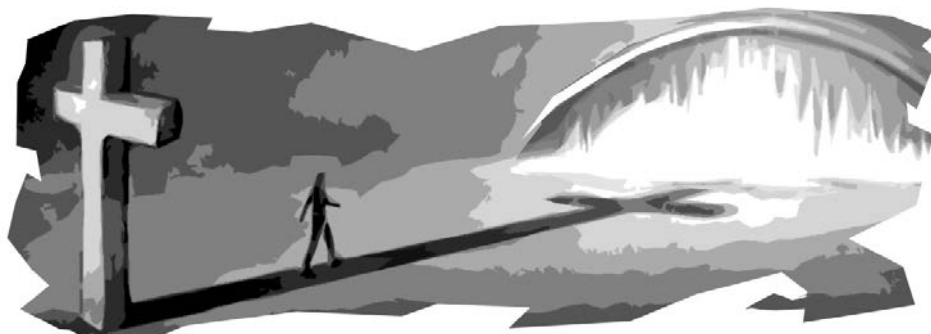


Growing in Christ



SABBATH—OCTOBER 27

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Isaiah 35:10; Mark 10:45; Romans 6:12–23; Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 1:16; Galatians 4:1–11; Colossians 2:15.

MEMORY VERSE: “He [Jesus] took away the weapons of the powers and authorities [devils]. He made a public show of them. He won the battle over them by dying on the cross” (Colossians 2:15, NIV).

KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT: The Cross shows us Christ’s complete victory over sin. This victory is His gift to us.

THERE WAS AN AMENDMENT TO THE CHURCH’S FUNDAMENTAL (BASIC) BELIEFS NOT TOO LONG AGO. It was voted on at the fifty-eighth General Conference Session in 2005. It was titled “Growing in Christ.” This statement includes the following important points: (1) Jesus has defeated Satan and his armies. (2) Through Christ, victory over these powers in a person’s life is possible. (3) Finally, there are conditions (requirements) before a person can have these victories in his experience.

These points are included in the next three lessons. This week we will be looking at the nature (what something truly is or means) of the victory that Christ won on the cross. By His victory, Christ has gained salvation for us.

As we try to understand what Christ has done for us, we will be better prepared to understand what we can have in our lives now. Christ’s victory can be our victory if we claim it for ourselves. For this reason, no matter what Jesus has done for us, we must choose to accept it. Victory is not automatically given to anyone.

SUNDAY—OCTOBER 28**THE REDEMPTION¹ (Titus 2:14)**

Christianity is “a religion of redemption.” Many people are saved from the damage and suffering caused by sin through what Jesus has done for them. In this way, the Christian religion may be separated from “a religion of law.” In a religion of law, a person may avoid his or her doom by “doing good works.” But the Bible says that our works, no matter how good, cannot save us. It also teaches that people without Christ are enslaved to sin (John 8:34) and are under a death sentence (Romans 6:23). These people cannot free themselves from these two conditions (states; situations). The sinner’s problem requires another person’s action. And this action comes at a price. As the New Testament so clearly teaches, that price was the death of Jesus on the cross.

What do Isaiah 35:10; Mark 10:45; Galatians 4:4, 5; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 9:12; and 1 Peter 1:18, 19 show about the concept (idea) of redemption?

The New Testament tells us that Christ died as our Sacrifice and Substitute. Jesus took our place on the cross. He sacrificed (offered) Himself for us. He suffered our fate for us so that we do not have to suffer it ourselves. Some refuse to accept this idea

because they do not like the idea of someone suffering in place of another. This seems especially unfair when the innocent must die in the place of someone who is guilty. But that is the important part of the gospel message.

“When the New Testament speaks of redemption, it means that Christ has paid the price of our redemption. For the full measure of the price to be paid, a Substitute is required to satisfy the payment.”—Adapted from Leon Morris, *The Apostolic [Having to Do With the Teachings of the Leaders of the New Testament] Preaching of the Cross* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), page 61.

Think of some things in your own life that you think are not possible to change. They are the things that you are helpless to do anything about. In the same way, we are helpless to save ourselves. How does this help us to better understand what Christ did for us on the cross? More important, how should this wonderful truth of redemption influence our lives?

MONDAY—OCTOBER 29**SLAVES SET FREE
(Romans 6:12–23)**

We need to understand redemption as freedom from the slavery of sin, slavery that required outside help. To do so, we may conclude that sinful people are trapped by a power or

1. redemption—the experience of a person who is saved because Christ has paid the price for his or her sins through His sacrifice on the cross.

influence stronger than they are. So the real question is, by what power or force have sinful people been trapped?

Study Romans 6:12–23. Notice that in verses 18, 20, and 22, Paul speaks about freedom. What is the meaning of this freedom? What is Paul talking about?



Jesus has freed us from the power of sin.

Think about what Paul says in the above verses along with what he says in Romans 6:1–11. Paul talks about what happens in Christian baptism. Here he sets forth (makes known) some things that were to have died with Christ in baptism. Then, Paul challenges the Christian, who has been united (joined as one) with Christ, to honor the lordship of Christ, who has freed him/her from the power of sin.

