

Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, **8** which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight

What is your greatest need? If you're sick, you may think, "My greatest need is to be healed of this illness." If you're unemployed, you may think, "My greatest need is to get a good job to provide for my needs." If you're single, you may think, "My greatest need is for a mate." If you're in a difficult marriage, you may think, "My greatest need is for harmony in my marriage." If you have a child who has become ensnared by life's challenges, you may think that your greatest need is for your child to be free from those difficulties.

While all of these are important needs, none of them are your greatest need. The greatest need of every person, whether he recognizes it or not, is to have God forgive his sins before he dies and faces God's eternal punishment. Health, adequate money, and a happy family are wonderful blessings, but if you die without God's forgiveness, these blessings will be useless. Your greatest need is to know that God has forgiven your sins and that you are reconciled to the holy Judge of the universe.

The subject of knowing and experiencing God's forgiveness of our sins is so important that the enemy of our souls has worked overtime to sow seeds of confusion and error. Our modern pagan society often deals with the problem of guilt by telling us that we don't need to worry about it. This is crassly summed up in a bumper sticker that advises: "Screw guilt!" In other words, since guilt doesn't make me feel good about myself (which is my aim in life), when my conscience condemns me, tell it to take a hike. Rather than being ashamed about our sins, we now celebrate them under the guise of being "true" to ourselves.

Another temptation of the world, the flesh and a Satanic suggestion is to get us to invent a god who is not perfectly holy, who is made in our own image and to view ourselves as basically good people. This god is tolerant and loving. He couldn't possibly

condemn a nice person like me! Of course, I'm not perfect, but compared to terrorists who blow up innocent women and children and perverts who abuse little children, I'm not so bad so I can excuse my relatively "minor faults" and dismiss my need for God's forgiveness.

Satan also sows confusion about God's forgiveness under the guise of religion. All of the world's non-Christian religions, some branches of Christianity, and all of the cults that claim to be Christian teach that we must do something—fasting, prayer, penance, self-denial, good works—to help pay for our sins and to earn God's favor. Often religious people base their hope of forgiveness on the fact that they have faithfully performed certain religious rituals—going to mass, praying the rosary or some other form of prayer beads observing sacred holidays, praying in a very ritualistic fashion, (which by the way genuine Christians can fall into if they are not careful

Several years ago, we experienced this when we visited the Moshnohiria Orthodox Monastery near Cherkassi in Ukraine. The place was dark, people were dressed in black. I noticed a woman on her knees, weeping and praying to an icon (a picture of a "saint"). Others nearby were lighting candles and going through other religious rituals. Meanwhile, a priest in his long robe strolled around, quietly observing these people who desperately needed to know what the Bible says about obtaining God's forgiveness. I wanted to grab him by his robe and scream, "Tell them how they can be forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ!"

An illustration of substitutionary death comes from the book "Captain Corelli's Mandolin" by Louis de Bernieres. Captain Corelli, and his great friend Carlo and their fellow Italian soldiers are to be executed by the Nazis, Italy having joined the Allies to fight against Germany near the end of the war.

"The carnage had none of the ritual formality of such occasions that film and paintings might suggest. The victims were not lined up against the wall. They were not blindfolded, faced away, or faced forward. Many of them were left on their knees, praying, weeping or pleading . . . Some stood smoking, casually as at a party, and Carlo

stood to attention next to Corelli, glad to die at last, and resolved with all his heart to die a soldier's death

"After the shooting began, the prisoners, wheeling and dancing in the horizontal rain, were crying out. They fell to their knees, their hands flailing, their nostrils haunted by the stench of cordite, searing cloth and oil, their mouths filling with the dry and dusty tang of blood. Some stood up again, holding out their arms like Christ, baring their chests in the hope of a quicker death, a shorter route through pain. What no one had seen . . . was that at the order to fire, Carlo had stepped smartly sideways like a soldier forming ranks. Antonio Corelli, in a haze of nostalgia and forgetfulness, had found in front of him the titanic bulk of Carlo Guercio, had found his wrists gripped painfully in those mighty fists, had found himself unable to move . . . Carlo stood unbroken as one bullet after another burrowed like white-hot parasitic knives into the muscle of his chest . . . [Eventually Carlo] flung himself over backwards. Corelli lay beneath him, paralysed by his weight, drenched utterly in his blood, stupefied by an act of love so incomprehensible and ineffable, so filled with divine madness." (Louis de Berneres, "Captain Corelli's Mandolin", Minerva, 1995, pp. 324-325). What an act of love, so unbelievable, so incomprehensible and ineffable. Now multiply by eternity! So it was with Jesus' love, not for a friend, but while we were yet sinners, in his love for a particular people who at one time were his enemies, he laid down his life for them.

