

Colossians 1:9-14; Saints in the Light; Redemption and "Aphesis"

By Karl Kemp; November 2013

I'll always quote from the New American Standard Bible, 1995 edition, unless I mention otherwise. Sometimes I'll make comments in the middle of quotations in brackets [] or [[]] to make them more obvious. If you click on my name at one of my articles, it will take you to a listing of all of my articles on this site. I would like to recommend the paper in 6 parts titled "Some Comments on 'Destined to Reign' by Joseph Prince and Righteousness and Holiness."

INTRODUCTION: These verses are of key importance on the super-important topic of righteousness, holiness, redemption, and the victory over all sin. Colossians 1:9-14 are discussed on pages 146-151 of my book, "Holiness and Victory Over Sin: Full Salvation Through the Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ," in the chapter titled "A Study on the Meaning of the Greek Noun 'Aphesis.' " (Colossians 1:9-20 are all one sentence in the Greek.) I discussed these verses and the meaning of "aphesis" in Articles #s 19 and 20 in my paper "Twenty-Eight Articles on Holiness and Victory Over Sin" that is on my internet site (Google to Karl Kemp Teaching). Those articles are available individually on this Christian article site. I will borrow heavily in this article from those articles, which borrowed heavily from my book. See the book and those articles for more details.

COLOSSIANS 1:9-11. "For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it* we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, (10) so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; (11) strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously"

The apostle Paul was concerned that the Colossian Christians (and all Christians) be transformed/sanctified and "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects." That certainly includes the victory over all sin, doesn't it? Christians must know the will of God (see verse 9) so they can cooperate (by faith) with His saving grace, which includes His sanctifying power (see verse 11). These verses show that Christians are enabled (and required) to live righteous, holy, fruitful, and steadfast lives (by the saving grace of God in Christ through faith). In the following verses, verses 12-14, the apostle Paul goes on speaking of the glory of new-covenant salvation that redeems sinners from

the kingdom of sin and spiritual death and transfers them to the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ and makes them righteous and holy.

COLOSSIANS 1:12-14. "[joyously] giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in [the] light. (13) For He rescued us [The 1977 edition of the NASB had "delivered us"] from the domain [or, authority] of [the] darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, (14) in whom we have [the] redemption, the forgiveness [Greek "aphesis"] of sins."

God the Father "has qualified us" (Col. 1:12). We could also translate "has made us fit." The Amplified Bible has, "has qualified *and* made us fit." For one major thing, the Father has qualified us (or, made us fit) to share in the inheritance of the SAINTS in the light by making us SAINTS (holy people, set-apart-for God people; people who live in an abiding state of holiness; this is the Christian ideal, and the New Testament doesn't present it as an unrealistic ideal; God's grace is sufficient).

Verse 13 shows how God the Father brought us into THE LIGHT (the definite article "the" is included in the Greek; the light includes God's truth, righteousness, and holiness): He "rescued us [or, delivered us] from the domain [or, authority; the NASB has a marginal note, "Lit(erally) authority] of [the] darkness [[the definite article is included in the Greek; the darkness is the kingdom of Satan, which is a kingdom characterized by the absence of truth, righteousness, holiness, God's love, etc.; when we were in the kingdom of darkness we were spiritually dead and in bondage to sin]], and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son ["the Son of His love"]," which is the kingdom of THE LIGHT.

It must be understood that the victory over sin is far from being automatic or always easy. The world, the flesh (the old man who still wants to live in sin), and the devil and his hosts are against us. However, as we walk in agreement with the Word of God and by the Holy Spirit of God on a continuous basis through faith, which we are called and enabled to do, we will walk with the victory over all sin. We are not supposed to make any room for sin or demons. If we should sin, forgiveness is provided through the atoning death of Christ when we repent.

The word "saints" is a translation of the plural of the Greek adjective "hagios," which is typically translated "holy" or (in the plural) "saints" in the New Testament. Christians are SAINTS (holy people) in that they have been SET APART (by God) for God. They have been SET APART from the kingdom of the darkness, from spiritual death, and from bondage to sin. They have been transferred into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the kingdom of the light, and they partake of the life of God (having been born again), and they become slaves of righteousness (having been redeemed from bondage to sin; from being slaves of sin). Much of Col. 1:9-14 helps explain what it means to be saints. Also see Col. 1:21-4:6 and 4:12, and see the last chapter of my book.

THE LIGHT at the end of verse 12 is contrasted with "the darkness" that is mentioned in verse 13. God is LIGHT and His kingdom is the kingdom of THE LIGHT (see, for example, John 1:4-9; 8:12; 9:5; Acts 26:18; 1 Pet. 2:9; 1 John 1:5-7; Rev. 21:23; and 22:5).

