

THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND
THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL:
A STUDY OF EPHESIANS
(LESSON NINE)
“REDEMPTION”

EPHESIANS 1:3-7

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.

In our consideration of **Ephesians 1:1-6**, we have encountered some remarkable statements in which the essence of the Gospel of grace is summarized. In verse **3**, we were informed that God has “*blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ;*” in verse **4**, we were told that God has “*chosen us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world;*” in verse **5**, we learn that God “*predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself;*” and in verse **6**, Paul advises us that God has “*made us accepted in the beloved.*”

In verse **7**, the Apostle Paul gives us yet another remarkable statement. He writes, “*In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.*” This statement, like the others, confronts us with the very heart of the gospel. The words “*in whom,*” with which the verse begins, obviously refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who was described as “*the Beloved*” in the previous verse. In that verse, Paul says that we have been “*accepted in the beloved.*” Now he tells us that it is in that same One that we have been redeemed. In other words, “*the Beloved*” is described as the One “*in whom we have redemption.*” It is only in Jesus Christ that we have redemption. In **2 Corinthians 5:19-21**, Paul tells us that “*God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.*” It is only in Jesus Christ that God reconciles the world unto Himself!

It is important for us to recognize that verse **7** marks a point of transition in this first chapter of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. In verses **3-6**, he outlines for his readers the eternal purpose and plan of God. In verses **7-12**, he describes **how** that eternal purpose and plan was carried out.

It should be clear to us that in order for God’s eternal purpose and plan to be actualized in our lives, there was a great obstacle that had to be overcome. That obstacle, of course, was sin. We are sinners by nature and therefore, we commit acts of sin. Sin is the disease and sins are the symptoms. Our sin and its symptoms separated us from God (**Isaiah 59:1-2**). Therefore, before God could consummate His eternal purpose and plan, He had to deal decisively with the problem of sin. It is for this reason, primarily, that Jesus Christ came into the world.

This truth is emphasized in **John 1:29**: *“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, **which taketh away the sin of the world.**”* Jesus Christ came to deal decisively with sin. By so doing, He made it possible for sinful human beings to be reconciled to God. This is what Paul, in verse **7**, informs us has been done: *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”*

The Greek word translated *“redemption”* in our text is in the present tense and is durative in action. Therefore, the clause literally means, “in whom we are having redemption.” The redemption is an abiding fact from the past, through the present, and into the future. We were redeemed in the past, we are presently redeemed, and we will be redeemed in the future. The fact of our redemption is always **a present reality**. In the Greek, the definite article appears before the word *“redemption.”* It has a twofold significance. In the first place, it points to the particular redemption spoken of in the Bible with which both Paul and those to whom he was writing were familiar. Secondly, it speaks of ownership. It refers to the redemption which is the personal possession of each saint. Perhaps it would be more accurate to refer to it as the redemption which personally possesses each saint!

The word *“redemption”* is a translation of the Greek word **apolutrósis, (ap-ol-oo'-tro-sis)** which refers to “a release effected by payment of ransom.” **Thayer’s Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament** defines the verb as follows; “to redeem one by paying the price, to let one go free on receiving the price.” It defines the noun as, “a releasing effected by payment of ransom, deliverance, liberation procured by the payment of a ransom.” The particular aspect of redemption spoken of in **Ephesians 1:7** is redemption from the guilt and condemnation of sin, for the qualifying phrase, *“the forgiveness of sins”* is added.

The story of redemption can be told in the three Greek words which refer to redemption in the New Testament. We shall examine each word briefly. The first word is **agorazó, (ag-or-ad'-zo;)** which means “to buy in the slave market.” The Lord Jesus Christ bought us out of the slave market of sin, and the ransom price that He paid for us was His precious blood. In **Matthew 20:28**, our Lord confirmed this usage of the term. He said, *“Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, **and to give his life a ransom for many.**”*

The word is used in the following verses:

1 CORINTHIANS 6:20

*“For ye are **bought with a price**: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”*

1 CORINTHIANS 7:23

*“Ye are **bought with a price**; be not ye the servants of men.”*

REVELATION 5:9

*“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast **redeemed** us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”*

The second Greek word which refers to redemption in the New Testament is **exagorazó, (ex-ag-or-ad'-zo;)** which means “to buy out of the slave market, to buy off, **to buy for one’s self.**”

Our Lord not only bought us out of the slave market of sin, He bought us **for Himself**. The redeemed are now the permanent possession of the Lord Jesus Christ and will never be put up for sale in any slave market again. We belong to Him forever. We are no longer the bond-slaves of Satan, but we are now the bond-slaves of the One who bought us out of the slave market of sin with His own blood.

The word **exagorazó** is used in the following passages:

GALATIANS 3:13

*“Christ hath **redeemed** us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”*

GALATIANS 4:4-5

*“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To **redeem** them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”*

The third Greek word which refers to redemption in the New Testament is **lutroó**, (**loo-tro'-o**;) which means “to liberate by payment of ransom.” The Greek word **apolutrósis**, which is translated as “redemption” in **Ephesians 1:7**, is closely related to this word. This Greek word highlights the idea that the redeemed are set free from the guilt and power of sin now, to be finally set free from the presence of sin at the Rapture.

The Greek word **lutroó** is used in the following passages:

TITUS 2:14

*“Who gave himself for us, that he might **redeem** us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”*

1 PETER 1:18

*“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not **redeemed** with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”*

Another matter we must consider is the price which was paid in order to redeem us. Paul does not leave us in any doubt as to what the price was. This redemption is said to be “*through His blood*.” The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God which was shed on the Cross is the redemption price, it was the ransom. The blood of Christ paid for the sins of the human slaves of sin in the sense that it satisfied the just demands of God’s holy law which decreed that “*the wages of sin is death*” (**Romans 3:23**), and blood that has been outpoured signifies death. The verse we have just read (**1 Peter 1:18**), emphasizes this truth.

