4-8-18

Ephesians 1:7-8a

In this verse, we really have the Gospel. It tells us about being saved, who it is that saves us, and why He saves us. It is bringing us out of slavery, it is Jesus, and it is due simply to the grace of God. Notice that we have nothing to do with the whole process, we are simply the recipients of wonderful gifts that God pours out in His great love.

Our verse starts out “In Him” or “In Whom”. This refers back to the previous verse which ended with “in the Beloved”. This is, of course, Jesus Christ. All of what follows comes about through Jesus, and only through Him. It is so important for us as Christians to understand that any good thing we have from God is only through Jesus. It is our human nature to try to achieve things for ourselves, but when it comes to God, we must fully submit to Christ and abandon any idea of our own merit being worthy of the Almighty.

The only way to the Father is by Jesus Christ. It is only by Him that we are redeemed from slavery to sin. It is only by Him that we have forgiveness of sin, and if not for forgiveness of sin, we would have no access to the Father. The only reason Jesus has provided these things for us is because of His grace; we don’t deserve any of it, we are far too sinful. God is so good, and God loves us so much, that when we come to Him by way of His Son, the way He pours out gifts on us can only be described as lavish.

In Jesus, we have redemption, and we have that redemption through His blood. Redemption and the blood of Jesus are tied together; they are inseparable. It is only because of Jesus’ blood that we are redeemed. And we must speak of His blood, not simply His death.

Leviticus 17:11

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.

This passage from Leviticus is talking about the animal sacrifices that Israel made under the law of Moses. The blood, which contained the life, of the animal was taken from the animal and treated differently. It was never eaten. It was sprinkled on the alter, or the mercy seat, or on the people. Otherwise it was poured out on the ground. All of this pointed to Jesus. His blood was sprinkled on the alter of the cross and it was poured out on the ground. His blood was offered before the mercy seat of God on our behalf. His blood is sprinkled on us in that by it we are cleansed of sin. The powerful difference for us comes in the Lord’s supper. In that ordinance we are invited to become spiritual partakers of His blood. By this, we drink in His life; His life is now part of us. These things are no longer merely external and physical, they are now also internal and spiritual.

To speak of Jesus’ death is to simply speak of His cessation of life. When we speak of His blood, we speak of His life itself. He gave His life and we are redeemed; He gave His life and we received it. Now, Christ is in us, as we are in Him. The Old Testament sacrifices provided atonement. Jesus’ sacrifice provided atonement and so much more. In particular, He provided our redemption, and everything that comes with it.

Redemption is a very important word in Christianity and we use it a lot. It comes up frequently in the Bible. Let’s spend some time looking more closely at this word and what all it means for us.

Redemption shows up early in the Old Testament; in the Pentateuch. It is often with regard to land, but that is a different topic. The term is also applied to people, to those who become servants or slaves to another Israelite. The idea of slavery is abhorrent to us and rightly so. We think of human beings kept against their will and force to work under poor conditions. These happenings are part of history and, unfortunately, are even more widespread and profitable today. Certainly, this type of slavery took place in Israel.

The type of slavery we are discussing here is different. Then, as now, people could fall on hard times and have no source of income. There was no welfare system. What was available was to find someone who was better off and become their servant or slave. The slave would work and be at their master’s beck and call; in return, the master provided what the slave needed to live. This type of thing takes place today in a slightly different form: it’s called a job.

There were a couple ways out of this slavery. Every seven years, all Hebrew slaves were allowed to go free from their masters with no strings attached. In addition, a slave could be redeemed by another, usually by a close relative. In this redemption, the value of the slave’s worth in work would be paid by the redeemer. In other words, a price would be paid to bring someone out of slavery; that is redemption.

We, as human beings, are slaves. By our sin, we are slaves to sin and to satan. Oddly enough, we are slaves to the law of Moses. If we don’t follow its rules, we face punishment. The law is very unforgiving. Sin and satan are ruthless tyrants. If we look at all the horror and inhumanity of slavery down through the ages and now, we have a glimpse of what it is like to have satan as a master. The worst part is that while we are under his mastery, we are deluded into thinking we are free. Only the Holy Spirit, by the grace of God, can show us our chains. Only Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, has paid for our redemption.

In the Old Testament, provision was made for someone who wanted to remain as the slave of their master. According to Exodus 21:5-6, a man who doesn’t want to leave will be taken before God and have his ear pierced with an awl, and he will remain a slave. In the same way, anyone who chooses not to accept redemption will remain a slave to satan; and accept the eternal consequences.

