

Ephesians 1:7-8

Introduction

“*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who* has blessed us *with* every spiritual blessing *in* the heavenly places *in* Christ, *even as He chose us in* Him *before* the foundation of the world, *that* we should be holy and blameless *before* Him *in* love, *having* predestined us *for* adoption as sons *through* Jesus Christ *to* Himself, *according* to the good pleasure of His will, *to* the praise of the glory of His grace, *which* He freely bestowed on us *in* the Beloved...”

That’s only 65 words of a single sentence that goes on for 202 words. And what do you hear – a long, awkward, “monstrous” sentence, or the lavish riches of a salvation too *wonderful* to be contained by any of the “rules” of grammar? Three weeks ago, we saw that God... chose... us – before the foundation of the world. This *is* the spiritual blessing from which all other spiritual blessings flow. When God chose us, it was the supreme expression of His *love* – He was *fore-knowing* us. When God chose us, He was selecting us from out of a vast multitude of people – He was fore-knowing *only* us. When God chose us, it was in spite of us – when there was nothing in us to deserve, or even to invite His love. We saw that the goal and end of God’s choosing us in Christ *before the foundation of the world* is our full perfection in Christ *on the day of the Lord Jesus*. God’s choice of us in eternity past has its ultimate fulfillment in eternity future. We know that these things are accomplished as Paul repeatedly says, *in Him – in Christ*. But *how*? How is it that God’s choice of us actually becomes *effective* in Christ? How is it that this choice God made before the foundation of the world is actually accomplished and brought to pass within our own experience *today* – so as to actually make us holy and blameless before Him in love?

Paul answers in verses 5-6 that God destined us before the foundation of the world to adoption as His very own sons and daughters *in the Beloved*. In other words, we’ve been made to share in the loving relationship that has existed for all eternity between the Father and His one and only Son. This is how our own adoption as sons and daughters of God is made possible. Through our union with Christ, He shares *His* own divine sonship *with us...* *Christ’s* status as God’s Son lifts us up and makes us sons and daughters of God *with Him*. As we share with the Son in the Father’s love, we also come to *share* in His infinite *privilege* as heir of all things and His perfect *likeness* to the Father in holiness and blamelessness. The Father has sent forth the Spirit of His one and only *Son* into *our* hearts.

God chose us. And in order that this choice might be made effective in our lives God predestined us to adoption as His own sons and daughters. But then we’re left with another question: As a sinful and rebellious people, how in the world have we been made to share in the loving relationship that’s existed for all eternity between the Father and His one and only Son? How could we possibly *not* be asking this question – over, and over, and over, and over again?

- ✓ Psalm 111:2 (NASB) — Great are the [saving] works of the LORD; they are studied by all who delight in them.

Was our adoption accomplished as if by magic, so that God just spoke the word and “zap!” we were part of His family – His own sons and daughters? Not at all. The real answer is more than any one of us could have ever dared to imagine, much less put into words. But under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul has actually written it down on paper with pen and ink. And through all the centuries God has preserved His word so that *today* we might read it, and know the truth, and give Him glory. Paul continues in verse 7:

I. “in whom”

In verse five, most of our modern translations change the *participle* (“having predestined”) to a main verb (“He predestined”) – so we can make verse five the beginning of a new sentence. Now here in verse seven, *all* of the modern translations change the *relative* pronoun, “in *whom*,” to a *personal* pronoun, “in *Him*.” Of course, the reason for this is so we can start another new sentence and make things a little easier to read. Obviously, you can’t start off a new sentence like this: “in whom we have redemption” because then these words would just be dangling in thin air. But that’s the point. Paul didn’t start a new sentence. He used the relative pronoun, “in whom,” which means that the sentence which already has sixty-five words is about to get even longer. He used the relative pronoun, “in whom,” because he wasn’t yet stopping to take a breath. Because the blessings and riches of God’s awesome salvation kept driving him forward – always giving him *more words* which now just seem to be tumbling one after the other out of his mouth. “In whom,” Paul writes...

