

## Legalism: Chasing Shadows vs. Christ the Substance Col 2:16-17

### I. Introduction

#### ***A. I remember a Saturday working in the garage***

1. Had the radio on while at my workbench
2. Listening to an Oldies station – 1950s, 1960s oldies
3. One the kids had a friend over
4. Their mom comes to pick them up
  - a) I said hello as she got out of the car and she said hi
  - b) She walks past me in the garage
  - c) Looks at me and says something to the effect of “You’re a Christian and listen to that kind of music?”

#### ***B. I remember being at a Bible Study as a young Christian and mentioning that we drank wine!***

1. You could’ve heard a pin drop in the room!
2. The looks I got!

#### ***C. On a slightly different note***

1. When I got to Seminary, one of the biggest things I learned was NOT to be judgmental if someone DIDN’T HAVE EXACTLY the SAME THEOLOGY as you!
2. IOW – at our home church,
  - a) Someone would read a book
  - b) IF they found ANYTHING they disagreed with in the book, they’d
    - (1) Toss the book
    - (2) Toss the author!
    - (3) IOW – toss the baby out with the bathwater!
3. I had “grown up” in a environment of judgmental / critical spirit Christianity!
4. YET – I get to my FIRST Theology class
  - a) Professor gives first assignment- READ THE PREFACE
  - b) There author explains that He believes in (I think if I remember right) healings today, tongues, people doing miracles!
  - c) Professor – Other than those areas, this is a great theology textbook and we’ll still read those sections SO THAT you can understand the position of people who believe these things!

#### ***D. “Legalism” not a Scriptural term.***

1. BUT that’s what we’ll be talking about today!
2. Legalism = rules-based Christianity
  - a) Rules to GET you / KEEP you saved
  - b) AND/OR rules you must live by AFTER saved!

#### ***E. Review: Our Context!***

1. Remember we just finished Paul’s attack on Human WISDOM/LEGALISM

2. AND, the section included OUR COMPLETENESS in CHRIST!
3. Now Legalism is the next are Paul wants to attack!

### **F. Outline: LEGALISM**

1. Chasing Shadows
2. Christ the Substance

### **G. TURN TO Passage to read...**

#### **II. Chasing Shadows!**

**Col 2:16** Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day— 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come;

#### **A. Therefore = GIVEN everything I just wrote v.8-15 is true**

1. Therefore, SINCE you know that HUMAN WISDOM/Philosophy is EMPTY and WORTHLESS
2. Therefore, SINCE you ARE COMPLETE in CHRIST
3. Therefore, Since you have Complete SALVATION in Christ
4. Therefore, SINCE you have COMPLETE FORGIVENESS in Christ
5. Therefore, since you have COMPLETE VICTORY in Christ
6. = Therefore, since you have EVERYTHING SPIRITUALLY POSSIBLE for a person – IN CHRIST
7. = a HUGE FOUNDATION by which to CONTRAST EVERYTHING ELSE!
8. Because Paul laid this complete foundation, he can now just fire his automatic weapons AGAINST anything / everything OPPOSED to COMPLETENESS in CHRIST!

#### **B. no one is to act as your judge**

1. "no one" = specific people Paul has in mind
  - a) For us = anyone who judges
  - b) BUT for Colossians – Paul, says "you know who I'm talking about..."
2. is to act as your judge
  - a) = one verb in Greek = "judge"
  - b) = COMMAND to STOP letting them judge
    - (1) Commands like this are either STOP doing something or DON'T START doing something
    - (2) Here = STOP letting them judge you
  - c) Addressed to them ALL in plural
    - (1) Would be like me saying to you as a group – "Don't let anyone walk in here and tell you all to leave now"
    - (2) Someone is trying to judge "the Church at Colossae"
  - d) "judge" = judgment of behavior As right or wrong/ approval or disapproval

#### **C. in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day**

1. Sometimes our translations just complicate Scripture!
2. "in regard to" / "in respect to" PLUS the "and" plus the "or" several times DOESN'T show you HOW DIRECTLY Paul CONDEMNS these things!

