

Bought with a Price: The Efficacy and Particularity of Redemption

Selected Scriptures

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Introduction

Well, come this morning to the *seventh* message in our series on the atonement of Christ—the series which I’ve entitled, *O Perfect Redemption!* We have been celebrating the perfection of the atonement that Christ has accomplished on our behalf, rejoicing that we have such a Savior who has accomplished so glorious a work of salvation for us; who left nothing undone; who bore the full weight of our sin up to Calvary and extinguished our guilt before God; who drank the full measure of the wrath of God that burned hot against us, so that we would never have to bear it ourselves; who abolished in His flesh the enmity—the hostility—that existed between us and God, reconciling us in His body; who left no stone unturned in His mission to rescue His bride from the damning effects of our sin.

In every way that sin afflicts us, we have found Christ to be perfectly suited to our need. We have defiled ourselves and become guilty; but we find that Christ Jesus, our Great High Priest, “has been manifested to put away sin by the **sacrifice** of Himself.” His atonement is a perfect **expiation**—an offering of sacrifice that takes away our sin and our guilt. We have incurred the holy wrath of Almighty God. Our sin has roused the anger of perfect Justice, and justice demands that that righteous wrath be exercised on those who have sinned against the Holy God. And yet we find that Christ Jesus, our Great High priest, has “made **propitiation** for the sins of [His] people”—that, by receiving in Himself the full exercise of the Father’s wrath against the sins of His people, Jesus satisfied the Father’s righteous anger against our sin, and turned away God’s wrath from us who were bound to suffer under it for eternity. We have alienated ourselves from the God we were created to love and enjoy. Our sin made us enemies with the greatest of all friends. It erected a barrier of hostility between God and man and separated us from Him. But in Christ Jesus we find the **reconciliation** that overcomes that hostility. His atoning death destroys that enmity. It makes peace. And it restores us to fellowship with the God we were created for. Every need that our sin creates for us, Jesus our Savior overcomes by His glorious work of atonement. We have every reason to sing, “*O Perfect Redemption!*”

And what I’ve been endeavoring to do, is to defend the perfection of that redemption—the glory of that atonement—from an unlikely enemy. And that enemy is what is undoubtedly a noble desire of some Christians to universalize the extent of that glorious atonement. Out of what I believe is a sincere desire to magnify the grace of God in Christ, many claim that Jesus has

accomplished this glorious work of atonement for everybody—for all without exception, for every single individual who has ever lived or will live. But why is that an enemy? Why is a universal extent of the atonement the enemy of a perfect atonement?

And the answer we've been giving is: because if the atonement is something that Jesus accomplishes for all without exception, and yet not all without exception are saved, then we have emptied the atonement of its inherent power to save. If Jesus' death takes away sin and guilt, and a great portion of those for whom He died perish in their sin and retain their guilt for eternity, then Jesus' death does not really take away sin and guilt, does it? If Jesus' death satisfies the wrath of God, and a great portion of those for whom He died suffer under the wrath of God for eternity, then Jesus' death does not really satisfy God's wrath, does it? If Jesus' death reconciles God to man, establishing peace between them, and a great portion of those for whom Jesus died are separated from God forever in the eternal lake of fire, then Jesus' death does not really reconcile God to man, does it? All of a sudden, this perfect, powerful redemption, looks like a paltry, puny redemption. It's robbed of its efficacy. Instead of accomplishing realities, it "provides" "possibilities." And therefore it thrusts the weight of the decisive, determinative cause of salvation back upon the shoulders of the sinner. The atonement has been re-imagined—not as that by which God saves us, but as that by which God enables us to save ourselves.

The great theologian J. I. Packer summed this up well in what is a now-famous paragraph—one that I'm sure I'll quote again before the series is over. Packer writes: "We want (rightly) to proclaim Christ as Savior, yet we end up saying that Christ, having made salvation possible, has left us to become our own saviors. It comes about in this way. We want to magnify the saving grace of God and the saving power of Christ. So we declare that God's redeeming love extends to everyone, and that Christ has died to save every man, and we proclaim that the glory of divine mercy is to be measured by these facts. And then, in order to avoid universalism, we have to deprecate all that we were previously extolling, and to explain that, after all, nothing that God and Christ have done can save us unless we add something to it; the decisive factor that actually saves us is our own believing. What we say comes to this—that Christ saves us with our help; and what that means, when one thinks it out, is this—that we save ourselves with Christ's help" (128–29). Herman Bavinck said, "What they gain in quantity—and then only seemingly—they lose in quality" (3:468). When we universalize the extent of the atonement, without universalizing the extent of salvation itself and saying everybody goes to heaven, we have to deprecate the atonement we were previously extolling. We have to drain it of its power. We have to empty it of its sovereign glory. When you universalize the extent of the atonement, you necessarily undermine the efficacy of the atonement.