I'll read Col. 1:12 from the *Amplified Bible*, "Giving thanks to the Father, Who has qualified *and* made us fit to share the portion, which is the inheritance of the saints (God's holy people) in the light."

Formerly we were slaves of sin and the god of this world; we were under "the authority of the darkness." I'll quote what the apostle Paul said in Rom. 13:12-14, "The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds [or, the works] of [the] darkness [which includes everything that is sinful] and put on the armor of [the] light. (13) Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. (14) But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts." And I'll quote what he said in Eph. 5:8, 9, 11, 12, "for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (9) (for the fruit of the Light *consists* in all goodness and righteousness and truth).... (11) Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds [or, works] of darkness, but instead *even* expose them; (12) for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret."

It is very important to see (and obvious) that the emphasis of Col. 1:12, 13 goes far beyond the forgiveness of the guilt of sin(s), though that is included, and is very important. On being set free from the authority of sin, see, for example, John 8:31-36; Rom. 5:19-6:23; 8:1-14 [see my recent articles on Romans chapter 6 and Rom. 8:1-14]; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:16-25 [see my recent article on these verses]; Eph. 4:17-6:20; Titus 2:11-3:11; and 1 Pet. 1:13-2:25. On being set free from the authority of Satan, see Matt. 28:18-20; John 16:11; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 1:20-2:10; 4:27; Col. 2:15; and Heb. 2:14-18. (Most of the passages listed in this paragraph are discussed in my book and/or writings on my internet site.) I'll quote the last two passages I listed here:

Colossians 2:15. "When He [God the Father] had disarmed the rulers and authorities [[The Lord Jesus, by bearing our sins with the guilt and penalties, including the penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin, set us free from the authority of Satan (and spiritual death, and sin). These enemies gained authority over us through our sins, especially Adam's one great transgression (see Rom. 5:12-21; Romans chapter 5 is discussed on pages 89-96 in my book; also see Article #s 11 and 12 of my "Twenty-Eight Articles on Holiness and Victory Over Sin").]], He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him [through the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning death (and resurrection)]."

Our being born again, walking in the righteousness and holiness of God, casting out demons, etc. publicly manifests the overthrow of Satan and his kingdom.

Hebrews 2:14-18 (NIV). "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted [especially to help/enable them to resist temptation and to walk in the righteousness of God (by grace through faith)]; cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 10:13]."

I'll quote COLOSSIANS 1:14 again, "in whom [in Christ Jesus] we have redemption [we have "the redemption"; the definite article is included in the Greek], the forgiveness [Greek "aphesis"] of sins." This verse has much in common with Eph. 1:7; see my recent article on Eph. 1:3, 4, and 7.

The Greek noun "aphesis" is typically translated "forgiveness," or the equivalent, in this verse, but I don't believe this is an adequate way to translate aphasis in this verse, or in several other verses. ("Aphasis" is discussed in some detail in chapter 7 of my book, "Holiness and Victory Over Sin," and much information on that noun is included in Article #19 of my "Twenty-Eight Articles on Holiness and Victory Over Sin.") A translation like "in whom we have the redemption, the release from sins [with the guilt and the penalties (including the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin)]" is required. This other translation says so much more, and it agrees perfectly with what "the redemption" (Col. 1:14) means and with what the apostle Paul just said in the preceding verses.

I believe this is extremely important! If we put most of the emphasis on forgiveness and right standing and minimize the enablement, and requirement, for Christians to walk in the righteousness and holiness of God with the victory over sin, by grace through faith (which is being done by large numbers of Christians in our day), we are distorting the gospel in a very substantial way at the very heart of the gospel. God hates sin and He paid an infinite price to set us free from sinning. I believe the New Testament puts about ten percent of the emphasis on forgiveness and positional, legal righteousness and about ninety percent of the emphasis on our walking in the imparted righteousness of God (by grace through faith) to the glory of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ didn't just bear our sins with the guilt so we could be forgiven, as important as that is. He bore our sins with the guilt and with the penalties (very much including the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin) in His all-important atoning death, so He could forgive us and redeem us

out of the kingdom of the darkness, with its spiritual death and bondage to sin. He bore our spiritual death, so we could be redeemed out of the kingdom of spiritual death and be born again. He bore our bondage to sin, so we could be redeemed out from under that evil taskmaster and be made righteous and holy with the imparted righteousness and holiness of God.

