

I've Been Redeemed
Series: I Know Who I Am
Ephesians 1:7-13
January 10, 2016

Do you remember the old camp song "I've Been Redeemed?"

*I've been redeemed (I've been redeemed)
by the blood of the Lamb. (by the blood of the Lamb.)
I've been redeemed (I've been redeemed)
by the blood of the Lamb,
I've been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb,
filled with the Holy Ghost I am.
All my sins are washed away,
I've been redeemed.*

*And that's not all; (and that's not all)
there's more besides. (there's more besides.)
No, that's not all; (No that's not all;)
there's more besides.
No, that's not all; there's more besides.
I've been to the river, and I've been baptized.
All my sins are washed away,
I've been redeemed.*

I thought about that old camp song when I read today's Scripture passage in our series "I Know Who I Am." We're looking at who we are in and through Christ.

Today, I want us to continue our study in the book of Ephesians by looking at Ephesians 1:7

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.¹

It was almost 1:00 in the morning when the phone rang. Dr. Leo Winters, a highly acclaimed surgeon, was abruptly awakened from his night's sleep. There had been an accident and his skilled hands were needed for immediate surgery. The quickest route to the hospital happened to be through a rather tough area of the city, but with time being a critical factor, it was worth the risk.

At one of the stoplights his door was yanked open by a man with a gray hat and a dirty flannel shirt. "I got to have your car!" the man screamed, pulling the Doctor from his seat. Winters tried to explain the gravity of the situation but the man would not listen. When the doctor was finally able to get a taxi to the hospital, over an hour had elapsed and it was too late. The patient had passed away 30 minutes earlier.

The nurse told him that the father of the victim had gone to the chapel wondering why the doctor never came. Dr. Winters walked hurriedly to the chapel to explain what had happened to him. When he entered he saw the father kneeling in the front row, he

¹ Ephesians 1:7 (NRSV)

was wearing a gray hat and a dirty flannel shirt. Tragically, he had pushed from his life the one who could have saved his son.

My friends, scores of people push from their lives the very “One” who can save them. Save them from the penalty and the power of their sin. Countless numbers are too busy for the One. The One who can deliver them. The One who can save them. They cannot seem to find time for the One who can redeem their lives.

It is so tragic. For life could be so different for so many if they would only find time for the One. If they would only make time for the One. If they would only make time for Jesus.

In announcing the Savior’s birth, the angel of the Lord declared to Joseph:

*She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.*²

In Ephesians, Paul uses another word to address salvation: redeemed.

*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.*³

Paul declares that we have been redeemed. How? Through the blood of Christ.

He begins his letter to the believers gathered in Ephesus rejoicing in that blessing of redemption. Now, the word redemption is a commercial term borrowed from the marketplace, from the market where human beings were offered for sale to the highest bidder. Condemned to this state, these slaves were powerless to escape. Their only hope was redemption, an uncommon process whereby they were purchased... in order to be set free.

Scripture uses the tragedy of slavery to illustrate our human predicament. Without God’s intervention, we are all hopelessly enslaved to self, to sin. Without God’s intervention, we are all forced to live in bondage, enslaved by sin and guilt, and unable to liberate ourselves.

Jesus said in John 8:

*I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.*⁴

Sin traps us. Sin holds us, rendering us powerless to escape from its clutches. Consequently, try as we might, we in our own strength are unable to overcome sin. In our natural, unsaved state we are at the mercy of sin, powerless against it. Our only hope is in Christ Jesus who can redeem us, setting us free from sin’s penalty and power.

Describing what God has done for us, Paul goes on to say,

*In [Christ] we have redemption through his blood...*⁵

The writer of Hebrews is clear:

*... without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.*⁶ REPEAT

Through faith in Christ, we are delivered from the consequences of sin.

But that is only part of what it means to be redeemed. For both our present and our future are affected. We are no longer held captive. We are delivered from our old lifestyle and introduced to a new and better way.

² Matthew 1:21 (NRSV)

³ Ephesians 1:7 (NRSV)

⁴ John 8:34 (NIV)

⁵ Ephesians 1:7a (NRSV)

⁶ Hebrews 9:22 (NRSV)

Again from John 8, Jesus said,
*So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*⁷

Through the power of God's indwelling Holy Spirit, we are able to say "no" to sin. We are thus ransomed. We are delivered to live our lives on a higher plane.

