

In the Greek New Testament, Eph. 1:3-14 is all one sentence. Can there be another sentence like this, one which tells us so much of what God has done, the unsearchable riches of His grace to His people in Christ? There are really two amazing things here: (1) that God would ever do such a thing, offer up His own dear Son on the cross; and (2) that He would do it for sinners like us. What is grace, after all? It's not just undeserved favour. It's God's own favour, His lovingkindness and blessing, bestowed on those who deserve His fierce wrath and indignation.

In v.6, we read of God's Beloved. This is the only begotten Son of God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ. According to Isaiah 42:1, He's the chosen One in whom the Father delights. At Jesus' baptism, you remember, God said, "This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased." You see, Jesus is loved of the Father and received by Him for His own sake. On the other hand, we who are sinners by nature, the objects of God's wrath, cannot be loved of God for our own sake or because of any good in us. No, our sin stands in the way. How, then, can we be loved of God? Is there any way that we can be? We are loved of God, dear Christian, and given access to His eternal favour, not for our own sake, but for Jesus' sake who paid the penalty for sin in our place and imputed His perfect righteousness to us as our own. 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Isn't that the most amazing thing, congregation, the most wonderful news in all the world?! We (with believers everywhere) were loved in and for Christ, and by means of Him God will bring us home to glory!

Let's look now at v.7. In Christ, we have redemption. In Israel, throughout the Old Testament, if any man had gone into debt and had no reasonable means of paying it off, he could sell himself (for the sake of his family) into slavery. We can't imagine what that must have been like, I suppose, but there was a way out of slavery: he could be delivered by the payment of a ransom. He could be redeemed by his nearest relative, whichever one was able and willing to pay the price of ransom on his behalf. This is the background, if you like, the historical context, for our understanding the biblical doctrine of redemption. Christ came into the world as our elder Brother, the only One who could redeem us from slavery, to buy us back from our bondage to sin.

Now there are three things we need to know if we are going to grasp with any real appreciation what it is to be so redeemed:

1. We need to know about the price of ransom. Jesus said that He came as the Son of Man, Mark 10:45, not to be served, but to serve, "and to give His life a ransom for many." Now there it is. The ransom that Jesus paid was nothing less than His own life! The price of a common slave was 30 pieces of silver. If someone, then, wanted to buy his relative out of slavery, that is what he would have to pay – or, depending on the debt, he might even have to pay a good deal more. It's noteworthy that, when Judas betrayed Jesus, he did so for 30 pieces of silver; he sold

His Master for the price of a common slave! Yet when Jesus redeemed us, beloved, it was not with perishable things like silver and gold, but with His very own life, with the shedding of His own precious blood! Our text (v.7) says, "In Him we have redemption" – how? – "through His blood." What a ransom! What a price He had to pay to release us from our bondage to sin!

Does this not tell you something, believer? Does it not tell you how precious you are in the sight of the Lord our God? We were as Gomer, the adulteress – fallen, unworthy, naked in the streets. God instructed Hosea to go and buy his wife back, to love her according to the love of the Lord for His Church, for the children of Israel who in their sinful state look to other gods. And so, too, has Christ purchased us in the marketplace, as it were, but not for 15 pieces of silver (the price of a harlot), not for 30 pieces of silver (the price of a slave), but for what price? The ransom price was His own life, the pouring out of His blood unto death!

Oh, how great is the depth to which we had sunk! Oh, how great is the height to which we are now elevated! And this honour, beloved, bestowed so freely upon us has not been at any cost to us, the Bride. No, it's the Bridegroom who has paid it all on our behalf! He paid an infinite price, one we can't begin to measure, and how thankful it should make us that He did! What did Jesus say? "He who has been forgiven little loves little, but he who has been forgiven much loves much." As the former adulteress who would not stop kissing Jesus' feet, and anointing them with oil, let's consider, dear Christian, how much we ourselves have been forgiven – let's consider at what great price we have been forgiven – and let's love Him, in turn, who so loved us that He gave Himself for us!

There are many Christians who fear that they may yet lose their salvation. They fear this because they see themselves as having chosen Christ rather than God Himself, in Christ, having chosen them. (See Exodus 33:19; Romans 9:15.) They see themselves as hanging onto God, and fearing that one day they may lose their grip, rather than God, their heavenly Father, hanging onto them and being carved into the palm of His hand with a love that will never let them go. What did Jesus say? He told us that no one could snatch us out of His Father's hand. If you are a Christian, my friend, who is in any way troubled with the fear of losing your salvation, consider this: if when we were sinners Christ died for us, God will surely not cast us off now that we are His believing people, now that we are His children and heirs! Romans 5:10, "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Whenever you are gripped by fear, believer, remember the blood of Christ – remember the ransom that was paid to obtain your eternal redemption – remember that He who died for you also rose in victory from the grave, that He entered into the very presence of the Majesty on high on your behalf, and that there, at the right hand of the Father, He ever lives to make intercession for you!

2. We need to know, not only about the price of ransom, but to know as well our Saviour's purpose in paying it. Let's look at that. In the Bible, unbelievers are said to be the children of the devil and slaves to his wicked devices. But, when this same Word of God speaks of our being redeemed by Christ, it doesn't mean to imply that this ransom was paid to Satan, or that

anything at all was given to buy him off in order to bring us back to our Creator. Jesus defeated Satan, remember – He conquered him; “now is Satan cast out,” He said – He did not pay him off in order to get us back!

