

# Sermon Ephesians 1:1-14 (Part 2)

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## Introduction

I want us to go back to this passage and have another look at it. This time I want us to look more at the great things that the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us rather than the great things God the Father has done for us.

Let us list some of the things that are mentioned in these verses:

- We have redemption through his blood
- We have the forgiveness of sins
- Has made known to us the mystery of his will
- We are chosen in him
- We are included in Christ
- We are given the seal of the Holy Spirit

And the reason for all of these – *“to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ”*. Everything is working according to plan – God's plan – as I mentioned before. But for this sermon I would like us to concentrate on verse 7 - *“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace”*.

**Doctrine:** Redemption is one the greatest blessing we can receive.

But why? Well probably the first question we need to ask is – what is redemption?

## What does redemption mean?

What does it mean to be redeemed? Redemption is a concept found in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament it is used to express the action of a relative in setting free a member of his family or buying back his property. We see this for example in the Leviticus 25:25 and following. The term was also used in the Graeco-Roman world for the setting free of slaves.

In the New Testament the starting point for our understanding of this concept lies in the words of Jesus when he says that the Son of Man came *“to give his life as a ransom for many”* (Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45) and the Greek makes it clear that he is giving his life in exchange for those whose lives are forfeit. In the bible Christ's death is seen as a sacrifice through which we are set free from our sins and their consequences. We see this, for example, in 1 Peter 3:18 - *“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.”* Or Acts 20:28b where Paul commissions the Ephesians elders to *“Be shepherds of the church of God, which he brought with his own blood”*. Here we also see the concept of the purchasing of the saints. Jesus paid the ransom price for us. John himself put it this way in John 3:16-18 - *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.”*

## Why do we need redemption?

So if Jesus has redeemed us just exactly what is it that we are redeemed from? Well we partly



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answered that in the above and it is a question that most of should be able to easily answer - sin. But why is sin a problem? For most of us that's okay – we know we all do things wrong occasionally but it's not all that major. Anyway, don't we do enough good things for God to forgive us? This is a fairly common idea – the idea that most of us go enough good in our lives that God has to accept us. Well, actually no. The problem is that God has a very different perspective on it. And if God has, then we should to. I would like to cover some of the effects of sin on us individually and corporately in more detail in a future sermon but for now concentrate on the broader issue why it's actually a problem. And for the beginning of it all we have to go all the way back to Adam and Eve. They were given a choice by God and that choice carried consequences. If they ate from the tree they would die – die both physically and spiritually. They may not have understood the full consequences of that choice but they had God's word for it and given the close relationship they had with God one would think they would trust him. But they decided to eat the fruit of the tree anyway. And the resulting consequences were devastating – both for them and us. Their relationship with God was broken, in fact, they became God's enemies, as are we by being in Adam, or alternatively, as we are in our corruption rather than as we are in our nature. So how big a problem was that? We can often tell the extent of the problem by looking at what the solution to the problem is. And what was that solution? Well the solution was God's own Son dying on a cross. So we are not talking minor here.

But let's think about it for a while. Why did Jesus come down to Earth? To die for our sins – to be our redeemer. Yes well you might say? We know that. But actually stop and think about it - why would God send his Son through such humiliation and torture and death unless it was absolutely necessary in order to save us? Given God's character I think we can safely say that he wouldn't unless it was absolutely necessary. Which gives us some idea of just how bad sin actually is and how much God loves us. In order for us to be saved and be brought back into a right relationship with God, God's son had to die. THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY.

Yes – God is a God of love. If he wasn't there wouldn't be any hope for us. But the extent of that love gives us a very clear picture of the problem. We would like to think of God has the great Father Christmas in the sky, looking down on humanity, showering us with blessings and chuckling merrily to himself over our foibles. The reality is that yes he does shower us with blessings but it's not because he doesn't really care – it's rather because he is patient. As Peter put it - “*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promises, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9). But the day of the Lord will come when His patience will run out. And I really wouldn't want to face that day without Christ to stand there for me.

And that is why redemption is the greatest blessing we can receive. Without it there is no hope and as Hebrew's tells us - “*It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of a living God*” (Hebrews 10:31).

The irony in all this is that when we understand this side of the story we understand far more about God's love and mercy and patience and grace. It's no longer about us and God having to love us because he doesn't really have a choice. Rather it's amazement and awe and wonder that God's loves me, that he sent Christ to die for me. That is to me why Peter and Paul and the other apostles can get to caught up, so raptured with God and his love. And to me it's why Augustine, Calvin, Bunyan, Charles Spurgeon and J.I. Packer, to name but a few through the centuries, reflect that same passion. Of course it may just be that I'm a dinosaur and old fashioned but in this I would rather be old fashioned. Because it puts the emphasis where it should be – on God and his glory. It's not that we are insignificant or worthless – we're not. We are creatures created in the image of God, even if corrupted by sin. But if who or what we are distracts from God even one tiny little bit then we are missing the point.



But do you you want to know what the really sad thing is? Most of the time I live as if I don't care. Life, day to day life continues, and I forget God. I'm too busy with this and that, mostly things of complete zero value from an eternal perspective. I sin. And yet God doesn't give up on me. He nudges, guides, carries me, and sometimes even has to hit me over the head, but he never leaves me, nor forsakes me. And he carries on loving me despite who I am. Now that is what is amazing. And he can do that because he has redeemed me. Christ has paid the price that I should have paid.

### **Uses:**

Use 1: If you start to think of how much God has done for you it will hopefully motivate you to do more for God. He loved us enough to send his Son to die for us. Why do we complain and mumble then when he asks something of us? True, there is a limit to what each of us can do. But remember, it is not about seeing how much extra you can cram into your already busy lives – rather it's about where our priorities lie and does it reflect the God whom we serve. Less is better if it's being done for God rather than just being done.

Use 2: If you start to meditate on how much it cost God to save you from your sin that should be a restraint on the temptation to sin. The old saying salvation may be free, but it's not cheap, is very true. Next time you are tempted think about what it cost God to forgive you and ask yourself if the pleasure of that sin is really worth grieving God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit for?

Use 3: So next time you are praying, whether in your closet or in the car, remember to thank God for the great blessing he has given you in redeeming you. And meditate on it, think about it.

Use 4: It should also give you some idea of why most people's idea about religion and Christianity in particular are completely wrong. If Jesus had to die to redeem us then sin is not a mild cold that we can ignore – it's a raging disease. It also helps us to understand why there is such a thing as hell and eternal punishment.

Use 5: Today we live a world where you are not allowed to say things are wrong. Rather we would rather blame it on something else – our upbringing, our culture, the environment or just that's who I am. And we do it ourselves. We do the same as Adam and Eve did rather than accept responsibility for who we are – which would force us to acknowledge that we are not what we should be.

I've asked Tim if we can sing amazing grace.

