

REDEMPTION AS A RELEASE TO SOMETHING—VOLUNTARY SLAVES OF JESUS CHRIST

INTRODUCTION:

Here's a rather strange question for you: 'What would it be like to be paraded across a platform and sold as a *slave*? A reporter for the New York Daily Tribune witnessed that very thing and wrote the following on March 9, 1859:

...The expression on the faces of all who stepped on the block was always the same, and told of more anguish than it is in the power of words to express. Blighted homes, crushed hopes and broken hearts was (sic) the sad story to be read in all the anxious faces. Some of them regarded the sale with perfect indifference, never making a motion save to turn from one side to the other at the word of the dapper Mr. Bryan, that all the crowd might have a fair view of their proportions, and then, when the sale was accomplished, stepping down from the block without caring to cast even a look at the buyer, who now held all their happiness in his hands.

Others, again, strained their eyes with eager glances from one buyer to another as the bidding went on, trying with earnest attention to follow the rapid voice of the auctioneer. Sometimes, two persons only would be bidding for the same chattel, all the others having resigned the contest, and then the poor creature on the block, conceiving an instantaneous preference for one of the buyers over the other, would regard the rivalry with the intensest (sic) interest, the expression of his face changing with every bid, settling into a half smile of joy if the favorite buyer persevered unto the end and secured the property, and settling down into a look of hopeless despair if the other won the victory... "Slave Auction, 1859", EyeWitness to History, www.eyewitnesstohistory.com (2005).

Hard to imagine going through that, isn't it? It gets down to two bidders as was just described and you are looking back and forth at the two people "bidding" against each other over **you**. Comparing the two based on looks and mannerisms—or maybe having met them both during the 4-day "inspection" period prior to the auction—you have a preference as to which master you want to serve. Regardless of which one **chooses you**, however, the reality is you don't know what kind of master they **really** are until you serve under them for a while.

Take your Bibles and turn to Deuteronomy 15:12-17. Although the scene from the slave auction differs quite a bit from the passage in Deuteronomy I just read, there is one thing both scenarios have in common—the future happiness of the slave is dependent upon the character and treatment of their master.

How does this apply to us? Notice on your outline the third aspect of redemption: (3) People are redeemed **to** something; namely, to a state of *freedom*; and then they are called to *renounce* that freedom for **slavery to the Lord** who redeemed them." In the passage we just read, we see that very thing, don't we? A slave is granted his freedom, but gives up that freedom to remain permanently enslaved to his master because he loves him. This morning we are going to look at how this is a picture of **our** redemption—and whether or not it pictures our response to being released from the penalty of our sins.

REVIEW: In way of a quick review, Ryrie defines redemption as "liberation because of a payment made." He then goes on to state: "Redemption may be summarized around three basic ideas. (1) People are redeemed **from** something; namely, from the marketplace or slavery of sin." We looked at this aspect of redemption two weeks ago. Although I don't totally *disagree* with the suggestion that we are redeemed from the slavery—the power—of sin, I chose to emphasize our freedom from the penalty of our sin—the future wrath of God. To be free from sin's mastery in our life is a wonderful thing, but to be freed from the torment of hell is far better.

Last week we looked at Ryrie's second aspect of redemption: (2) "People are redeemed **by** something; namely, by the payment of a price, the blood of Christ. **I Peter 1:18-19** "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not **redeemed** with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; ¹⁹ But with the **precious blood of Christ**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:"

Why blood? Because blood equals life and the shedding of blood equals death and the wages of sin—the penalty that must be paid—is death. And just like the "destroyer" passed over the homes where the lamb's blood was sprinkled on the door posts just prior to the exodus from Egypt, God will pass over **us** in judgment when He sees the blood of Christ credited to our account. **I Cor 5:7b** "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."

And that brings us to Ryrie's third aspect of redemption: (3) "People are redeemed **to** something; namely, to a state of freedom; and then they are called to **renounce** that freedom for slavery to the Lord who redeemed them."

1. A picture of our redemption

So how does this release of a slave picture our redemption? First, there is....

A. An unpayable debt (v 12)

Notice verse 12. "Brother" here refers to a fellow Hebrew—one of their own country-men. We aren't going to turn there but in Exodus 21—just after God gave Moses the 10 Commandments—God gives these same instructions to Moses. Why would God allow His people to "buy" one another? Because they had a debt that they could not pay! Sometimes they had a debt they couldn't pay because they *stole* something.

