

Colossians

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Preacher: Delves, Stanley (1897-1978)

[0 : 0 0] For our meditation this morning, as the Lord may help and direct us, I will read from the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians, the twelfth and the thirteenth verses.

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.

The first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians, the twelfth and thirteenth verses. It will be remembered, of course, that last Lord's Day I spoke on the twelfth verse, but not having time and opportunity to speak of the giving thanks for these mercies.

I thought I would read the two verses this morning and so bring that point into our meditation. Giving thanks unto the Father who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

For this second of the two verses, of course, is a further expression of work of God's grace and it's so necessary to make us partakers of that glorious inheritance.

[2 : 0 4] Now, my friends, the work of God in grace is the most wonderful thing in the world. And the more it's understood in its nature and effects and everything concerning it is considered, the more wonderful it appears.

It's a wonderful thing that God should work in the hearts of men and very wonderful if he should work in mine and in yours here this morning.

To begin with, on this consideration, it's very wonderful that God should have that regard to mankind at all.

As it is written, Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him or the son of man that thou visitest him Lord, what is he that he should attract thy notice and not only thy notice but thy love and that thou shouldst deal with him in the way thou dost Lord, what is man that thou shouldst be mindful of him like that when you consider how great God is and how insignificant by comparison man is it does seem wonderful for God is so great that nothing is anything compared with him two men will he liken

God or with what likeness will he compare unto him for he sitteth upon the circle of the earth and the nations of the world how is a drop of a pocket yea they are less than the small dust of the balance what compared to God are the innumerable millions of mankind they are less than nothing and if it is so with regard to the whole mass of mankind then what is an individual amongst them just one person one little minute speck that's all and that God should regard anyone personally and deal with that one personally and manifest his grace and his love and his mercy to that one personally is almost incredible but so it is that is the nature of the matter

[5 : 22] God doth have regard to men of low estate and he who is so great that the heaven of heavens cannot contain him will yet dwell with him that is poor and of a contrite heart and that trembleth his word it is very wonderful if you consider the nature of God's work in the soul for all that God does is in some sense mysterious to us but I think this is most mysterious we cannot understand how his truth and his grace and his love should operate upon men's hearts but we know it does we know the effects of it they are such as to make a man a new creature to deliver him from the power of darkness and translate him into the kingdom of God's dear son to snatch him from a deserved hell and bring him to an undeserved heaven and fit him for it that's

God's work but it's very mysterious in a sense it's more mysterious than God's work in creation it would seem as though the greatness of creation the universe with all its innumerable worlds is a worthy work of God it might seem indeed as though there at any rate God has manifested what his almighty power can do but actually to create a world is a less wonderful thing than to save a soul much more it's very wonderful in its nature you know the work of God's grace in the soul as

Jesus said of the new birth which is the very commencing of it the wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof and what might be truly added you can feel the power thereof but you cannot tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth so mysteriously does the work of God operate in the soul it is very wonderful and it's very wonderful if we could understand the purpose of God in it you know God doesn't work for nothing behind his work there's his purpose and that purpose is the purpose of eternal love and grace it is to form a people for his praise it's wonderful is the purpose of

God in his work wonderful when by faith we're enabled to trace it in ourselves and to trace God's eternal purpose behind his work of grace upon our souls for God's work is never haphazard there's always a definite man and purpose behind it all and if we could see the work of God as it will appear in its final completion the consummation of his work of grace in glory it would seem wonderful to us that from man lost rebellious ruined polluted dead there should be raised an innumerable number of souls holy pure

Christ like to praise and bless and glorify his name and enjoy him forever that's a wonderful work that has such a wonderful consummation and this is certain my brethren that where God begins the work he will certainly bring it to that blessed termination there will perfect that which concerneth me the Selmist said there will perfect that which concerneth me and this is that which concerns every one of us who have been brought to feel that it concerns us and that is to be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light to be delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of his dear son now that's what concerns us just that and the

