

## Our Redemption.

Text: Eph 1:7

Suggested Hymns:

163, 171, 154, 54, 221

- 1) Why Are We in Need of Redemption?
- 2) How Was Our Redemption Accomplished?
- 3) What Is The Blessing Of Our Redemption?
- 4) How Is Redemption Made Our Own?
- 5) What Will Our Redemption Do In Us?

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Ephesians 1:7, *' In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today we are continuing our series on the Nicene Creed focusing on the words, *And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried.*

With these words the Nicene Creed moves into the inner sanctum of God's love. Here is a love so deep that the human mind has never been able to fathom it. Here is a love so profound that even the angels of heaven desire to look into its mysteries. Here is a love so overpowering that not even the hellish kingdom of hate can destroy it.

The Father's love for us crucified His Son and made Him suffer. The Father's love for His lost world brought death and the grave to His Son that He might win it and make it again His own. The cross, although an emblem of shame, shall always remain the symbol of our redemption.

So that we Christians may better understand this central doctrine of our Christian religion let us consider five questions relating to our redemption. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### 1. Why Are We in Need of Redemption?

The answer to this question must come from God, not from us. Our heart is too proud to feel in need of outside help. We take pride in our independence in

politics, in work, in our social life, and finally in religion. “*Who needs any help anyway?*” we cry out.

But God tells us that we are all under the curse of sin. We read in Psalm 14:2-3, <sup>2</sup> *The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there are any who understand, who seek God.* <sup>3</sup> *They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one.* Who will dispute this Word of the Lord?

In John 3:6 Jesus says, “*That which is born of the flesh is flesh.*” Who will dispute the Word of God’s Son? In Romans 6:23 St. Paul writes *the wages of sin is death.* Who will dispute the word of this inspired writer? Death, this unnatural phenomenon, is the universal proof of universal guilt.

Furthermore, Scripture makes no distinction among men. They may differ in colour, language, wealth, social position, talents, skills, and aptitudes, and yet “*there is no difference; <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*”<sup>1</sup>

Here is God’s answer, why we stand in need of redemption. We have failed, all of us, to be what God wants us to be. God said no, and we said yes. God said yes, and we said no. This is the great problem of our life. Therefore “*the Scripture has confined all under sin.*”<sup>2</sup>

What Scripture teaches is emphasised by experience. The entire recorded history of man is still really nothing more than the record of man’s sin. Sin destroyed the great empires of antiquity. Sin leveled Hiroshima as well as Sodom and Gomorrah. Sin built the Great Wall of China as well as the wall of Berlin. Sin builds hospitals and prisons alike. Sin creates armies and navies. Where can you touch the life of man and not touch his sin?

And now add to the voice of Scripture and of experience, the voice of man’s conscience. Paul recognised this voice. “*I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*”<sup>3</sup> Paul wanted to do good, but, as he says, “*I find then a law, that evil is present with me.*”<sup>4</sup> His conscience too was God’s voice telling him, “*Paul, you are a sinner.*”

Truly blessed is the person who accepts the triple witness to his guilt: the witness of Scripture, of history, and of conscience, for then he will see why he needs redemption.

Then he will see the total corruption of his nature, the great chasm between him and God. He will recognise his own inability to set things right, to make amends, and to satisfy the demands of a just and holy God. He will cry out in his need for help from above. Redemption must come from another source. And it did come.

## 2. How Was Our Redemption Accomplished?

Again God must lead us to the answer. He does this in a negative and in a positive way. Because there is so much misunderstanding, even among supposedly Christian people, how we are redeemed, we must of necessity show how it was NOT done.

First, we were NOT redeemed by the Law. The Ten Commandments are wonderful words from the lips of God, telling us what we should do and what we should not do. They speak in clear and unmistakable language about the godly life we are to lead. They explain God's holy will to us.

What then is our problem? Not the finding of a better law, but the keeping of the Law that God gave us. "*A man is not justified by the works of the law,*" says Paul.<sup>5</sup> And why not? Although we know the Law and praise the Law and boast of the Law, we do not and we cannot keep the Law. Therefore we cannot be redeemed by the Law.

