

Colossians Bible Study

2:6-15

Questions will be posed and space will be allowed for a written response. Make every effort to answer the questions before looking below for the answer. **The answers will be in bold print.**

1. Being concerned about the depth of their faith, Paul asks the Colossian Christians to remember that as they first received faith in Christ Jesus by God's grace they are to continue to live in Him" (v. 6). What does it mean to "live in Christ?"
Colossians 2:7
Romans 8:9
Galatians 2:20
2. In verse 8 Paul begins his warning to the Colossians against the false teachers in their midst. This warning forms the heart of his letter. Although Paul never directly describes all the features of the Colossian heresy, what information can you gather about it?
2:8
2:11
2:16-18
2:20-23
3. Paul warns the Colossians not to be taken "captive" by such "hollow and deceptive philosophy" (v. 8). In what ways can false teachings take people captive?
4. Verses 9-10 are a direct attack by Paul on the Gnostics. They were teaching that, in order to be saved, people needed special knowledge beyond their knowledge of and faith in Christ. Paul's words that describe the nature of Jesus in verse 9 also attack the Gnostic claim that all physical matter is evil and cannot possibly be of God. What do the following references say about the person of Christ?
Colossians 2:9

Colossians 1:19

John 1:14
5. The Gnostics claimed that the person who relied only on Christ for salvation was deficient. How does Paul dispute this claim in verse 10? Review also 1:15.
6. The false teachers in Colosse insisted on physical circumcision as an outward ritual to supplement Christ's work. Recall that in Philippians Paul calls such circumcision, "mutilation." According to verse 11-13, what is superior about the spiritual circumcision that all who believe in Jesus receive?
7. When do believers in Christ receive this spiritual circumcision?

8. Read verse 11-14 and Romans 6:1-14. What connection does Paul make between OT circumcision and NT Baptism in these verses?
9. Read verse 15. The Colossian were troubled by all sorts of false teachings about the spirit world. What reassurance would Paul's words in verse 15 have offered them?
10. Verse 15 goes on to say that "[Jesus] made a public spectacle of them [powers and authorities]." In Paul's day, Roman emperors often granted a victorious general a victory march through the streets of Rome. In this march, the captives the general had taken in battle would be led in disgrace down the streets for all to see. How did Jesus make a "public spectacle" of Satan and all his helpers?
11. How do verses 13-15 comfort you in the face of evil? See also 1 John 4:4.

Seeking guidance and security from creation rather than from the Creator will end in disaster. We must not forget that all creation has been corrupted by sin. Created things, as good as they may be, are no substitute for God. He gives us the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ. In Baptism, we have been raised up as a new creation. • "In Thee all fullness dwelleth, All grace and pow'r divine; The glory that excelleth, O Son of God, is Thine. We worship Thee, we bless Thee, To Thee, O Christ, we sing; We praise Thee and confess Thee, Our glorious Lord and King." Amen. (*LSB* 527:3) (TLSB)

Some Answers to the above Questions:

1. Those who live in Christ focus on His love and on His sacrifice on the cross. Living in Christ means to trust Him, cherish His forgiveness, to obey His will, and to guard against anything that might disrupt a personal relationship with Him.

Through baptism Christ lives in us. This is a spiritual living that is shapes every aspect of our life in accordance with the will of God.

2. The Colossian heresy was a mixture of Jewish ideas and pagan philosophy. The false teachers in Colosse presented notions about things like festivals, food, drink, and the worship of angels as a more complete and sophisticated form of Christianity. The regulations and false teachers wanted to improve, in effect, added something to God's way of salvation, which He had already made complete for us by Christ Jesus. (See Deuteronomy 4:2 and Revelation 22:18-19) These regulations included harsh treatment of the body as a means of religious discipline. The Gnostics and Judaizers who threatened the true faith of the Colossians based their ideas on human reasoning instead of on divine revelation. While such teachings had the appearance of wisdom, they were actually empty and perishable because they were not based on Christ Jesus alone.

