

Redeemed

Ephesians

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Well, we have a dual purpose as we come to God's word this morning. We're here to continue our study in the book of Ephesians, of course, which we started last month, but this message will also prepare us for the communion service which lies just ahead and I trust that the message today will help prepare your heart to take communion in a worthy manner. Communion, of course, is the time when we commemorate the Lord's death on our behalf. Scripture says that a man should examine himself before he takes of the elements. It says that in the context of promoting the unity of the church and also not allowing yourself to come to communion with unconfessed sin in your heart and taking the Lord's table in vain as if you would receive forgiveness but continue in the sin for which the Lord died, that is a contradiction in terms. What we want to do this morning in our message is to help all of us avoid doing that but rather to take communion in a manner that is worthy of the Lord who gave himself on our behalf.

So I invite you to turn to the book of Ephesians chapter 1, as we begin this morning. Last time if you were not with us, we considered the biblical doctrine of adoption. It's an aspect of our salvation, that God adopted us into his family. He severed the prior ties that we had with our father, the devil, and brought us into his family so that we enjoy full status as one of his sons or daughters. God has brought us into his family. A privilege, an opportunity, a status that we could never deserve, that we could never have earned, this was an act of sheer unmerited grace. A divine favor to his people to bring us into the very family of God and we can rightfully call him Father as a result. That's a wonderful aspect of our salvation and yet there is more reason for us to honor God, to bless his name, to rejoice in his work in our hearts this morning and I want you to look with me, as we look at chapter 1, verse 3, in Ephesians where the apostle Paul said this, he said,

"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 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. 7 In Him," that is in the beloved, in

Christ, "we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He lavished on us."

In that passage we see such wonderful aspects of salvation. In verses 3 through 4, we see that God chose us before the foundation of the world in order to enjoy salvation, that we might become holy and blameless before him. In verses 5 and 6, you see that he adopted us into his family. Here in verses 7 and 8, we're going to talk about the redemption which Christ purchased for us with his own blood and as we think about coming to communion to remember our salvation, to remember the Lord who died on our behalf, I want you to frame your thinking along these lines because it is the only way that we can properly respond with the spirit of praise, that Paul animates throughout this entire passage verses 3 through 14. When God chose you before the foundation of the world, you had no influence over that decision of his. He chose you for his own good purposes because it pleased him to do so. He chose you before you had done anything good or bad and he said, "I will set my affection on you and bring you into my family one day forever." You were chosen and you had no power or influence over that choice which took place before creation began. In like manner beloved, when we think about the matter of adoption, I want you to think about it this way: a man who is the head of his family has control over his family and there is no one outside of the family that can demand entry into the family and demand to be treated like a son. That must come from the will of the father. It must come from the good intention, the overflowing love of the father of the family to bring someone in. There is a claim, there is no obligation upon the father to do that and that's what God the Father has done when he adopted us into his family. In the pristine nature of his holiness, in the glory of his grace, he reaches out and says, "I will have you in my family," and he brought us in. You could never have demanded that. You could never have earned that. You simply cannot earn a position like that. A position of favor with God where he says, "I will treat you as one of my sons," with full status and privilege, appertaining thereto as a former attorney would say maybe.

Well beloved, when we come to redemption we see this theme again. What I want you to see is the commonality, the undercurrents that underlie these doctrines of election and adoption and redemption, that every one of them, every aspect of what Paul is praising God for here in Ephesians chapter 1, presupposes a sheer act of mercy of God that you could never have earned on your own. You could not earn election. You cannot earn adoption and in the same way you could not earn redemption either. What is redemption? We've studied it a bit in the past when we looked at Titus chapter 2, but let me just give you a definition of the doctrine of redemption to set this straight in your mind and so that you'll have a sense of what we are talking about over the next half hour or so that we look at this passage in Ephesians. Redemption is the act of God in which he delivered us from sin based on the price which Christ paid with his blood. I'll say that one more time in case you're taking notes: redemption is the act of God in which he delivered us from sin based on the price which Christ paid with his blood. Redemption pictures a slave market where slaves are not able to buy their own freedom. They are destitute. They have no way of changing their status or changing the master to whom they belong and then someone comes along and pays a price for them and makes them their own. Just