[11 : 30] Lord will perfect that which concerneth me he will not forsake the work of his own hands for God to begin is for God to finish for God to purpose is for God to perform now my friends this wonderful work of God is going on it was operated in the days of the apostle Paul and very powerfully through his ministry and amongst the Colossians and in their hearts but it's going on things are not as we would like to see them in the nation and in the world religion as such just now is at a very low ebb but the work of

God is going on he is still delivering people from the power of darkness he is still translating them into the kingdom of his dear son for nothing can thwart God's purpose and nothing can prevent the operations of God's grace now that is my subject this morning to set before you this work of God in this particular of it who has delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of God's dear son I will be very thankful if it should please God to make the word helpful and instructive and a blessing and perhaps especially where he is working this very work of his grace amongst us

I would be very thankful if the word might be means of deepening and furthering that work of grace and confirming it where it is indeed in operation for you know it is very possible to be the subjects of this marvelous work of God's grace and power and yet to be very confused about ourselves and not very clear that this work is really being wrought in us especially I think it is so usually in the first commencement of it very few in whose hearts the Lord is beginning to deliver them from the power of darkness and bring them into the kingdom of his dear son realize what

God is doing in their souls but they will come to realize it in due course and see with thankfulness in their hearts that God has done great things for them it will be a simple method of handling this subject if I speak a little first of what this power of darkness is and how God delivers from it and then speak a little of what the kingdom of God's dear son is and what it means to be translated into it that's a substance of the text now the Lord make it the substance of our meditation as you know very well of course the expression darkness is one of those frequent metaphors in the scripture to describe by that with which we are familiar conditions and things that are very difficult of expression and darkness in the scripture in this usage of the word is a metaphor for blindness in the mind and ignorance and sin sin ignorance and blindness are conditions that are meant by the expression darkness in the scripture of course literal actual darkness cannot by any means be the purport of this word and this is a very familiar expression in the scripture to set forth the natural condition of men until the light of

God's grace and truth penetrates their souls they're in darkness and they walk in darkness and they know not at what they stumble either because as Jesus said darkness hath blinded their eyes for darkness is a very blinding thing no matter how naturally one may have good and clear eyesight but if they're walking in darkness they might as well be blind because darkness blinds their eyes to any sight of anything they know not at what they stumble there's no doubt that primarily the apostle in this expression meant the state of heathenism with all its idolatries and superstitions that obtained at that time in the gentile world that was darkness indeed it was referred to by the prophet isaiah when he said that darkness should cover the earth and gross darkness the people that was a state of the gentile world it was a time of ignorance but the word itself in the meaning of it is not to be confined at all to heathenish darkness it really expresses the condition of the natural mind unenlightened by the holy spirit for in the mind sin and ignorance prevails it is with men to this very day and as much this day as any other day as apostle wrote to the

[19 : 20] Romans their foolish heart was darkened their foolish heart was darkened soul that is by their folly in walking in the ways of sin and ungodliness their heart became darker and darker for sin is a darkening and a blinding evil nothing darkens a soul more than the prevalence of sin sin is darkness in the same sense of meaning as that holiness is light just as holiness is light sin is darkness and because the state of the lost is a state of blackness of darkness forever because sin reigns and prevails in all this evil in that hopeless condition and my friends just as the light of grace in the soul is the prelude to the light of glory in heaven so the darkness of sin in the soul is the prelude to the darkness of hell one just as much as the other for

I must say and it is I think a most solemn and weighty thing to say that the eternal conditions of the soul in the life to come begin here they begin here just like a stream may have a small beginning present it flows into the ocean so sin may seem to have a small beginning but it flows into the ocean of eternal misery and though grace seems to have a small beginning it flows into the ocean of eternal love you think of that the eternal conditions of the soul whether of happiness or misery peace or raw holiness or filthiness the eternal conditions of the soul are beginning here and now in this present time state

