

To Deliver Us from Evil
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Grace to you and peace . . . from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

All of grace, all its multiple forms, all for you **and peace from God.** (v.3) Truly there is a peace which comes from God, *through God in Christ.*, and, apparently, it cannot be sourced anywhere else. Meaning it comes from God through Christ and it comes from and through that channel alone. *This, in itself, is newsworthy.* This peace is not artificially produced—it isn't synthetic but a sheer extension of divine favor. When I say, all of grace, I am definitely alluding to its many forms. Remember, not comprehensively and not exhaustively! So, on top of that I would suggest that the supreme graciousness of God is shown in the gift of his own Son. So this state of grace is entered through the offices, and ministry of Jesus. It refers to a blessed state, a state of well-being which originates in the "right a restored relationship with God the Father (a fairly new name for God as propagated by Jesus). Jesus was restoring the picture, or understanding of God as a good, provident, faithful and just heavenly Father—which he has been from the beginning, only our enemy sowed seeds of distrust and suspicion into the hearts of Adam and Eve. We've seen the results of that spiritual subversion! We call it "the Fall of mankind." *Through faith in the Son, we receive the results of forgiveness and "imputed righteousness.* Without those two things, we shall not stand in the day of the Lord.

Remember the Lord **Who gave himself for our sins** (not his own sins which is why we describe his death as substitutionary!) **to deliver us from this present evil age.** (v.4) Now this verse contains **the salvation narrative** of our faith . . . the "news" bit of the **good news of Jesus Christ.** *It is the "critical bit" of the story which we must never tire of sharing and telling.* And we must never let it be submerged by the news cycle, buried as it were in the million other "narratives" hyped for our distraction/*destruction* actually. The "critical bit" refers to the use **the salvation narrative** as the lens through which we view the word and everything in it! The enemy of our souls uses hyperbole, nuance, exaggerations and lies to achieve his malignant, and murderous agenda against us . If he can just succeed in getting us to take our eye off the ball, he counts that a first step to victory and bondage. It is not possible to overstate his hatred of freedom—and to keep us from being focused on "soul liberty." Those who have been set free in Christ are his worst nightmare! Satanic license is no substitute for Christian liberty! Remember Rene Descartes proposition, **Suppose there was a terrible demon seeking to mislead, or deceive us and bring about our destruction . . .** well, there is one, his name is Satan.

Again, the Lord **Who gave himself for (hyper) our sins . . . to deliver us from this present evil age.** The Greek translated "sacrifice" is probably too narrow and should be expanded to cover both "self-giving" and either "price" or "ransom." A *resolution of sin debt seems to be in view.* *Hyper* carries the sense of "on behalf of" . . . our sins. There are, further, two parts to this very freighted sentence: the first deals with Christ's sacrifice (satisfying the wrath of God, paying the penalty due our sins) and the second deals with the purpose of that sacrifice (the deliverance of His people from bondage). The only gospel that covers this, or deals with our emancipation **from this**

present evil age is the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Forgiveness by God and imputed righteousness only come this way. Now this puts the weight of emphasis on Calvary, as contrasted with the incarnation of Bethlehem—therefore the cross is weightier than the manger. It is the cross that produces a positive effect leading to positive change (spiritual transformation). It is the cross that **delivers us out of this present evil age** and into the will of God (as opposed to the domain of darkness/of Satan); or, say, **which is the age to come** where/when we enter into the power of God which is the kingdom of God. Now **the age to come** was commonly linked in Jewish thought with **the life everlasting**—for as heaven is greater than the earth, so is eternity vaster, greater than time.¹ Think of it as leaving one sphere of influence and entering another—a sphere where God holds jurisdiction, where demonic influences cease and spiritual hindrances dissipate! Here is a deliverance we can all embrace. Christ's death and resurrection defeats sin, darkness, death and the Evil One as we **rise in Christ**, triumphing over all his foes. In a careful piece of foreshadowing, in the progressive development of revelation, it appears that shucking—or getting out from under three centuries of the slavery mindset is very, very challenging. The recidivism rate of slavery is high, regression is common . . . it is not merely that traction towards God's sovereignty is hard to come by.

A later thought in Gnosticism, the Greek concept of “*aeons*,” may have been incipient (imperfectly formed) in Paul's thinking—and it may well have become part of the baggage of the Judaizers, so called. This may have been Paul's intention. He deliberately used a term familiar in the culture but infused it with Christian content and significance: appropriating it to the gospel applications. **Changed from glory unto glory** (2 Cor. 3:18) is a parallel construction to **from this present evil age . . . and the age to come.**²

¹ It is worthy of note that in the Lord's Prayer, we pray “deliver us from the Evil One” in keeping with the idea that we pray this way because his power lies solely in **the present evil age**.

² There are two ways to defeat your debate opponent. First, we can demonstrate a fundamental incompatibility. Second, we can show how his ideas are already embraced and transcended in your use of terminology. Political foes have embraced this as “spin.” Academic adversaries do something broader, namely, “revisionism.” A common lead-in would go something like this: “you may think that this is what happened and what it means, but, actually” . . . then, comes revision. It is very ironic that “revisioning” is code for “re-imagining” and, psychologically, “the talking cure” is talking one out of one post of view and into another one. This could result in correction of error, or in indoctrination (the effort to alter one's pattern of thinking—or worldview).