like with election, I could not have influenced God's choice, he made it before I was born. Just like with adoption, can't I demand entry into a family that is not my own. So with redemption there is the underlying presupposition that you did not have the means to buy your own freedom from sin. You did not have what it took to be released from its power, to be released from its penalty, to be released from its presence and so the whole nature of salvation as Paul unfolds it in these verses, these different pictures, these different doctrines that he enunciates, all presuppose something that you were utterly helpless and powerless to accomplish on your own. That is absolutely essential for you to have a right understanding of salvation. It wasn't that you and God work together 50-50 to bring this result to pass. If you are in the family of God, if you have been redeemed from sin, it is because God sheerly, lovingly, out of his own loving gracious purpose towards you said, "I will have you as my own." That does a couple of things: one, it exalts the grace of God to the highest possible pinnacle in our thinking and it utterly humbles us to realize, "I contributed nothing to my salvation. I am in the family of God because it pleased the Father to do that, not because I earned it, not because I was somehow better than the guy standing next to me in line. No, this was something that the Father did because it made him happy to do so. It pleased him, it advanced his glory."

So, here we are today to consider for a few moments the doctrine of redemption. Well, how important is the doctrine of redemption? One writer put it this way and I quote, he says, "No word in the Christian vocabulary deserves to be held more precious than 'Redeemer' for even more than 'Savior' the word 'Redeemer' reminds the child of God that his salvation has been purchased at a great and personal cost. The Lord has given himself for our sins in order to deliver us from them." Redemption involves a price being paid, that's the nature of what it means. It's the language of the slave market and a slave had to be purchased to be released. Well, when we talk about salvation from the perspective of redemption, we are acknowledging that a price was paid to rescue our souls, that there was a cost to someone to free us from the judgment and the separation and the eternal isolation and pain of eternal damnation that our sins had rightfully called down upon our head. In redemption, Scripture teaches us that it was the Lord Jesus Christ alone who paid that painful price for us to receive salvation.

A price was paid, that's what redemption means: a price was paid for your soul. The question is what was that price? Who paid that price? And as Paul continues on, what we see is we ask ourselves: how must I love this one who redeemed me? How precious must the one who paid such a price for my soul be to my heart? How much he must be the singular pinnacle of my affections? How gladly I would abandon the world and leave it behind? How gladly would I forsake all of my sin for the sake of this one who paid such a supreme price for my soul? You see, beloved, when you really start to understand the multifaceted nature of the doctrine of salvation, you realize that you can't be the same. It's utterly absurd to think that somebody could enter into salvation and live a life that was completely unchanged from the life that they had lived before. How could that be? How could you be delivered from sin and yet continue to live in it? How could you understand that Christ paid a price for your soul and yet live indifferently to him and have so many affections that are tangled up in the world and Christ somehow just kind of fades into the background? That's ridiculous. That is the mark of an unconverted mind, an unconverted

life to live that way. When you understand truth salvation, you realize that there's only one object of your affection and you gladly give it to the Lord Jesus Christ because you say in your heart, "He paid so great a price for me."

1 Corinthians 6 says you were bought with a price, therefore glorify God with your body. And so when we study salvation together verse-by-verse here through the book of Ephesians, one of the things we should be seeing happening is that our affections for Christ are deepening. Our love and appreciation for the Father's plan expands exponentially. We love him more and more and more and more and our thoughts are captivated, our mind is captured by the reality that what Scripture says about salvation is the most important thing in the universe; it is the most important thing to my soul. Here it is in the biblical doctrine of salvation, is my eternal rest, my eternal comfort, my eternal security. And so for those of you that have been with us, I just invite you to look at the state of your heart, the affections of your soul and ask is that what's happening to you because that certainly is the only possible result if we're understanding and appropriating it. We love Christ. We love him. That's why we proclaim his word. That's why we obey him. That's why we pursue the purity of his church's. It's because Christ is the singular object of our love and devotion.

