

COLOSSIANS

Lesson 5

"ROOTED IN FREEDOM"

Ice Breaker: Why do you do the things you do as a Christian?

INTRO: Christians seem to naturally run to legalism... maybe because we feel keeping rules helps us know how good we are doing... which puts the focus on our ability to perform. But Paul warns the Colossians (and us) that trying to "be good enough" to be a Christian doesn't work... it just leaves you tied up in a performance trap. For us to really grow and live in Jesus, we need to be firmly rooted in the freedom Jesus bought for us.

Col. 2:6-23

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, 7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. 11 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. 15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

16 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. 18 Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. 19 He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

20 Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: 21 "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!" 22 These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. 23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

Q: The word translated “live” by the NIV in vs. 6 is translated as “walk” in more literal translations. Why do you think Paul describes living “in Christ” as a walk?

- The bible often refers to the Christian life as a “walk”. The reason is because a walk is composed of individual steps... each step leading to the next... ultimately taking us deeper into relationship with God.
 - Gal 5:25 “*Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep **in step with the Spirit.***”
 - 2Peter 3:18 “*But **grow in the grace and knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*”
- It is never about signing up and floating along.

Q: In verse 7, Paul connects walking or living “in Christ” to being “*rooted **and built up in Him.***” Paul is using two metaphors here, one is of a tree or plant that has roots and the other is of a building resting on its foundation. Why do you think Paul uses this mixed metaphor?

- A plant draws all it’s resources from its roots.
 - Paul says we draw all our resources from Christ when we are rooted in Him.
- The Greek word for “built up” implies something you build on, like a foundation.
 - A building’s foundation shares a similar purpose as a plant’s roots... it holds the building or the plant in place.
- Paul wants the Colossians to be firm and immovable.

Q: In verse 8, Paul warns the Colossians not to be taken captive by “***hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world.***” How can the things Paul mentions take a person’s freedom?

- When you “walk in rules”, you have to be able to measure up or you’re in trouble!

Q: In verses 9-11 Paul begins to explain that freedom is found “***in Christ***”. What does Paul say are the things we find “***in Christ***”?

- Vs. 9, “***In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives***”.
 - Everything that is God dwells in Jesus.
- Vs. 10, “***You have been given fullness in Christ***”.
 - If the fullness of God is “in Christ”, and Christ is in you (Col. 1:27), what more do you need to be OK with God?
 - You don’t need a bunch of rules to make you better.
- In Vs. 11, “***In Him, you were also circumcised***”.
 - Circumcision is about cutting something away.
 - Paul says spiritual circumcision is connected to the putting off (or cutting us free from) the sinful nature.
 - Circumcision “*done by hands of men*” was a rule that had to be followed under the law... it was a sign of a covenant relationship between God and man.
 - We have a new covenant relationship with God based on being “***in Christ***” rather than keeping religious rules like circumcision.

Q: In vs. 12, Paul goes from spiritual circumcision to baptism. What’s the connection?

- Like circumcision, baptism cuts you away from something.
 - The Israelites were cut off from their life in Egypt when they were baptized into Moses. 1Cor. 10:2 says, *"They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea."*
 - **Rom. 6:4** *"Therefore we were **buried with Him** through baptism **into death**, that **just as Christ was raised from the dead** by the glory of the Father, even so we also should **walk in newness of life.**"* (NKJV)
 - Paul compares baptism to being buried.
 - When you are buried you are cut off from the life you used to live.
- The point of being spiritually circumcised and buried with Christ in baptism is the new life that comes afterwards by being a part of a new covenant with God.
 - When you are raised up out of baptism you are raised to walk in new life!
 - **Ro. 7:6** *"But now, **by dying to what once bound us**, we have been released from the **law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit**, and not in the old way **of the written code.**"*

Q: What is Paul talking about in verse 14 when he says Jesus "cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us ... nailing it to the cross"?

- The "written code" refers to the Law.
 - Jesus fulfilled that system and took it with Him to the cross.
 - When He died, it died with Him.

Q: In verse 15, Paul says Jesus "disarmed the powers and authorities" and "made a public spectacle of them" by dying on the cross. Who is he talking about and what does this mean?

- "Powers and authorities" is a reference to the demonic forces in the world.
 - Eph. 3:10 *"His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the **rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,**"*
 - Eph. 6:12 *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against **the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.**"*
- Their weapon is darkness.
 - **Col. 1:13** *"For he has rescued us from the **dominion of darkness** and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,"*
 - **Acts 26:15-18** *"**I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,**' the Lord replied. ... **I am sending you to them 18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, ..."***
 - These forces aren't primarily interested in haunting houses or possessing someone, they are interested in damming souls through darkness.
- When Paul uses the word "triumphing", he is using a special word in Greek that was used to describe what the Romans did to their conquered enemies.
 - Paul is saying that the cross was Jesus' arch of triumph!

- Though the world saw it as Jesus being defeated, from the heavenly perspective, Jesus was parading His enemies – the Devil and his demons - through His arch of triumph... the cross.

Q: What is Paul telling us in verse 16-19?

- Paul says not to let people do to you what the demons were doing... that is, don't let them tie you to a bunch of rules or accuse you of not being good enough for God if you don't follow their rules.
- The law and rituals were shadows of the spiritual realities in Christ.
 - Shadows don't have substance. They are just an absence of light.
 - Living by Law is living in darkness!
 - If you are in Christ, you are in the light, you have received everything the laws and rituals were pointing to.
 - You can't make the light brighter by trying to add more shadow!

Q: According to verse 23, what is the problem with relying on following rules to make you acceptable to God?

- Being tied to a list of rules doesn't do anything to change what you want.
 - When your willpower fails, you will fall.
 - If you trust keeping rules to save you, it's pass/fail... you have to BE righteous 100% or else you will be a slave to sin.
 - **James 2:10** *"For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it."*
- When we are free from that system, we find ourselves free to "practice righteousness".
 - **1John 2:29** *"If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him."* (NKJV)
 - Practice isn't pass/fail... it's freedom to keep learning!

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT: *Answer the following questions as best you can, then get with your discipler/discipleship group and discuss your answers.*

1. Would God say you are walking in Christ or just trying to be a good person?
2. Do you obey Jesus because you hope to be acceptable to Him, or because He **has** accepted you?
3. Do you feel like obeying Jesus is pass/fail or something He asks you to practice?