Exodus 22:1-4 "If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and **kill** it, or **sell** it; he shall **restore** five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.² If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him.³ If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him; for he should make **full restitution**; if he have nothing, then he shall be **sold for his theft**.⁴ If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double."

To discourage stealing, God instituted the law of restitution. Simply put, if you stole something and were later caught, you had to pay back *more* than what you stole. If you stole an ox, you had to repay 5; if you stole a sheep, you had to repay 4. What if you **couldn't** repay what you stole? If you had only two oxen—and stole two more and got caught—you were required to give back 10. It is impossible to pay back 10 oxen if you only have 4, so to make up for the other six you could do one of two things—buy 6 oxen or sell yourself to the debtor! Notice again Exodus 22:3 on your hand-out "...if he have nothing, then he shall be **sold** for his theft."

You and I have a debt that we cannot pay—and it is infinitely greater than 10 oxen! We have not just sinned against our fellow-man—we have sinned against a holy God! Time obviously does not allow us to look at **all** the sins listed in the Bible, but I do want to consider just a few. What follows is one of Paul's four lists of sins that total over 50: (I Cor 6:9-11; Gal 5:19-21; II Tim 3:1-4; Titus 3:3)

II Timothy 3:2 "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,"

--If you choose your way over God's way, you are a lover of yourself

--If you have desired something that belongs to someone else, you are covetous

--If you have boasted about something you did, you are a boaster

--If you have refused to acknowledge sin, you are proud

--If you have cursed or insulted God, you are a blasphemer

--If you have taken for granted what God has given you, you are unthankful

--If you have sinned only once, you are unholy

Romans 3:23 reminds us that "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" and Romans 6:23 declares "For the wages of sin is death." What does that mean? Does it just mean that our bodies cease to live?

No; “death” in the Bible means far more than just the end of our *physical* life. We are created in the image of God and one of the many things that sets us apart from the rest of God’s creation is that we have an **eternal soul**. There is a part of us that will live forever—somewhere—and there are only two “somewhere’s.”

--One is in heaven—with God—for all eternity.

--The other is in hell—separated from God—for all eternity.

So how do we get rid of the debt for our sin? How do we “pay” what we owe? We can’t—but Jesus can! The penalty for sin is death—that didn’t change—but the **payer** of our debt can change. Instead of us paying ourselves, Jesus lovingly and willingly left heaven, came to earth and lived a perfect life, died, and rose again—demonstrating God’s acceptance of Him as our substitute. And when we receive Him as our Savior, we become the children of God. **John 1:12** “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name:”

Have you done that? If so, your debt has been paid by Jesus and God will not require it from you. If not, your debt remains *unpaid* and you will be eternally separated from God in a place called hell.

Back to our passage. The man not only had an unpayable debt, he also had...

B. An undeserved release (v 12b)

Notice again the middle of verse 12 “...and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt **let him go free** from thee.” It didn’t matter if the debt was paid or not, freedom was going to be granted and the man would be released from his debt and he would be free to leave. Imagine how much he looked forward to being free from his bondage; his slavery. Can’t help but think that as the seventh year grew closer, this man would be both excited and a bit nervous at the same time. Freedom was coming, but what would it be like?

One thing this man knew is that he would not go out empty-handed. Look at verses 13-14. The law required that the master he had just served provide for him from his flock, his floor—referring to threshing floor and meaning grain—and the winepress; meaning something to drink. Verse 14 says he was to provide for him *liberally*. He would be set, so to speak, to start a new life. But was that his **only** option?

Let’s consider next the...

2. Possibilities for the released slave

Having already read the passage, we know the man had two choices. First, he could...

A. Take the goods and go (vss 12-14)

I won’t elaborate much on this because the passage doesn’t, but here are a few things we can say with certainty.

--He was free to go because the law required his master to release him.

--He would not go out empty-handed because the law required the man provide liberally.

--And it was **not** wrong for him to go because God had designed the year of release in the first place!

“To take the goods and go” is not the only option, however, and instead the man decided to...