The bottom line (necessary point) here is that, according to Paul, no matter how sinful our nature (who we are) has been, through Christ we can be free from its enslaving power. Who has not seen just how destructive this

kind of slavery can be? Who has not seen lives ruined by sin? Who has not struggled with the power of sin in his or her own life? Sin is the greatest enemy that we as humans will ever face.

What makes it so bad is that it is a slavery that does not come from outside of us. Instead, it comes from inside us. How are we freed from a slavery that begins in us, one that begins even in our very nature?

The answer comes only from the power of Jesus. He won the victory for us and offers us the power to overcome. Through Christ, our sins are forgiven. We are to be dead to them. And we are to be freed from them. They no longer have to control us. These are wonderful and powerful promises. They are the promises that all who accept the name of Christ must claim for themselves.

What has your own experience been with the enslaving power of sin? How can you learn to better hold on to the wonderful promises of freedom that have been offered to us in Jesus?



Through Christ we are to be dead to sin.

TUESDAY—OCTOBER 30**PRINCIPALITIES² AND POWERS:
PART 1 (Ephesians 6:12)**

The Bible pictures our world as being under the control of evil armies that are trying to fully destroy us. So, the great controversy (war) is the result of the Lord's work against these powers. The great news is that the Cross guaranteed victory against them, even though the battle is still going on. The war is terrible and great, but the victory belongs to God. We can share in this victory by faith.

Study 1 John 3:8; 1 John 5:19; John 12:31; John 16:11; Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 1:16; Colossians 2:15; and Romans 8:38, 39. What do these verses show us about how real this battle is? What great hope and promises are found in them for us?

Many people today only believe in a scientific worldview. This worldview means that things are examined mainly from a scientific or naturalistic³ point of view. This is the only view (opinion) that many believe to be true. For these people, a world filled with evil armies and demons is only superstition, ignorance (lack of knowledge), and a fear of the unknown. But the Bible shows devils and demons fighting for control of this world and its people.

2. principalities—rulers or demons that try to control human life.

3. naturalistic—having to do with natural causes, or caused by forces in nature, as opposed to something being caused or permitted by God's actions or plan.

In Romans 8:38, for example, the word translated as “principalities” is the Greek *archai*. This word could mean government rulers as well as demonic powers that try to control the lives of people. In Ephesians 6:12, the real wording “the rulers of the darkness of this age” (NKJV) could also be translated as “world rulers of this darkness.”

“Clearly Paul is speaking of personal evil spirits, who have some power over the world. Compare this with the wording ‘prince of this world,’ meaning Satan, in John 12:31; John 14:30; and John 16:11. The devil as a real person was also clear to John, the writer of Revelation [Revelation 2:10; Revelation 12:10].”—Adapted from *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 6, page 1044.

How does the great controversy show itself in your own life? In what ways do you sense the struggle? What is the only way to be defeated in this struggle when you have the promise of Christ's victory for you?

WEDNESDAY—OCTOBER 31**PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS:
PART 2 (Colossians 2:8, 14, 20)**

As we have studied, the word translated as “principalities” could mean world rulers or demons that try to control human life. Another Greek

word that is used with the word *principalities* (*archai*) is the word *stoicheia*. *Stoicheia* means “elements.” It also is used to describe other parts of this sinful world. But, fortunately, we have been redeemed (bought back; purchased) from this sinful world by Christ’s victory on the cross.

On the basis of our study, we have been saved through Jesus from what other things aside from actual evil powers? Read Colossians 2:8, 14, 20; and Galatians 4:1–11, especially verses 3 and 9.

The New Testament seems to connect demons to groups or government leaders who rule over human life outside of Christ. These groups or leaders could be political, social, traditional, even religious. The word *stoicheia* is used in Galatians 4:3, 9. It refers to the systems controlled by heathens (people who worship false gods). The Christians in Galatia had been saved from these systems. The word also is used to refer to parts of the Jewish legal system in early Bible times. And in Colossians 2:8, 20, it refers to false worldly teachings.

“In Isaiah 24:21 the wordings ‘the kings of the earth upon the earth’ and ‘the high ones that are on high’ suggest Satan and the evil angels. Paul speaks of Satan as ‘the prince of the power of the air’ (Ephesians 2:2). He also speaks of the unseen leaders of evil as ‘the rulers of the darkness of this world’ that live ‘in high places’ (Ephesians 6:12). In 1 Corinthians

15:24, 25, Paul points to their defeat by Christ. Isaiah foresees the time when evil angels and evil men will all suffer punishment. (Read Matthew 25:41; 2 Peter 2:4, 9; and Revelation 20:10–15).”—Adapted from *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 4, pages 198, 199.

In short, the Bible teaches us that life is ruled by powers, both personal and not personal. Without Christ, humans are at the mercy of these powers. The pressures of the present moment, the fear of the future, and the demands of life, rules, and government can create influences that can separate a person from the Lord. But through Christ we have been forgiven of our sins and released from our slavery to these “powers.” We need to understand the nature (the way something is) of that victory and claim it as our own.

