

# Lesson 5

**Rooted in Christ;  
He is our Victor...  
so live in him, enjoying the  
fullness of life in him**

## GETTING STARTED

### 1. Our Study: Colossians 2:8-15

#### Overview

First, try to visualize the many pictures Paul has been painting of Jesus Christ in this Letter to the Colossians. Imagine that you were going to paint a series of pictures depicting the many aspects of Christ's nature and work which Paul has been emphasizing. What pictures would you paint? \_\_\_\_\_

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Again, reread the letter. Keep in mind these pictures of Christ. See if you can find some additional ones.

Pray that you might have insight into the victory you have in Christ over the power of sin and evil so that you may enjoy the fullness of life in Him. Also pray for discernment regarding false teachers and philosophies which may be endangering your faith.

#### Concerns About the Life in Christ

Have you ever said, "She is a lucky person ... she has everything!" For the most part, our idea of "everything" includes good looks, good health, happy relationships, family, financial security, social acceptance. Is this, then, the meaning of fullness of life? Do you sometimes feel as if your own life is hollow and empty, and that evil seems to win all the battles? Consider what Paul has to say about all of this. \_\_\_\_\_

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#### Problems Facing the Colossians

Christians today are entangled with the culture of their day, even as the Colossians were in their day. There were many voices saying, "This is the way to the full life, the satisfying life." Always there is the temptation to trust in other things rather than in Christ. While Paul does not spell out the false teachings which he is combating, his warnings give the clue. He is concerned about some of the Greek and Jewish religious superstitions and philosophies which were being introduced into the church and usurping the place of Christ.

- Legalism (insisting on conformity to laws). Old Testament restrictions and laws were being introduced as requirements for salvation. The importance of circumcision, fasting, and religious ceremonies was being emphasized.
- Angel worship. One of the mystical teachings of that day was that there were celestial spirits in the heavenly bodies just as there were human spirits in human bodies. These angelic spirits, known as the elemental spirits of the universe, were organized into a celestial hierarchy with titles and ranks such as thrones, dominions, principalities, authorities. It was believed that they functioned as mediators between human-beings and the highest divinity.
- Astrology. Many believed that the stars and the planets had great influence on their lives. They thought that the human personality was the product of the interaction of the cosmic elements. Man was ever searching for ways to put himself in the right relation with the powers that were controlling his fate. If these relations were good, the powers would enable him to find the *fullness of life*.

# DIGGING IN... for the facts

## 2. Paul's Warning Against the Intellectuals (Colossians 2:8-15)

As you study this passage, note what Paul had to say about the following:

A. ABOUT PHILOSOPHY AND EMPTY DECEIT? (2:8) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

B. ABOUT CHRIST?  
2:9 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2:10 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. ABOUT THE CHRISTIANS?  
In Him (2:10) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(2:11) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

With Him (2:12a) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(2:12b) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(2:13) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

D. ABOUT GOD?  
What He did for Christ (2:12) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What He did for us through Christ (2:13-15) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

as to our trespasses \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

as to our sin debt \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

as to evil powers \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# DIGGING DEEPER... for understanding

## 3. What Does Paul Mean?

This is a passage with many interesting contrasts and comparisons. No doubt you have found many statements in this passage about which you have been asking yourself some questions. Don't feel too disturbed if you cannot understand all the meanings. Many learned scholars have difficulty interpreting some of the statements in the passage, such as what did Paul mean by the *elemental spiritual forces of this world* (rudiments of the world)? Was he referring to the mediating spirits or did he mean a very elementary kind of religion? We shall not try to solve this problem, but there are some statements we should consider.

Choose ONE or more of the following questions for special study.

- A. What questions might Paul have been trying to answer through his emphasis in this section of Colossians (2:8-15)? What problems is he trying to combat? \_\_\_\_\_

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- B. What do you think would be the difference between a philosophy *according to human tradition* and *according to Christ*? In the light of Colossians 2:8, why has Paul been stressing knowledge and understanding of God's will? Is there the same need today? \_\_\_\_\_

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- C. What is the meaning and relationship of these phrases: *buried in baptism - raised with Christ*? Note Romans 6:3, 4; Galatians 3:25-28. \_\_\_\_\_

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- D. What is the meaning and relationship of these phrases: *dead in sins - made alive*? Note Ephesians 2:4-10. What is the difference between being *dead in sins* and being *dead to sin*? Note Romans 6:5-11. \_\_\_\_\_

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Choose one or more of the suggestions for special study. Look up words in the dictionary. Study cross references. Compare translations. Record one new insight which you have received. \_\_\_\_\_

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## GROWING... in Christ

### 4. What is Paul Saying to Us?

- A. To counteract the demands that Gentiles be circumcised, Paul claims that Christ brings about a spiritual circumcision by freeing man from the power of evil and all that keeps him from God. Baptism has now taken the place of circumcision. We believe that through Baptism we are born into the kingdom of God, but we need to think about the importance of Baptism in our daily lives. Study Luther's explanation concerning the significance of Baptism and compare it with Colossians 2:11-15. What new insights do you receive?

**THE MEANING OF BAPTISM FOR OUR DAILY LIFE**

*Fourth: What does baptizing with water mean?*

*Baptism means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.*

*Where is this written?*

*St. Paul says in Romans, chapter 6, "We were buried with Christ through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."*

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- B. What if This Were Your Experience?

Hot tears filled your eyes as you watched your son leave the room. You knew that he was crying because of your sharp words to him for losing his new jacket. Somehow everything had gone wrong this day. It started with siblings scuffling over the biggest cookie and knocking a cup of coffee on the floor. Your spouse got upset over the damage to the carpet. From then on, the day had one frustration after another. The climax was your son losing his jacket. "Seems as if I have spent the entire day scolding," you say to yourself and then find yourself praying, "O God, I feel like such a failure as a parent. ..."

How can Christ be your Victor in this situation? What consolation can you have in your Baptism? What responsibility when facing problems?

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### 5. How to Respond

*Reflect...* on the meaning of the fullness of life in Christ. This life implies the assurance of the forgiveness of sins, freedom from the powers of sin and self in order to love and serve God and others. Fullness of life has to do with relationships rather than things. Broken relationships with both God and persons result in unhappiness, emptiness, bondage. A "victorious" life in Christ is not a life free from problems, frustrations, and disappointments, but a life that is anchored in Christ, in which all aspects are brought to Him for guidance, for comfort, for forgiveness, for assurance of His love. The key to the full and victorious life is forgiveness – clinging to forgiveness from God and others, offering and forgiving others, learning to be honest with ourselves (people prone to say and do what we know we should not and to neglect what we should), but to see ourselves as forgiven in Christ. Daily we need to repent and be cleansed. Daily we need to rest in Christ's promises of forgiveness and love.

*Memorize...* Colossians 2:12. Think of how you might apply this verse in everyday life.