3. False teachings (both in Paul's day and today) keep people from the freedom Christ has given them through His love and forgiveness. False teachings impose strict and unnecessary restrictions on behavior and lead people to believe that by following these restrictions, they can somehow earn their way to heaven. Many cults in operation today hold people's minds hostage through brainwashing. Some even kidnap people from their loved ones by barring them from contact with anyone outside of the cult.

4. These passages reveal that Jesus was true man, yet all the powers and attributes of God were and are in Him. The very essence of God was – and is – in totality in Jesus' human body, now glorified.

Significantly, the apostle adds that in Christ the divine fullness dwells "*bodily*" (2:9). The term points to the incarnate Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, as the one in whom God's full Deity dwells. The language here constitutes the strongest possible attestation of the divine nature of Jesus. Thereby it also constitutes a rejection of the heretics' principle that physical matter itself is evil. (CC)

5. In verse 10 Paul says that we "have been given fullness in Christ." In Christ we are made complete. Jesus gives us the fullness of every spiritual blessing because He is our all-sufficient Savior and Lord. Since Jesus has made us full to the limit, we have no need for human philosophies or schemes. Jesus' fullness, His sufficiency, includes His absolute rule over every power and authority in the spirit world. Jesus is "the firstborn over all creation" (1:15). He supreme over angels, both those in heaven as well as Satan and the evil angels. Christ has made us complete in Him. Satan and all that is evil have been defeated by Him. Why should any Christian look for something more to try to add to what Jesus offers when in Him we have everything we need?

This unique relationship that the church has with Christ is also seen in the church alone being the body of Him who is the head—not only of the church, but also of every ruler and authority, that is, over all creation.. Since Christ is the head of those, a relationship with him who is their head is vastly superior to a proto-Gnostic worship of the powers that are subservient to Christ and to a philosophy that is in accord with those lesser authorities. (CC)

6. The spiritual circumcision Christ gives cuts away our old sinful nature and gives us new life. The Holy Spirit then works in us, daily renewing and strengthening us through the power of the Gospel.

In the Israelite faith, circumcision was a sign that the individual stood in covenant relation with God. While this is the only reference where circumcision is associated with baptism, the passage teaches that, for the Christian, water

baptism is the parallel rite of the new covenant relationship. It, like the Lord's Supper, is a means of grace. (CSB)

7. We receive Christ's spiritual circumcision through Baptism.

8. In these verses Paul says that Baptism more than takes the place of circumcision. OT circumcision signified that God made the male children members of His covenant line and sharers in His covenant promise that centered on Jesus, the Savior to come. When Jesus came, He fulfilled all of God's covenant promises, making the OT circumcision no longer necessary. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He gave the Sacrament of Baptism to the NT church. In Baptism, a means by which we receive God's grace, we are united with Christ, receiving the benefits of His death and resurrection.

9. Paul says that by His death and resurrection, Jesus "disarmed the powers and authorities." He stripped the devil and all his evil helpers of their power to accuse sinners before God.

Not only did God cancel out the accusations of the law against the Christian, but he also conquered and disarmed the evil angels (powers and authorities, 1:16; Eph 6:12), who entice people to follow asceticism and false teachings about Christ. The picture is of conquered soldiers stripped of their clothes as well as their weapons to symbolize their total defeat. (CSB)

10. After Jesus died on the cross and ended Satan's power, He went and preached to the spirits in prison [hell]" (1 Peter 3:19). There Jesus publicly proclaimed His complete and final victory over Satan and all evil and publicly put them to shame.

By the phrase "*triumphing over them*" is literally meant, "leading them in a triumphal procession." The metaphor recalls a Roman general leading his captives through the streets of his city for all the citizens to see as evidence of his complete victory. (CSB)

11. These verses assure us and all believers in Christ that the devil and evil spirits have no real power over us. While they are still our enemies and are powerful and dangerous, they have been defeated by Christ, our all-sufficient Savior. Because we share in Jesus' victory by faith, we have in Him the power to defeat Satan and evil.