

# Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"



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## A New Translation

*Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.... (Colossians 1:12–13)*

Paul continues his simple, but quite specific description of God's saving work in His chosen people. We existed in and under the power of darkness. Darkness defined the forces that controlled us. Darkness is essentially a negative force, the absence of light. To the extent that light is present darkness vanishes. In the ordinary depiction of Scripture darkness points us to Satan and his domain, while light directs us to God. We lived wholly under the domain of Satan and remained there until God "translated" us out of that domain. How much ability does darkness have toward light? It has none; they are polar opposites. Darkness cannot exist in the presence of light. It is as impossible and nonsensical to think of a person under the power of darkness seeking after God, longing for God, or in any way moving toward God as it is to think of darkness coexisting with light. Any view of man's new birth, or regeneration that requires any action from man contradicts this basic logical truth.

Paul reinforces this basic truth by his analogy of translation. Since the Bible was originally written in various ancient languages, we all read a translation of the Bible, hopefully a King James translation. I offer no apology for my preference. How much effort did the Greek words of the New Testament manuscripts exert to ensure their translation into the English language? Did the Greek words jump off the page of those old manuscripts, translate themselves, and imprint their English equivalent onto the new page? No, the idea is patently absurd. Yet many sincere Christians go through life believing that they shall never see God or enjoy His eternal kingdom and fellowship unless they accomplish their own translation into God's kingdom. These dear people would readily agree with the point when applied to the literary translation of documents from one language to another, but they seem oblivious to the parallel when applied to their relationship to God and His kingdom. Let's examine Paul's teaching.

D. A. Carson affirms this clear teaching.

The Almighty One has acted on their behalf and already fitted them for an eternal *inheritance*. This language is full of OT echoes and recalls the promise first given to Abram (Gn. 13:14–17) which was later renewed to Israel (Nu. 26:52–56). The inheritance to which Paul refers belongs to a higher plane and a more lasting order than the land of Canaan, for it is *in the kingdom of light*, i.e. in the realm of the light of the age to come, in heaven itself. It belongs to a spiritual dimension, unable to be ravaged by war, famine or the like. This inheritance is the 'hope laid up in heaven' (1:5; cf. 3:1–4) and is none other than the Lord Jesus himself.<sup>1</sup>

Why affirm such a basic doctrinal issue when dealing with the infant Gnostic error? Perhaps that is the precise reason Paul needed to deal with this basic truth of the faith. Tom Constable explores this point.

Perhaps Paul explained redemption because the false teachers were redefining that term too. Redemption is a benefit of union with Christ (v. 13b). "Emancipation" expresses this aspect of Christ's work for us.

"The real redemption [*apolutrosis*, lit. ransoming away] needed by men is not a redemption from fate by gnostic aeons; it is a redemption from sin by a Divine-human Mediator."<sup>362</sup>

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OT OT Old Testament

cf. cf. compare

<sup>1</sup> D. A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary : 21st Century Edition*, 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

<sup>36 36</sup> 36. Johnson, 472:345.

<sup>2</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003).

Notice the beginning point of error in Constable's comments, the redefining of a commonly accepted and understood term. Over the years I have become increasingly wary of men who attempted to redefine common Bible terms. Why do they feel the need to redefine a word or term that is historically and clearly understood? Sadly, their need to redefine Bible terms often grows out of their essential departure from the truth set forth in the accepted definition of the term, no less than the Gnostic teachers in Colosse needed to redefine redemption to make it appear dependent on their Gnostic imaginary leagues of deities and mystical teachers.

Often the gravest of errors dress themselves up to look like commonly accepted and believed truths. Otherwise, people would recognize the error and promptly reject it. The most effective inoculation against error is to constantly teach people balanced and sound Bible truth. Sometimes even repetition is necessary to reinforce and to imbed essential truth into people's minds. Did Jesus not use repetition in His own teachings? Consider as one of many examples Jesus' use of the parable of the talents. The parable in Luke 19 appears in a clearly different setting than its appearance in Matthew 25. Why would Jesus repeat the same parable in two such different settings? He was teaching a common truth of such importance that repetition was necessary to imbed it in the minds of the disciples. One of the descriptions of Biblical preaching is to "reprove." (2 Timothy 4:2) One meaning of reproof is to confront and reject error. Another meaning is to prove the same thing again, to repeat. Jesus directed John's disciples to "...shew John again..." the things that John already knew about Jesus and His work.

Nothing will expose and refute error as effectively as a clear and consistent preaching of New Testament truth. It is said that a primary tool used in training Federal agents to recognize counterfeit money is to expose them for hours on end to real money. After they have seen nothing but real money, they become experts at recognizing counterfeit money. I believe the same principle wisely applies to preaching. Though at times we may need to be quite specific in warning people against errors, one of our best antidotes to error is constantly to teach people the truth of Scripture. If people fully understand truth, they may not understand all the nuances of error, but they will readily grasp that something is wrong and avoid errant teaching.

Though somewhat technical, A. T. Robertson affirms this powerful truth of God's work in and on the behalf of His beloved children.

...describes God the Father's redemptive work and marks the transition to the wonderful picture of the person and work of Christ in nature and grace in verses 14 to 20, a full and final answer to the Gnostic depreciation of Jesus Christ by speculative philosophy and to all modern efforts after a "reduced" picture of Christ. God rescued us out from (ἐκ [ek]) the power (ἐξουσίας [exousias]) of the kingdom of darkness (σκοτους [skotous]) in which we were held as slaves. **Translated** (μετεστησεν [metestēsen]). First aorist active indicative of μεθιστημι [methistēmī] and transitive (not intransitive like second aorist μετεστη [metestē]). Old word. See I Cor. 13:2. Changed us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light.<sup>3</sup>

In our native world of sin we, and all humans in that state, lacked both the ability and the desire or will to move toward God or in any way to alter our spiritual state.

We lacked the ability.

*Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. (John 8:43)*  
Notice the emphasis on ability; ...**ye cannot**...

We lacked the desire, the will.

*And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. (John 5:40)* Notice the absence of will; ...**ye will not**....

In this hopeless state, void of both ability and will or desire, Jesus did for us what we could not do—and did not want to do—for ourselves.

Paul does not describe a hybrid or partial translation, but a full translation from the power of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. Even in the translation of our King James Bible, the translators occasionally "transliterated" certain words. That is, they gave the Greek word an English form rather than actually translating it into its English equivalent. This is true of the word "baptize." The Greek word translated "baptize" in the New Testament means to dip or to immerse. It was used in the first century Greek culture in the garment industry, referring to the manner in which cloth was dyed, its color changed. It was not sprinkled with dye. What a dreadful result that would produce! It was wholly immersed into the

<sup>3</sup>Robertson, A. (1997). *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Vol.V c1932, Vol.VI c1933 by Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. (Col 1:13). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems.

dye liquid. Thus New Testament baptism requires immersion; it cannot be accomplished by pouring or by sprinkling. I find it fascinating that the strongest literary documentation for this fact comes from linguistic scholars who themselves practiced sprinkling or pouring, but they were faithful to the meaning of the Greek word more than to their denominational practice. Thanks to them for this literary integrity.

Our present position in God's kingdom is not that of a hybrid transliteration, but the result of a divine translation. God didn't take us halfway from the power of darkness and tell us to complete the process. He translated us wholly from the power of darkness to the kingdom of His dear Son.

What a blessing!

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church  
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Worship service each Sunday      10:30 A. M.  
Joseph R. Holder                      Pastor