As we have seen, the apostle Paul begins this powerful letter to the Ephesians with a long sentence (in Greek) that runs from verse 3 through verse 14, in which he blesses God for all of the spiritual blessings that He has freely given to us in Christ. In 1:3-6, he blesses God for the work of the Father; in 1:7-12, he unfolds the work of the Son; and, in 1:13-14, he shows the work of the Holy Spirit in our salvation. So, in verse 7, we begin a new section of this extended exclamation of praise. Paul is saying, "In Christ, we have redemption through His blood, the abundant forgiveness of all our sins."

Before we consider the meaning of Paul's words here, I cannot over-emphasize the importance of these truths for your life. If you try to seek God's forgiveness in any way

other than what Paul here states, you will waste your time and endanger your soul. If your hope of heaven rests on anything that you must do to earn it, you will hear, "I never knew you; depart from Me" on that great day. If, as a Christian, you do not understand and live daily in light of the truths that Paul here sets forth, you will not grow in godliness. You will be defeated by sin and guilt. So these truths are vital for a healthy Christian walk.

1. In Christ we have redemption.

"In Him" is literally, "in whom," and refers back to Christ, whom Paul calls "the Beloved" in verse 6. Jesus Christ is God's beloved Son, in whom He is well-pleased (Matt. 3:17). His perfect life and His substitutionary death on the cross obtained redemption for all whom God has predestined to adoption as sons (Eph. 1:5).

John Brown, the Scottish preacher and commentator, once said, "Let a man preach with the greatest ability and zeal everything in the Bible but the Cross, he shall, as to the great end of preaching, preach in vain. While, on the other hand, the honest preaching of the Cross - though in great weakness, and even when accompanied with great deficiencies as to a full declaration of the counsel of God on some other subject - has usually been accompanied with the divine blessing. The doctrine of atonement ought not to be the sole theme of the Christian ministry, but every doctrine, and every precept of Christianity should be exhibited in their connection with this great master principle; and the leading object of the preacher should be to keep the mind and the heart of his hearers steadily fixed on Christ Jesus - Christ Jesus crucified."

A. All of God's blessings come to us in Jesus Christ.

As Paul puts it (2 Cor. 1:20), "For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; ..." Spurgeon succinctly put it (Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit [Pilgrim Publications], 37:310), "We have nothing apart from Jesus.... Our wealth of mercy is all in Christ." Whatever spiritual blessing you need, God has given it to you "in Christ" (Eph. 1:3).

So, if you lack redemption or forgiveness of your sins, you will not find it anywhere except in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Trust in Him and you get it all! As Jesus proclaimed (John 7:37-38), "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" All you need is in Jesus Christ!

B. Redemption means that Christ paid the price to free us from the penalty and power of sin. It is where atonement was made.

Leon Morris points out (The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross [Eerdmans], p. 11) that we use words such as "redeemer" or "redemption" as religious terms. "But when the man of the first century heard them he immediately thought in non-religious terms." It brought to mind the common picture of a slave being purchased and then set free. Redemption meant release from bondage by the payment of a price. Every Gentile in the Roman world would have thought of this when he heard the word, "redemption."

The word also has roots in the Old Testament, which refers to a "kinsman-redeemer." For example, in the Book of Ruth, Naomi's family property, due to debt, had fallen into other hands. Because she had lost her husband, she could not afford to recover it. Boaz was a near relative who had the right to redeem the property by paying the price, which he did.