Let's look at two aspects of redemption as we find them here in verses 7 and 8 of the passage that I read. First of all, I want to show you the fact of redemption. The fact of redemption in verse 7, "In Him we have redemption through his blood." Now, before we get in to talking about, in a little more detail the nature of redemption, I want you to notice two things. First of all it says "in Him," in the original language it's "in Whom," it's referring back to the beloved, Christ the beloved, who is the means by which God displayed this disgrace to us. But he says "we have redemption." That is a present tense verb in contrast to the past actions where God chose us, where God adopted us, or predestined us, I should say, to adoption, here in verse 7, we move into the present tense. We're talking about the ongoing possession of every believer in Christ, is that we have this redemption as an ongoing, unbroken aspect of our spiritual condition. You don't fall in and out of redemption. It doesn't start and stop and start and stop depending on whether you had your devotion or not. This is an ongoing, underlying, continually flowing reality in the life and the status of a believer. We have this. It belongs to us in Christ and he will never take it away.

Now, with that in mind, what is it that we have? What is this precious gift that has been given to us? It says that we have redemption. A slave could be set free if someone paid the price for him and the payment of that price was called redemption. Stated differently, redemption was the necessary expense to obtain freedom. You say, "What did I need to be free from? I was going along just fine. I came and went as I saw fit. I believed what I wanted to be. I was free," so says the natural man. "I am free. Don't put the chains of God upon my soul." Ha, there's a man speaking out of ignorance, who talks that way. You see, Scripture takes the picture of redemption and applies it to help us understand something about what our salvation means and what it is like and it does it having said, "He predestined us to adoption in the beloved in whom we have redemption," and so there's a continual flow of thought through here. He chose us to save us. We might be holy and

blameless in Him. He predestined us to adoption and that adoption comes through Christ in whom we have redemption.

There is this wonderful, unbroken chain that is woven through these verses 3 through 14 and here, beloved, is where I need to bring you face-to-face with your spiritual mirror. Where you were in the past and sadly for those of you who are not Christians, I am describing your present in what I am about to describe. On your own, you could not possibly have been a member of God's family. You could not have become part of his family. You belong to something else. Jesus said in John 8:34, "whoever commits sin is a slave of sin," and that was true of all of us before Christ. We were in sin. We were slaves of sin. We could not do anything but have sin as our master. That is by definition from Christ himself. Those who sin either in false religion or in spiritual pride and arrogance or in loving the world or in living a lascivious, drunken, immoral life, whatever that particular manifestation of it is, it all had a common root in sin and Jesus said, "Sin owned you." You were a slave to sin. It was your master. You could not get away. That is true of every single man, woman or child, whoever walked on the face of the earth. When Adam fell, he plunged the whole race into sin and we were born into sin and it could be no other way. Sin was our nature; it was our master; it's what we loved; it's what we pursued and we were spiritually indifferent and dead to anything else. It owned us. That's why looking back on your pre-Christian life, that's why it was so hard for you to break your sinful habits. It wasn't because you lacked sufficient willpower, it's because the power was sin over you, not you over the habit. You were a slave to it. It owned you and some of you in your testimony can speak to particular manifestations of that drug, that alcohol, that conduct that just owned you. You had to do it because you couldn't do anything else. You were a slave to sin. You belonged to something else indeed. Scripture says, "You belonged to someone else."

Scripture says, in 1 John chapter 3, verse 8 that, "the one who practices sin is of the devil." There is a cannon shot to the pride of man as he pursues his spiritual destruction, claiming his autonomy, claiming his free will. Scripture says, "No, no, you belong to the devil. You are a slave of sin you belonged to the devil," and again I have to say this again, those of you who are not Christians and some of you know that I'm talking about you, you need to realize that I'm describing your present biography from Scripture. You are a slave to sin, you are a slave to the devil and while you stick your fingers in your ears and say, "Blah, blah, blah, I'm not going to listen," you're just plunging further and further into darkness and destruction. The slavery chains are just wrapping around you tighter and tighter as you stiffen your neck against the gospel. That's what's happening for those of you who don't know Christ. This is not to be trifled with. A slave to sin. A slave to Satan. Belonging to him. That's where we all were. We had no key to unlock the chain. We had no desire to unlock the chain. As I've said in the past, we would reach down and kiss the chain because we loved sin that much. That is a horrific place for a man or a woman or a young person to be. That's why today's passage is such a basis for us to praise God and to honor him and to rejoice in him. Here we are in chains to foes that we could not see. We cannot see the principle of sin. We cannot see Satan, but we see the effects of our bondage to our immoral thoughts and our immoral behavior as we look back on our pre-Christian life.

