

Text: Colossians 1:13-14

Title: Complete Transfer

Truth: God has moved us out of darkness and into light. I am thankful!

Date/Location: Sunday July 19, 2015 at FBC

Introduction

The structure of the passage is simple; its ideas are profound. Verses 9-12 record Paul's ongoing prayer for the Colossians to be filled with the knowledge of God's will and to behave themselves in a manner worthy of the name "Christian." Paul thanked God because God qualified the Colossians to be heirs with all other believers. Prior to salvation, no person is qualified/approved/authorized to participate in salvation's blessings. But we can thank God that He did three things to approve the Christian believer for Heaven. These are:

I. Delivered

A. The verb *deliver* means to rescue from dangers of all sorts, whether Satan (Matt. 6:13), natural or supernatural disasters (2 Peter 2:7), evil deeds (2 Timothy 4:18), unbelieving people (Rom. 15:31, 2 Thess. 3:2), divine wrath (1 Thess. 1:10), persecution (2 Timothy 3:11), temptation (2 Peter 2:9), sin (Rom. 7:24), enemies (Luke 1:74), the lion's mouth (2 Timothy 4:17), death (2 Cor. 1:10), ungodliness (Rom. 11:26), and even, although impossible, the cross (Matt 27:43). This past tense indicates that our deliverance was a past event. We can look back on it with gratitude. The person who does not know peace with God can look forward to this blessing if he or she will only exercise faith. It is notable that the example situations are *dangerous*. Sin and its consequences are a severe danger that requires divine rescue.

B. Biblical and historical illustrations of the rescue idea abound. The Israelites were delivered from the power of darkness in Egypt—the iron furnace—in 1445 B.C. (Deut. 4:20, 1 Kings 8:51, Jer. 11:4). They were delivered from the hands of many enemies by their judges in the book by that name. They were delivered from Babylonian captivity. They were delivered from Antiochus by the Maccabees. Some slaves escaped their "Egypt" in the 1850s with the help of an Underground Railroad conductor named Harriet Tubman, who herself became a living legend called Moses.

C. We were captive to sin, death, and Satan, as are all who remain in unbelief at this moment or who never escaped unbelief during their lifetime. If in our minds we personify sin and death as dreaded masters,

we will get the idea of how wonderful it is to be delivered from them, and how awful it is to pay homage to them. The accuser, Satan, that is, the devil, also held us under his power. He is the ruler of this world (John 12:31, 14:40, 16:11; Eph. 6:12; 1 John 5:19). It is his realm that is called the power of darkness (Acts 26:18).

His realm could be called the kingdom of Satan, by which we could consider him as the king; the earth as the realm; and “worldlings” as his subjects. However, the Bible doesn’t really use the *kingdom* terminology to refer to people in this world as “a Satanic kingdom.” Satan’s kingdom is viewed as his rulership over the demons in the spirit realm (Matt. 12:26, Luke 11:18; see also Eph. 1:21, 6:12, Col. 2:15; Rev. 9:11). The world is seen as a collection of kingdoms that Satan has limited power over (Luke 4:5-6 // Matt. 4:8-9).

II. Transferred

- A. The verb *conveyed* means to transfer or to bring or transplant into. In a negative way, it is used to refer to *someone* being deposed (like 1 Kings 15:1, Luke 16:4, Acts 13:21-22; Daniel 2:21) or *something* being removed (1 Cor. 13:2). This word is also in the past tense.
- B. Combined with the rescue from the domain of darkness, this transfer causes a complete change of realm for the new believer. The Christian does not live under the power of Satan anymore. Any claim that “Satan made me do it” is thus neutralized for the believer (that claim is almost always untrue for unbelievers as well).
- C. When were we transferred? At the moment of our salvation. Substantial preparations were made at the cross; but the actual transfer did not come until the time of our choosing to follow Christ.
- D. To where were we transferred? The simple answer is given in the text: The kingdom of the Son of God. Once again, we can look at all believers as the subjects of a kingdom over which Christ is Lord, and the realm is either the world (of living believers) or a split realm between the world and heaven of all believers. But the Bible does not major on the term *kingdom* for this. It rather prefers to use church to describe the institution in which believers find themselves. The present age is one of a distributed, decentralized church, not a centralized monolithic kingdom.
 - 1. There are lots of portions in the New Testament that speak about kingdoms—154 verses to be precise. The church is also frequently referenced, at 107 verses.