In order to secure our redemption, our Lord had to leave the splendor of heaven, enter human existence by the process of incarnation, and live an absolutely sinless life under the Law. He had to suffer rejection, betrayal and abandonment. He had to endure ridicule and shame, the horror of being made sin for us, and the excruciating, agony of the scourging and then of crucifixion. He had to experience the full effects of the curse of the Law, including being forsaken by His Father and the fury of the wrath of God. His precious blood had to be shed. This was the price that was demanded and He had to pay it in full.

It is as a result of the paying of the ransom price that certain consequences follow for us. Paul tells us that the paying of the ransom price has resulted in our redemption. Redemption encompasses the whole of our salvation, from the time of our initial quickening to the time of our ultimate glorification. One of the benefits of our being redeemed is that we have received *“the forgiveness of sins.”*

The first aspect of redemption is *“the forgiveness of sins.”* Redemption will ultimately be brought to perfection with the glorification of our bodies, but it begins with the forgiveness of our sins. The forgiveness of our sins is the crucial, necessary first step to our sanctification and glorification, because there can be no deliverance from the **power** of sin unless and until we are delivered from the **guilt** of sin. This is dramatically highlighted for us in our Lord’s utterances to the woman taken in the act of adultery recorded in **John 8:10-11**: *“When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”*

After the last of the woman’s accusers had disappeared, the Lord said to her, *“Neither do I condemn thee.”* Then He said, *“Go, and sin no more.”* In other words, it was only after Jesus had dealt with the **forgiveness** of her sin that He spoke to her about her **sanctification**. And the basis on which He pronounced her not guilty and declared, *“Neither do I condemn thee,”* was that in a short time **He** was going to be condemned in her place. **His** condemnation was to be the ransom price which would secure her redemption.

It is critical for us to note the order of the two utterances of our Lord to this woman. He did not say, *“Go and sin no more, and I will not condemn thee.”* If He had so ordered His words, the woman would have known that her condition was hopeless. Instead, the Saviour first said, *“Neither do I condemn thee.”* This statement placed her securely within the sanctuary of **Romans 8:1-2**: *“So now the case is closed. There remains no accusing voice of condemnation against those who are joined in life-union with Jesus, the Anointed One. For the “law” of the Spirit of life flowing through the anointing of Jesus has liberated us from the “law” of sin and death”* (**The Passion Translation**).

After He had assured her that there was no condemnation for her to fear, He said *“Go and sin no more.”* This statement placed her under the constraint of His love.

The very first thing that sinful human beings need is to be reconciled to God and we cannot be reconciled to God until our sins and the guilt that is associated with them, has been effectively dealt with. That is why whenever the Bible addresses the matter of redemption, it always commences with the forgiveness of sins.

The word *“forgiveness”* is the translation of the Greek word **aphesis**, (**af’-es-is**;) which means *“to send from one’s self, to send away, to release or depart.”* **Thayer’s Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament** explains that when the word **aphesis** is used in relation to sins, it means, *“a release, the letting them go as if they had not been committed, thus, forgiveness, a remission of their penalty.”* Archbishop **Richard Trench** says that the image underlying the verb is that of the releasing of a prisoner, or the letting go, as of a debt.

This image of the releasing of a prisoner or the letting go of a debt, reminds us of the one goat who was offered as a sin-offering on the Day of Atonement, and of the other goat upon which the sins of the people was symbolically placed.

This goat was afterward let go in the wilderness, never to be seen again by Israel. This latter goat typified that aspect of redemption in which the sins of the human race were put away, never to be charged against the individual again. God's forgiveness of sin refers to His act of putting sin away on a judicial basis. It refers to His remitting of the guilt and penalty of sin. Jesus Christ died to carry away our sins **so they might never be seen again.** **Psalm 103:12** reminds us, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." He could not have removed them any further! He gave a specific promise to that effect in **Jeremiah 31:31-34:**

31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: **for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.**

John 1:29 is very clear as it relates to this point: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, **which taketh away the sin of the world.**" Brothers and sisters, the liberating truth is that no written accusation stands against us because our sins have not just been covered, they have been taken away!

But what is it that has made redemption and the forgiveness of sins possible? The answer Paul says, is "according to the riches of His grace." The words "according to" are the translation of a Greek word which has the idea of "down" or "under." The word, as it is used in this context, speaks of domination or control. By using this Greek word, Paul is informing us that the degree of this forgiveness of sins was controlled or dominated by the riches; the wealth; the abundance of God's grace. This forgiveness of sins is, therefore, a complete, unconditional, and unchanging one, because it is controlled by the abundance of God's grace, and that abundance is infinite in proportion.

Regarding the phrase, "the riches of His grace," **Expositor's Bible Commentary** makes the following remarks: "The freeness of this divine favor in the form of grace, the unmerited nature of the divine goodness, is what Paul most frequently magnifies with praise and wonder. Here it is, the mighty measure of the largesse, the grace in its quality of riches, that is introduced."

The riches of God's grace are as abundant and unchanging as God is, for when He gave us His salvation, He gave Himself to us in Jesus Christ!

Jesus, my Lord will love me forever,
From Him no pow'r of evil can sever,
He gave His life to ransom my soul;
Now I belong to Him;

Chorus

*Now I belong to Jesus,
Jesus belongs to me,
Not for the years of time alone,
But for eternity.*

Once I was lost in sin's degradation,
Jesus came down to bring me salvation,
Lifted me up from sorrow and shame,
Now I belong to Him;

Joy floods my soul for Jesus has saved me,
Freed me from sin that long had enslaved me
His precious blood, He gave to redeem,
Now I belong to Him;