As you can probably tell, redeem carries the idea of “to buy out”. For those of us who accept Christ, we have been redeemed, the price has been paid to deliver us from slavery. As Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 6:20:

For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

That price was very high, it was the blood of Jesus Christ. It is only reasonable to glorify God, to give yourself to Jesus; He paid the price to keep you out of hell.

We read about the riches of God’s grace and how He lavishes that grace upon us. We see this in the redemption itself; we have been purchased out of slavery. While this is more than we deserve or more than we could ever hope for, Scripture shows us many benefits of redemption. We have to look to Scripture to find these benefits because they are spiritual, not physical. Because of our physical nature, we tend to look for blessings in things like having enough money, being healthy, or just having things work out once in a while. Some of these things are provided by the LORD for us; but the greater treasure lies in the spiritual.

We are shown a big one right here in our Scripture today: forgiveness. This is forgiveness of our own individual sins or trespasses, not just the idea of forgiveness of sin in general; and again, it’s in His blood. God is, by His very nature, holy; He will not allow sin in His presence or even to go without just punishment. Because of our sins, we are unable to be before Him and deserve eternal separation from Him. Because of redemption, our sins are forgiven, Jesus took the punishment Himself. Through the blood of Christ, God now sees us as sinless and we can approach Him. That veil in the temple that separated us from the Holy of Holies where God dwelt, has been torn in two and we can come to Him. Our sins are wiped away and we are clean.

Revelation 5:9-10

And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”

This is a scene that the apostle John sees taking place in heaven around the throne of God. The beings there are singing praise to the Lamb Who was slain. He is the only One, of all those in heaven, worthy to break the seven seals on the book. Why is He worthy? Because He used His own blood, His very life, to purchase people for God. Purchase is what redemption is about. Jesus bought us for God, for His purposes; and that means eternal life for us. In addition to forgiveness, redemption gives us eternal life with the Father.

Romans 5:7

For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

By the sin of Adam, death entered the world and we are all subject to it. All it took was one person, one act of rebellion, to allow satan access to the world and rule over it. It would only take one person to be perfectly obedient to God to break satan’s hold. Jesus was that person. His obedience cost Him His life, His blood. Look at the gift Paul points out that we receive because of this: righteousness.

As a Christian we have Christ’s righteousness; our own righteousness does us no good. Again, someone who is not righteous cannot stand before God. Because we have been redeemed through Christ, God now sees His righteousness when He looks at us. We have access to the Father.

Galatians 4:4-7

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

When we consider the idea of being purchased, it sort of alludes to the purchaser becoming the owner. As we saw earlier in a Scripture, “You were bought with a price”. When we say yes to Christ, that purchase takes effect and we are redeemed from slavery to sin and we are now owned by Christ. In a manor of speaking, we become slaves of Jesus. Really, this is very good. We could have no better Master. He provides for us abundantly beyond anything we could ever imagine. In fact, once we begin to understand what He has done for us and who He actually is, it becomes our desire to be His servant. May we always feel this way and ever offer ourselves to Him.

But in God’s lavish grace, He goes beyond this. When we are redeemed by Christ, God adopts us as His very children. We actually become His sons and daughters. Not only can we come to God, we come to Him as children come to their Father. This is such a huge change in relationship. When Christ died, we were enemies of God; now through the blood of Christ we are His children. All by God’s grace, all through Jesus.

As if this weren’t enough, notice the last part of the passage from Galatians. Since we are children we are also heirs. Heirs receive good things from their Fathers and God has many good things in store for us; along with eternity to enjoy them. When we dwell on these things, it becomes mind boggling. God is so merciful.

If the LORD is willing, I will continue next week on this verse because there are lots more blessings that come with the redemption Christ has obtained for us. Hopefully, during the coming week you will have opportunity to reflect on the blessings I have mentioned. Let it sink into your mind and heart how truly wonderful and merciful these blessings are; and then, thank God for them; thank Jesus for providing them.

Prayer

LORD, the more we consider all that You have provided for us in Your grace, the more in awe of You we become. What You have provided us with is so vast, we cannot comprehend. We ask that Your Holy Spirit help us to grasp the fullness of Your grace, so that we may give You the glory and praise You rightfully deserve.

In our humanity, we tend to focus so much on the physical, which passes away. It is easy to miss the more important spiritual dimension of life that will last for eternity. First, thank You, for Your awareness and patients with us; Your knowledge of our frailty. Next, we ask that as part of our sanctification, You would bring us to focus more on the spiritual. It is here that we can praise You for Your great grace.

Father, we thank You now that we can be called Your children. We can enter into that relationship that You desired from creation. All glory is Yours.

These things we pray in Jesus’ name

Amen