Mary Postle speaks of the power of darkness who has delivered us from the power of darkness for there is a power in darkness mind you there's a power in darkness it isn't something that a man can throw off his mind if he wishes to or can be persuaded to it isn't something a man can clear himself from he just cannot let him try you'll find he cannot for there's a power in darkness and are we to understand this power is it personal or impersonal is it that darkness has a power in itself as darkness or is it that there's something deeper here and that the power of darkness is the power of a person brethren it's both darkness would not have the power over men of itself if it was not that there is one who has the power of darkness himself there's no question about that and I will remind you of the reading just now when the apostle Paul was giving that account of his own experience in this matter and then of his call to the ministry and the nature of his ministry and the effects of it was intimated to him it would be to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of

Satan mark that and from the power of Satan unto God God now darkness has such power because it's the power of Satan and just as the holy and blessed spirit operates through the light and truth of the gospel so the power of Satan operates through sin in the soul my friends there never was a man who could deliver himself from the power of Satan by himself never for this power of darkness has such an extensive influence for one thing of course it affects a man's mind his outlook his understanding he just cannot see what there is in the ways of God to desire he cannot see what there is in spiritual things that he should have any concern about them to him they're just dry dreary things and more likely than not there is that unbelief which is a part of the darkness that disposes him to believe there's nothing in it anyway there's nothing in it anyway and why does he have that deal because you see the power of darkness controls the outlook of his mind describe to him what the things of

God are give your own testimony to them what they are to you still you find you're up against the power of darkness nothing you can say can dispel it and this is exactly the teaching of the word of God because in describing this state and the power of darkness in it we read having their understanding darkened through the blindness that is in them through the hardness of their hearts nothing any man can say will deliver anyone's mind from that blinding darkness with regard to divine things and this power of darkness necessarily affects the heart as well as the mind why do men love darkness rather than light for love is an affection of the heart is darkness preferable to light of course it isn't is sin preferable to holiness of course not is enmity hatred bitterness preferable to love and peace of course not but then why why do men love darkness rather than light it's because the power of darkness holds their affections they cannot love the light they cannot they cannot love the light because the power of darkness controls their heart there's that power in darkness that makes it that cannot love anything else except darkness they cannot they might do if it was not that Satan has the power of darkness if it was just a condition as such and there were no no there were no enemy no no devil to exercise power in it it might perhaps be different and describe to anyone the blessings of the gospel they might if it were not that

[28 : 53] Satan holds them in darkness they might turn to it for what I know but I know they cannot now and never will till they're delivered from the power of darkness and so it is with regard to the will now there's been no end of arguments with regard to man's will and much of it I think unprofitable the fact can be plainly enough stated man has got a will there's no question about that if he had not a will he wouldn't be a responsible person man has a will it's part of his nature to have a will he wouldn't be a normal man if he hadn't a will every man has a will he has a will just the same whether it's this way he will not come unto me or whether it's this way thy people shall be willing but he has a will no man is ever lost without being willing to be lost mind you that no one's ever lost without being willing to be lost no man ever rejects the truth without being willing to reject it but why is he willing to reject it because he cannot do anything else the power of darkness controls his will and he's bound to be willing to reject the truth unless he's delivered from the power of darkness that holds his will now these things are deep

I know but they're very true and unless we understand them we can never understand why it is that things are as they are why the gospel has such little acceptance why the truth of it is so little believed why people turn it was seen to us almost naturally away from the ways of godliness to the ways of worldliness we cannot understand it unless we understand the reason and the reason is that the power of darkness controls their spirit and their mind and their will but now with my time nearly gone I mustn't sit down without just getting a little into the other side of this matter my brethren there is such a thing as being delivered from this power of darkness you know being freed from it the mind the will the understanding the heart the affections being delivered from this shocking condition of darkness now it is of course an unquestionable position that whatever delivers from one power must be a stronger power and there is only one stronger power than sin and that's grace and there is only one stronger personality than