Besides the powers in heaven and in our world, what other influences work against you and your faith? You need to know what they are and then claim the promises that you have in Jesus so that you can gain victory over them.

THURSDAY—NOVEMBER 1

A MURDERER EXPOSED (MADE KNOWN) (Colossians 2:15)

Christ came into the world for the purpose of destroying the works of the devil (Hebrews 2:14). This He did at the cross. But if Christ has been victorious over the devil, as well as

over the principalities and powers, why are we still struggling with principalities and powers? And why is the devil still able to roam about like a lion trying to destroy us?



Satan roams about like a lion trying to destroy us.

Study Colossians 2:15 carefully. Look at the three different verbs that Paul uses to describe what happened at the cross. How do we understand what this means?

First, Christ “spoiled” (KJV) or “took away the weapons of” (NirV) the “powers.” The Greek word for these verbs is *apekduomai*, which means “to strip off [take away] one’s clothes.” Here it may mean that the powers were stripped of their weapons.

What weapons? “Christ’s life of victory, ending in Calvary, meant the devil would be destroyed. Satan’s disguise was torn away. His methods of work were exposed to the angels and the entire heavenly universe. He had exposed his true colors. . . . By His cross Jesus Christ took away from the powers of darkness both their robe of office [rank] and author-

ity as princes of this world, and their armor of strength in their warfare [war] against what is right.”—Adapted from *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 7, page 205.



By His cross, Jesus took away the armor and weapons from Satan and the rulers of the world in their war against what is right.

Christ “made a public show . . . openly” (NirV) of the “powers.” How were the powers exposed publicly at the cross? What picture of them became clear? Read John 8:44.

The verse also says that Christ “won the battle over them” (NirV). The Greek word for this action is *thriambeuo*, and it suggests success and celebration. Yet, there is a great mystery here: Jesus hung on the cross, suffering what appeared to be a terrible defeat. But the Bible calls it a victory. Whatever else this victory meant, it certainly showed Satan to be the murderer that Jesus said he was.

Because of the Cross, a day is coming when the control of the powers will come to a complete stop. That will be when Christ “puts an end to

all rule and all authority and power” (1 Corinthians 15:24, NKJV). And the last enemy to be destroyed will be death (1 Corinthians 15:26). Until then, we have to keep on fighting the fight of faith in the strength of God that is offered to all who will claim it.

After Christ’s death, “Satan understood that what he was trying to hide was torn away. His evil work was laid open [shown] before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had shown himself as a murderer. By shedding [spilling] the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted [removed] himself from the sympathies of the angels. From that time on, Satan’s work was limited. Whatever attitude [feeling] he might have had, Satan could no longer wait for the holy angels as they came from the heavenly courts. No longer could he blame Christ’s brethren [brothers] for being clothed with the robes of blackness, dirtied by sin. The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken.

“But Satan was not then destroyed. The angels did not even then understand all that was involved in the great controversy. The principles [important rules] were to be more fully exposed [revealed]. And for the sake of man, Satan’s life must be continued. Man as well as angels must see the contrast between the Prince of light [Jesus] and the prince of darkness [Satan]. A person must choose whom he will serve.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 761.

4. Spiritualism—a belief that the living can communicate with the spirit world, or the dead, through mediums, or people who claim to speak to spirits. The Bible clearly is against this practice, teaching that when a person dies, the soul “sleeps.” (Read Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6.) Any spirit claiming to be a dead loved one or anyone else from the past is really a demon in disguise.

FRIDAY—NOVEMBER 2

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “The Book of Books,” page 136, in *Fundamentals [Building Blocks] of Christian Education*; “Spiritualism,”⁴ pages 394, 395, in *The Story of Redemption*; and “Agency [Power] of Evil Spirits,” pages 511–517, in *The Great Controversy*.

“A battle unseen by human eyes is going on. The army of the Lord is on the ground, trying to save souls. Satan and his host are also at work, trying hard to deceive and destroy. . . . Day by day the battle goes on. If our eyes could be opened to see the good and evil armies at work, there would be no vanity, no jesting [making fun] or joking. If all would put on the whole armor of God and fight bravely the battles of the Lord, victories would be gained that would cause the kingdom of darkness to tremble.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies [Messages] for the Church*, volume 6, page 41.

“As men try to work with God, they will find that attacks against the cross have not stopped. Evil angels and wicked spirits in high places are lined up against all who obey the law of heaven. So, instead of causing grief, attacks against God should bring joy to the disciples of Christ, because this is proof that they are following in the steps of their Master.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pages 29, 30.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Review Hebrews 2:14, 15 a little more closely. Death as part of enslavement is clearly described here. Notice, too, our fear of death. Why do we fear death so much? How does the fear hold us in a kind of slavery? How should the Christian, free in Christ, think of death?

❷ For some people the whole idea of demons is very foolish. For others, this fear controls their entire lives. How,

as Christians, can we keep the right balance in our understanding of these powers? At the same time, how can we understand what Christ has done for us in the fight against these powers?

❸ What are some examples of how evil groups control or influence different worldly powers?

❹ How does the great-controversy worldview help us to understand the continuing history of evil, even after Christ's victory at the cross?