II. “in whom we have redemption”

As Christians, we know instinctively that this is a beautiful, *beautiful* word. But if we were to move past our instincts, why is it that this word is so beautiful? Behind the word “redemption” is the whole history of how God delivered and rescued the nation of Israel – first of all from Egypt, and then, much later, from Babylon. So we read in Exodus chapter six:

- ✓ Exodus 6:5–7 (cf. Psalm 77:14-20; 78:42-43; 106:7-10) —I have heard the ***groaning*** of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as ***slaves***, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, “I am the LORD, and **I will BRING YOU OUT** from under the ***burdens*** of the Egyptians, and **I will DELIVER you** from ***slavery*** to them, and **I will REDEEM you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people**, and **I will be your God**, and you shall know that **I am the LORD your God**, who has **brought you out** from under the ***burdens*** of the Egyptians.”

What is *redemption*? To be redeemed is first of all to be ***rescued*** from and ***delivered*** out of slavery and bondage. In Israel’s case, it was the hard burden and oppression of slavery in the land of Egypt. When God redeemed Israel, He delivered them from this “house of slavery” – He brought them out from under the burdens of the Egyptians (cf. Deut. 13:5; Micah 6:4; Deut. 15:15; 24:18). So to be redeemed is to be ***set free*** – released from the chains and bondage of a cruel master. But it’s even more than that.

When God redeemed the people of Israel, He was not only *delivering* them *from* Egypt, He was also *acquiring* them for Himself – to be His own treasured *possession*. “***I will redeem you*** with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. ***I will take you to be my people.***”

- ✓ 2 Samuel 7:23 (cf. 1 Chron. 17:21) — Who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to **REDEEM to be his people**, making himself a name and doing for them great and awesome things by driving out before your people, whom you **REDEEMED for yourself from Egypt**, a nation and its gods?

So to be redeemed is not only to be set free from the chains and bondage of a cruel master, it also means being *acquired* by a new master. We are *set free* in order to be **claimed** by another.

- ✓ Psalm 74:2 (NET; cf. NRSV; NLT; contra NASB; NIV; HCSB; ESV; NKJV; NCV) — Remember your people whom you **acquired** in ancient times, whom you [**redeemed**] so they could be *your very own* nation!
- ✓ Exodus 15:13-16 (NRSV; contra all other translations) — In your steadfast love you led the people whom you **redeemed**... The peoples heard, they trembled... Terror and dread fell upon them; by the might of your arm, they became still as a stone until your people, O LORD, passed by, until the people whom you **acquired** passed by.

There’s such a depth of meaning and beauty to that single word, *redemption*. To be redeemed is to be rescued and delivered from a miserable life of slavery under a cruel master, *and* to be *acquired* by a new master – a master who is merciful, and gracious, and kind. To be redeemed is to be fought for, and sought after, and claimed by one we didn’t formerly serve, but who loved us nonetheless. But for all of this, Israel was ungrateful. Israel rejected her Redeemer to serve idols, and pursue her own vain and empty pleasures. And so God scattered Israel among the nations, and sent His people into a second captivity and exile – which, unbelievably, set the stage for a “**second** redemption” – a redemption that’s often described using the picture of Israel’s first deliverance from Egypt (cf. Isaiah 44:23-28; 48:20-21; Zech. 10:8-12).

- ✓ Jeremiah 50:33-34 — Thus says the LORD of hosts: The people of Israel are **oppressed**, and the people of Judah with them. All who took them **captive** have held them fast; they refuse to let them go. Their **REDEEMER** is strong; the LORD of hosts is his name.
- ✓ Isaiah 11:11 (cf. Neh. 1:10) — In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to **recover [acquire]** the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.
- ✓ Isaiah 43:1-7 — But now thus says the LORD...: “Fear not, for I have **REDEEMED** you; **I have called you by name, you are mine**. ***When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you***... you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you.”

The language of redemption is the language of love. The language of redemption is the language of being **sought** after, and **fought** for, and claimed by God when we were miserable and hopeless slaves. Twice, God redeemed Israel.