God's redemption through Jesus Christ is THE REDEMPTION in that it is the theme of much Old Testament prophecy and is at the heart of new-covenant salvation. Also, the apostle does not first come to the idea of redemption at Col. 1:14; he has been speaking of the redemption, using different words, in the preceding verses, especially verse 13. On "the redemption" see under Rom. 3:24 in chapter 6 of my book, "Holiness and Victory Over Sin." I'll quote part of what I said there, starting on page 80 of the book. We're discussing the words "through THE REDEMPTION [my emphasis] which is in Christ Jesus" of Rom. 3:24.

Sin formerly reigned (see Rom. 5:21, for example), and we were slaves of sin (see, for example, Rom. 3:9-20; 6:6, 17-22; 8:2, 5-8; and John 8:31-36), but now we have been redeemed out of the kingdom of sin (and spiritual death) through the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ (and His resurrection).

The word REDEMPTION conveys the idea of buying a slave to set him free. We were slaves of sin (according to the New Testament), but we have been redeemed out of the kingdom of sin; we are no longer under the authority and power of sin, and we are no longer to serve our old master of sin (by sinning). If we were forgiven but were still slaves of sin, we would not be redeemed. Let's briefly consider several passages that deal with THE REDEMPTION in Christ Jesus, passages that emphasize the transformation to righteous and holy living.

[I quoted 1 Cor. 6:18-20; Gal. 4:4-7; and Titus 2:11-14 (NIV) in the book; they are quite important, but I'll skip them for this article.] FIRST PETER 1:14-19 speak of THE REDEMPTION and put a very strong emphasis on the need for Christians to be set apart from all sin for God. "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were *yours* in your ignorance [back before you became born-again Christians], (15) but like the Holy One who called you, BE HOLY YOURSELVES ALSO IN ALL YOUR BEHAVIOUR [my emphasis]; (16) because it is written, 'YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.' [Verses 15 and 16 certainly include the victory over all sin, don't they?] (17) And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *upon* earth [We must be afraid to sin against God; that is a healthy fear and a necessary fear according to the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments.]; (18) knowing that you were not REDEEMED [my emphasis] with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile [and sinful] way of life inherited from your forefathers, (19) but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ [In other words, we were redeemed by His all-important atoning death]." Christians

have been redeemed from their former futile, sinful way of life by the atoning blood of Christ. First Peter 1:13-19 are discussed in the last chapter of my book, "Holiness and Victory Over Sin." (That concludes the excerpt from pages 80, 81 of my book)

Now we'll further discuss the words "the forgiveness ["aphesis"] of sins" of Col. 1:14. I can't live with the translation "forgiveness" for aphasis here. As I mentioned, I would translate "the release from sins [with the guilt and the penalties (including the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin)]," or the equivalent. With these words, which are in apposition with the words "we have [the] redemption," the apostle expands on what he means by THE REDEMPTION - he says essentially the same thing using different words.

Formerly we were under our sins with the guilt and the penalties. (See chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 of my book.) To be under our sins with the penalties included being under the authority of sin, spiritual death, Satan, and the darkness. As I mentioned, these enemies gained authority over us through our sins, especially Adam's one great transgression.

God sent His Son to bear our sins with the guilt and the penalties, and He delivered (rescued) us from the authority of the darkness (see Col. 1:13). The deliverance (rescue) of Col. 1:13 refers to the same basic gospel reality as do the expressions "the redemption" and "the release from [our] sins [with the guilt and the penalties (including the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin)]" of verse 14. All these expressions include the forgiveness of the guilt of sin, but they also include much more. We were not just redeemed from the guilt to sin - we were redeemed out of the kingdom of sin. This means, among other things, that we are no longer required to (or supposed to) serve our former master of sin by sinning, not at all. This is very good news! This is what we want, isn't it? Teaching like this, which is typical for the New Testament, was designed to enlighten, convict, and sanctify us, not to condemn us.

Isaiah chapter 53 (key verses of this chapter are discussed in my book; see the listing of passages at the front of the book) is a very important passage to show by what means we are released from our sins with the guilt and the penalties. That chapter deals with the all-important atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I have already mentioned quite a few other passages that are important illustrations of this concept of being redeemed and released from our sins with the guilt and the penalties (including the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin). Since this concept is so important, and since it is not widely understood, let's consider several more illustrations. I'm taking these illustrations from pages 149-151 of my book:

PSALM 130:8. "And He will redeem Israel From all his iniquities." Iniquities is a translation of the plural of the Hebrew noun "awon." I believe this Hebrew noun is

used here (as it very often is) of the iniquities with the guilt AND THE PENALTIES. (Chapter 2 of my book deals with the meaning of this Hebrew noun. I'll quote a sentence from page 13 of that twenty-two page chapter, "The BDB Hebrew Lexicon [under awon] lists 64 verses under the heading 'consequences of, or punishment for, iniquity.' ") Israel needs to be redeemed from her iniquities with the guilt and with the penalties (consequences, punishment). Psalm 130:8, understood in its ultimate sense, prophesies of full salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. The concept of being redeemed from iniquities with the guilt and the penalties in Psalm 130:8 is essentially the same thing as "the redemption, the release from sins [with the guilt and the penalties (including the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin)]" of Col. 1:14.

