

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



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## Redeemed!

*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: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:12–14)*

Paul continues to expand the reasons for which he thanks God on behalf of the Colossians. In this context deliverance and "translation" refer to our citizenship. Prior to God's translating grace, we were hopeless slaves under the power of darkness, but He translated us out of that domain into the "kingdom of his dear Son." However, Paul has not yet explained the solution to our debt problem, our sin-debt problem. Now in Verse 14 he explains God's remedy for that problem.

In the Old Testament redemption was a family matter. After Israel entered Canaan and "possessed their possession," God gave them a set of rules to govern their life there. Each tribe received a specific territory. Within each tribal area, God divided portions of the land to families. As we know the concept, the people could not sell their land. They might indent it for a limited time, but they could never sell it. The same basic principle applied to individuals. An Israelite might become indebted beyond his ability to pay, forcing him to sell himself and/or his family into servitude for a limited time to pay his debt. If someone else in the family decided to intervene, he could step into the situation and pay off his "near-relative's" debt. The term that applied to this intervention was "redemption." Mosaic law precisely identified the only people who had the right to redeem; it must be a near relative to the indebted person. A stranger or even a good friend who was not a near relative could not redeem.

In the Roman culture that dominated the first century the term "redemption" referred to the act of buying a person out of slavery. Roman law included none of the restrictions outlined above for the Jewish law of redemption.

This *redemption*, which is a present possession of the Colossians, is closely linked with *the forgiveness of sins*. 'Redemption

releases from the power of sin and forgiveness from its guilt' (D. Guthrie).<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes John Gill (Commentary on the Whole Bible) is wordy, but often he captures the rich breadth of the Biblical text. His commentary on this verse is rich.

**In whom we have redemption...** Which is an excellent and wonderful blessing of grace saints have in and by Christ; and lies in a deliverance from sin, all sin, original and actual, under which they are held captive, in a state of nature, and by which they are made subject to the punishment of death; but through the sacrifice of Christ it is taken, and put away, finished, and made an end of; and they are freed from the damning power of it, or any obligation to punishment for it; and in consequence of this are delivered from the enslaving governing power of it by his grace and Spirit, and will hereafter be entirely rid of the very being of it: it consists also of a deliverance from the law, the curse and bondage of it, under which they are held on account of sin, the transgression of it; but being delivered from sin, they are also from the law, its accusations, charges, menaces, curses, and condemnation; as likewise out of the hands of Satan, by whom they are led captive; for through the ransom price paid by Christ they are ransomed out of the hands of him that was stronger than they, the prey is taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered by him that has led captivity captive: in short, this redemption is a deliverance out of the hands of all their enemies, and from all evils and misery, the effects of sin, from death, and hell, and wrath to come. The author of it is

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

Christ, the Son of God, the Son of his love, his dear Son: he was called to this work in the council of peace, in which the affair of redemption was consulted; and he agreed to undertake it in the covenant of grace, of which this is a principal article; and being in his constitution, as Mediator, every way fit and proper for it: as man, the right of redemption belonged to him, being the near kinsman of his people, and, as God, he was mighty and able to perform it; as man he had something to offer, and, as God, could make that sacrifice valuable and effectual to all saving purposes; as man, he had compassion on human nature, and, as God, was concerned for things pertaining to his honour and glory. And thus being every way qualified, he was sent, and came on this errand, and has obtained a redemption, which is precious, plenteous, complete and eternal: it is now with him, and "in him"; and he is made this, and everything else to his people, that they want. The subjects of this blessing are, not angels, but men; and not all men, but some that are redeemed from among men, out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation; who are called by the name of Jacob, the people of Christ, a peculiar people, and the church of God; and evidentially are such, who have faith in Christ, love to the saints, and good hope of eternal life; who know the grace of God in truth, are made meet to be partakers of the eternal inheritance, being delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of Christ, and are designed by the we in this text: the means by which this blessing is procured,<sup>2</sup>

In this verse, Paul postures our redemption with our forgiveness. There is a direct corollary between the two. We could not possibly enjoy present forgiveness apart from the redemption purchased by Jesus' blood. That is the point of the Guthrie quote above from Carson's commentary.

Redemption releases from the power of sin and forgiveness from its guilt.

Consider a finite illustration of this incomparable truth. We owed a debt that we could not possibly pay. First, the debt was too great. Second, we were not merely "under-employed" or unemployed, but we were dead and therefore unable to do anything whatever to pay that debt, and we had no estate from which we could order its payment. By the giving of His life, the

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<sup>2</sup> Gill, John, *Exposition of the Entire Bible*. Copied from SwordSearcher Bible Study Software.

shedding of His blood, for us, Jesus paid every penny we owed because of our sins. During the history of Christian doctrine, a rather bizarre notion arose, the idea that we owed the debt of our sins to Satan. Our sins represent an asset to Satan, not a debt. We owed the debt to God and to His just, but offended law. Jesus didn't offer Himself in payment to Satan, but to the Father. What an absurd notion!

If you or I owed a monumental debt and could not pay it, what would happen to our credit rating, our ability to borrow money and to carry out the ordinary activities of daily life? Our credit rating would be ruined, and we could not buy anything on credit. Even if we eventually managed to pay off the debt, our credit history and rating would remain in a shambles.

Think about Paul's linking of redemption and forgiveness in this way. By His substitutionary death, Jesus paid every penny of our impossible debt. We don't owe anything now against that debt. We owe the debt of Christian love and godly service, but not the debt imposed against God by our sins. Now the debt no longer exists. Ah, but the guilt, our tainted credit history, remains on the record. In forgiveness Jesus removes our bad credit history, and restores us with His healing balm of grace so that we can live our lives for Him and to His glory without the weight of that debt. In *Pilgrim's Progress*, I recall a scene in which Pilgrim has long carried a near impossible burden on his back. Wherever he went, whatever he did, that onerous burden went with him. In a priceless scene, Pilgrim is standing at the top of a hill. He looks down below him and sees an empty tomb. Wonder of divine grace, as Pilgrim focuses on the empty tomb, the burden falls off his back, and rolls down the hill into the empty tomb. The burden was gone! Pilgrim was free from its dreadful weight.

God indeed holds us accountable for our sins in a practical or temporal sense.<sup>3</sup> He allows the

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<sup>3</sup> There is no contradiction in the points made. While God forgives us wholly and fully, He does not reverse the temporal—and temporary—consequences of our sins. For example, a person may indulge in a sinful lifestyle and contract HIV. If God subsequently regenerates this person, He forgives, but that does not remove the HIV from the forgiven sinner's body. Ah, the body will not have HIV in the resurrection, but the disease shall continue in this life. We all live with one or another consequence of our personal sins, but we should daily celebrate God's forgiveness, and we should refuse to allow those consequences to impede our praise of God. John Newton never forgot his slave trader days, but he also never

consequences of our sins to remain, a reminder of their awfulness. Sometimes we allow this point to load us up with Pilgrim's burden. God's forgiveness reminds us that God for Christ's sake has forgiven us. Therefore, even as we may live with the temporal consequences of our sins, we can find God's healing forgiveness and blessing. We who were such sinners receive His blessings to enter His church, to sing His praises, to pray to Him as our loving Father, to enjoy His "feast of fat things" in our daily lives. How can this be? It can be because God forgave us even as He redeemed us by Jesus' blood.

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church  
16434 Woodruff  
Bellflower, California

Worship service each Sunday      10:30 A. M.  
Joseph R. Holder                              Pastor

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forgot to praise God for "Amazing Grace" that saved him from that life.