Second, Christ did NOT redeem us by His example. Jesus certainly gave us the most wonderful pattern of a holy and righteous life the world has ever seen. We are to strive to follow Christ's example, but we utterly fail in doing so.

Of what help is the perfect demonstration of an athlete to a prisoner with ball and chain on his leg? The chain must first be removed. So with us. We are prisoners bound by the chains of our sin. We cannot run the race of holiness as Christ did. Our redemption cannot be wrought by the Lord's example of holiness. "*You shall be perfect,*" says God, "*just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*" Although you know all about Christ, you cannot be like Him because you are a sinner. Therefore His example cannot redeem you.

Now we consider the positives. The Nicene Creed emphasises the crucifixion, the suffering, the death and burial of our Lord. The emphasis, however, is not on mere historical facts but on the purpose of these facts. "*Crucified also for us,*" says the Nicene Creed. God taking man's place, a Substitute for sinners has been found.

God's holiness, righteousness, and justice had to be satisfied, or there could be no redemption. God had to demand fulfilment of His holy law, and He had to punish all transgressions of that law. If He had not demanded the penalty, He would have ceased being holy and righteous and just and truthful.

Our life does not satisfy God's demands. The harsh judgment of God is our lot. Redemption, therefore, was wrought by Christ who could give God perfection and holiness. Each day of His life our Saviour was working out our redemption by fulfilling the Law for us.

When Jesus obeyed His parents, He was keeping the Law for us, giving God the obedience toward parents which we should have given. When He worshiped in the temple, He was atoning for our sins of neglect. When He loved the poor, it atoned for our self-centred lives. The life of Jesus was from beginning to end an obedience in loving activity by which He worked out our redemption.

Then came the climax of the cross. The scourge, the crown, the nails, the wood, the tomb — each in order became a symbol of God's wrath. What should have been ours, the Father gave to His Son. Jesus "*became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*"<sup>6</sup>

Passively He hung there, letting heaven's curse strike Him. He knew His Father's word, "*Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree,*"<sup>7</sup> Caiaphas said that "*It was expedient that one man should die for the people*"<sup>8</sup> Little did he know that God concurred, for in God's plan this one death would redeem mankind. Thus through Christ alone, through His life and His death, our redemption has been accomplished.

### **3. What Is The Blessing Of Our Redemption?**

The reason for this question is that some people may not know what redemption involves. What are the blessings of redemption, or from what have we been redeemed?

The Scripture draws three beautiful conclusions about our redemption. Firstly it says, ***“we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”***<sup>9</sup> Here is comfort for all of us. We are forgiven. God has marked our account ***“Paid in Full.”*** The Law can no longer condemn us. It can no longer demand that you pay or be punished.

Standing before the Almighty in eternity we shall hear the words “Not guilty,” just as we hear them now in the Gospel. This message comes to us not only from Paul in the New Testament. The psalmist of old already wrote in Psalm 130:4, ***“But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.”***

Is it any wonder that John the Baptist found such joy in calling out to his hearers, “Behold”? Behold what? ***“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”***<sup>10</sup>

This brings peace to our smiting conscience. It brings peace to our trembling souls, that God has in Christ and because of Christ forgiven us; that the curse cannot strike us, and that our sins will no longer determine our eternal destiny. We are redeemed from sin. What a blessing!

Secondly, we are redeemed from death and its curse. People die only because they have sinned. Without sin there would be no death. We read in Romans 5:12 that ***death spread to all men, because all sinned.*** Man fears death because he knows that the judgment will follow. But this fear is now taken from us. ***“Christ has abolished death.”***<sup>11</sup> This does not mean that that people will no longer die, but that they will no longer fear to die.

