



Pointers and questions on Paul's letter to the

COLOSSIANS

Session **6**

2:16-23

Living Free from Legalism

Summary

- 2:16-17** Outward religious practices like the observance of particular days and dietary regulations—based on Old Testament laws—are not what Christianity is all about. Christianity is simply about Christ. Those other matters were never more than pointers to him and, now that he has come, must be avoided altogether.
- 2:18-19** Other emphases likely to mislead the Colossians are the worship of angels and human substitutes for Christian humility, both features of the false teaching and in the end 'unspiritual'. What truly matters is putting Christ first.
- 2:20-23** Christ died to set them free from a legalistic way of life and they should take advantage of that freedom. The fact is that legalism cannot deal with sin, but Christ can! The choice of which basis to live by is therefore obvious.

Questions to get you thinking

1. Legalism means making rules and insisting they be observed when such rules are neither necessary nor conducive to life in the Spirit. Give some examples of legalistic practices you have seen.
2. What legalistic practices were clearly part of the Colossian heresy? Look in particular at verses 16, 21 and 23.
3. The opposite of legalism is freedom in Christ. Does Christian freedom mean freedom to do as we please, including obviously sinful practices? If not, what is it that keeps us living in a way that pleases the Lord?
4. What legalistic attitudes do you find yourself most tempted to fall into?
5. Talk about the 'shadow' and 'reality' imagery of v17. How would you explain to a new Christian what Paul is saying here?
6. Have you ever met a professing Christian who fits the description in v18? How would you recognise such a person if you met one?
7. What does v19 tell us about the church and how God wants it to be?
8. Notice the word 'human' in v22. Where else does it appear earlier in this chapter? What is it that is described this way?
9. What other people think ('human' opinions) can have a negative influence on the way we live. Give some examples.

