

# Day 168, Colossians 2

by David Servant

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*Paul reminds the Colossian believers of the sufficiency of Christ and the dangers of false teaching.*

**Scripture:** John 8:36, Colossians 2:8-10, Colossians 2:15, Colossians 2:23

**Topics:** "False Teaching", "Christ Supremacy"

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## Description

David Servant emphasizes Paul's concern for the believers in Colossae and Laodicea, warning against the dangers of false teaching that had infiltrated the churches. Paul addresses the Jewish legalists promoting circumcision and the mystic pagan philosophy of asceticism, redirecting focus to the supremacy of Christ. He highlights that in Christ, believers find completeness, forgiveness of sins, and victory over evil spirits, making worldly philosophies and rituals insignificant. Paul clarifies that only through Christ can true holiness be attained, debunking the self-made religion propagated in Colossae. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross disarmed rulers and authorities, freeing believers from sin and Satan's power.

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## Transcript

Paul's greatest concern for the believers in both Colossae and Laodicea was for their spiritual understanding, and rightfully so. False teaching can be potentially damning. Clearly, false teaching had infiltrated the churches in Colossae and Laodicea, apparently converging from two different streams.

First, there were the Jewish legalists with whom we've become so familiar, who were always trying to convince Gentile believers to be circumcised and submit themselves to the Mosaic Law. So Paul reminds the Colossian believers that they have been "circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (2:11). That circumcision is far superior to what the Jewish legalists had to offer. In fact, it could be argued that the circumcision prescribed in the Mosaic Law was simply a foreshadowing of the circumcision that would be experienced by all Christian believers---the cutting off of our old sinful, fleshly nature by Christ.

Second, there was apparently some form of mystic and pagan philosophy that was also making inroads. It was characterized to some degree by asceticism, extreme self-denial that served no worthwhile purpose (2:18, 23).

In light of these doctrinal distractions, Paul pulls his readers back to what they should be focused on---Christ Himself. When we are focused on Him, there is no possibility that we will be enamored by what is really nothing by comparison, what Paul calls "the elementary principles of the world" (2:8). In Christ "all

the fullness of the Deity dwells in bodily form" (2:9). Moreover, "in Him [we] have been made complete" (2:10). We don't need to look for fulfillment or truth anywhere else. Additionally, Jesus "is the head over all rule and authority" (2:10). He is higher than any other earthly or spiritual leaders. He's the King of kings and Lord of lords! Compared to Him, everyone and everything is inferior. Thus it would be an insult to Him if we seek after what is lesser.

Beyond these facts about Christ, Paul also points out to his readership (which includes us) that they are united with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection (2:12). As a result, we've been spiritually reborn (2:13), our sins have been forgiven, and we're accepted by God (2:14). Jesus defeated the evil spirits that previously held us captive (2:15). In light of these things, how could anyone be enamored with worldly philosophies that are only fit for those who are ignorant of Christ? How could anyone be persuaded to follow old covenant rituals---giving all his or her attention to keeping Jewish festivals, new moons and Sabbaths (2:16), which Paul says are "a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ" (2:17)? That is, Jews practiced rituals that were designed to point them to Christ. Yet they missed the point entirely. It was somewhat comparable to a father who lays down a trail of pennies to lead his child to a hidden birthday present. Wouldn't it be tragic if that child stopped following the penny trail and made a religion out of the pennies?

So self-abasement, angel-worship, unbiblical visions, and food regulations, all of which were apparently being promoted in Colossae as containing some "truth," amounted to nothing more than "self-made religion" that was of no real value to make anyone holy (2:23). Only Christ can do that, and He only does it for those who repent and believe in Him.

Finally, I'm afraid the meaning of Paul's metaphorical words about Jesus "disarming the rulers and authorities" has been perverted by certain advocates in the modern spiritual warfare movement. First, note that it is something that Jesus did, so we don't need to. Second, Jesus did it on the cross. Jesus "disarmed the rulers and authorities" by dying for our sins, metaphorically spoken of in the same passage by Paul as the canceling of our debts. By God's righteous permission, Satan has the right to rule transgressors; but those who are in Christ are no longer transgressors but righteous new creations! That is how Jesus' death frees us from sin and Satan. "If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

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