Something more insidious occurs when mental health professionals work at denying one's psychological reality (convincing them they are delusional when they aren't). This mistreatment can result in mental breakdowns, or even psychotic breaks—it can ruin a person's life, or destroy the ability to discern truth from falsehood.

In socialistic totalitarian regimes (whether they be an iteration of the Bolshevik, or national socialism (as pursued by Germany in the early twentieth century—or in America by the radical left in the twenty-first century) or by the CPC (Chinese Communist Party) for the past one hundred years, social subversion by distortion, lies, propaganda, nuance builds whole regimes on lies. Chairman Xi may be a materialistic messiah but he is devoid of spirit truth! His regime has thrived on consumerism (rule by thought control and appetite), which only works where pleasure and personal comfort dominate a culture. It is anti-Christian morally, spiritually and truthlessly.

We should note, however, that the second paired term doesn't actually occur in the verse; only **this present evil age**. We should unpack this phrase. First, **Present**, that means in its immediacy, its temporal setting. It means "this" age and not another. So I suggest that part of the evil of this **present evil age** lies in its "absorbing" nature—it is the obsession with, or absorption by the immediate, the present and temporal nature of things that is, in itself, contributory to evil. And it may not be that "it is" that way so much as it is that we would have it that way! So instant gratification, to say nothing of perpetual gratification (the hedonist drive to get in, stay in and to be in a euphoric state—whether obtained artificially, or through natural stimulation). This condition which bears some resemblance to the twin drives to remain comfortable, or to feel 'no pain' that can addict us to either being under the influence or into avoidance patterns. That would be a glimpse at the beastie hiding under the rock. "Addicted to" is to be "in bondage to" something; in this case the immediacy of, and the temporality of sensate, or perceivable experience; or, frankly, its materiality. It is evil to be too plugged into the stuff of this world. It is a misappropriation of what we were given to enjoy, and celebrate, but not to be super absorbed in, or, better, solely absorbed in.

Take this familiar passage from Isaiah, for instance; it is an invitation to imbibe in things more than **temporal**:

1 "[Yo!]You there! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;
And you who have no [b]money come, buy and eat.
Come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without cost.
2 Why do you [c]spend money for what is not bread,
And your wages for what does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good,
And delight yourself in abundance.
3 Incline your ear and come to Me.
Listen, that [d]you may live;
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
According to the faithful mercies [e]shown to David.

Thirst, hunger and eat, spend, buy and sell . . . all temporal. **But listen carefully to me, eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance**—these things transcend the husk, or shell of mere present-ness! And that is just the point. The first is materialistic, base living and survival only. **Listen carefully** that elevates us. **Incline your ear and come to me** that's what we were made for. Yes, interaction and relationship with our God—that is what is "good, lasting and permanent." In the beginning, God exalted man: first by creating him in **our image** and secondly by sharing the work of dominion with him—a lasting partnership (at least as planned).

Listen, that you may live . . . and I will make an everlasting covenant with you. (v. 3) That's the super temporal dimension I've been pointing to—it is above, better, more suitable for man. Far superior to "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow

you may die.³ So the evil lies in the distractibility of the temporal. Jesus said, "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." **Then Jesus said** to his disciples: "Therefore I **tell you, do** not worry about your life, what you will **eat**; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is **more than food**, and the body **more than clothes**. (Luke 12:22-23) See also Matt. 6:25-32:

25 "For this reason I say to you, [stop it] do not be worried about your [soul] life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is life not more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the sky, that they do not sow, nor reap, nor gather *crops* into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more important than they? 27 And which of you by worrying can add a single⁴ [cubit] day to his [height] life's span? 28 And why are you worried about clothing? Notice how the lilies of the field grow; they do not labor nor do they spin *thread for cloth*, 29 yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He* not much more clothe you? *You of little faith!* 31 Do not worry then, saying, 'What are we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear for clothing?' 32 For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

We should ask: what does Jesus mean when he speaks of Gentiles? He probably is referring to them as unbelievers, as those outside the covenant blessings and family of God . . . as faithlessly materialistic **You of little faith**. A little more pejorative, or negative than "worldly, or secular." I have sometimes wondered if anxiety is not the symptom of a disorder instead of the disease. What if it comes of over-absorption with temporal matters? And, if that is the case, then repentance may play a more key role than we tend to think in becoming less anxious. "If my focus has brought me to this, Lord, help me turn back my eyes to you."

The last piece to be explored is **evil age**. It is the fashion of the times and not creation itself, the world which is called **evil**. The world is fallen but not irredeemable. I think that is the meaning. But as long as we are fretting, fussing and fuming about this temporal world and things connected solely with it, the more apparent it is that we are missing out!

³ "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die" is a conflation of two biblical sayings, **Ecclesiastes 8:15**, 'Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry', and Isaiah 22:13, 'Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die.' <https://www.funtrivia.com/> This quote is more directly made in the Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 28:7-9?

⁴ Jesus use of words here is fascinating: he adds a "cubit" to time, and "height" to a life span. At the very least those things are outside the box. Less in our "present," less temporal.

So that leaves us with the remedy. Namely the Lord Jesus Christ who delivers us from this present evil age through his sacrificial death on the cross—that in itself being the deliverance from darkness to light, from the dominion of Satan to the power of God. **To whom be the power and glory forever and ever.**

Amen.