Twice, God rescued Israel from captivity, and acquired her to be His own. But as the prophets looked forward to that second redemption, they seemed at times to be anticipating something even greater and more wonderful than either of the first two had ever been. God's redemption of Israel from slavery in Egypt and captivity in Babylon foreshadowed a much greater, once for all, everlasting redemption still to come.

- ✓ Jeremiah 31:8–14 — “He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.” For the LORD has ransomed Jacob and has **REDEEMED** him *from hands too strong for him*. They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD... their life shall be like a watered garden, and they shall languish no more... I will turn their *mourning into joy*; I will *comfort* them, and give them *gladness for sorrow*.
- ✓ Isaiah 35:9–10 — No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the **REDEEMED** shall walk there. And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; *everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away*.

The question that everyone should have been asking was this: If there had already been a need for Israel to be redeemed a second time, why shouldn't there be a need for a third, and a fourth, and a fifth, and a sixth redemption? What would be different about this final redemption – one that would make the first two mere shadows and pointers to the real thing?

We've seen that when God redeemed Israel He was *releasing* them from the chains and bondage of slavery in Egypt, and captivity in Babylon, in order that He might *acquire* them to be His very own treasured possession. The Hebrew word for “acquire” can be translated in different ways – depending on how you go about doing the acquiring (Gen. 4:1; Ps. 139:13; Ps. 78:54; cf. Deut. 32:6; Gen. 14:19, 22; Prov. 8:22; Isa. 1:3; Prov. 1:5; 4:5, 7). When God *acquired* Israel for Himself, it was with “an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.” We think especially of the ten plagues, and the dividing of the Red Sea. We could say that God *won* Israel for Himself by war and conquest (cf. Psalm 78:54; Exod. 6:5-7; Psalm 77:14-20). But the difference between this past redemption of the nation of Israel and our *own* redemption is in *how* God has acquired His people. There's another way to translate the word “acquire,” depending on how you go about doing the acquiring (Gen. 33:19; Lev. 25:25-30; Ruth 4:4; Jer. 32:7; Neh. 5:8).

- ✓ 1 Chronicles 21:24 — King David said to Ornan, “...I will **buy** them for the full *price*. I will not... offer burnt offerings that *cost* me nothing.”

When God redeemed the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, there was no payment. When God acquired the nation of Israel for Himself, there was no purchase price. But when we come to think of our own redemption, what do we find? When God acquired us for Himself, how did He do it? Paul writes:

II. “In whom we have redemption through His blood – the forgiveness of trespasses”

How has God acquired us for Himself? He's acquired us for Himself through the payment of a *price* – through the shedding of the blood of His only Son. But now we have to be careful. Right

away, we tend to think of a commercial transaction, and so we want to know *who* the price was paid *to*. Origen thought that since we were slaves of Satan (or of sin and death), then God bought us by paying a price to Satan. So the shed blood of Jesus was the price paid to meet the just demands of the devil. Well, that might be logical, but there's no other support for this idea in the Bible. Augustine said that God paid the price to Himself to satisfy the demands of His *own* holiness and justice. It's true that Christ's shed blood has satisfied the holy wrath of God. But it seems strange to talk about paying yourself – to say that God bought us from Himself. Other people have come up with other ideas, but I wonder if in the end, we might be missing the main point?