Two Commentators on Psalm 130:8. J. J. S. Perowne ("Commentary on the Psalms," a 1989 reprint by Kregel), commenting on the words, "[He will redeem Israel] from [all] his iniquities" says (in part), "The redemption includes the forgiveness of sin, the breaking of the power and dominion of sin, and the setting free from all the consequences of sin."

F. Delitzsch (Volume 5 of the Keil and Delitzsch commentaries on the Old Testament) says (in part), "...He, in the fullness of the might of His free grace, will redeem Israel from all its iniquities, by forgiving them and removing their unhappy inward and outward consequences. With this promise the poet comforts himself. He means complete and final redemption, above all, in the genuinely New Testament manner, spiritual redemption."

PSALM 39:8. "Deliver me from all my transgressions; Make me not the reproach of the foolish." The word "transgressions" was translated from the plural of the Hebrew noun "pesha." I believe the idea is "Deliver me from all my transgressions [with the guilt and with the penalties]," or just, "Deliver me from the penalties of my transgressions." The first chapter of my book deals with the meaning of the Hebrew noun *pesha*, and Psalm 39:8 is discussed in that chapter.

MATTHEW 1:21 is another verse that will help us understand the concept of being saved from our sin(s) [with the guilt and with the penalties (including the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin)]. "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus [which means "Yah (which is short for Yahweh) saves"], for it is He who will save His people from their sins." That is, He will save His people from their sins with the guilt and the penalties (including the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin). Note the preposition "from" in Matt. 1:21, "He will save His people FROM their sins [with the guilt and the penalties (including the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin)]." The salvation definitely includes being saved FROM being spiritually dead and in bondage to sin. And note the preposition "from" in the next verse listed here, REVELATION 1:5, "To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins [released us FROM our sins with the guilt and with the penalties (including the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin)] by His blood." I should

mention that the preposition "from" was also used in Psalm 130:8 and Psalm 39:8.

1 PETER 2:24, 25, "and He Himself bore our sins [He Himself bore our sins with the guilt and the penalties (including the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin) in His body on the cross, THAT WE MIGHT DIE TO SIN AND LIVE TO RIGHTEOUSNESS [my emphasis; this is a lot more than being forgiven and having a right standing with God; being dead to sin and living to righteousness (being slaves of righteousness instead of being slaves of sin [cf., e.g., Rom. 6:15-22]) is a big part of what Christianity is all about; God hates sin and He paid an infinite price to set us free from sin and make us righteous with His righteousness], for by His wounds [the wounds that caused His atoning death] you were healed. (25) For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls." The Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, bore our sins with the penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin so that we might be born again and live in the very righteousness and holiness of God, as His born-again, very thankful children.

R. C. Lucas ("The Message of Colossians and Philemon," published by InterVarsity Press in 1980) has an interesting discussion regarding the meaning of "the forgiveness of sins." I'll quote the major part of his primary paragraph on this topic, "The blessing of forgiveness has sometimes been devalued, as though it were no more than the wiping of the slate clean. But sin is always a power that holds people in thrall [in bondage], so, in Paul's teaching forgiveness must include the breaking of that power. It is inconceivable that God should forgive the past, and then send us back incapable of living a new life. Pardon without deliverance would be a mockery, and it is never so contemplated in the New Testament. We ought not speak of 'mere forgiveness' as though this were but an initial blessing of the gospel. The gospel is precisely the offer of freedom because of the forgiveness of our sins. (E.g., Acts 13:38, 39.) That forgiveness flows from the cross where Christ not only cancelled our debt but also disarmed our enemy (see Colossians 2:14, 15)."

I appreciate these words by R. C. Lucas, but I'll make two brief comments. Most Christians don't use the word "forgiveness" in the full sense presented in this excerpt, and I don't believe they ever will. Secondly, I believe a translation like "release from sins [with the guilt and the penalties (including the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin)]" more accurately reflects the meaning intended for "aphesis" here in Col. 1:14, and in several other verses (including Eph. 1:7).

May the will of God be fully accomplished through this article and His people be edified to the fullest extent possible! In Jesus' name!

Karl Kemp; November, 2013

© Copyright by Karl Kemp