And now in verse 7, into that spiritually dark place, the light shines. Into that place the glorious Lord Jesus comes and asserts himself. Into that dark condition, Christ appears and declares what he has done for us and what has he done? Verse 7, "In Him we have redemption through his blood." Redemption? You mean that there is freedom from sin to be had? You mean that these chains don't have to bind me? Indeed in Christ they no longer hold me captive? "I have been set free," the Christian says, "I have been purchased. I am no longer in that slave market. Christ has paid a price to deliver me so that I would be free to enter into the adopted family of God." You see, biblical salvation directly addresses the problem of your slavery to sin and to Satan. But before we get into it, let me say one more time, repetition is the key to learning they say and for those of us that have spiritually dull hearing, we need to hear it yet again: in your slavery to sin and Satan, you could not buy your own release. You could not purchase your own freedom. The presupposition of the picture is that you were bound and helpless in your condition and so you could not buy your way out through money, through good works, through religious rituals, through anything else, there was no way out of your condition. You were locked. You were bound. You were a slave.

Look, we don't mind saying these things, we don't mind hearing these things corporately as a church because here's the thing: it is only when you understand and embrace how desperately helpless your position was, that you can ever begin to appropriately understand and respond to what Christ has done for you. If you don't understand that you were bound, you're not going to appreciate your freedom. If you don't understand that you were bankrupt, not just a little bit in debt, you're not going to fully appreciate the price that was paid for your release. And so the key to understanding salvation, the key to understanding Christ and responding to him in the appropriate level of love, is to realize how bad it was. Because when you understand how bad it was, then the one who came with the key and unlocked and said, "Come forth with me," becomes someone who is exceedingly sweet and precious to you. There's no other way around it. Someone who thinks they contributed to their salvation cannot possibly love Christ in the proper way because that view leaves you kind of doing a high five. "We did it Lord, together." No, no, cut that hand off. "Lord, you did it all for me and I am a grateful follower as a result." There is no high five with the Lord, that together you guys figured out the way to accomplish your salvation, ha. No, there is falling on your face before him in unspeakable love and gratitude, "Thank you for doing what I couldn't do for myself." That changes everything and that is why this passage is such a basis to praise God. Redemption tells us that Christ has paid the price for you. When Christ died, he was paying the price that God required for sinners to be released from slavery to sin. It is in Christ alone where there is redemption. To say that in Christ we have redemption is another way of saying that Christ paid the price for your salvation. You who had empty pockets, you who had zero and more than zero in your bank account, you had unspeakable debt in your bank account that you could not pay, the Lord Jesus Christ came and paid it for you and what a price he paid.

Look at verse 7 with me. Paul by the inspiration of the Spirit, compacts so much truth into so few words, he says, "We have redemption through his blood," an obvious

reference to the crucifixion of Christ. An obvious reference to the fact that Christ voluntarily lay down his life at Calvary in order to secure your redemption, in order to pay the price that was necessary to release you from your sin. Stated differently, beloved, and in a day and age where preaching of the cross has been marginalized and we're used to wearing the cross as a piece of jewelry, something attractive, let's remember that the cross was an instrument of torture. Let's remember that Christ suffered a violent death to secure our redemption. That the innocent Son of God took the stripes on his back. Took the crown on his head. Endured the blows and the spittle on his face. Carried the cross to his own execution site. Was nailed on the cross. Was lifted high to die. Was mocked as he hung in disgrace and agony. Darkness fell for three hours while he bore the eternal weight of sin and separation from his Father in a profound mystery that we cannot properly articulate. This innocent Son of God went through that violent, physical, and spiritual suffering in order to pay the price for your redemption. Let's think about it from a different perspective. Christ accepted, Christ received obediently, voluntarily, Christ received that violent judgment that should have fallen on you. That's what should have happened to you and to me. Except for us, it would have been eternal, the infliction of punishment that we deserved for our sins against an eternal law of an eternal God. You see, there's no way to marginalize this or trivializes this. We need to hold it up to our understanding and embrace it. "I was really, really lost and Christ paid a really, really high price to save me, to redeem me, to buy me, to rescue me, to deliver me, to save me." It could have been no other way. His agony in death and separation from the Father was what it took. Hebrews 9, 22 says that "without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." Your guilt could not have been removed from your account except through what Christ did.

