. We’ll touch more on this when we get to verse 23 in a couple of weeks.

**2) They worshipped angels.** We see that in vs 18, too! **How**—in **what way**—they worshipped angels, we are not told. And we aren’t told **why**. **Steven Cole suggests:** “...they may have used their false humility to say, ‘We are not spiritual enough to go into God’s presence, so we approach Him through the angels.’”

It sounds very pious, doesn’t it? ‘We are too humble and lowly and sinful to appear before God!’ But it is really a **false humility** because it contradicts what God says about **our mediator!** **1 Timothy 2:5-6** “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; <sup>6</sup> Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”

One God...and one mediator between God and men! It is **not Mary**—and it is **not angels!** It is the God-man—Christ Jesus! **He only** is the One who died as a ransom; **He only** is the One fit to be our mediator!

So to reject God’s mediator is **not humility**—it is really pride!

**3) They had “special” experiences.** We see that in the phrase “intruding into those things which he hath not seen...”—which, in my opinion, is the most difficult phrase in the verse! To “intrude” means to enter or invade. **Where** did these false prophets supposedly enter? Into the **immaterial world of angels** and spirits and visions where they supposedly had experiences that made them more spiritual than the Colossian believers they were trying to sway. ‘Come with us—and be like us—and you, too, will experience what we have!’

So to not lose our reward of enjoying the riches of all that God has for us in being complete in Christ, we need to reject false teaching. But that’s not enough!

We also need to... **3. Remain “reward-worthy” by “holding unto” the Head**

That is something the false teachers **obviously didn’t do!** We see that in vs 19 “**And not holding** the Head...”

The “**Head**,” of course, is Christ. **What** is Christ the Head of? **The body!** **What** is the body?

**The church!** It plainly states that in Colossians 1:18 “And He is the head of the body, the church...”

What are we—as members of the body—**supposed to do?** **Hold**—meaning grasp firmly—the Head!

So first, let’s consider... A. What holding unto Christ looks like

**1) We will be content in Him.**

--Colossians 2:3 says in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

--And—as mentioned earlier—Colossians 2:10 says we are complete in Him.

--And Jesus Himself said in John 10:10b “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” So be content in Christ! To **look for more**—outside of Christ—is to **settle for less than the best!**

**Don’t listen** to those who say Christ is not enough—and that you **need apparitions and angels!**

**2) We will submit to Him.** We **as individuals** should submit to Him as Lord in our lives. If He is the Head, He is the leader. If He is the leader, we need to **obey His commands**—and **submit to His leadership**. We are to present ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice. The same is true for us collectively as a **church body**. I am not the head of the church; I am not the sole decision maker. We **make decisions together** as a church family at business meetings.

B. What holding unto Christ results in

What will be the results if we as individuals firmly hold onto Christ?

**1) We will have “nourishment ministered.”** What does that mean? “Ministered” often means served or supplied. Is Paul saying we will be **merely fed**—spiritual food—if we hold unto Christ? Not at all! The Greek word used here is one we saw in our series in **II Peter**. You may not remember the word, but you might remember the illustration. **The plays** in ancient Greece often required large and expensive choirs. When a play was put on, a wealthy person from that city would defray the cost for the choir. Since these donors didn’t want people to think they were stingy, they gave **abundantly**. That is the word being used here!

**2) We will be knit together.** In the same way joints and bands (ligaments) in a physical body need one another and depend on one another, we should have the **same kind of unity and care** for one another. Too often times we like to be “Lone Rangers” when it comes to our relationship with Christ.

If we hold to Christ, we will be more concerned for one another's walk with Christ!

**3) We will increase with the increase of God.** In other words, **the church** will grow as **God causes it** to grow! David Pao explains it well: "The 'growth' of the body of Christ involves the **spiritual growth of the individual** members (3:5-8), the **growth of unity** among these various members (3:9-14), and the **outreach** to those outside the body (4:5-6)." (*Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Colossians & Philemon*, pg 192).

The false teaching taught by false teachers won't bring any of these things, will they?

--Instead of being abundantly and lavishly fed by Christ, you'll be left hungry!

--Instead of caring for one another, you'll be trying to "one up"—or **put down**—one another!

--And instead of reaching out to a lost world, you'll only be **focused on you** and **your** experiences.

What is God's message to us about false teachers?

--Don't **feel condemned** because you don't keep **their** rules!

--And don't **condemn others** because they don't keep **your** rules!

--And don't be disqualified from your prize by believing what they are promoting!

You have Christ—and Christ is all you need!

What is it that God would have us do in light of what we've heard this morning?

1. First and foremost, do you have a **relationship** with God? True Biblical Christianity is **not a religion comprised of rules**—it is a **Father-child relationship** with the God of the universe!

--God is everyone's **Creator**—but He is not everyone's **Father!**

--For Him to be your Father, you need to be adopted into His family!

**How are we adopted** into His family?

--When we admit to God—and agree with God—that our sin disqualifies us from heaven and that we don't deserve to be His child.

--And we agree with God that nothing we do can make us qualified or worthy.

--And then believe what God says about Christ: that He died in our place—and will become our Savior—if we receive Him for ourselves by faith!

**Have you done that?**

2. Second—if you are truly a believer—are you cultivating your relationship with God? Do you spend time with Him? Do you listen to Him through His Word? Do you talk to Him in prayer? Do you praise Him throughout the day? Do you meditate on who He is...and what He's done? Do you love Him—and try to please Him?