

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

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## Redemption: An Eternal Purpose

*And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. (1 Peter 1:17–21, KJV 1900)*

Jesus' coming and work was not a last-minute scramble by God to recover from Adam's sin. Before God created our material universe, He "Ordained" Jesus to come and complete His assigned work of redemption. Over five hundred years before Jesus came in human flesh, the Holy Spirit inspired the prophet Daniel to prophecy the precise time of His coming. (Daniel 9:24-27) First century Jews, knowing Daniel's prophecy, anxiously looked for His coming. Several key New Testament passages refer to God's eternal purpose in Jesus, or to His purpose for the redemption of His elect in Jesus before "...the foundation of the world." (Ephesians 1:4)

Jesus' foreordination was not a contingency plan on God's part, as if He either could not or would not purpose certain and secure means to redeem His elect. Nor does Scripture describe this eternal purpose in terms of an uncertain and provisional design that merely opened the door of possibility that fallen sinners must walk through. From Spurgeon to contemporary pulpit confusion, the foolish wrangling to balance God's sovereignty and man's responsibility leaves hungry sheep confused and looking to the wrong source and to the wrong methods for their eternal security. Eternal salvation is not presented in Scripture as a cooperative venture between God and man—never. Scripture presents it as a certain and successful work, wholly accomplished by the Person and work of God. Our passage makes that point. Redemption through the Lamb of God is affirmed prior to our belief, faith, and hope. God redeemed His elect through the sacrificial death of His Son, applied that redemptive benefit in the new birth through the exclusive work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:1-8), and then commands His born-again elect to live the abundant life, characterized by belief in God, faith in Him and His effectual work, and hope that is anchored in God's faithfulness, just as Abraham's faith was so anchored.

If Jesus' redemptive price was paid for all humanity, but humans must make the final installment payment by doing anything, anything whatever, to gain free title to eternal life with God,

what—in the end—actually accomplishes our redemption? Where should our faith and hope rest in such a belief system? If Jesus did as much for the eternally lost as for the eternally saved, what makes the actual difference between eternity in hell or eternity in heaven? Scripture consistently directs us to the eternal purpose of God, fully and successfully accomplished in time through the work of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 4:12; notice that the verse does not indicate a basis by which we might—or might not—be saved, but a basis on which we "...**must** be saved")

In the Old Testament law of redemption, the man under debt could not pay his debt. By his own conduct, he put himself into bankruptcy. All of his debt, not part of it, was paid by his near-kinsman-redeemer. This law serves as the model for the New Testament doctrine of our redemption in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We sing a hymn that attempts to capture this theme. "Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe." However, as true as the first point is, the second point misses the true outcome of the first. Some hymnal publishers have recognized this flaw and have changed the words to "Jesus paid it all, all the debt I owed." If we owed an impossible debt to divine justice for our sins, and if Jesus' death merely transfers the debt from divine justice to Jesus, we still owe the impossible debt. Most of us who paid for our homes through a mortgage have experienced occasions when the bank or financial institution that originally processed and funded our mortgage sold it to another bank or financial institution. We still owed exactly the same sum; we merely started sending our monthly mortgage payment to another institution at another address. If we owed God an impossible debt, we are no better off if we still owe the debt to Jesus. However, if he wholly liquidated our debt, He gives us clear title to our eternal inheritance based on His full payment of our debt. We have the inheritance, and we make no payment; the debt has been fully paid. If Jesus paid the full debt, rational financial principles, and Scripture, acknowledge the paid-in-full-debt. God does not require double payment, first from Jesus and then again from you and me.

