



Lesson 4

2:2-5 ² My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. ⁵ For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

Note:

- “fine-sounding arguments” (πιθανολογία) (v. 4): convincing/persuasive logic that is wrong and misleading

4.) Give some examples of compelling, fine-sounding arguments that are contrary to Christ and Scripture.

2:6-10 ⁶ 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.

Notes:

- “continue to live” (v. 6) = lit. “walk around”
- “rooted” “built up” and “strengthened” are all passive participles (done to us with ongoing effect)
- “human tradition” (v. 8) = what is passed on from person to person, one generation to the next

- “lives” (v. 9) = “to dwell as a permanent resident”
- “you have been given fullness” (v. 10) = something of a paraphrase, more literally “and you are having been filled in him” (i.e. an action begun in the past that is currently in progress and persists into the future)
- “power and authority” (v. 10): often used by Paul to signify not only worldly powers and authorities but those in the spiritual/heavenly realms (i.e. angels and demons)

1.) In what sense are the Christless philosophies of the world empty?

2.) Give some examples from Scripture where human traditions supplanted Scriptural truth among God’s people.

3.) What are some questions should we ask our traditions to “test” them?

4.) How do the truths of verses 9-10 cut to the heart of proto-gnosticism?

2:11-15 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.

Notes:

- Paul is now transitioning from a false Gentile/pagan philosophy to a mixture of Jewish errors and misunderstandings.
- “forgave” (v. 13) = to graciously forgive, emphasizing the grace of the actor rather than the action itself
- “sins” (v. 13) = “trespasses, missteps”
- “the written code” = (hapax) lit. “the hand-written note” which was said of one’s legal indebtedness

- “the powers and authorities” – once again not only in the earthly realm but more so in the heavenly
- “triumphing” (v. 15) is referring to a Roman triumph parade

1.) Verse 12 has some grammatical difficulties that effect its interpretation.

συνταφέντες αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ βαπτισμῷ, ἐν ᾧ καὶ συνηγέρθητε διὰ τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἐγείραντος αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν.

“having been buried with him in baptism, in which (referring to baptism)/in whom (referring to Christ) also you were raised with through faith of the effective working (subjective gen./gen. of producer = ‘from/by God’s effective working’) of God who raised him from dead ones;”

NIV 1984: 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.

NIV 2011: having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

HCSB: Having been buried with Him in baptism, you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

EHV: when you were buried with Christ in baptism. And in baptism you were also raised with him through the faith worked by the God who raised Christ from the dead.

2.) Recall that Paul is writing to a predominantly Gentile audience, yet he neither requires nor implies that they should be circumcised. What was the purpose of circumcision under the Old Covenant?

Genesis 17:9-14 Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. ¹⁰ This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹² For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring. ¹³ Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴ Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

3.) Tragically, what had become of the sign of circumcision among many of God’s people?

Jeremiah 4:4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, circumcise your hearts, you men of Judah and people of Jerusalem, or my wrath will break out and burn like fire because of the evil you have done—burn with no one to quench it.

Matthew 3:8-9 “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.”

4.) What is the New Covenant sacrament that replaces circumcision? How is it superior?

5.) (Verse 12) What does it mean that we were buried and raised with Christ in baptism? What was buried? What was raised/given life?

Romans 6:3-4 Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him 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.

John 5:24-25, 28-29 “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. ²⁵ I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. ...²⁸ Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.”

6.) (Verse 14) What is the comfort in knowing that our signed/personal indebtedness to God’s commands is nailed to the cross?

7.) When did Christ make a public spectacle and triumph over the powers and authorities? (cf. also the Apostles’ Creed)

1 Peter 3:18-20 Christ also suffered once for sins in our place, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in flesh but was made alive in spirit, ¹⁹ in which he also went and made an announcement to the spirits in prison. (EHV)