Satan and that's the Holy Ghost and that's just where our hope lies when the strong man keeps his house his goods are in peace they don't want to be disturbed but when the stronger than he cometh ah that's it that there's a stronger than the strong man when he cometh then he overcometh him turn him out of doors destroys his armor what is it to be delivered from the power of darkness well I can put it to you simply it is for the light and power of the gospel to come into our souls I know that is the work of the Holy Spirit but just exactly as the power of

Satan works through darkness the power of the Holy Spirit works through truth by truth he awakens the soul by truth he convinces of its condition to give repentance towards God with truth he delivers the soul from the power of evil God it is when the gospel comes to a man not in word only for that will leave him just where it found him but when it comes in power and in the Holy Ghost that is the power is the power of the Holy Ghost and in much assurance that is the assurance that the power of the Holy Ghost gives us to feel that the gospel is true the very gospel of the grace of God that the soul begins to be delivered from the power of darkness for look my friends to begin with the light of truth overcomes the darkness of the understanding and spiritual things begin to be discerned spiritually and as they begin to be discerned spiritually the old darkness that blinded the eyes of the mind against them begins to be overcome and the light of truth especially the light of the glorious gospel of

Christ who is the image of God the light of truth begins to overcome the power of darkness and there is in the gospel a divine power of grace grace and the grace of God acts upon the heart and on the mind is there prejudice bitter prejudice the grace of God subdues it is there enmity we will not have this man to reign over us the grace of God breaks it down so the grace of God acting upon the soul begins to deliver it from the reign of sin it is as you read that where sin hath reigned unto death grace did much more abound and much more reign unto eternal life through Jesus

[36 : 40] Christ our Lord and there is in the gospel the power of love sooner or later that power will begin to act upon the soul when God delivers it from the power of darkness the power of love of Christ's love of Christ's dying love risen love forgiving love attracting love begins to act upon the soul when you begin to feel that the power of darkness begins to be overcome by the love of Jesus Christ here is one perhaps in the spirit of it has said I will never have this man to reign over me a rather devil than Jesus

Christ begins to say reign over me as king and accomplish thy will and powerfully bring me out from all ill till falling before thee I lord thy love name ascribing the glory to God and the lamb my brethren if the light of truth is acting upon your mind giving you spiritual discernment if the power of grace is acting on your heart subduing it if the power of love is acting on your affections attracting them the lord is delivering you from the power of darkness the work is going on and he will most assuredly translate you into the kingdom of his dear son just a word on that although the time has gone

I must have just a word on it translated us now you know that in the course of time especially of centuries words tend to change not their original meaning but their common usage and our translation of course of the scripture is 300 years old more than that in fact and the usage of words have changed somewhat now when we speak of translation and being translated we think of the rendering of a book say the scriptures from one language into another language when we speak of the translation of the scriptures we mean the rendering of the scripture into other languages but that's not exactly the meaning of my text not this word in my text it might be better rendered according to our present usage of terms transferred than translated because that's what it really means transferred now when God transfers anyone from the power of darkness into the kingdom of his dear son and I can't stay to describe that blessed kingdom now he transfers them for instance he transfers their desires mark you that he transfers their desires now what is the state of the desires of the mind when it's under the power of darkness it's all for the things of this world and in some cases of course for the very sinful things of them they follow the desires of the flesh and of the mind and those desires are always for the things of this world and the sins of it now when

God translates man he transforms he transfers his desires to spiritual things and sets them by the influence and direction of God the Holy Ghost on those things that are heavenly and spiritual oh what an instance of this the apostle Paul was you compare his state a persecutor a blasphemer injurious and very thinking that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth may you mark men when God had transferred him that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings and be made conformable unto his death yea doubtless

I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord see how his affections how his desires were transferred to Jesus Christ from enmity to love from bitterness to graciousness it's a great thing brethren if God has enlivened your heart to give you spiritual desires and transferred them to the kingdom of his dear son well I must break off suddenly because I've overrun the time this morning now the Lord bless the world and above all the Lord work this wonderful work in your souls believe me if he does you will live to praise him and bless him and glorify his holy name amen amen