

## The Powerful Working of God; Colossians 2:8-14

### I. Taken Captive

- A. Colossians 2:8; 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.
- B. "According to"
- C. This phrase is used three times to define philosophy and empty deceit
- D. Human Tradition
  1. Philosophy - From two Greek words, literally means, "the love of wisdom"
  2. Here it is used for the love of human wisdom
  3. Acts 17:19–21; 19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20 For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean." 21 Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.
  4. The love of learning something new, not to use it or make application, but just to know it
  5. The "professional student"
  6. 1 Timothy 6:20–21; 20 O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge," 21 for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you.
  7. Empty Deceit - foolish, futile; causing someone to believe an untruth (meaning that whatever people are trying to get you to believe is foolish or futile)
  8. There are people out there whose sole purpose is to get you to believe something other than the truth about God and His Son, Jesus
  9. Ephesians 5:6; Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.
- E. We often allow tradition to interfere with or interpret Scripture for us
  1. "One of America's most popular bibles has caused a stir after bowing to political correctness by introducing women and gender-neutral language in its latest translation." [www.dailymail.co.uk](http://www.dailymail.co.uk) in 2011
  2. In this case, it may actually be good, rendering the Greek work for "mankind" "people" instead of "man."
  3. But it didn't start as a method to correctly translate the bible, it started as a method to be more inclusive to women
  4. "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven." Acts 2:38 1973 NIV
  5. "The English word "for" in the phrase "for the remission of sins" (Ac 2:38, KJV, NKJV) is ambiguous. It can mean "because of" (Mt 25:8, NRSV; Re 16:10, ASV), or "in order to" (Mt 26:12; Ac 27:34, NRSV). The translators of the 1973 NIV in Ac 2:38 have "so that your sins may be forgiven." However, "many letters from pastors and professors" caused the 1984 NIV to return to the ambiguous "for the forgiveness of your sins," concerning which Dr. Ken Barker, of the translation committee, wrote, "I believe we translated it correctly the first time." Hugo McCord, Quoted from the appendix of the 4th edition of his translation, The Everlasting Gospel, p. 718
  6. "I have often wondered (in the sense of marveled) that the original translators had the courage to do it right! Then I have often wondered (in the sense of "I wish I knew") HOW MANY CALLS AND LETTERS the translators and publisher received

from the “sola fidei” folks complaining about the original version and demanding a change.” Jack Cotrell (Professor of Theology at Cincinnati Christian University)

F. Elementary principles of the world

1. Basic teachings
2. “The problem with the world’s philosophy is that it defines truth by a standard other than God’s revelation” Bob Utely
3. There are three sides to every story
4. We see things through the lenses of our own experiences which sometimes can altar our idea of the truth; but the truth is still the truth!

G. Not according to Christ

1. We must strip away our tradition when reading Biblical texts
2. Yes, I understand that the traditions of the first century can be key to understanding a certain passage
3. But the traditions of the 21st century play no part in our interpretation
4. More often than not, a passage of Scripture from one letter or Gospel is interpreted by a passage in another letter or Gospel
5. We should be “taken captive” by Christ and His teachings
6. Romans 6:17–18; 17 But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

II. Circumcised

A. Colossians 2:9–12; 9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. 11 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, 12 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.

B. In the Old Testament, circumcision was the sign, a token, of their covenant with God

1. Genesis 17:9–10; 9 And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. 10 This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised.
2. Genesis 17:14; Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”
3. Exodus 4:24–26; 24 At a lodging place on the way the Lord met him and sought to put him to death. 25 Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son’s foreskin and touched Moses’ feet with it and said, “Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!” 26 So he let him alone. It was then that she said, “A bridegroom of blood,” because of the circumcision.

C. Without circumcision, the Israelite was cut off from his people

D. Paul turns the physical circumcision into a spiritual one, “not made with hands”

1. The removal of the physical flesh becomes the removal of the carnal mind
2. Galatians 5:24; And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.
3. Romans 6:6; We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

E. And the vehicle to get us to that spiritual circumcision is baptism, buried and raised with Christ

F. Romans 6:3–5; 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

G. Raised through faith

1. “The powerful working of God” is a wonderful way to describe our rebirth
2. The resurrection of Jesus was, without a doubt, the most powerful miracle, or sign, we have in our Scriptures that point us to the savior, Jesus Christ
3. Our immersion is an reenactment of that death, burial, and resurrection
4. Through our faith in the savior, Jesus Christ, we call on the promises of God in our rebirth
5. We call on the “powerful working of God” to remove our sins, to make us heirs of the great and glorious promises He has given us!

III. Nailed to the Cross

A. Colossians 2:13–14; 13 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, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

B. Paul is comparing the promises of OT circumcision with the promises of NT baptism

C. Even though the Gentiles (most of the residents of Colossae) did not have the covenant of circumcision with God, they have the covenant of the spiritual circumcision

D. All our sins are forgiven

E. Canceling the record of debt

1. A handwritten legal certificate of indebtedness, with the emphasis on our own hand writing it
2. We have written (with our lives) the debt (sins) that stand between us and God
3. Its legal demands is our death!

F. Set aside

1. John 1:29; The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”
2. 1 John 3:5; You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.

G. His sacrifice enabled our salvation!

1. Hebrews 9:23–28; 23 Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. 25 Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, 26 for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, 28 so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.
2. 2 Corinthians 5:21; For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

H. Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection were for us, so that we would be able to have eternal life, forgiveness of sins, the promises of God

I. Our answer to that?

1. 1 Peter 3:21; Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,
2. Spiritual circumcision!
3. Calling on the powerful working of God!
4. Immersion in the likeness of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection!

IV. Powerful Working

- A. Have you been taken captive by human theology?
- B. Have you been spiritually circumcised?
- C. Have you been immersed in the likeness of Jesus' death?
- D. Have you called on the powerful working of God?