3. Literally "[in food AND in drink OR in festival OR in new moon OR Sabbath](#)"
4. = automatic weapons fire against legalism!
5. Another "list" that Paul is famous for!
6. Now – the list: OT rules from the LAW
  - a) Judiazers: You must KEEP the LAW to BE SAVED
    - (1) IOW – LEGALISM as we call it today
    - (2) RULES-BASED religion
    - (3) Works-righteousness
  - b) USED to Judge
    - (1) SALVATION – you CAN'T be SAVED UNLESS you live an OUTWARDLY RELIGIOUS LIFE based on RULES
    - (2) SANCTIFICATION – Spiritually immature, backslidden, fleshly, worldly, carnal, etc. IF you don't LIVE an OUTWARDLY RELIGIOUS LIFE!
  - c) Legalism = Basing your spirituality on Man-made rules
  - d) Obedience = Obeying God's rules

**D. "[food or drink](#)" (spend most of our time here)**

1. Remember – Jewish had MANY food RULES in OT
  - a) Why? SET THEM APART from cultures around them
  - b) ALMOST EVERY aspect of life was DIFFERENT from pagan societies
  - c) IMPOSSIBLE to mix IF you were keeping the law!
  - d) God DEMANDED PHYSICAL separation in OT!
  - e) SO – BL: Before CHRIST, the MOSAIC law HAD DIETARY RULES!
2. BUT, FIRST, Jewish leaders TURNED this into legalism
  - a) Law's Purpose? Drive us to CHRIST, not save us:
 

[Ga 3:21](#) Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. [22](#) But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. [23](#) But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. [24](#) Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.
  - b) BUT Paul ALSO had to tell the Galatians:
 

[Ga 3:3](#) Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

    - (1) Don't GO BACK to the LAW!
  - c) What was coming to the Colossians was LEGALISTIC LAW KEEPING
    - (1) More than just the original intent of the Law
    - (2) Law SAVED you!
    - (3) So, either way you look at this – it was just WRONG!
  - d) Remember – IF YOU ADD ANYTHING to Christ for SALVATION, You lose Christ!

- (1) HP had an ad for a long time “HP+” with a superscript “+”
  - (a) HP plus your business WINS!
  - (b) ADD HP and YOU WIN
- (2) Well, ADD anything to CHRIST for salvation and YOU LOSE!
- (3) Paul SUMS this BEAUTIFULLY in Gal 5:1 and then uses circumcision as the example of “Christ PLUS”

[Ga 5: 1](#) It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. [2](#) Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. [3](#) And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. [4](#) You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; [you have fallen from grace \[you're not saved!\]](#). [5](#) For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.

3. SECOND, the LAW was Fulfilled with Christ and We are FREE TO EAT EVERYTHING!

- a) Jesus was FIRST to CORRECT the LEGALISM of the Jewish leaders AND declare all foods EATABLE!

[Mk 7: 14](#) After He called the crowd to Him again, He *began* saying to them, “Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: [15](#) there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. [16](#) [“If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”] [17](#) When he had left the crowd *and* entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable. [18](#) And He said to them, “Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, [19](#) because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?” (*Thus He declared all foods clean.*) [20](#) And He was saying, “That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. [21](#) “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, [22](#) deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness. [23](#) “All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”

- b) Peter then had the vision of Acts 10!

[Ac 10:9](#) On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. [10](#) But he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance; [11](#) and he saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground, [12](#) and there were in it all *kinds of* four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air. [13](#) A voice came to him, “Get up, Peter, kill and eat!” [14](#) But Peter said, “By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean.” [15](#) Again a voice *came* to him a second time, “What God has cleansed, no *longer* consider unholy.” [16](#) This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up into the sky.

4. We are FREE to EAT everything. We call it “liberty”
5. DON'T JUDGE others BY what they eat or drink!

**Ro 14: 1** Now accept the one who is weak in faith, *but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.* **2** One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables *only.* **3** The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.

6. What are TWO areas that PEOPLE JUDGE today?
  - a) Drinking!
    - (1) “I saw so and so drinking a beer” AND they SAY they are a Christian!
    - (2) Guess what? You are FREE to drink alcohol!
    - (3) We'll do that sermon another day
  - b) Close to food and drink so will include here: SMOKING
    - (1) How many Christians BELIEVE that SMOKING is
      - (a) Sign of not being saved
      - (b) Sign of SERIOUS SIN
    - (2) Yes, smoking's not good for your health
    - (3) Yes, smoking is an addiction
    - (4) BUT is it a sign of NOT BEING SAVED? NO!
    - (5) And, do you “possibly” have some habit in your life that is an addiction – but just not so visible? (caffeine, chocolate, biting nails, chewing gum, tapping your feet, etc)
    - (6) Are those signs of serious sin/ not being saved? NO!

