

"Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord..." - 1 Cor 15:58

NORTHSIDE EXHORTER

A Teaching Bulletin to Inform & Edify God's Family at Northside

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"Elemental Spirits Of The World"

In one of our most recent radio broadcasts, our first question was waiting for us & it had to do with **Colossians 2:8**, where the Bible reads, **"See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy & empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, & not according to Christ."** The caller wanted to know, "What is meant by elemental spirits of the world?" We gave the following answer: *"Elemental spirits equals elementary principles. These are principles the world uses to take captive the minds of men. These principles stand opposed to Christ & through baptism, we died to them (Colossians 2:20). Paul equates the elemental spirits of the world to philosophy, empty deceit, & human tradition."*

Although this answer is biblical & the caller said they understood, upon pondering this text more, I could not help but believe that the apostle was addressing something more specific than the answer we gave. I'm even a little embarrassed by the fact that **Colossians 2:6-23** is a text that I have personally preached often. I gave a lecture on **Colossians 2:13-15** at a college. I've engaged in a public debate in Southern Virginia with an SDA preacher & used **Colossians 2:16-17** to disprove the false doctrine of Sabbatarianism. I have preached several sermons on **Colossians 2:11-12** to show the absolute necessity of water baptism. By this text, one can defend its action, its type, & what God does when we are immersed. In previous broadcasts, **Colossians 2:18-23** have been expounded upon to destroy the folly of being saved through asceticism. **Colossians 2:8** has even been reference to show the things we must stay away from, yet in all this study, I have never delved into getting an accurate meaning of "elemental spirits of the world" ...until now 😊.

The Greek word, "Stoicheion", which is used in the text of **Colossians 2:8** was originally translated "rudiments". Paul uses this word to speak of the ceremonial ordinances of the Mosaic Law, which he describes as worldly elements. Vincent's Word Studies of the NT states the following, "Ceremonialism – meats, drinks,

washings, Essenic asceticism, pagan symbolic mysteries & initiatory rites – all belonged to a rudimentary moral state". When the prepositional phrase "of the world" is added, then we are speaking of these principles that are in contrast to the spiritual.

So, what are the elemental spirits of the world? It is similar to asceticism, which is "the doctrine that a person can attain a high spiritual & moral state by practicing self-denial, self-mortification, & the like". The difference is asceticism was voluntary, but these rudiments were taught by men as binding. Paul said that both were not according to Christ.

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