***“Death is swallowed up in victory.”***<sup>12</sup> God assures us in 1 Corinthians 15:26 that <sup>26</sup> ***The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.*** Sin was our first enemy. If that is removed, then also will the result of sin, death, be removed. Is it any wonder that the old and the new Simeons sing, ***“Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace”?***<sup>13</sup>

As death draws near, the child of God cries out with Paul, ***“I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ.”***<sup>14</sup> To Paul death did not mean the entrance into an unconscious nothingness, either temporal or eternal. It meant being translated into the presence of Christ. That is also our hope, that is our victory, that is one of the blessings of our redemption.

Thirdly, there is one more blessing which will add joy to your Christian faith. Our redemption brought us freedom from the power of Satan. Satan is real. Satan is vicious. Satan seeks to destroy. But his power is broken.

We read in 1 John 3:8, *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.* He can no longer accuse you. He can no longer harm you. He can no longer destroy you, either in body or in soul.

Why not? Not because you are strong, but because the Stronger Jesus Christ has conquered. This is a blessing of our redemption, that the chains with which Satan once bound us have now been shattered. The cross became the sledge by which the chains were crushed.

#### **4. How Is Redemption Made Our Own?**

Now all this that we have heard about redemption is quite wonderful, but of what good is it to you if it doesn't belong to you? How can you make it your own? Let us solve this problem, but again, only on the basis of God's Word.

All through Scripture we notice that redemption was won for all mankind. Not one person has been excluded from God's love nor from His promises. It is simply not true that God did not intend to save some people, or that He did not intend redemption for all people. For this we have three witnesses.

First, the angel at Christmas said, *"I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people."*<sup>15</sup> Surely that is plain enough! Is God so insincere that He lets the angel tell the world, *"This is for all of you,"* and then retains a mental reservation, *"But I want some to be lost"?* Whoever speaks thus of God does not know the God of all grace.

Second, we have also the witness of Paul. *"God,"* he says, *"desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."*<sup>16</sup>

Third, we have the witness of Jesus Himself. Jesus told Nicodemus that God loved the world, that God gave His Son, and that whoever believes in His Son will have everlasting life.<sup>17</sup> Clearly, redemption has been purchased for all people. It is offered to all in Word and in Sacrament.

This is why the Lord told His disciples to go to the uttermost parts of the earth with the message of redemption. In fact, the whole Christian church, if it is

truly the church, is nothing more than the total number of Christians constantly on the run carrying the message of redemption to others.

Don't think of the missionaries in foreign lands. Think of yourselves. You are the church. You are the disciples. You are the "sent ones," because God intended redemption to be brought to all people through you and me.

But here is the tragedy. The world rejects the message. It wants nothing to do with the kind of redemption I pictured to you. Those who reject it are lost. Not because it was not intended for them, but because they will not believe.

Redemption, to become your own, must be received with a believing heart. It must be accepted by faith. There is no other way to appropriate it. Jesus said to the Jews in Jerusalem, <sup>24</sup> *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life."*<sup>18</sup> He said it again to the Jews in Galilee. *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life."*<sup>19</sup>

To have redemption, you need only to receive Jesus as your Saviour, believe that God sent Him to do what you could not do: pay the price of your salvation. When you believe this good news, then redemption is yours.

This message is the glorious Gospel. This Gospel of Christ is *"the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."*<sup>20</sup> Believe it and redemption is yours. The Holy Spirit is calling you by this Gospel. The moment you believe it, your name is written in the Book of Life. Everyone who hears the message in church, or hears it by means of radio or television, or hears it by means of a Christian tract, or hears it through the witness of a friend, such person is being invited by the Holy Spirit to believe.

Only the Holy Spirit can work this faith in us. Only He can convert us. We read in 1 Corinthians 12:3 that *no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.* We didn't want God, but God wanted us. Therefore the Holy Spirit invites us through God's Word. He convinced us through that Word that we have a Saviour. Through the gift of faith He made us God's people. Redemption is ours, but only because the Holy Spirit has changed us and has given us a believing heart. That is how redemption became your own.

## 5. What Will Our Redemption Do In Us?

We have already seen what redemption did for us. Now we wish to see what redemption does *in* us. Every person is motivated by something. There is in every human being a power that makes him what he is.