Jesus Christ came to earth:
*... to give his life as a ransom for many.*⁸

In our Ephesians text, Paul rejoices in the incredible blessings that come with redemption. He calls our attention to the blessing of forgiveness.

*In [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace*⁹

I recently read this:

If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator.

If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist.

If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us a banker.

But since our greatest need was forgiveness, God sent us a Savior.

At the Last Supper, our Lord said, "This is my blood which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."¹⁰

1 John declares that:

*But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.*¹¹

God has promised through the prophet Isaiah:

*"I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more."*¹²

Our sins will be separated as far as the East is from the West and thrown into the sea of forgetfulness. God gives us what we as sinners could never earn: grace.

The Greek word that Paul uses that is translated grace is a word that was used when someone was ushered into the presence of royalty. Through grace in Christ, the door has been opened for us to enter into the presence of God, finding forgiveness and fellowship in spite of our sinful pasts. When we come to Christ with a spirit of repentance, God redeems us and pours out His grace upon us. He blesses us in countless life-changing ways.

Lou Johnson was a 1965 World Series hero for the Los Angeles Dodgers. He tried for 30 years to recover the championship ring he lost to drug dealers in 1971. Drug and alcohol abuse cost him everything from that magical season, including his uniform, his glove, and the bat he used to hit the winning home run in the deciding game.

When the Dodgers president, Bob Graziano, learned that Johnson's World Series ring was about to be auctioned on the Internet, he immediately wrote a check for \$3,457.00 and bought the ring before any bids were posted. He did for Johnson what the former Dodger outfielder had been unable to do for himself.

⁷ John 8:36 (NIV)

⁸ Matthew 20:28 (NIV)

⁹ Ephesians 1:7 (NRSV)

¹⁰ Matthew 26:28

¹¹ 1 John 1:9 (NLT)

¹² Isaiah 43:25 (NIV)

My dear friends, God has done for us what we are unable to do for ourselves. He redeems us and makes us the recipient of His amazing grace.

The blessings of God's grace were especially evident in the life of John Newton. He was raised in a Christian home for several years until his parents died. While living with relatives, he was mistreated, abused, and ridiculed. Unable to bear the abuse, he, though still a boy, fled and joined the Royal Navy. From there his life went downhill, as he became a drunkard and a brawler.

Deserting the Royal Navy he joined up with a slave trader. His life continued to disintegrate and spiral out of control.

One day he stole the ship's whiskey and got so inebriated he fell overboard. He was so close to drowning that one of his shipmates literally harpooned him and brought him back on board. Consequently he had a huge scar in his side for the rest of his life.

Finally, one day during a storm, he began to reflect upon some Bible verses his parents had taught him as a young boy before they died. He reached out to Jesus that night and his life was redeemed, and he was forgiven.

But God's grace did not end with his salvation. John Newton became, as Scripture tells us, a new creation in Christ Jesus. When the grace of God entered his life, when he matured in Christ, he married his childhood sweet heart, became a preacher, and lent his voice against slavery and to one of our greatest hymns:

*Amazing Grace how sweet the sound
to save... a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now I'm found
was blind but now I see.*

Folks, when we yield to Christ and experience God's grace, we begin to enjoy the restoration of what our life should have been like.

I will end with this story that may help illustrate redemption, what Christ has done for us.

In 1927, in West Africa, a blood specimen was taken from a native man named Asibi, who was sick with yellow fever. A vaccine was made from this original strain of the virus obtained from this man. In fact, all the vaccine manufactured since 1927 by the Rockefeller Foundation and other health agencies, are derived from the original strain of virus, obtained from this one man. Through the creative imagination of science, the blood of this one man in the West Africa has been made available to serve the whole human race.

Friends, the blood of Jesus has also come to serve the human race. The word of God

*In him we have redemption through his blood...*¹³

We are redeemed through the atonement, through the amazing grace of Jesus.

¹³ Ephesians 1:7a (NRSV)