

**Valley Bible Church**  
**Sermon Notes for July 15, 2012**

**Legalism: The Enemy of Sanctification**  
**Colossians 2:20-23**

Legalism is elevation of man's opinions to the level of God's Word.

What is often overlooked is how legalism is particularly dangerous to our sanctification, which is our personal growth in holiness.

**1. The path of true sanctification (2:20)**

The only means to true sanctification is having died with Christ.

The life change that God brings is predicated upon our faith (Colossians 3:1-4).

**2. The path of false sanctification (2:20-23)**

By "false sanctification" we mean certain behavioral changes that appear similar to the result of God's work in the life of a Christian but are really the product of external pressure rather than internal faith.

Legalism both causes this and results from this.

a. False sanctification employs the world's methods (2:20)

The world's methods have a higher degree of "success" but are no solution.

b. False sanctification enacts unnecessary restrictions (2:21)

Man-made prohibitions, while perhaps well-intended, are never-ending.

c. False sanctification emphasizes what is temporary (2:22)

It is temporary in the sense of an over-emphasis on the things of earth. (Colossians 3:2; 2 Corinthians 4:18).

It is temporary in the sense of the duration of the change.

d. False sanctification exalts the teaching of men (2:22)

Legalism is the fuel of false sanctification and the cancer of true sanctification. True sanctification exalts Christ; false sanctification exalts man.

e. False sanctification expresses religious wisdom (2:23)

Churches make the world's methods attractive to the believer by using religious terms. The world's methods are not made better when put in a religious context -- they are made worse.

f. False sanctification exhibits false sacrifice (2:23)

The sacrifices of flesh are the joys of the Spirit. The pursuit to avoid non-sinful practices to please God is rooted in legalism and its fruit is unrighteous judgment.

g. False sanctification effects no true change (2:23)

Not only are the restrictions of legalism useless against the indulgences of the flesh, they promote self-indulgence.

The life change that God brings is predicated upon faith; the life change that the world brings is predicated upon works.

Legalism, or the elevation of the opinions of man to the level of the word of God, cannot bring true sanctification, because true sanctification does not come from behaviors we change but the faith we embrace (Colossians 3:1-17).