A thief is a thief not because his hand picked someone's pocket, but because greed has taken possession of his heart. He was a thief before he stole.

We Christians too are what we are because of a power that has taken possession of us. Scripture says that our bodies are "*the temple of the Holy Spirit.*"<sup>21</sup> We are the houses in which God lives. God's Spirit has swept out all unbelief and has left in its place the great gift of faith in the redeeming blood of Christ.

Everything we are and do now has a relationship to our redemption. Our whole life is bound up in the crucifixion, the suffering, and the burial of our Lord. This is the great generator in our lives. By Word and sacrament God wired us to this generator. At the moment of our conversion, to continue the picture, the Holy Spirit threw the switch of faith.

Immediately something happened. Lights began to burn. Motors began to hum. Wheels started turning. God's "*holiness factory*" began to produce. The Bible calls this process "*sanctification,*" which is a simple Latin term for "*the production of holiness.*" In other words, we are now, because of our redemption, a different people. We are God's children. We are the body of Christ. We are the church. Let us then be the church.

Our redemption has changed us completely. It has changed our outlook on life. We no longer look first to the approval of man on our actions. Instead, we look for God's approval. We may be the laughing-stock of the world, but we are the ones who can truly laugh.

Our redemption made us such. Trials, reverses, heartaches, and even captivity shall not remove laughter from our mouth nor a song from our lips. Our redemption assures us of ultimate victory. He who wins may laugh. As a child of God are you laughing?

Furthermore, our redemption dethrones material things and enthrones things spiritual. Our outlook on life is changed. What has priority in the life of God's people? No longer the dollar and cents, but the things pertaining to God.



*“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”* says our Lord.<sup>22</sup> What are you seeking as a child of God? What comes first in your life? Knowing how to make more money, or knowing how to serve God better? What is your ambition? To dig ever deeper into the soil for gain, or to dig ever deeper into the Scriptures to find the pearl of great price? Our redemption lifts our eyes from the gold and raises them to God. As a child of God are you seeking the Kingdom?

Our redemption does still more in us. It opens our mouth to glorify God among those who are strangers to the Gospel. “We can’t help it. *“For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard,”* said Peter and John.<sup>23</sup> They were what they were because of their redemption — tellers of the message of salvation.

Thus the Christians of today share with the ignorant the wisdom they possess. The telling of the story of the Redeemer goes on from age to age, from the Main Street to the jungle trail, from nation to nation, from tribe to tribe. When once the telling stops, then the death knell of the church has been tolled. As a child of God are you telling?

Finally, our redemption has been the motivating power that drove men and women to the ends of the earth carrying the light of the Gospel into the darkness. It keeps alive the flame of missionary interest and devotion. It opened the hands of millions to offer gifts to the King on the cross that His love might be known in the lands of hate.

The story is always the same, the redeemed share their gifts with Jesus who is the Giver, because He gave and loved them first. *“We love Him because He first loved us.”*<sup>24</sup> As a child of God we are to be loving and sharing.

*“Crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried.”* Why? For us! They said it in a distant city, in a distant land, in a distant age. Let Nicea be reborn in us today.

Let us close with this word of Scripture, Isaiah 43:1 *“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine.”* Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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- 1 Romans 3:22-23
  - 2 Galatians 3:22
  - 3 Romans 7:23
  - 4 Romans 7:21
  - 5 Galatians 2:16
  - 6 Philippians 2:8
  - 7 Galatians 3:13
  - 8 John 18:14
  - 9 Colossians 1:14
  - 10 John 1:29
  - 11 2 Timothy 1:10
  - 12 1 Cor. 15:54
  - 13 Luke 2:29
  - 14 Philippians 1:23
  - 15 Luke 2:10
  - 16 1 Timothy 2:4
  - 17 John 3:16
  - 18 John 5:24
  - 19 John 6:47
  - 20 Romans 1:16
  - 21 1 Corinthians 6:19
  - 22 Matthew 6:33
  - 23 Acts 4:20
  - 24 1 John 4:19