

**A Series on Ephesians: Spiritual Blessings**  
**Redemption in Him (Ephesians 1:1-14)**  
**January 24, 2010**  
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I. Spiritual Blessings

We are in the middle of a series on Ephesians, and series within a series called Spiritual Blessings.

When things are difficult, we wonder if God is blessing us at all. Why isn't God blessing me? Paul wrote this letter from prison. He had nothing materially. He was in chains. He was poor. He didn't eat well. He was in rags. Yet, when he wrote this letter, in Ephesians 1:3, Paul starts out the letter by saying: **"Praise be to God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."** Then, he breaks out into all of the spiritual blessings that God has bestowed upon us, all the way until the end of verse 14. Verses 3-14 is grammatically one sentence.

So, during this short sub-series, we are going to look at the true blessings we have in Christ so that our lives can be like Paul—praising God even in midst of suffering.

Today's topic is redemption.

Let's read Ephesians 1:1-3-14.

**<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. [what did he bless us with?] <sup>4</sup> For ["for" means this is what he has blessed with] he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. [we talked about this blessing two weeks ago] In love <sup>5</sup> he<sup>a</sup> predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ [we talked about the blessings of sonship last Sunday], in accordance with his pleasure and will— <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood [we want to talk about the blessings of redemption today], the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.**

**What is redemption?**

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<sup>a</sup> 4,5 Or *sight in love. He*

The word for redemption in Greek is *apo-lutron*. It's an interesting word. Let's say you have too much debt, so much that you can't repay your debt. Under the Roman law, you couldn't just get rid of your debts by filing a bankruptcy like you can now. You had to sell yourself as a slave. And the slavery during that time was not racially based. So, let's say you owed a million dollars, and there was no way to pay that back. You went to the slavery market to sell yourself. If someone came and asked you, how much do you owe, they would ask, how much is your ransom? How much is your *lutron*? Ransom (*lutron*) means the price of freedom from captivity. If you were a really nice person and wanted to free this slaver, and you decided to pay the ransom, you were called a redeemer (*lutro*), and the process was called redemption (*apo-lutron*).

Jesus said, in Matthew 20:28: **“the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”**

That's why Paul says, **“In him, we have redemption.”**

**So when the Bible tells us that Jesus is our redeemer, it means two things: (1) we were in slavery, and (2) Jesus paid the price to free us from our bondage because we could not pay the price, we couldn't set ourselves free.**

Let's look at each of these two things:

A. First, how are we in bondage?

- Alcohol, crack, or other kind of substance. Maybe it's lust. You try to stop, but you can't seem to stop.
- Maybe it's anger. There is something inside of you that gets angry in a particular situation. You don't want to be angry, but it's like you can't control it.
- Maybe it's bitterness. You just don't like the way someone treated you. You don't like the way several people have treated you. It's not just one person, but you feel overcome with bitterness.
- I think some of us get enslaved by cynicism. You look at everything in a twisted kind of way. Once you start looking at things cynically, it's like you can't stop.
- Sometimes you feel so jealous and envious and hate. You can't help feeling that way. Some of you who have been divorce might know this feeling well. When

your ex-spouse or ex-girlfriend or ex-boyfriend starts to see someone else, you hate that. You don't even like her or him anymore. Sometimes, you feel a sense of anger or depression, depending on your personality.

- Some of us are enslaved to idols—not like stone idols but we keep looking to things, relationships, careers (good things), but we turn them into ultimate things (only if I can get that, I'll be happy), and we are enslaved by them. We marry the wrong people. We ignore our family and friends and God in the quest for money and success. And we become enslaved by them.

In Romans 7:14, Paul says that he is a slave to sin because:

15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.

Paul says that we all know what the right thing to do is, but we don't do what we want to do, but we do the thing that we hate to do. We are enslaved by selfishness. We are enslaved by sin. And we are powerless to overcome it.

And all of these things lead to guilt. When we keep doing the things we don't want to do, we hurt people, we deceive people, we have broken relationships, and there is a sense of guilt in our lives.

Now, I know some of us have created strong self-defense mechanism in our lives to deal with guilt by (1) either blaming other people and being blind to your own guilt or (2) you say something like, well, everybody else has done it. But, just because everybody else is doing it doesn't mean it's all okay. Everyone was doing it was what the Germans thought about the horrendous crimes against the Jews. The wrong is wrong even if everyone is doing it.

Sin always costs someone something. If I forget an appointment, I feel awful, and the person says forget it. That person lost something. If you lend me your coat, and I lose it, it costs you something. If I slander you or exaggerate negatively about you, you are out some reputation. Every sin is a debt. You can only forgive someone by absorbing the cost. If you forgive me for losing the coat, you're paying the debt. If someone is slandering you, forgiving that person means I will face the consequences of

your slander. Most people mean I am not going to punch you back, I am not going to actively pursue you. But, you continue to be cold to the person, and say bad things about them to others; you don't want to pay the cost. You have not forgiven them. Forgiveness is hard because there is a cost to forgiveness.

