

## Colossians Lesson 5 - Built Up in Christ

### HOMEWORK FOR NEXT WEEK: Read Colossians 2:16-23

#### TEXT

In preparation beforehand or as a group, please watch The Bible Project's YouTube Video on the Book of Colossians from 3:30 through the 5:15 mark:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXTXIDxQsvc>

**Key Question:** In what ways are Christians united to and built up in Christ?

Read Colossians 2:6-15

<sup>6</sup> Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, <sup>7</sup> rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

<sup>8</sup> See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. <sup>9</sup> For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, <sup>10</sup> and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. <sup>11</sup> In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, <sup>12</sup> having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. <sup>13</sup> And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, <sup>14</sup> by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup> He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

#### COMMENTS

The bottom line of this passage is that the Colossians should reject any false teachings they are exposed to because they have everything they need for salvation through Jesus Christ. This passage is intended to build up the Colossians by reminding them that they are deeply rooted in their faith. It provides Biblical truths and reasons that are firmly grounded in scripture to reject any philosophy that attempts to tear them away from Christ or add something to the gospel.

There is little information provided in the passage regarding the specifics of the false teaching that is threatening the church in Colossae. However the reference to a philosophy based on human tradition and elemental spirits of the world suggests that Paul believes it is not consistent with the gospel and it might be inspired by demonic forces.

In verses 9-15, Paul offers four reasons why the Colossians should reject the false teaching. First, it will not fulfill them the way that Jesus Christ will. Second, the Colossians have already been spiritually circumcised with Christ, thereby nullifying the need for a physical circumcision, which the philosophy might have demanded. Third, God raised them from death through their union with Christ. And fourth, Paul indicates that Christ has disarmed the rulers and authorities (this might be a reference to spirits and demons) that might be promoting the philosophy, and therefore God is supreme over these forces.

Paul emphasizes the union with Christ that Christians share. Through that union, believers have everything they need for their salvation (see Romans 6:5-11). We are united to Christ and as a result, we are buried and raised with him. If we are united to Christ, we are no longer slaves to sin and through Christ we are free from the elemental spirits of the world that seek to pull us away from Christ and enslave us. Verse 7 tells us the fruit that will occur if someone is truly united and rooted in Christ: they will abound with Thanksgiving.

## **STUDY**

### **1. READ**

- a. What does Paul warn the Colossians to not be taken in by?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. In verses 6-7, what four actions does Paul recommend to the Colossians to build up their faith in Christ against false prophecies?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c. What are some attributes of those living in Christ in this passage?

### **2. MEANING**

- a. Why does Paul remind the Colossians to walk in Christ in verse 6?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. What do you think Paul means by a philosophy that is according to human tradition and elemental spirits of the world in verse 8?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c. What are four reasons Paul offers in verses 9 through 15 to resist heresy?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- d. What does it mean that we are “circumcised in Christ” and “buried and raised in Christ?”

### **3. APPLY**

- a. Based on the passage, how can we be rooted and built up in Christ?

- b. What human traditions and elemental spirits of the world do you think you are vulnerable to believe in the San Ramon Valley that could take you away from Christ?
  
- c. How would you address someone who thinks Christ is not enough or that there are other pathways to salvation?

## NOTES

v 6-7 - Paul reminds the Colossians here of the teaching given to them by Epaphras. This teaching establishes Jesus Christ as Lord. The metaphor of a tree **rooted** and being **built up** in Christ is purposeful to remind them of the firm foundation of their faith, which is all they need for their salvation. They must follow Christ's example by being rooted, built up, and strengthened in their faith.

v 8 - Philosophy is used here to refer to the false teaching that the Colossians are vulnerable to. He claims the teaching is not only empty deceit, but that it has also been inspired by elemental spirits of the world. It could refer to the fundamental principles of pagan religion. But it might also refer to Persian religious texts, astrological documents, and some Jewish texts. Regardless, Paul might use this language to categorize the false teaching into those that are inspired from demonic spirits who do not have the best interests of the Colossians at heart. The fundamental problem regarding the philosophy is that it is not in accord with Jesus Christ and the gospel.

v 10 - Paul asserts here that Christians share in Christ's authority through their union with him. Believers have everything they need in Christ. No other teachings are necessary for salvation. Christ alone is necessary for our redeemed life, because he is life. We are complete if we are in him who saved us.

v 11 - Here Paul uses circumcision as a metaphor for spiritual action. Christians are no longer evaluated based on the flesh (physical circumcision) and instead live through and in Christ. They live in solidarity with Christ and his righteousness.

v 14 - Paul characterizes a person's indebtedness to God due to their sin. But God has resolved this for Christian believers by taking their indebtedness note and nailing it to the cross.

v 15 - Although the cross ultimately defeated demonic powers, they continue to exist and to exercise power in the world. Christians must put them to shame using their knowledge of the gospel; God's plan for salvation through Christ. The imagery here is reflective of a victorious military procession, where the defeated ruler is paraded through the streets.

## **REFERENCES**

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*ESV Study Bible*, English Standard Version, 2008, Colossians 2:6-15, pp. 2296-2297, Crossway, Wheaton, Illinois.

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Wilson, Alistair I., *Colossians*, Thanksgiving and Prayer, The Gospel Coalition, available online:

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