Your eternal well-being is locked up into what he did on the cross and so we love him for that. We praise him for that and let's pivot from the past guilt to the present aspect of what this means for us now in our liberation. Verse 7, "In Him we have redemption through his blood," and then he goes on and says exactly what he's referring to. He says we have "the forgiveness of our trespasses." Five words that redefine our spiritual condition. Five words that redefine our eternal future. He says, "Our trespasses have been forgiven." The word "trespasses" in the plural here, indicates conscious, willful, deliberate acts that violate God's law and his righteousness. It's not just that you made some mistakes earlier in life, he kind of stumbled over a math problem, "I did that wrong." No, no, the Bible describes our sin as deliberate rebellion against God. Conscience disobedience to him. And the nature of God's justice, we read about God's justice from Psalm 9 a little earlier, the nature of his justice is such, that there must be accountability for that sin. There must be punishment for disobedience. Our flabby approach to law and order, parental authority and disobedience, our flabby approach in the 21st century has nothing to do with the way God views disobedience against him. It must be punished and what redemption teaches us is even though you were guilty, even though you were without excuse, the Lord Jesus Christ paid the price so that you would be free from that penalty of sin.

It says, "In him your sins are forgiven." Now, let's enter into that realm and glory in it and rejoice in it for just a moment. What does it mean that your sins are forgiven as a

Christian? What does forgiveness apply to your account? To say that you are forgiven means that God has eternally canceled your responsibility for your sins. It means that you have been released from the liability for punishment that otherwise would have been required. The weight of guilt upon you has been removed. God says, "I will no longer hold your sins against you because of what my Son has done on your behalf. I have applied my punishment which I poured out on my innocent Son, I have applied that to your account so that the debt has been fully paid." Paid in full. Love it. If you're a Christian, if you have redemption, you have the forgiveness of your trespasses. Among many other things, that means that you can let go of the shame that you feel about the things that you did wrong in the past. You don't have to carry that as an ongoing burden on your conscience. Christ has satisfied the demands of God's justice, therefore walk from your broken chains and go free. You're forgiven. Paid. "Their sins and their lawless deeds," God says, "I will remember no more." Buried in the depths of the sea where no one can find them. Where they will never be called back to your account. Once we are in Christ, God does not punish us again either now or into eternity. You have been forgiven.

Christ voluntarily paid that price and so think about it, beloved, think about what we're saying: a slave to sin and Satan, bound without means of getting our own release, Christ intervened on our behalf. And he didn't just intervene with the entry of an accountant on a book, didn't just take an eraser and kind of scrub out your guilt in the books of heaven, no, in love he came to earth. In love he personally bore the cost. In love he shed his own life blood. In love. In love he came to earth knowing that would be the outcome. Knowing the end from the beginning. Knowing that the cross was ahead for him, he said, "I will come. I will do that. I will lovingly, graciously, gladly lay down my life for you."

It takes some silence for that to set in, for that to sink in, to realize the glory of what that is describing. This is the intersection of your eternal destiny. Christ went before you before you were even born, so that you could never be lost. So that your sins could be fully atoned. The payment could be made. Christ as it were said, "Father, I'll take that. Just let my people go." Christ put his hand on the cross and at the same time put his hand over you so that you would be shielded from the punishment that should have been yours. He paid the price and he's got the holes in his wrists to show it, to prove it. He's got the hole in the side to prove it. He's got the holes in his feet to prove it. Those holes in his body are the statement that the price has been paid and with Thomas, he comes to you who are not saved and he says. "Here put your hand in this place. Grab hold of me that I might extend that same grace to you who do not yet know me." Why would you turn away?