B. Remain forever with the master he loved (vss 16-17)

Instead of going, the released slave decides to *stay*. Not only does he say that, he also states **why** he wants to stay. Why did he decide to stay? Two reasons.

1) vs 16 (middle) “because he loveth thee and thine house.” He loved the master and the master’s house. I don’t think he loved the actual *physical* house as much as he loved the master and the people and the atmosphere of the home.

2) vs 16 (end) “because he is well with thee.” He fares well; his needs are met; it is a good place to be. This decision was probably not made hastily or taken lightly. Why do I say that? Notice verse 17. It wasn’t the “pain in the ear” that had to be carefully considered—it was the **permanence** of the arrangement. The middle of verse 17 plainly states that if he chose to remain, “...he shall be thy servant forever.” In other words, he was giving up his new-found freedom to remain a servant of this master for the rest of his life.

Is this not a picture of what Ryrie suggests regarding redemption? Think again about the statement we started with: “People are redeemed **to** something; namely, to a state of *freedom*; and then they are called to **renounce** that freedom for slavery to the Lord who redeemed them.” That is what this man did—and is it not what we should do?

Lastly, let’s go beyond the possibilities of this released slave and consider the possibilities for **us**—those of who have been freed from the penalty of our sin. What are our “options” as redeemed sinners?

3. Possibilities for the redeemed sinner

Our options—the choices we can make after being forgiven of our sins—are very similar to the released slave, aren’t they? Just like him, we can...

A. Remain with the one who redeemed us

--This man had a debt he could not pay—the debt for our sin is infinitely greater.

--This man’s debt was “canceled”—our debt was **paid for** by the blood of Christ.

--This man had a master he loved—how much more should we love the one who first loved us and died for us?

--This man had a master who was required to be generous—our Master **chooses** to be generous.

--This man “had it good” with his master—how much better do we have it with the Master we serve?

God desires that we be faithful and remain with Him, doesn’t He?

--In **I Cor 15:58**, we are exhorted “...be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord...”

--In **I Cor 3:14**, we are reminded that our works will be rewarded in heaven.

--And in **Matthew 25:21 and 23**, Jesus through a parable teaches us that our desired welcome into heaven should be “Well done, thou good and **faithful** servant...enter thou into the joy of the Lord!”

Although remaining with the One who redeemed us is the reasonable and right thing to do, it is not the **only** option. Sadly, we see a second choice—a different response—from redeemed sinners, that being...

B. Remove ourselves from our master

We can take our new-found freedom from the penalty for our sins—and the bountiful gifts given to us by our loving God—and choose to go *away from* our Master. There is one big difference between us and a released slave, though, and the difference is this: whereas it is not a *sin* for the released slave to leave his master, **it is sin** for us to leave ours! Do redeemed—forgiven—sinners sometimes depart from God? They most certainly do and that is why God’s Word warns against it!

Jesus plainly stated in **Mt 6:24** “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

Heb 3:12 “Take heed, **brethren**, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in **departing** from the living God.”

Rev 2:4 “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast **left thy first love.**”

The question that begs to be answered, then, is this: why do so *few* of the ones that Jesus purchased with His own blood serve Him? Why do so many hesitate to submit to His leadership? Why do so many depart from God in order to be their **own** master instead of remaining with the most compassionate, forgiving, loving, mighty, wealthy and wise Being in the entire universe? God Himself asks some of those very same questions!

Jer 2:5 “Thus saith the Lord, **What iniquity** have your fathers found in me, that they are **gone far from me**, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?”

Mic 6:3 “O my people, what **have I done** unto thee? and wherein have **I wearied thee**? testify against me.”

Are you living for God? If not, why not? What answer will you give to God as to why you have departed from Him?

Here are a couple of things I believe God would have us consider.

1. Are you a redeemed sinner? Asked another way, have you been forgiven of your sins? Your sin against God is great—has the penalty for it been removed? If not, you are one-heart beat from spending eternity in hell separated from God—forever.

2. As blood-bought and forgiven sinners, God does not force us to live for Him, does He? Just like the released slave here in Deuteronomy, we have the choice to remain with our loving Master—or remove ourselves from Him. The blessing for us, though, is that if we are removed from Him—if we have wandered away from Him—we can still come back and He wants us to come back and He will take us back.