In the Old Testament the people of God were enslaved in Egypt. They were making bricks without straw and living under the threat that their newborn babies would be killed because they were multiplying too fast. Then God redeems them out of the land of slavery. They are set free to go to the land of Canaan on the other side of the Jordan, which he provides for them. Later on God provides animal sacrifices as a means of redemption from sin. The life of the spotless animal is the ransom that is provided by God and then offered to God. No three-legged lambs, and no shabby goats were permitted. It had to be a lamb without a blemish, the best of the flock, and by that redemption offering the person who offers is freed from the guilt of sin. His part is to

provide the lamb and put his hand on its head before its life is taken. God accepts the blood shed as the price of the offerer's freedom. Something in the very nature of God himself - what is the very essence of the only God there is - requires the laying down of a life, not a dying in old age in a bed, but the shedding of blood in order for forgiveness of sins to ours.

Those Old Testament lambs were types/shadows of the real thing, the antitype/the substance that was to come one day. You see in the window of an estate agent a model of a new development or you see a larger model of one of their new houses. That gives you some idea of what the real thing is going to be like. Today the estate agent will switch on a modem and will take you on screen into the virtual reality of a newly planned house, and you can go through the various rooms and zoom in on the various features that are going to be built. It all seems very real, but it is only in the planning stage. That is rather like the 53rd chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah which predicts the dying Servant of God. There you find the virtual reality of what one day will be absolute reality when the Lamb of God himself comes and takes away the sin of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, hanging on Golgotha.

This is how Peter talks about it in his first letter, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (I Pet. 1:18-19). "You were redeemed," he says to the whole church to whom he was addressing this letter. "This is your status, and don't forget it." As a Christian you must always reckon yourself to be a redeemed person, and to love to proclaim this fact. But your reckoning on this fact does not make you any more redeemed, and those joys that you may get as you sing some of the great redemption hymns do not mean you are getting 'more redeemed.' Redemption was a work, which Jesus Christ accomplished all by himself for all who benefit from it. Redemption is the gift, which God, in the language of our text, "lavished on us".

A third Old Testament example of redemption was that God commanded the Jews to redeem the firstborn of their sons and of their farm animals (Exod. 13:12-13; Num. 18:15-17). In the case of sons and of some animals, it meant paying a price. In the case of other animals, it meant offering the firstborn on the altar. It was a picture of God's redeeming Israel from Egypt (Exod. 13:14-15). The main idea was the payment of a price to effect release from bondage or captivity.

Paul uses the word in a spiritual sense to refer to Christ's paying the price of our sin by His sacrificial death on the cross on our behalf. We were helplessly, hopelessly enslaved to sin and under God's just condemnation. But with His own blood Christ paid. The Bible is clear that we are now released not only from sin's penalty, but also from its power (Romans 6). For a believer to live in sin is to contradict the redemption that Christ secured for us.

There was a building contractor here in New York state who was awarded a contract to build a jail called Tombs Prison. Not long after its completion he was found guilty of forgery and sentenced to several years in the very prison he had built. As he was taken into his cell he said to the warden, "I never dreamed when I built this place that I would one day be an inmate." That is profoundly true of sin. Our desires imprison us. Men boast in their freedom. They are free! No, says the Bible, you are prisoners of sin, and whatever sin tells you - that you do! "Laugh at sin, disdain the law of God, mock religion, boast about your conquests

Implicit in the biblical doctrine of redemption is that God did something for us that we could not do for ourselves. We were enslaved to sin and had no power or means to free ourselves. God did not need our help in paying the price. In fact, it is an insult to Christ if we think that we can add anything of our own to the great price that He paid. If someone offered you a gift that was worth thousands of dollars and you reached in your pocket to give him a penny to pay for it, you would insult him. Jesus graciously paid it all. We can do nothing except to receive His gift and then live every day in light

of what He so graciously and generously did for us. Peter exhorts us to conduct ourselves in the fear of God and then adds (1 Pet. 1:18-19), "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with the precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."

