By "elements" in Galatians 4:1-5 and Colossians 2:8, 20, Paul refers negatively to:
1. Stars and heavenly bodies deified by pagans (Dt 4:19)
2. Spirits/gods pagans believed controlled the cosmos (Wis 13:21)
3. The belief that the physical elements of the world have an influence on their lives (Lev 19:31; Is 47:13-15)

These negative aspects are in contrast to what Paul refers to positively in his Letter to the Hebrews as the need for the "basic elements" that are basic principles of education and religion that are the utterances of God: ...*you need to have someone teach you again the basic elements of the utterances of God...* (Heb 5:12).

2 Think of [phroneo] what is above, not of what is on earth.
In 3:2, Paul uses the same word, *phroneo,* for "think of" concerning the Christian mindset or attitude focused on what is above in Heaven and not on earth. It is the same word he used in his letters to the Philippians and Romans (Phil 2:2, 5; Rom 12:3).

Paul lists five earthly vices in 3:5: immorality [fornication], impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed. Fornication is sexual intercourse between people not married to each other. According to Scripture and the Church, fornication, like adultery and homosexuality, is a mortal sin. Sexual sins defile God's gift of fertility and the Sacrament of Marriage. Fertility was God's first gift to humanity (Gen 1:28) in which He invites men and women to become His partners in creating the next generation. Sexual sins that abuse God's blessing of fertility are mortal sins that block the path to Heaven. St. Paul wrote: *Make no mistake—the sexually immoral [fornicators], idolaters, adulterers, the self-indulgent, sodomites, thieves, misers, drunkards, slanderers, and swindlers, none of these will inherit the kingdom of God* (1 Cor 6:10).

St. Augustine defines sin as, "A word, deed or desire in opposition to the eternal law." Sin is a deliberate transgression of a Law of God, which identifies the four essentials of every sin:
1. Moral law is involved.
2. God is offended.
3. It is a transgression against grace.
4. It is a deliberate act freely committed.

Scripture has always identified two degrees of sin—mortal and venial. Mortal/deadly sin destroys sanctifying grace, the state of friendship with God, and causes the supernatural death of the soul. It is a turning away from God because of an inordinate adherence to creatures that causes grave injury to a person's rational nature and to the social order, depriving the unrepentant sinner his or her eternal salvation. It is called "mortal" or "deadly" sin because it causes the death of the soul by denying the soul the hope of life in Heaven. Venial sin is an offense against God which does not deprive the sinner of sanctifying grace. It is called venial from *venia*, a Latin word meaning, "pardon." The soul still has the vital principle that allows a cure from within. This healing is similar to the healing of a sick or diseased body whose source of animation (the soul) is still present to restore the ailing body and bring it back to health.

➔ Over

3:5 and the greed that is idolatry.
Paul equates greed with idolatry as he did in Ephesians 5:5, listing some of the same vices: *Be sure of this, that no immoral or impure or greedy person, that is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.* Greed is the intense and selfish desire to possess something. Paul's point is that sin, especially sexual sin, can come to dominate a person's life so completely that it replaces God as the most important part of a person's life. Anything that supplants God in one's affections is idolatry.

3:6 Because of these the wrath of God is coming [upon the disobedient].
The "wrath of God" is a Biblical image that uses human language to portray God's divine judgment and just punishment for sins.

In 3:8, Paul lists a second set of five vices in what is to be "put off" as vices generated from the heart but often exercised by the mouth as sins of speech: anger, malice, slander, obscene language, lying. The list of vices reflects the link between one's interior life and its expression in speech which the final vice confirms. Jesus said, *"I tell you, on the Day of Judgment people will render an account for every careless word they speak. By your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned"* (Mt 12:36-37; also see Luke 6:43-45). On Judgment Day, God will hold people accountable for even their careless words because words reveal the true heart/character of a person.

In 3:12, as a parallel to "putting off" the ten vices he listed earlier, Paul invites Christians to "put on" five virtues in Christ: heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. These virtues are the attributes of Jesus in His humanity and the hallmarks of Christians living in the image of Christ by sharing His love with others.

Compare Colossians 3:18-19 to Ephesians 5:21-22 where Paul writes that there are three ways husbands must serve their wives, quoting from the Old Testament creation story of the marriage of Adam and Eve that Jesus also quotes in Matthew 19:5:
1. Husbands must love their wives with the same self-sacrificial love with which Christ loves the Church (verses 25-27).
2. Husbands must love their wives as their own bodies as Christ loves His Body the Church (verses 28-30).
3. Husbands must give their first loyalty to their wives and view their union as "one flesh." Paul is quoting from Genesis 2:24 (verse 31).
In the Ephesians passage and Colossians 3:19, Paul places the greater burden for harmony between husband and wife on the husband.

Some women serving and offering their homes in the local churches:
1. Mary, the mother of John Mark, in Jerusalem
2. Lydia in Philippi
3. Chloe in Corinth
4. Phoebe in Cenchreae
5. Pricilla (who Paul affectionately called Prisca), the wife of Aquila, in Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus
6. Euodia and Syntyche in Philippi
7. Nympha in the Lycus Valley