7. Paul to the ROMANS:

**Ro 14:17** for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

- a) “eating and drinking” = ANYTHING EXTERNAL
  - b) “righteousness” = OBEDIENT living!
  - c) BL: kingdom of God is INTERNAL, not EXTERNAL
  - d) What goes on INSIDE important, NOT the externals!
8. BUT – we also know that we RESTRICT our liberty for the sake of a WEAKER BROTHER!
    - a) Both 1 Cor 8 and 1 Cor 10 say so
    - b) AND, BOTH use FOOD as the example!
    - c) Romans 14 again

**Ro 14:13** Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. **14** I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. **15** For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. **16** Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; **17** for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but

righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. **18** For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. **19** So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. **20** Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. **21** It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles. **22** The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. **23** But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because *his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.*

9. And, of course, the application TODAY is that you can eat ALL the ribs you want at our house this afternoon! ☺

#### E. “festival”

1. Again, OT full of festivals that the Jews were REQUIRED to attend! Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles,...
2. Real Simple: Don't let anyone JUDGE you if you CHOOSE to go to a festival!
3. You don't HAVE to Go – NOT a REQUIREMENT for SALVATION - BUT you CAN GO!
4. Jewish CHRISTIANS today will observe Passover.
  - a) We were invited to a “Sadr” while in Seminary
  - b) Didn't choose to go, but it would've been fine!
5. And, don't forget PAGAN festivals!
  - a) We'll talk about this specifically under “new moon”
  - b) BUT people have culture festivals that they attend too!
6. Closest Application I can think of today is CHURCH!
  - a) Have you ever been judged for a Church you visited?
  - b) I've been judged for going to churches to attend weddings and funerals!
  - c) People will judge a WHOLE denomination “not Christian” and JUDGE anyone who steps in the door as either NOT a CHRISTIAN or IN SIN!

#### F. “new moon”

1. What's a new moon? Does this mean you can't go star gazing anymore? ☺
2. “new moon” AGAIN goes back to OT
3. = Sacrifices made on the first day of the month of a new moon

**Nu 10:10** “Also in the day of your gladness and in your appointed feasts, and on the first *days* of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be as a reminder of you before your God. I am the LORD your God.”

**Ps 81:3** Blow the trumpet at the new moon, At the full moon, on our feast day.

**Is 1:13** “Bring your worthless offerings no longer, Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies— I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly.

**Eze 46:3** “The people of the land shall also worship at the doorway of that gate before the LORD on the sabbaths and on the new moons.

**Eze 46:6** “On the day of the new moon *he shall offer* a young bull without blemish, also six lambs and a ram, *which shall be without blemish.*

4. ALSO, we know that most PAGAN societies had new moon festivals

- a) Had many festivals tied to astronomical events: new moons, solstices, etc.
  - b) Church at Colossae MOSTLY GENTILES
5. Don't know exactly what the problem was here
    - a) Could've been judged for going to the Pagan festival
    - b) Could've been judged for NOT doing the Jewish new moon observances
    - c) OR both!
  6. BL: Societies have ALL KINDS of things to celebrate!
    - a) Don't let ANYONE judge you for going to a New Year's eve party
    - b) Or a July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration
    - c) Or whatever!
  7. Of course, you're all thinking – WHAT IF THE festival is an OUT-RIGHT anti-Christ event
    - a) Like a Satan-worship festival!
    - b) A: Don't go!
    - c) We're talking about things CLEARLY NOT SINFUL!
    - d) And, if you do go, your behavior must be Christ-honoring.
      - (1) You can celebrate New Year's Eve!
      - (2) You CANNOT get drunk!
  8. What's the problem biblically?
    - a) People TURN their APPLICATION of SCRIPTURE into DOCTRINE
    - b) APPLICATION becomes "inspired doctrine"
    - c) Remember, there is ONE interpretation and many applications
    - d) Yes, there are Grey areas and Romans 14 covers that
    - e) You need to study and area find out the right Biblical interpretation and the possible applications
    - f) THEN, you will STILL run into what Scripture calls "weaker Christians"
      - (1) You don't JUDGE them
      - (2) You don't force them to go against their conscience!
      - (3) And, you give up your LIBERTY around them!

### G. "Sabbath day"

1. Obviously, Jews were to REST on the Sabbath – Saturday
  - a) Jesus regularly VIOLATED the Jewish WRONGFUL INTERPRETATION of the Sabbath – led to His death!
  - b) John 5: healed the Paralytic on the Sabbath!
  - c) They sought to kill Him...
    - [Jn 5: 18](#) For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, ...
2. Remember – In those days, People WORKED 6 days! Didn't have weekends off!
  - a) SO, Sabbath was ALREADY the day off in society!
  - b) Early Christians had to work on Sunday!

