

Man's Redemption

Adam sinned and by his fall constituted all his descendants sinners. This means that all men are ruined in Adam, dead in sin, unable to put the matter right.

Consequently, the great question must be this: How can man be rescued, redeemed, delivered from this appalling condition?

The biblical answer is clear. Man can only be put right with God by God's direct intervention.

What is this 'direct intervention'?

God sent his Son into the world to accomplish redemption for sinners. Hence the great, triumphant cry of the Lord Jesus in his death: 'It is finished' (John 19:30); that is: 'It is accomplished!' Christ had come into the world to do his Father's will (Heb. 10:4-10), and that will was to save his elect (Matt. 1:21; 1 Tim. 1:15, for instance): 'By that will [that is, by Christ's obedience to his Father's will] we [that is, the elect] have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all' (Heb. 10:10); in other words, Christ has redeemed his elect.

Thus, Paul writing to the Corinthians, could state:

For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam – all men] die, so also in Christ shall all [that is, all who are in Christ – the elect] be made alive (1 Cor. 15:21-22).

The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Just as we [the apostle is now speaking of

Man's Redemption

believers] have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven (1 Cor. 15:45-49).

With that as a kind of preface, let me now pick up where we left off with Paul's words to the Romans – at the point where the apostle is comparing – or, rather, contrasting – the works and accomplishments of Adam and Christ:

...sin came into the world through one man, [that is, Adam] and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned... But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many [that is, all in Adam] died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many [that is, the elect]. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men [who are in Adam; that is, all men], so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men [who are in Christ; that is, the elect]. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:12-21).

In short, as all who are in Adam – every human being – fell into sin and under condemnation with Adam, so all who are in Christ – the elect – were redeemed in and through the sacrifice of Christ.

This, in brief, is what I meant by 'God's direct intervention'.

Of course, there is much more that needs to be said about all this. When exactly are the elect justified? What, precisely, is the righteousness that is imputed to believers? Such major

Man's Redemption

questions are only two of the many which need to be answered, but, trying be brief in this booklet, and since I have dealt with both elsewhere,¹⁴ I simply state that while the elect were justified in God's decree in eternity past, and were justified by Christ in his death and resurrection, and will be finally and fully justified in eternity to come, they are actually justified as they come to saving trust in Christ – and actually only then:

The righteousness of God has been manifested... the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:21-26).

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God... God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die – but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation (Rom. 5:1-11).

And so to Romans 5:12-21, already quoted.

¹⁴ See my *Eternal; Imputed*.

Man's Redemption

In a parallel passage to Romans 5, when writing to the Ephesians, Paul makes the same point. Having set out the sinner's (including the elect sinner's) natural condition:

You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience – among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind (Eph. 2:1-3)...

...the apostle moves on to the remedy:

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us [that is, the elect], even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:4-10).

Here we have the way of redemption. Everyone of us is born a sinner, dead in sin, under the wrath of God. But – what a glorious word¹⁵ – God has intervened, sending his Son into the world to redeem his people from their sin. What is more, God does not leave it there: his Spirit applies the finished work of Christ to the elect – regenerating them, convicting them of sin, bringing them to repentance and saving faith in Christ. All is on the basis of God's grace, love, kindness and mercy.

¹⁵ Take the phrase 'but now' (Rom. 3:21-22. 5:9,11; 6:22; 7:6; 8:1; 11:30; 11:31 (second 'now' in NIV, NASB); 16:26; along with John 15:22,24; Acts 17:30; 1 Cor. 15:20; Gal. 4:9; Eph. 2:12-13; 5:8; Col. 1:26; Heb. 8:6; 9:26; 12:26; 1 Pet. 2:10). For more on this, see my *Christ; Public*.

Man's Redemption

Salvation does not stop at mere deliverance from the guilt and condemnation of sin; it includes the deliverance of the believer from the power of sin, displayed in his life-long growth in grace in obedience to Christ in the manifestation of good works, produced by the energy and power of the Holy Spirit – good works, not to obtain salvation, but good works produced by those who live in gratitude and obedience to the God who has saved them.

Scripture never tires of the theme:

Thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6:17-23).

The Lord Jesus Christ... gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father (Gal. 1:3-4).

The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works... We ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the

Man's Redemption

goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Tit. 2:11 – 3:7).

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen (Rev. 1:5-6).

This is man's redemption.