2. The situation is reversed if we limit ourselves to the books from Romans to Revelation: kingdom is used in 25 verses, the church in 85. I believe this change has to do with the recession of the kingdom into the background as God presently pursues an active work with the church in preparation for His future work through His kingdom.
3. There are a handful of verses that describe the kingdom as somehow present now (Rom. 14:17, 1 Cor. 4:20 and Col. 1:13).
4. Most of the kingdom verses have to do with God's kingdom starting up in the future, as in who will inherit it, etc.
5. The gospel of the kingdom is an interesting phrase that bears further investigation (Matt. 4:23, 9:35, 24:14; Mark 1:14-15). A key text that must be examined is 1 Cor. 15:25. I leave these for later.
6. In short, I believe the best understanding of this verse is that we are removed from the realm of Satan, sin, and death, and granted citizenship in the realm of Christ (John 3:3, 5; Eph. 2:19; Phil. 3:20). This citizenship will come to full expression in the Kingdom of the God of Heaven on this earth after the Tribulation. Then that kingdom will be "merged into" the heavenly state and continue into eternity future. Our Kingdom-of-God citizenship is not only useful at that future time; it has benefits and ramifications for the here and now.

III. Redeemed and Forgiven

The text says "in whom." The deliverance and transfer come to Christians because of the Person to Whom they are attached in a living union.

Christian salvation is not about what you do or what you know; it is about Who you know and what He did!

A. "We have redemption" means that we own our release from a formerly captive condition (BDAG, s.v. "ἀπολύτρωσις"). The word is used of emancipating slaves, and in the Bible in several places:

Heb 11:35 to speak of release from torture, not accepted so as to gain a better reward in heaven.

Rom 3:24 regarding redemption in Christ, the only kind there is.

Rom 8:23 of the future glorification of our physical bodies.

Eph 1:7 about redemption coming through the blood of Jesus (without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness, Heb. 9:22).

Eph 4:30 concerning a future day of redemption in which all of salvation will be provided in the believer's life.

1 Cor. 1:30 to inform us that redemption is entirely wrapped up in the person who provides it, Jesus Christ.

- B. The particular facet of redemption emphasized here is the release from captivity to sin, for the next phrase qualifies this benefit as “the **forgiveness** of sins.” Forgiveness has to do with liberation from something that confines, as from jail (Luke 4:18 twice, Isaiah 61:1, 58:6). More to the point here, forgiveness is a release from obligation to pay a penalty, that is, to receive punishment for sins.
1. We must make sure to understand that Christian redemption *is* the forgiveness of sins. It is not liberation from economic oppression or from social injustices of various sorts. These ideas are common in liberation or liberal theologies, but these systems miss the mark entirely when it comes to Christian salvation.
 2. We receive the benefit of release from obligation to pay through the new covenant foundation, that is, the blood of Jesus (Matthew 26:28). Salvation comes through forgiveness of sins (Luke 1:77). Forgiveness through repentance is the message we preach to the nations (Luke 24:47, Acts 2:38). Forgiveness is a gift from Christ (Acts 5:31). See also Acts 13:38-39; 26:18.
 3. Of course if you downplay the significance of sin then forgiveness will not seem important. But if you understand that sin’s penalty is eternal death, you will want to know how to be released from it.
 4. A couple of inquirers at our Art Fair booth asked whether one little sin would send someone to Hell for eternity.
 - i. The short answer is yes, because failing one point of God’s moral code is equivalent to breaking the whole thing (James 2:10).
 - ii. The longer answer is still yes, because any one sin is an offense against the infinitely holy God; because one act of disobedience by Adam was enough to plunge the entire race into sin and death; because we are guilty as sinful members of a sinful race before we even commit a single conscious sin; because even some infants experience physical death before doing a single sin; because people between Adam and Moses, who had no published law of God, also experienced death.
 - iii. Finally, the hypothetical question does not reflect the reality of the questioner: no one can say they did “one little sin” and then complain that God is unfair! The fact is that every person does lots of sins, and has a sin-bent nature, does not acknowledge God for

Who He is, rejects Jesus Christ, and the like. These are no minor infractions.

- iv. May I ask a question? Do you have a thankful heart toward the God who created you, sustains your life, and provides for you everything you have? God loves you; not being thankful is a crime against Him.

Conclusion

There is hardly a more brief but glorious statement in the Bible of the problem and provision of salvation.

Our Lord was delivered to the power of darkness (Luke 22:46-48, 52-54) so we could be delivered from the power of darkness (Col. 1:13, Acts 28:16) and be granted citizenship in His glorious kingdom through redemption, that is, forgiveness of sins. Gratitude! MAP