

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup>. November 2018  
Redemption Ephesians 1.7

Deut. 7.6-7 & 4.30, 1Pet.1.13-21

In the list of spiritual blessings which are given to us when we believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, after Adoption, Paul lists Redemption. There are three references in Ephesians of redemption, 1.7, 1.14 and 4.30. These three verses tell us the cost, the immediate effect and the ultimate goal of Redemption. They are the Blood of Christ, the guarantee of our inheritance, and the final goal of redemption, which is to belong to God for ever. Redemption applies to the beginning of the Christian life, our journey through earthly life which is to be progress in holiness, and then entry into heaven, an eternal redemption.

We need to say something about the word itself, and the way that Paul uses it. Redemption carries several expressions of meaning. It means to 'ransom in full.' This includes the idea of a change in ownership or of rule. It has the meaning of buying back out of bondage or possession by paying a ransom price. The principle example in Paul's mind when using this word is the slave market, a common and well known feature in the Roman world and their territories.

We also need to see how Paul uses this word. It is used to state a principle truth and beyond that we are going to be in difficulty if we try to make the details of the slave market apply to the redemption that is in Christ. For example, if we slavishly apply the example of the slave market, some will ask, to whom is the ransom price given. This would lead some to think that since we are redeemed from the rule of Satan, somehow God is paying the devil off! This cannot be so, because that would give the devil a standing before God that he does not have. God does not do deals with the devil, and neither should we. So get rid of 'horror scopes', tea leaves and psychic interests and all that sort of stuff.

After the core meaning that redemption is God ransoming us, and our seeing from what He ransoms us, we should leave trying to make a market transaction correspond to God's action in all aspects. It is tempting to try and make all its parts say something, but it will not help us to understand and will prove a distraction. The focus is this, once we were in bondage, but now we have been liberated!

The actual idea of being liberated from bondage is a theme that runs through the history of the Israelite nation. The account of the Exodus is clearly an event in which God redeemed His people from the hand of the Pharaoh and the bondage of Egypt. God did not do a deal with Pharaoh, He took them out of His hand. The captivity in Babylon was a state of bondage, and the return to the land was by God once more redeeming His people from the hand of captivity and bondage.

The Prophets tell of a Messiah who will redeem His people. Isaiah 41.14, 43.14, 44.24 and 54.8 all speak of one who will redeem them, Christ, the Messiah. In these scriptures

redemption is shown to be not an impersonal thing that God does, but the personal act of the personal God. Redemption is set in the context of not only the physical matter of land and military conquest, but it is personal. There is a deeper and more fundamental matter which is addressed in redemption, and it is the spiritual and moral condition of God's people. Bondage is presented as the consequence of unfaithfulness and rebellion towards God. God will act to rescue His people from the bondage they have entered into, bondage which like Egypt and Babylon, they cannot escape by their own power and strength, but requires God to deliver them.

This would be a good point to ask the question, since we are not captives in Egypt or Babylon, from what do we require to be redeemed? I hope we all know the answer to this question. The bondage we are in is to the dominion of sin, death, Satan and even the world and its values and system. These bondages give rise to all the mental, emotional and spiritual troubles we encounter. The trouble is that just like many deadly diseases, we do not recognise the symptoms until the disease is terminal, and beyond cure. This is why God must step in if we are to be set free. We need a miracle, and that miracle was accomplished in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ Jesus. There is no deliverance apart from Him, or through Him.

Let me take one or two examples. Over the course of my life, I have seen and heard of people who were screaming out in torment on their death beds, in terror as to what awaited them beyond death. Others who were Christians, died in peace. What do you believe happens one second after our last breath? Do we know now by faith where our eternal habitation will be, heaven or hell? We can know, and it is important to know what the grounds of hope are, that we are citizens of heaven. It's all by being united with Christ. Those who are united with Christ are united in His death and burial and resurrection. United with Christ, He takes us through death and into eternal life. If we are not united to Christ, we drift away into eternal death, hell. Having an assurance of heaven is one fruit of redemption.

