

# RELIGIOUS ASCETICISM

## COLOSSIANS 2:16,17

*How did you see God working in your life this week? (Romans 1:11, 12)*

**BACKGROUND:** Up to **Colossians 2:15**, the preparation for battle has taken place. Your personal relationship with Christ has been grounded in knowledge of Christ and in identification with Him. Now you must exercise the power of Christ in you against religious asceticism. Religious asceticism is trying to gain God's favor by practicing self-discipline or self-denial in place of God's grace. Asceticism is like a weed. A weed is a plant that is out of place. If left alone to prevail, the weed (asceticism) will usually dominate.

**DON'T ALLOW** anyone to judge you or look down on you because you do not take part in his restrictive diet and holy days. You do not need this because you have a one-on-one relationship with Jesus. You live in His kingdom and possess the fullness of Christ in you. Since Christ is your Lord, do not let anyone judge you. Neither should you allow yourself to judge others who are in Christ. (**Colossians 2:16, fn 2:16, Colossians 2:13, fn 2:13-15, Colossians 2:9, 10, fn 2:9, Colossians 1:27, fn 1:26, 27, Colossians 1:13, fn 1:13**) *How does knowing who you are in Christ keep you from this kind of asceticism?*

**DON'T RETREAT.** "The Jews had their special feast days (Leviticus 25) and their 'New Moon' celebrations (Isaiah 1:13) and their Sabbaths (Exodus 20:9-11). When Christ came, He fulfilled them all!" R. Kent Hughes, Colossians and Philemon: The Supremacy of Christ, p. 82. (**Colossians 2:16, Colossians 2:14, Romans 10:4, fn 10:4, Galatians 4:4-11, Hebrews 7:11-19, fn 7:18, 19, Colossians 2:6, 7, fn 2:6, 7**) *Why are the Old Covenant practices attractive but misunderstood by the religious ascetic?*

**FACE REALITY.** "...Christianity was not fashioned to resemble Judaism, but Judaism was fashioned to resemble Christianity." Everett F. Harrison, Colossians: Christ All-Sufficient, p. 66. The old has gone. The new has come. To depend on yourself for your relationship with God is a throwback to the Old Covenant. To depend on Christ in your relationship with Him is reality. (**Colossians 2:17, fn 2:17, Hebrews 8:3-13, fn 8:5, fn 8:8-12, fn 8:10-11**) *How is religious asceticism unrealistic?*

*According to this preparation how may we pray for you to be strengthened in your personal relationship with Jesus? How else may we pray for you?*

