

sermon study summary

Pastor Kevin Carruthers

Christ Over All – Living the Gospel

January 25 / 26, 2025

Following Jesus is simple; it's just really hard. Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians to prove that you don't need anything other than what Jesus has already earned for you and freely given to you. False teachers had come to Colossae to convince the Christians that Jesus wasn't enough. The false teachers were telling the Colossian Christians that they needed to do certain things, uphold certain standards and traditions, keep certain rules in addition to Jesus if they wanted to experience the freedom they were longing for.

Paul pointed out what Jesus had already done for them. Paul taught: Don't buy a false version of what you already possess. You already have the real thing!

Jesus offers freedom instead of slavery. Adding something to Jesus leads to less, not more. Legalism is the idea that you become acceptable through your doing; that you gain approval or acceptance by keeping the rules, maintaining the standards, upholding the values. Legalism is a form of self-righteousness, an attempt on our part to make ourselves right before God. It leads to slavery not freedom. In reality, legalism provides us with a way to avoid acknowledging our deficiencies and our inabilities. It offers us a way to avoid Jesus and keep control of our lives. But control is an illusion.

Legalism is a 'Jesus + Something Else' approach to life. Self-righteousness comes from a legalist spirit. It concludes that what we like best pleases God most. Legalism feeds our pride. But eventually we will realize that legalism (i.e. performance) = slavery. The Gospel is the only thing that can crush our legalistic tendencies and set us free because the Gospel focuses not on what we must do, but on what Jesus has already done!

Real freedom is living for something because we already have favour (the Gospel) instead of living for something in order to gain favour (that's slavery, our sinful nature).

Jesus offers fullness instead of emptiness. We all have a God-shaped void in our lives that only God is big enough to fill. A finite thing cannot fill an infinite void; a temporary thing cannot fill an eternal void. Jesus alone possesses the eternal resources we need to satisfy our eternal yearnings because Jesus is eternal. We don't need to spend our lives trying to earn the approval and acceptance of those around us because Jesus has already earned God's approval and acceptance for us.

The only thing that can fill the longing of any heart (in Christians and non-Christians alike) is Jesus. He is the only one who can satisfy our emptiness and our eternal longings and cravings.

Jesus offers an eternal identity instead of an earthly one. With new life, we have a new identity; it's "in Christ." Our identity is no longer connected to our ability. It's about what we can give and how we can serve. What our world needs to see from Christ-followers is that "in Christ" our identity is secure, which frees us to give everything we have because "in Christ" we have everything we need. We're free people.

Jesus didn't come to make bad people good or good people better. Jesus came to make dead people alive! What will capture the attention of our world for Jesus is a group of humble, desperate, Spirit-filled people who acknowledge their sin and who point to their Saviour as the only one who can offer them freedom instead of enslavement, fullness instead of emptiness, and an eternal identity instead of an earthly one.

JESUS + NOTHING = EVERYTHING! and Everything – Jesus = Nothing

sermon study guide

IN – PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. Legalism says, 'I can achieve acceptance or approval by doing.' Why do people fall into legalism?
2. What legalistic practices or traditions are evident in the modern church? How do they take the focus off of Christ?

UP – PURSUE GOD

Read *Colossians 2:8-23*.

3. Contrast the identity of a person in sin with one who is in Christ. What changes a person's identity?
4. What things is Paul warning the Colossians about? Why?

OUT – PURSUE MISSION

5. Why is knowing our identity in Christ important? What does our identity in Christ alone, nothing else, give us?
6. In what areas do we still struggle with legalism? What steps can we take to eliminate legalism?

For Personal Reflection / Prayer:

Pastor Kevin shared that "Jesus + Nothing = Everything." Yet, it's common for us to seek fulfillment by adding other things alongside Jesus. Is there something you've been relying on to fill a void in your life? Take time to reflect, repent, and surrender those things, remembering that Jesus alone is enough to satisfy and complete you.

THE WORD (NIV)

Colossians 2:8-23

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰ and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. ¹¹ In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

¹⁶ Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. ¹⁸ Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. ¹⁹ They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

²⁰ Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: ²¹ "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? ²² These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. ²³ Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

This week's writers: Elsa Henderson, Deb Matiko, Alfred Samson, Jorel Quemuel, David McMillin