



Forgiveness Effect

Ephesians 1: 7-8a NIV

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us.

What Has God Done for You Lately?

If I were to ask you what you most want taken away, what would it be? For me, most of the choices would involve physical matters. I would like the arthritis in my knees removed. It would be great if my body fat were taken away and I would be happy to lose the problem I have with forgetting names. There are more internal parts to me I would love to see disappear. I don't want to lose my temper ever again and I would love it to never get discouraged or frustrated by how things go. All those bad experiences I have had that still trip me up and have left me emotionally scarred I could happily wave good to them. Our text tells us that God has gone to extremes to get rid of something He thinks is critical to you having a good and happy life. **In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us.** (Ephesians 1: 7-8a) Let's take a look at what God has done for you!

The word translated "redemption" was a legal term among the Greeks. It had to do with the release of a slave or a captured foe. A slave could gain his or her freedom by saving enough money to purchase it. Someone taken in battle might have family or friends with the money to ransom him from the captivity. Redemption always implied a cost. The freedom was purchased at a price. We are told here that Jesus Christ took us out of slavery by using His own blood to set us free. The cost was the suffering and death of God Himself. Never undervalue the price Christ paid to set you free. Every blow, every lash of the whip, each nail driven through His body was for your sake. God paid the ultimate price to have you released.

Who or what had you captive? It is the sin in you that made you a slave. Sin held your life prisoner and was a pitiless master. The word translated sin is a unique Greek word. It is *paraptoma*, which means to stumble, to fall, to be unable to get going in the right direction. When I was skiing, I caught the tip of my ski in the snow and the momentum of my body going downhill snapped my leg in half. That is the sort of stumbling meant here. It is disastrous falling, horrific and life shattering falling. Imagine driving to a job interview and a car wreck not only keeps you from getting to the meeting but the injuries make it impossible for you to be hired. *Paraptoma* ruins your life, destroys your future. In the end, sin brings you death; physical death, the psychological death of your personality and spiritual death...the separation of you and God.

The question asked ten thousand times over is, "Who is paid the ransom; who is the captor that requires the death of Christ?" Is it Satan, is it the Father? Who is the master? This is a most complicated question and there is a tremendous amount of confusion in those trying to make sense of it. God created the universe built on right and wrong. Right is the way of life, wrong the path to death. It cannot be violated, this structure to heaven and earth. God has perfectly designed the universe to run completely within the

boundaries of good, justice and love. When you entered sin, rejection of God and His perfect ways, you became a prisoner of death because that is what sin creates. It makes you dead. Sin holds you prisoner. The only way to be free of sin and death is by Jesus dying in your place. More than that, He takes all of your sin into His own body so that you become free. To be redeemed out of the bondage of death your sin had to be taken from you which is what Jesus did when He took them all into His body and died as a result of them.

The word translated forgive means much more than a decision to just wave off wrong behavior. It is in the original wording the Greek noun *aphesis* which describes the casting away of something. Flinging it out and that is what Christ did: He didn't just dismiss your sin, He ripped it away from you and cast it into Himself so that He alone would suffer its outcome. Let me illustrate the wonder of what Christ has done for you from an example in the Old Testament. Abraham the prophet had a nephew named Lot who had moved with Abraham south into Canaan. Both men were ranchers with vast herds of sheep and goats. Because it was difficult for their shepherds to manage all of these herds in the same area and keep straight whose was whose, they decided to split up with Lot moving to the plain and Abraham settling in the highlands. It worked out great for Abraham but was disastrous for Lot. The people of Sodom got into a small scale war with neighboring villages and Lot and many others were taken captive along with their possessions. When Abraham got word of it, he gathered all the fighting men of his community and went after the army holding Lot and the others as prisoners.

When Abraham defeated the captors holding Lot and the others from Sodom prisoner, he freed them all. It was a great victory that must have brought Lot much happiness. The king of Sodom was so thrilled by his rescue that he offered to give Abraham all of the goods reclaimed from the former captors. Abraham refused the offer, wanting to have nothing to do with the corruption and immorality of the people of Sodom. It must have been a bit awkward for Lot as he watched his uncle reject outright gifts his king offered Abraham. Lot returned to Sodom, Abraham to the high country. Although Lot was set free, he was no better a person than before. Like a fly drawn to the light of a bug zapper, he was spiritually sucked back into the corruption of Sodom. Abraham risked his life, easily could have lost it, to set Lot free and in the end, Lot was no better off for it. The same corruption he had before became even more embedded after he was given his physical freedom.

Freedom doesn't assure you of becoming better. You might be happier with your freedom, but eventually who you are within, a prisoner of sin, makes your life outside you a prison of sin too. The riches of God's grace which He has lavished upon us destroys the sin within. He died to take even the sorrow and heartache of sin out of you. God sees you as a prisoner He has come to set free and it all is finished because Christ died to take out of you your sin that one day He was crucified. I am encouraged by the account of Judah in a strange way. Judah was one of the twelve sons of Jacob, the father of the nation of Israel. Judah lost his wife and was lonely and depressed. His daughter-in-law also lost both of her husbands. Her first husband was a great sinner and God struck him down. Judah, in keeping with the practice of his time, gave Tamar his second son as a husband and he also died because of how evil he was. Judah promised Tamar that she could marry Judah's third son but when the boy came of age, Judah wouldn't arrange the marriage. Tamar heard that Judah, her father-in-law was going to a certain village for the shearing of sheep ceremony and afraid she would die in her old age without children, she dressed up in the clothing of a prostitute and disguised herself. Judah came upon her as he was walking down a village road and not realizing it was Tamar, made the financial arrangement to sleep with her. Tamar became pregnant as a result and gave birth to twin boys.

Do you know who was a direct descendant of one of those twin brothers? Jesus. God took the sin of both of those two, Judah and Tamar and wiped them clean of their paraptoma, their sins, by dying on the cross for them also. We are sinners by choice, broken by our own actions and we deserve no favor from God. We have done our part to wreck the universe with our own sinning and God would be justified in casting us

into hell forever. Yet, His love is so great for you that He died to make you perfect in every way. Cold-hearted sinners like Judah, He died to save. Corrupted worriers like Tamar, He came to save. And you. You are the one He loves and who He lavishes, or as the Greek word behind it indicates, makes overflow abundantly His kindness and mercy.

How can you ever comprehend the extent of Christ's mercy to die for all your sins and take them away from you...the sins you happily committed because you didn't care and those you stumbled into and regret immensely? The language of heaven is forgiveness and undeserved mercy. No one but Christ, who enters that new world of joy deserves to be there. You speak the language of God when you show someone mercy, when you bite your tongue and don't argue back, when you love the very person who doesn't deserve it. You are an object of supreme kindness. Be kind this week and a giver of forgiveness. Let go of whatever grudge you might be holding and enjoy your freedom in Christ.