

Redeemed, But Waiting For Redemption

David C. Grabbe

Given 10-Apr-21; Sermon #1592s

Last Sabbath we observed the last day of Unleavened Bread. That was most likely the day when God brought the Israelites through the Red Sea on dry ground and gave them an uncontested victory over their former captors. The prior week, on the Night to be Much Observed, Israel left Egypt proper under the watchful care of the Almighty. And the night before that special night was the Lord's Passover, when God redeemed the Israelites from the hand of Pharaoh and made them His people.

Now consider God's redemption of the Israelites at Passover. It marks the beginning of their relationship with the God of their fathers, but it was just the beginning. They still had to follow the cloud out of the land of Egypt. They still had to make a covenant with their new God, and more critically, they had to be faithful to that covenant, which of course was not their strong suit. God's redemption freed Israel from a harsh master and got things started in her relationship with God, but there is much more ahead. I Corinthians 10 tells us that Israel's experiences serve as examples for us, and we can understand from the record that their redemption marks the beginning of their experience rather than the totality.

Today we will examine what the New Testament teaches about redemption, and what we will see is that just as Israel's redemption in Egypt was just the beginning of her relationship with God, so our redemption has past, present, and future aspects.

To define our terms, the verb "redeem" means "to buy back" or "to pay the ransom of." If you are in need of some quick cash, you can go down to the pawn shop with your vintage Fender Stratocaster or maybe a semi-rare baseball card, and you can get some money based on how the pawnbroker values your cherished item. But later if you really want back your prized property, you can go and you can redeem it. You can buy it back if the broker has not sold it.

But redemption is not limited to financial transactions or physical goods. It has a broader meaning of "to rescue from the power of." That rescue could be from a person or a circumstance. Healing can be spoken of in terms of redemption because God rescues the person from the power of an illness. The various psalmists speak of God redeeming His people, whether individually or nationally from troubles, from battles, and from the power of the grave. There are countless ways that God redeems in the sense of rescuing a person or group from the power of something oppressive or injurious.

Now please turn with me to the book of Galatians, where we will see the first way that redemption is used. This is not the first mention, but it is the first step in the overall process of redemption. We will read verse 13, a very well-known verse that says,

Galatians 3:13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.")

Turn over a page or so to Galatians 4, verses 4 and 5.

Galatians 4:4-5 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

And this is the best known application of New Testament redemption. But it has also tripped up many professing Christians. Galatians 3:13 says that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. It does not say that God's law is a curse, but that the law *has* a curse, and when we break the law, we then come under the curse of the law. We have to be redeemed or rescued from the penalty that the law imposes.

Remember God's preamble to the Ten Commandments. He said, "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." The laws He then gave told them how to stay out of bondage, how to keep from giving their power over to enslaving forces. The book of James calls the commandments the law of liberty and even the perfect law of

liberty. Poor Martin Luther could not grasp that God gave His law to keep His people free from the curses, free from lifestyles that can only enslave in various ways.

While the overarching curse of the law is death, breaking God's law has other consequences, such as the damage that it automatically does to relationships. In addition, Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 give many other curses that result from habitually breaking the law, things like pestilence, poverty, fear, blindness, confusion, and loss of peace. Those are all life conditions that come from habitually breaking God's law and which require rescue or redemption. Along similar lines, when God gave the Ten Commandments a second time in Deuteronomy 5, He tied the Sabbath commands to remembering His deliverance from bondage.

God gives His people freedom. He redeems us, and He also instructs us on how to remain free. And the Sabbath is a large part of that liberty. But Israel did not believe God. She defiled His Sabbath and became re-enslaved. And as these verses in Galatians show, because we are under the law's curse, God redeemed us by using His Son's perfect life to pay the ransom. This first type of redemption, the redemption from the law's curse, is just like our justification that took place in the past.

Now a second type of redemption is what Jesus continually does on our behalf as High Priest. We will see a mention of this redemption in Ephesians chapter 1, if you would please turn there.

Ephesians 1:7 In Him [in Christ] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

And notice that this is written in the present tense. Paul speaks of redemption as something that we have right now and not merely something that happened in the past when we were baptized and cleansed of our sins. This is because even after our initial redemption, we still stumble and fall. We still sin and we find ourselves needing to be rescued from the power of sin and its penalties. In Christ, such redemption is available.

However, those two little words "in Him" give a qualification. We must be *in Him* for Him to mediate on our behalf and continue to redeem us. In John 6,

Jesus said that of those who eat His flesh and drink His blood, who abide in Him, which directly ties being in Christ to the Passover, which only the smallest percentage of nominal Christianity even observes. And John 15 links abiding in Christ with Christ's words abiding in us. We have to keep and do His words. Being in Christ is about the ongoing relationship.

But as He says in the Sermon on the Mount, He does not know those who practice lawlessness. He delivers us when we stumble and when we agree with Paul that the law is good and we do our utmost to uphold it. But when lawlessness becomes our practice, Jesus says, "I do not know you," even if we still call Him Lord. There is no ongoing redemption for those who count the blood of the covenants a common thing through willful sin. But those who remain in Christ have redemption in the present in various applications as He graciously works on our behalf.