Practically, our assurance of heaven can vary in strength depending on our circumstances. Sometimes when God is purifying us in the furnace of affliction, we can wonder will He ever smile on us again. At such times, either our own emotions or the devil can insinuate that our feelings of God having left us, shows that we are not children of the Father after all. However, in adoption, the proof of being a child of God includes discipline and training, hence James bold assertion that we should 'count it all joy' when we find ourselves in trials!

In society today, there are support groups, services, agencies that specialize in a multitude of mental situational, and emotional crisis that we may encounter in our lives. Groups exist for everything and seek to help those with drug and alcohol addictions, stress, debt, anger and an endless list of things that are bondages and burdens to us. Many of these are good and helpful, but have limitations. They mostly deal with this life, and often, though not exclusively, deal with coping mechanisms and techniques. In contrast to this, redemption goes right to the heart of our bondage, it deals with our souls and hearts.

Redemption is a two sided coin. We are redeemed from, and redeemed to. We are redeemed from the house of bondage, the kingdom of darkness, the dominion of sin, to the liberty of being children of God, into the Kingdom of God's beloved Son, and into the Body of Christ, the Church. We are redeemed from one authority, to another authority. We are redeemed from serving the owner of the pigs where no-one gives us anything, to the house of the Father who gives us everything as His children. We are redeemed from the dominion of an evil kingdom to the kingdom of light.

This does not mean for a moment that God sets us free just to live as we like, and this is where the Church in the West has been going wrong for decades. A price has been paid to redeem us. It was not a king's ransom, it was much more than that, it was nothing more than the life blood of God's only begotten Son, Jesus. The question has to be asked, is there anything in all of eternity which is more precious to God than His Son? There is not. God gave His only begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life. There is no higher price than the life of the Son of God, and this was freely given.

Another question arises from this. What should humanities response be to this? The hymn says it well,

'love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.'

If this is not our response, then either we are not believers, or if we are, we are still in a serious state of rebelliousness.

In times past, if your friend saved your life, say on the battle field, you regarded yourself in his debt. We are debtors of God as believers, debtors to mercy, and Christ expects return from His sacrifice.

1 Peter begins with a glorious declaration of salvation.

'who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the  
Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to  
Jesus Christ and the sprinkling by his blood.'

We are then reminded in chapter 1v18-19 that we were redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb. This is not an isolated idea. It appears in both Testaments. The New Testament has many references to being not our own, bought with a price. 1Corinthians 6.19-20, 7.23, and 2 Peter 2.1, all have the statement of purchase, price, and appropriate response on our part. Other scriptures lean more towards the purpose for which we have been redeemed. 1 Thessalonians 1.9 speaks of turning from one way of life to that of serving God. That is the reasonable requirement of redemption. Hebrews 10.7, tells us that the delight of the Son was to do the will of the Father. If we are God's

sons by adoption and redemption, we are to become like Christ and delight to do God's will also.

We are redeemed by the blood of Christ, not to belong to ourselves, but to belong to God. We are redeemed not to serve our own interests, but the will of God. We are redeemed not to choose what and where we will serve God, but how and where He appoints. Sadly, in so many areas of the Church, those who say they are believers think that we are free to do what we want, when we want and how we want. This is not so. So many things that believers in the past and elsewhere in the world today would not think of accepting for a moment, are now deemed acceptable because, 'God is a loving God, and surely He would not have wanted to keep this or that from us.'

All I can say to that is that the Bible and history does not share that very easy going notion of an indulgent God. We must not confuse God's compassionate patience with indulgence. We have been redeemed from a terrible slave master, to the service of a good and gracious master, but master none the less. We have been redeemed for good works, but before that, and above that, we have been redeemed for God Himself, to wait on Him, to serve Him, to serve His will, for a relationship with Him. We are redeemed to become conformed to the likeness of Christ, for obedience of faith, holiness, devotion, trust, participation in His body which is His Church. These are the things we have been redeemed for. These are the things that must occupy our thoughts and time and energy before all else.