- c) Had to worship either Saturday (often in the evening) or EARLY Sunday!
  - d) Christians CHOSE to worship SUNDAY in remembrance of the RESURRECTION of Christ ON A SUNDAY!
3. Paul had to deal with this in Romans 14!

Ro 14:5 One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.

***H. Here's the BOTTOM LINE on this whole SECTION – the Principle we need to understand!***

Romans 7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. 10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. 11 For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD." 12 So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

1. Worry about your own life before God!
2. Live for the Lord – He's your Lord
3. Worry about your DAY BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT!
4. Don't add the sin of judging to ALL the other sins you already need to deal with!
5. Back to Colossians – how does Paul summarize this list?

**I. 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come;**

1. "things" = the whole list
2. "which are a mere shadow"
  - a) = literal shadow of an object
  - b) A SHADOW is NOT the real thing
  - c) Has no SUBSTANCE
3. of what is to come;
  - a) Be careful with this!
  - b) In context, Jewish legalism was trying to force things FROM the OLD TESTAMENT on these Christians
  - c) The OT Saint didn't have the REAL THING – Jesus Christ
    - (1) Everything "pointed forward" to Christ!
    - (2) This were "types" or "shadows" or "signs"
  - d) From these things people could get an idea/general impression but didn't have the real thing
    - (1) A shadow gives some information about the object
    - (2) You recognize the shadow of a person vs. the shadow of a tree, etc.
    - (3) BUT it really doesn't tell you much!

- e) These things had VALUE in the OT economy as the POINTED forward to what was to come.
4. Heb 10:1

**Heb 10: 1** For the Law, since it has *only* a shadow of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.

- a) Law = a SHADOW – not the real thing!

**J. Transition: Paul now completes his metaphor**

1. Why chase the shadow
2. WHEN you CAN have the REAL Object casting the shadow!

**III. Christ the Substance**

Col 2:17 ~~things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.~~

**A. “but” = CONTRAST: SHADOW vs. SUBSTANCE!**

**B. the substance belongs to Christ.**

1. “the substance” = literal contrast to shadow!
  - a) How? The word is literally “body”!
  - b) Paul is using a literal contrast here!
  - c) BUT – in context – He doesn’t mean “body” BUT SUBSTANCE or REALITY!
2. “belongs to [the] Christ”
  - a) Literally “is THE Christ’s”
  - b) = POSSESSION BY THE CHRIST
  - c) = ALREADY possessed by CHRIST!

**C. What is Paul saying?**

1. With the emphasis of “the Christ” =
  - a) Christ is the FULFILLMENT of EVERYTHING the OT “shadowed”
  - b) Christ is the “good things to come” that EVERY thing in the OT pointed to!
  - c) CHRIST is the REALITY, THE SUBSTANCE – NO MORE SHADOWS!
  - d) You HAVE the REALITY – why go back to SHADOWS?

**D. The REALITY is ALL Paul’s been writing about for 2 chapters!**

1. He’s already covered the reality of Christ!
2. Col 1 covered the LORDSHIP of Christ!
3. Col 2 just covered the SUFFICIENCY of Christ!
4. You know that you are AS COMPLETE as IS POSSIBLE in CHRIST!
5. Paul: WHEN you HAVE CHRIST
  - a) You have ALL the SUBSTANCE
  - b) You have ALL the REALITY
  - c) WHY CHASE SHADOWS?!!!

## IV. CONCLUSION

### A. Paul Told Titus

**Tit 1: 5** For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, **6** *namely*, if any man is above reproach,[elder qualifications...] **9** holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. **10** For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, **11** who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not *teach* for the sake of sordid gain. **12** One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." **13** This testimony is true. For this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith, **14** not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth. **15** To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. **16** They profess to know God, but by *their* deeds they deny *Him*, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.

1. Same problem in Crete! Don't pay attention to them!

### B. Paul told Timothy

**1 Ti 4: 1** But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, **2** by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, **3** *men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.* **4** For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; **5** for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.

1. Same problem in Ephesus!

### C. And, there's our FINAL application:

**4** For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; **5** for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.

**D. We ALL need to check our judgments and critical spirits based on a passage like this!**

**E. Your homework is to read and reread Romans 14 all week!**