Now even aside from the forgiveness of sin, we may find ourselves under the power of sickness or an oppressive relationship or some other circumstance from which we would like to be rescued. Because of our access to God, we can ask for redemption, which those who do not know God cannot. But God does not always redeem us from every such circumstance because it may bring about something better in us. God redeemed Daniel from the lions, but not from Medo-Persia as a whole. He remained under the power of that empire. God redeemed Paul from blindness both physically and spiritually but not from the power of His thorn in the flesh because that circumstance was of spiritual benefit to Paul even though it was uncomfortable.

God tells us what He is most interested in redeeming us from in Titus 2:14. He wants to redeem us from every lawless deed. Not just from the law's curse, but from the deeds themselves. He wants to rescue us from sin.

Now the Scriptures also speak of redemption in the future, again applied in various ways. We will not spend time on it, but a quick search shows at least 18 mentions in the Prophets and Psalms of the future redemption of physical Israel and Judah. They will not only be redeemed from oppressive Gentile powers, but more importantly, they will be brought into the New Covenant and thus redeemed in the same way the church has been.

But for those of us already in Christ, our future redemption is significantly different. Please turn with me to Romans chapter 8, verse 23. Paul writes:

Romans 8:23 Not only that, but we also have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

The redemption of our body describes God's final deliverance, not simply from the law's curse, but from this flesh that houses the law of sin and death that leads us to break God's law. Consider that our redemption from the death penalty does not automatically make us worthy of immortal life. Without a complete replacement of our nature, we would defile God's Kingdom immediately on inheriting it. And this is the reason for Paul's statement that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption. The redemption of the body is when these bodies that are sown in corruption are raised in incorruption and death is swallowed up in victory. We will then have nature suitable for inheriting the Kingdom of God and will be fully manifest as God's children.

And thus, even though we have been redeemed, we are also waiting for redemption. We will see this again in Ephesians. If you would please turn with me to Ephesians chapter 4, verse 30.

Ephesians 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

That day when we are changed into incorruptible spirit.

Turn back to Ephesians chapter 1 once again, this time verses 13 and 14.

Ephesians 1:13-14 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

We are the purchased possession bought with the blood of the Son of God, and God has given us His Spirit to seal us until our future redemption. A better rendering would be down payment of our inheritance instead of guarantee. As we saw, Romans 8:23 mentions the firstfruits of the spirit. It indicates a small initial portion and a much larger portion will come later, assuming that there is not crop failure. The word guarantee can give the impression that nothing can stop that inheritance, but remember that we just read in chapter 4, "do not grieve the Holy Spirit." In I Thessalonians 5, Paul also says, "do not quench the spirit." It means we can act against it and even extinguish it.

After King Saul's rebellion, the Spirit of the Lord departed from him, and God regretted making Saul king. There was crop failure because of Saul's choices. After King David's sin spree, he beseeched God not to take His Spirit from him, meaning that he considered it a possibility. And so this down payment that seals us until the day of redemption can be grieved and quenched, we can squander the firstfruits of the Spirit through willfulness and even carelessness, and thus reject the most precious things that can possibly be offered to a human being.

We will look at one more reference to future redemption, this time in the Olivet Prophecy in Luke chapter 21, starting in verse 25.

Luke 21:25-28 "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars, and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring [It is talking about the 6th seal.]; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

This reinforces that our redemption comes at our change or resurrection at Christ's return, when He will transform our lowly body, that it may be conformed to His glorious body and mortality will be swallowed up by life. At that point we will be redeemed from the power of everything that holds an oppressive hold over us, whether ill health, the first death, the second

death, or the corruption inside that Christ is continuing to redeem us from. So in the context of the New Covenant, redemption must be seen in a similar light as salvation. The Scriptures variously say that we have been saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved. In the same way, we have been redeemed from the law's curse, we are continuing to be redeemed, but we are still waiting for our final redemption.

Now think back to what Jesus said during the Passover meal on the eve of His crucifixion. It is just a page over in Luke 22:16 if you want to read it again. He said, "I will no longer eat of it [the Passover] until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." From the beginning, a major theme of Passover has been redemption. Abraham's Passover with Melchizedek came on the heels of God's redemption through Abraham of Lot and his goods from the five kings. Israel's Passover in Egypt included redemption from the hands of Pharaoh.

But with the New Covenant, redemption is a spiritual process that will not be complete until the Kingdom of God comes. This forward-looking aspect of Passover is why Paul told the Corinthians, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." As we remember Christ's death, we also look ahead to when He comes.

In other words, Passover commemorates what Christ's death has set into motion for us and which will culminate in our final redemption and sharing that future Passover with our Creator as He continues His works of creation and redemption. We have been redeemed, yet we are also waiting for redemption.