In our financial world, demanding double payment is illegal and immoral. God does not—ever—demand double payment for our sins. Jesus paid the full debt—end of story. Our present “Debt” is defined as thanksgiving and worship to Him as our acts of gratitude for His doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

God’s foreordination did not include every act of every human being who would live. Peter clearly applies the word exclusively to Jesus’ Person. He uses the personal pronoun, “who.” God eternally purposed the final, eternal security of His elect through His appointed Surety with ultimate certainty. This outcome was so important to Him—to His eternal purpose—that He would not put any part of it in the hands of uncertain humans. From my early childhood, I recall hearing preachers who did not understand this doctrine constantly preach on the fragile uncertainty of eternal salvation. When confronted with the Bible doctrine of election, they would typically play the childish quip, “Oh, I believe in election. In eternity, God cast a vote, Satan cast a vote, and the present outcome is tied. The sinner must cast the deciding vote.” This idea presumes an absurdity; that God permits Satan to have decisive input in the final, eternal destiny of His chosen people. If this were the case, Satan is effectively ruling with God—or overruling Him. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit cast the only votes allowed, and they all voted for the same people. The outcome of the election is eternally certain. That is the weight of Peter’s word “foreordained.”

*Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory....* First John 5:1 affirms that the new birth, wholly accomplished by God, occurs prior to our believing, not subsequent to it or because of it. Who accomplishes the new birth? Jesus emphasized this truth with Nicodemus (John 3:1-8), concluding with the point that the wind, depicting the Holy Spirit, “...bloweth where he listeth....” The Holy Spirit doesn’t retire passively waiting for us to tell Him where to blow. He, like the blowing wind, doesn’t consult with us. In the analogy, we witness the evidences of the blowing wind, but we do not in any way direct or control it. The new birth, wholly caused by God, enables a person to believe in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ.

*...that your faith and hope might be in God.* Peter concludes with a vital truth. Based on the nature of God’s eternally saving work, our faith cannot be in ourselves, in our faith, or in our works. If our faith is rightly anchored, it will be to the Anchor Rock of God. (Hebrews 6:16-20) Scripture identifies many people who believe in God, but put their faith in false hope and false gods. Paul charges this false belief onto the Galatians. They are children of God, but they have embraced another gospel and another Christ, not the one and only true Christ and true gospel. Peter’s point is clear. In unbelief or under the influence of false teachers, a child of God may believe in something

or someone other than the Lord Jesus Christ, placing their hope wrongly in the false god, just as the Galatians did. Paul first charges them with removing from “...*him* that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.” (Galatians 1:6) Removing from “...*him* that called you...” means that they removed their faith from Jesus, so they forsook both Him and the truth of the gospel. Later in the letter, Paul charges that they have fallen under bewitching error, “...that ye should not obey the truth...” (Galatians 3:1) The point that Peter makes is that no child of God can rightly believe in, have faith in, or hope in anyone other than God and Jesus’ finished work. Any belief or hope in anyone or anything else constitutes irrational idolatry and is committed with no valid grounds. The evidence of what God has done through the Lord Jesus Christ is so fully affirmed in Scripture, and in the true message of the gospel, that no basis exists for a rational belief in anything else. How sad it is to observe sincere people bowing before humanistic idols and giving those idols the worship that God alone deserves.

*For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. (Jeremiah 2:13 KJVP)*

Notice the details of this analogy. God describes Himself as the “...fountain of living waters,” fresh, clear water. Notice the counterpart of stagnant water gathered weeks and held in the cistern for future use. It is as irrational for someone to prefer stagnant cistern water over fresh, spring-fed water as for someone to believe in false gods and errant gospels instead of the Lord Jesus Christ and the New Testament truth of Him and of His perfect work. Who does this, “...*my people*”?

The gospel of grace is a hard doctrine for many folks. When Jesus taught the principles of His own grace as the sinner’s only remedy, including the truth that God performs all the work that removes the stain of sin and gives us hope of eternity with God, many disciples who had heard Jesus Himself teach those truths turned away and no longer walked with Him. (John 6:66) However, some also remained steadfast in their faith and service. (John 6:67-68) When faced with man’s way or God’s way, which do we prefer? When we look for solutions to needs or problems that we observe, do we look to what a man has done, or do we look to Scripture and what God teaches us to do? Do we accept Scripture as we find it, or do we strain it to the breaking point to appear to teach what we want it to teach, though it doesn’t teach those things? Our answers to such questions will reveal much about our true faith. Do we walk away from Jesus in favor of our own cisterns of stale, corrupt knowledge, or do we look to Him and to His revelation in Scripture for fresh and wise—true—words to meet our needs and to instruct us? “Lord, to whom shall we go?”

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Worship service each Sunday  
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10:30 A. M.  
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