The apostle John was with Jesus for three years. While the Savior was hanging on the cross he spoke to John and gave to him the responsibility of caring for his mother. So John had an experience of the cross as no other. He first had had the teaching of Jesus about the cross. For example, one day the Savior had told John that the Son of Man had not come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. So when John passes on to us something about the death of Christ we ought to prick up our ears. This is what John says, "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 Jn. 2:2). Jesus' death was an atoning sacrifice. The word 'blood' is found in our text. That is not unusual. It is used almost 300 times in the Old Testament and some 100 times in the New Testament. The blood is the sign of life forfeited because of sin. The great New Testament phrase about the blood is this: "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb.9:22).

In the Old Testament we are given simply the shadow or type of what the great sacrifice is going to be. We see God's people bringing the best beast from their flocks to the House of God to make a sacrifice on the altar to the Lord as an atonement for their sin. They are giving up something that is valuable - an animal that would be a meal for a week for a family - in order to get something of greater value - forgiveness and peace with God. This is pointing forward to the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ

Without ever failing, Christ is always loving God with all his heart, and loving his neighbor as himself. He is never dissatisfied with God's will even when the cup he is given to drink is very bitter. He strives through prayer and his knowledge of Scripture to

make his body a living sacrifice, which he gives to God. It costs him misunderstanding from his family, and hatred from the world, and His shed blood. That is something of the sacrifice he makes, but he has to do that to fulfill all righteousness for those he loves.

Thus all of God's blessings come to us in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Redemption means that He paid the price to free us from the penalty and power of sin.

C. We can know and enjoy our redemption right now.

Paul does not say, "In Him, someday we hope to be re-deemed." Nor does he say, "We're working at obtaining redemption, but we don't know yet if we'll get it until we see whether our good works tip the scale." Rather, he says, "In Him, we have redemption." It is our current possession and experience. True, we await the future redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:23). The finalization of our redemption will not occur until Jesus returns (Luke 21:28). But, even so, right now "we have redemption" in Christ.

Knowing this should fill us with joy, gratitude and love for Christ. It should remove any fear of judgment and fill us with hope beyond the grave. It should motivate us to be holy. If you have trusted in Jesus Christ as the payment for your sins, God wants you to know and enjoy the fact that He has redeemed you from bond-age to sin.

2. The redemption that we have in Christ is through His blood.

Jesus shed His blood to redeem us from our sins. Many are offended by the teaching that Jesus had to shed His blood to se-cure our redemption. But, you cannot get rid of the necessity of the blood of Christ and claim to believe in the Bible. Why does the New Testament insist on the necessity of Jesus' shed blood?

Romans 6:23 makes it clear, "The wages of sin is death...." If God declared that the wages of sin is death, but then eliminated the penalty, He would compromise His perfect justice. He would be like a judge who told a murderer, "You're forgiven; try not to do it again." We would be rightly outraged at such a miscarriage of justice. Justice

Ephesians:1:7-8a Redemption New Covenant Baptist Fellowship Pastor Joseph Krygier 3/7/010 10
demands the appropriate payment for the crimes committed. Hebrews 9:22 states plainly, “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” This takes us back to Leviticus 17:11, where God explains, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.”

So Paul, here, uses the word blood to point us back to the Old Testament sacrificial system, all of which Jesus fulfilled when He offered Himself on the cross (see Heb. 10:1-18). Those animal sacrifices pointed ahead to Jesus, the Lamb of God, who by His death redeemed all whom the Father gave Him. Thus, God can be “just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26).

So the issue is, either you trust in what Jesus Christ did on the cross as the full payment for your sins, or when you stand before God at the judgment, you must pay for your sins through eternal separation from God in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15). There will be no second chance (Heb. 9:27). That is why making sure that you have redemption through the blood of Jesus is your greatest need! Paul goes on to elaborate on what such redemption means:

3. Redemption through Christ’s blood means that all of our trespasses are forgiven.

Redemption encompasses more than forgiveness, but Paul mentions forgiveness because it is the first and foundational thing to know and experience when you are redeemed. Forgiveness means loosing or letting someone go from what binds him. The word trespasses is synonymous with “sins,” but the nuance indicates individual acts of sin, not sin in general. Paul wants us to know that our specific, shameful, embarrassing sins that loom up in our memories to condemn us are all forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ.

It is crucial for your Christian life that you understand and experience on a daily basis this liberating truth that God forgives all of your sins through the blood of Jesus Christ.