

ULC Sermon Study Resource

Greater Than: Legalism

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Prayer: Pause for a few moments to go to the Lord in prayer. Ask that He would draw near to you in this time, and open your heart and mind to hear His Word.

Icebreaker: What's your biggest "pet peeve"? (What little things particularly irritate you?)

Reading: Colossians 2:6-23

Outline:

- I. The centrality of Jesus (v. 6-8)
 - a. Christian maturity is not moving beyond the Gospel; it is becoming more rooted in the Gospel and living *from* the presence of Jesus and power of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. We're tempted to move beyond Jesus to moralism (Jesus + works) or self-discovery (Jesus + whatever I want), but these both return to "empty deceit and elemental spirits".
 - c. The Gospel invites us to rest in Jesus and be established in Him.
Q: How does being rooted in Jesus cause us to "abound with thanksgiving" (v.7)?
- II. The value of Jesus (v. 9-15)
 - a. Nothing compares to Jesus, and this passage reminds us of His infinite worth.
 - b. Christian maturity is learning to *constantly* hold the value of Jesus before our eyes.
Q: What in these verses stands out, and how does it affect how you value Jesus?
- III. The freedom of Jesus (v. 16-23)
 - a. Because of the value of Jesus, no one can disqualify you on the basis of legalism.
 - b. We have freedom in Jesus because our worth is found in him, not in proving ourselves to God or to the world.
Q: How was the law a "shadow" of things coming, with Christ as the "substance" ?

Reflection/Application Questions:

- 1) In what ways do we view salvation as something where God saves us, but we have to do all the work to stay saved and abide in Him? How do we act as though grace ends after conversion?
- 2) How do we lose sight of Jesus and make ourselves the center of everything?
- 3) How can we stay centered on Jesus despite all the other things that seek our allegiance?
- 4) How have you seen moralism and/or self-discovery fall short of faith rooted in Jesus alone?
- 5) How does faith result in doing good works (cf. James 2:14-26), yet we have "freedom" in Christ?

Suggestions for further study:

- Acts 15:1-35 **Q: Why is legalism an issue for the early church?**
- Romans 8:1-11 **Q: Why is there now "no condemnation" for those in Christ?**
- Galatians 3:1-14 **Q: How does legalism fall short, and how is Jesus greater than it?**

Closing Prayer: "Gracious God, we praise you for what you have done in Jesus. We praise you because there is nothing more precious than him. We thank you that Jesus is better than legalism or any other thing we would try to pursue. God, would you plant us deeply in the truth of what Jesus has done for us, and may lives of holiness that reflect your kingdom spring forth from that place. May we live in freedom to worship you and to praise you in everything that we do. God, we ask this all in Jesus' name, Amen."