You see, speaking to those of you who do not know Christ, you see there is such a...I run out of synonyms after a while, there is such a hard-hearted stubbornness to hear Christ presented to you and say, "No, I won't bend at the knee." Really? You would rather kiss your chains over here? You would join with those who spit on Christ? And say, "No, I'll live my own life. I like the life I've got just fine right now." Really? You would mock Christ that way? What a shameful attitude for you to carry in your heart. That's wrong, that's so wrong. There should be nothing in our hearts rather than utter gratitude and worship to Christ saying, "Lord, redemption and you paid the price and I'm free. Bless

your holy name." Christ paid the price so that you, who could not satisfy the debt on your own, could belong to God's family. With no claim on the Godhead, the Godhead reaches out and says, "We will do this. We will bring you," using the plural to refer to the Trinity. You know, sometimes you just want to be quiet in the presence of that truth. This is incomprehensible. What I mean by that, it is so much more than we can possibly begin to appreciate in the totality of our understanding. We can understand it but we can't plumb the full depths of it. What manner of love is this? What kind of grace is this that has been showered upon us who know the Lord Jesus Christ? How can it be, that the Son of God would do that for us when he was under no external obligation to do it? How could that be? Can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior's blood?

"Died he for me who caused his pain?
For me who him to death pursued?
Amazing love, how can it be?
That thou my God would die for me."

That's the price. What kind of love is that? Well, Paul explains it. We're going to look at point number 2 now: the focus of redemption. We've seen the fact of redemption in the first part of verse 7, now we just want to look at the focus of redemption for just a moment. To say that we have redemption through his blood, look at verse 7 with me, the forgiveness of our trespasses and to even in the most superficial way that we've done it here this morning, to try to scratch the surface of what that means for us, brings us to this great focus at the end of verse 7. This is according to the riches of his grace which he lavished on us. Paul multiplies words of generosity and wealth here in this little phrase to emphasize to us something of the incalculable kindness that has been shown to us in salvation. It was not just that it was according to grace although it certainly was unmerited favor that was shown to us. Beloved, those of you who are Christians, get this through your head what I'm about to say right now because I understand that you're like me and it's sometimes easy to think that maybe God's being just a little bit unfair to you. We have got to banish that from our thinking as we go through and respond to earthly circumstances. No, look at verse 7: God has dealt with us according to the riches of his grace. In the bountiful, immeasurable, goodness of the favor of God, he has opened up the storehouse and he has poured it out upon us without measure, without restraint, without regret. He has been richly good to us in salvation. He has been abundantly generous in kindness towards us. He didn't simply give us the riches of his grace, look at verse 8, he lavished it on us. Grace, riches of grace, lavished riches of grace upon you in Christ. God abundantly poured blessings on you when you didn't deserve it. God did not send a drizzle of grace to dampen the ground of your life. God showered upon you in a rain burst of waters of grace, poured mercy after mercy after mercy upon you. Raining down blessings without measure, without ceasing, not ceasing now, not ceasing throughout eternity. The grace of God has wiped away our sins, has restored us to his family and has secured us throughout all of eternity.

Oh brother and sister in Christ, don't you see? Don't you see the way that that should soften and tenderize your heart? And that even if you're like me and your eyes can talk about this and be dry, you realize that at least in your heart there should be rivers of tears

of gratitude wetting the page of the Bible on your lap. "Oh God, thank you for how good you've been to me. Oh God, I can't begin to measure your grace let alone an exponential presentation of the riches of your grace and the exponential of the exponential that you lavished it on me." Do you see when Paul's heart was so full of this truth as he began to write this letter? Look at verse 3, do you see why Paul opens up by praising God? "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." Verse 6, it's "to the praise of his glory." Verse 12, "to the praise of his glory." Verse 14, "to the praise of his glory." Verse 18, "I pray that you would understand." Glory, glory, glory, praise, praise, praise to you, O God, who has been so greatly merciful to your people. Praise, praise, praise to you, O Christ, who paid the price of a violent death to secure this for our souls. Praise, praise to you, O Holy Spirit, who applied it to our hearts." Redemption. The price paid for your salvation that is what we remember today at this table.

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