Did you know that forgiveness of your sins and my sins was the greatest problem that God ever faced? How can God have a problem? Because he is loving and holy. That created a problem. In Genesis, all God had to do was to say: let there is light, there was light. Why couldn't God just say, let there be forgiveness? Why can't God just forgive us? Because there is a cost to forgiveness. There is a ransom to be paid for forgiveness. Redemption is not free. There is a cost.

**B. Let's go to the second point: Jesus paid the ransom, the price to free us from bondage.**

I have two kinds of movies that I love: redemption movies and food movies. Now, if you combine redemption and food, it's awesome but rare. One of my favorite redemption movies is THE FISHER KING, starring Jeff Bridges and Robin Williams.

Jeff Bridges plays a character named Jack who is an obnoxious shock jock on the radio. When a depressed caller calls in about an infatuation with a yuppie women, Jack goes into a rampage about the evils of yuppies. Later, this depressed caller goes to an uptown yuppie restaurant, and mows down the people in the restaurant with a machine gun yelling out what Jack told him. Three years later, we see Jack was trapped in guilt, his life is out of control, he lost everything, he's in rags, he's drunk, and about to kill himself. Then, he meets Parry, played by Robin Williams, a homeless man who suffers from a mental illness due to a catatonic trauma he suffered when his wife was murdered by that depressed caller at a restaurant. His wife was killed by that same caller. Jack thinks that if he can help Parry, he can redeem himself. So, he tries really hard to help Parry hook up with a girl who Parry is in love with. When it appears that the hookup is working, he is sooo happy and he regains his confidence, feels like he has redeemed himself, and is about to start his career backup. But, everything falls apart when Parry acts up. Parry is not cured from his catatonic trauma. He continues to live in fear. That's not the end of the story, but let me stop here.

There are so many movies with a redemption theme. And in most them, the redemption is sought through human effort. Sometimes, it's just a friendship that leads to redemption. Sometimes, it is a tragic event that leads to redemption. Rarely, it is someone's graciousness that leads to redemption. That's my favorite kind of redemption movie. Someone gives something no one deserved at the cost to himself, there is redemption.

As I said, my other favorite genre of movies is food movie. And there is one movie that combines the theme: *Babbitt's Feast*. It's a Danish movie. Two sisters live in a dreary little town. They live extremely austere lives. They believe that God wants them to live such lives. They eat food without and taste or spice. They forgo all joy, even an opportunity to marry. They live in a community with others who live in that way, but there are budding conflicts and tensions in the relationships. Their religion has turned into life without much joy but a regiment of joyless but right actions. In a way, they are trapped in their religion. Babbitt is a French woman who gets chased out of France during the French revolution. She has no where to go and through a friend, she ends up living with the two sisters as their maid. It turns out that she was the chef at the fanciest restaurant in Paris before the revolution. After about 20 years together, she wins a lottery and instead of using it to get back to France, she uses the entire amount to cook a feast for small community. She cooks the best and she sacrificially gives everything she has. She lavishes her love extravagantly. The little community initially awkward at the beginning of the meal because it is so fancy, but as they taste the food, their heart began to melt, they experience delight, pleasure and joy, and see transformation. It is only at the end of the movie that we discover that she spent everything she had on the meal.

Babbitt is like Christ. The two sisters and their community lived in dreary condition. They thought that's what it means to be a Christian. But, Babbitt redeems them at the cost of everything she has to bring them to experience delight and joy.

We can't redeem ourselves. We can't fix ourselves. We can't save ourselves.

If you look through the passage, how many times does it say "in him?" He says it six times. He wants to make sure we understand that it is IN HIM that we have redemption. It is in him that we have every spiritual blessings. It is in him that we are

adopted. It is in him that we are chosen. “In Him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.”

Without Jesus, without being in him, there is no blessing. There is no forgiveness of sin. There is no redemption. There is no freedom.

Now, why is that?

Because when you sinned, you sinned against God. When you do something wrong, you not only did it against a person, but you did it against God. It’s like if you commit a crime, you didn’t just commit a crime against a person, but you also committed a crime against society. The prosecutor can choose to prosecute you whether or not the victim is willing to cooperate because the crime was a crime against society. In the same way, our sins are sins against God. You create a debt you couldn’t pay at the cosmic level. You were enslaved. Someone needed to be your redeemer. This redeemer had to pay your debt. No other human being can pay this cosmic debt because they all owed more than they could bear to pay.

The Bible tells us that this is at the heart of the human problem. We need forgiveness to be reconciled to God. So, because God loved us so much, he sent Jesus to pay the price of sin, through death on the cross. He became our substitute. He died for our sins. He became our sacrificial lamb. That’s what he means when he said we have redemption through his blood.

The blood refers to the image of the temple. Explain the temple practices.

Like Babbitt, Jesus lavished his love upon us and gave everything so that we can experience the beauty of God’s pleasure and joy in our lives.

Now the blood of Jesus tells us how much God really loves us.

If I am in a boat and we are in a swift river, and a friend says to me, I’ll jump out of the boat to prove to you that I love you. You would think that it was crazy because there was no need to die to show his love. BUT, if I fell out of the boat and I can’t swim, and he jumped into the river and saved me and died for me, I know he loves me. If you don’t understand this you have no idea how much he loves you. If you think that his death is not necessary, he is crazy.