This is such an important point, isn't it? But, still, it leaves us asking, ‘What, then, was the purpose of this ransom? To whom was it paid? Who was it meant to satisfy if not the devil?’ The ransom was paid to God Himself. That's right. It was paid to God the Father, and it was meant to satisfy His perfect justice! The wages of sin, don't forget, is death. God tells us, “The soul that sins, it shall die.” Going right back to the Garden of Eden, God said to Adam, “You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” – why not? – “for when you eat of it,” He told him, “you will surely die.” What He meant by that is that Adam would die spiritually (which happened that very day he did eat of it), and later he would die also physically, and, ultimately, (if he didn't have a Redeemer) Adam would die eternally, that is, he would suffer the unceasing consequences of his rebellion.

God hates sin, you see, and, as He tells us, He's angry with the wicked every day! It wasn't Satan who had to be paid off – no, no, he was the great usurper who kidnapped us in the first place, who engaged in trafficking us and then put us in bondage to sin. As I say, it was the justice of a holy God that had to be satisfied. Our sin had to be punished – God's anger for our sin had to be removed in order to bring us to God, in order to give us peace with God – and this was the purpose, then, of the ransom. 1 John 4:10, “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Christ is the One who takes God's wrath away, who reconciles us to the Father, and so gives us to abide under the shadow (under the protection and unfailing security) of the Almighty!

All through the Old Testament era, every year on the Day of Atonement it was repeated, an animal was killed, its blood was spilled, and some of that blood was sprinkled on the mercy-seat. This was a visual display before God and man that this was an acceptable offering to God, acceptable because it was the very one that God Himself had, in fact, appointed, and so He would forgive the sins of His people. Of course, this sacrifice each year was only a symbol of the real thing. It was only a picture of what Christ Himself was to do in offering up His own body on the cross. In the words of Isaac Watts,

“Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain,  
Could give the guilty conscience peace, or wash away the stain.  
But Christ, the heavenly Lamb, takes all our sins away,  
A sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than they.”

Now, believer, think of it: If the killing of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood could thrill the hearts of God's Old Testament people, how much more should the real thing, the shedding of Christ's blood at Calvary, thrill the hearts of God's people today!

Hebrews 9:11-14, “Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serving the living God?”

Isn't the blood of Christ, congregation, sprinkled now in the heavenly sanctuary and covering all our sins, blotting them out so they are never remembered, better than all the blood that came before it in the earthly sanctuary? What an amazing thing (and wonderful beyond all words to declare) is that Christ's blood, which was shed so freely on the cross at Calvary, flows back in time, fulfilling for those Old Testament saints what the blood of animals could only portray, and that it flows also ahead in time as well, covering now the sins of all God's people right down to our own day and to the end of the world!

Ah, but here's the thing: Just as it was not Satan who put Jesus on the cross, but God Himself, so Jesus paid the ransom, not to Satan, but to God, and to satisfy His justice. This is how it is that we are able to read in Holy Scripture that, if we confess our sins, God is both faithful and just – that's right, He's perfectly righteous and just – to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness. This is how, too, as we are also told, that He is both just and the justifier of the ungodly. Once His justice is satisfied with respect to our sin, you see, the Lord our God has nothing against us. And once the perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, is counted as our very own, which it is through faith in Him, God delights to lavish His favour upon us. This is what gives us that precious promise, “I will forgive their wickedness,” says the Lord, “and I will remember their sins no more”!

3. Beyond the price of ransom and its purpose, we need to know, believer, what being so redeemed by Christ does to us. Going back again to slavery in the Old Testament, redemption may have been to freedom, or it may have been to more slavery. It's true. If one's relative couldn't pay the required price to set him free, for instance, that same slave could be redeemed or purchased by another slave-owner. In such a case, of course, the deliverance by the payment of a ransom was probably not to freedom, but to more slavery. That slave could, in fact, be bought and sold many times over, just going from one slave-owner to another.

Well, we have to ask, then, if we've been redeemed by the blood of Christ, is it to freedom or to slavery? You may think you know the answer – but hang on a moment – it's to both. The Bible speaks of the glorious liberty of the children of God, and it's very true. If we are free in Christ, beloved, we are free, indeed, and there is no better liberty than that! However, the Bible also says that true freedom is to be in bondage to Christ. Real freedom, you see, is not to be free *from* Christ; it's to be set free from sin in order *to serve* Christ. Let me give you a few verses to think about,

Romans 6:17,18 – “God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.” Also 1 Corinthians 6:19,20 – “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

Now that sheds quite a different light on our freedom, doesn’t it? As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are now willing and eager to serve Him, and it’s important to see that. In Christ, beloved, we are free at last to do what is right and good and pleasing to our Maker and Keeper. We couldn’t before, but now the Lord delights to work within us to will and to do His good pleasure! That’s what our redemption does to us.

This word ‘redemption’ can be used in a broad sense, as in v.14, to include benefits which are still to come; or, it can be used in a narrower sense, as we see it in v.7, to speak of a present benefit, namely, the forgiveness of sins. What is the very first blessing we receive in being redeemed? It’s the forgiveness of our sins! This is what everybody needs above everything else, what one must have to gain peace with God and to enjoy all the other benefits which flow out of it. We all like to hear about the resurrection and heaven and everything we can about the life to come. These are all marvelous subjects, to be sure, but we can lay no claim to any of them until we have first been forgiven.

I don’t know your spiritual condition, my friend, but I do know that forgiveness before God is found only in Christ, and that it’s found by all who commit everything they are and have to Him. It was no great problem for God to create the world and everything in it, but, when the need to forgive sins arose, it was then necessary for Him to leave the courts of heaven, to come to earth as a Man, to offer His own body on the cross as a ransom for many, and so sprinkle the heavenly sanctuary with His own precious blood. Such was the difficulty, the love and grace that was needed, to forgive sins. If you have never come to Christ, I plead with you by the mercies of God to do so now!