The main point is that God has acquired us at *infinite cost* to Himself. Our redemption is not just an outward deliverance from slavery to the Egyptians. We were *slaves* to sin and death (cf. Rom. 6). We were held captive by our own lusts – by our own sinful desires for me, and for self. As slaves of sin, we were enemies of God. We couldn't escape from our own cravings which always placed “me” at the center of my own universe. We were slaves of our own lusts, and desires, and cravings for self-fulfillment and self-satisfaction, and yet the very things we pursued only brought us heavy burdens, and groaning, and misery, and death. Death – because we were not “innocent” slaves of some human master, but *guilty* slaves to our own sin. Death – because *our* sin deserves God's judgment. Death – because we could not escape or free ourselves. And it was into this miserable, hopeless, impossible situation that God came to *redeem* us – to rescue us, and deliver us, and set us free from the chains of our own sin – and having freed us from our own sin, to then take us for Himself. To be redeemed is to be fought for, and sought after. To be redeemed is to be rescued from one master and claimed by another. However we are redeemed, we can only feel loved. But God would have us to know that when He redeemed us, it was through the blood of His own Son. He released us not from any human captor, but from the chains of our own sin. Our redemption is the forgiveness of sins – of our willful “trespasses” against God and His holy law, and therefore our redemption is the release from sin's rule, and power, and authority in our lives. We've been *set free*! God rescued us, and delivered us from the cruel chains of our own sin – and having set us free, He then took us *for Himself*.

✓ 1 Peter 1:18–19 (cf. Rev. 5:9; Acts 20:28) — [We] were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from [our] forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

When God redeemed the nation of Israel, He went forth in war and conquest, and suffered no losses to Himself (Exod. 6:5-7; cf. Psalm 77:14-20). But God would have each and every one of us to know that when He redeemed us, it was at the infinite cost of the blood of His own Son. And that's *why* Paul continues:

III. “In whom we have redemption through his blood – the forgiveness of trespasses – according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight.”

Ours is a redemption infinitely more *lavish* than the redemption of the nation of Israel because it's a redemption infinitely more costly. Ours is a redemption that could only be made possible by the full *riches* of God's grace, *lavishly poured out* upon us, in *all* wisdom and insight. The

point of words like “riches,” and “lavished,” and “all,” is not that we’ve been given an extravagant bonus, but that these words were all *necessary* if we were ever to have redemption. Furthermore, we know that “the LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens” (Prov. 3:19; cf. Ps. 104:24; Jer. 10:12; 51:15). *How much more*, then, has God marshaled all of the resources of His infinite wisdom and understanding in accomplishing our redemption through Christ’s shed blood – the forgiveness of sins (cf. Thielman). Only the infinite richness of God’s grace can explain the infinite price He paid to redeem a people who were otherwise beyond all hope of rescue.

Calvin says that words like “riches” and “lavished” and “all” are “intended to give us large views of divine grace. The apostle feels himself unable to celebrate, in a proper manner, the goodness of God, and desires that the contemplation of it would occupy the minds of men till they are entirely lost in admiration. How desirable is it that men were deeply impressed with ‘the riches of that grace’ which is here commended! No place would any longer be found for pretended satisfactions.” Or as James Fergusson wrote in the 1600’s:

“As that grace, favor, and good-will which God manifested in the salvation of sinners, is a rich, copious, and abundant grace; so nothing argues the riches of this grace more, than that from it do flow such excellent effects, as the giving of Christ, the Son of God, to redeem slaves and rebels, together with forgiveness of sins; they being infinite wrongs, and there being many of them in every pardoned sinner; and those not only ordinary infirmities, but sometimes also heinous transgressions; and yet free grace pardons all, and this not only in one, but in all believers, in all ages, and does yet remain as full and overflowing in God to pardon self-condemned sinners as ever: all of which argues no less than a copious, rich, and abundant grace.”

Conclusion

Brothers and sisters, we’ve been redeemed. We’ve been rescued from one master and claimed by another. God has acquired us at infinite cost to Himself. So then, we may conclude with Paul’s words:

- ✓ 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 (cf. 7:23) — Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

(3) *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,*
who has blessed us
with every spiritual blessing
in the heavenly places
in Christ,

(4) *even as* He chose us
in Him
before the foundation of the world,
that we should be holy and blameless *before* Him *in* love,

(5) *having* predestined us
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to Himself,
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(6) *to* the praise *of* the glory *of* His grace,
which He freely bestowed on us
in the Beloved,

(7) *in whom* we have redemption
through His blood
– the forgiveness of trespasses –
according to the *riches* of His grace,
(8) *which* He *lavished* upon us
in all wisdom and insight,

- ✓ Revelation 1:5–6 — [Now] to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood... to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.