It is that enemy—the well-meaning but misguided proposal of a universal atonement—from which I've been seeking to defend the perfect redemption of Christ in this series. If we're going to sing, at the top of our lungs from the depths of our hearts, in praise of a perfect redemption,

we must necessarily sing of a particular redemption—a redemption, which, though it doesn't extend to every single individual in the world, nevertheless brings every single individual it was accomplished for all the way home to heaven. An atonement of unlimited power and perfect efficacy must necessarily be limited in extent to those who actually enjoy its benefits. And who are they, but the elect of God—those whom the Father chose in eternity past, those who are eventually granted the gifts of repentance and faith in Christ.

Well, in addition to an expiatory sacrifice, a propitiation, and a reconciliation, Scripture also characterizes the atonement as a work of **redemption**. The blood of Christ is shed as the payment of a ransom price which effects the release of sinners from the bondage of our sin and from the curse of the law. Most fundamentally, that is what redemption means: to redeem someone is to secure their release from bondage by the payment of a price.

And so this morning we will study the atonement as a **redemption**. And we'll do that in three points. First, we'll consider the **nature** of redemption. Second: the **efficacy** of redemption. And third: the **particularity** of redemption.

I. The Nature of Redemption

First, then, let's look at the **nature** of redemption. Now, the concept of redemption is fundamentally *commercial* language. One of the Greek words that's translated as redemption are the cognates *agorazō* and *exagorazō*, which both come from the word *agora*, which means "marketplace." So, *exagorazō*, to redeem, means to purchase out of the marketplace. Another word for redemption is *lutroō*, and it speaks of a purchase by the payment of a ransom. And so when we put these two together, we discover that a key concept of redemption is slavery. Slaves were redeemed by the payment of a ransom. But the rich imagery depicted by the concept of redemption doesn't begin with the death of Christ. It has its foundation in the Old Testament. And so, in order to properly understand the significance of Christ's death as **redemption** it is necessary to examine the Old Testament's usage of these terms.

Some of the first occurrences of the language of redemption come from the book of Exodus, and it speaks of paying a ransom price for the redemption of someone's life. In Exodus 13, God demands that Israel consecrate every firstborn animal, and every firstborn son to Him. They were to be sacrificed to the Lord. If the firstborn was allowed to live, its life was required to be redeemed by the payment of a price. Exodus 13:13: "But every first offspring of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, but if you do not redeem it, then you shall break its neck; and every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem." And so there was a death sentence from which a person could be released by redemption. In Exodus 21:28–32, Moses gives the case where an ox gores a person to death. If the ox was previously in the habit of doing that, the owner as well as the ox is to be put to death. But if the family of the one killed by the ox doesn't

insist that the owner die, he can demand a ransom payment for the redemption of the man's life. Exodus 21:30: "If a ransom is demanded of him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is demanded of him."

The first extended instruction on the laws of redemption in Scripture comes in Leviticus 25. Go ahead and turn there with me. When an Israelite had become so poor that he had to sell himself into slavery, God's law made provision for him to be redeemed out of slavery by his family members. Listen to the concept of redemption. Leviticus 25, starting in verse 47. "Now if the means of a stranger or of a sojourner with you becomes sufficient, and a countryman of yours becomes so poor with regard to him as to sell himself to a stranger who is sojourning with you, or to the descendants of a stranger's family, then he shall have redemption right after he has been sold. One of his brothers may redeem him, or his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or one of his blood relatives from his family may redeem him; or if he prospers, he may redeem himself. He then with his purchaser shall calculate from the year when he sold himself to him up to the year of jubilee; and the price of his sale shall correspond to the number of years. ... [Verse 51:] If there are still many years, he shall refund part of his purchase price in proportion to them for his own redemption; and if few years remain until the year of jubilee, he shall so calculate with him. In proportion to his years he is to refund the amount for his redemption." You hear this language of "purchaser," "price," "purchase price" (which is the same word for ransom), and "refund." This is the language of the market, of buying and selling. The family of the one who had been sold into slavery could redeem him by the payment of a ransom price.

By far, the most famous example of redemption in the Old Testament is the Lord's deliverance of His people Israel out of their bondage of slavery in Egypt. Exodus 2:23 says, "The sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God." Verse 24: "So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." And so Israel is in bondage in Egypt, God hears their cries, He remembers His covenant to make a great nation out of Abraham's descendants, and so He purposes to **redeem** Israel from their slavery. In Exodus 6:5-6, God declares to Moses what He is about to do. He says, "I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am Yahweh, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will **redeem** you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.'" Reflecting on this, Moses says to Israel in Deuteronomy chapter 7 and verse 8: Yahweh "redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." And so redemption referred to the deliverance of slaves from bondage.

Well, why would the writers of the New Testament cast Christ's atoning work in those terms? The answer is: because all mankind—by nature, as a result of our fall into sin—all mankind is born into the bondage of slavery. I wonder if you think of yourselves that way. I wonder if you

consider how striking the implications of such a notion are. Scripture testifies that every one of us enters this world as a slave to sin. Jesus says in John 8:34: “Everyone who commits sin is the *slave* of sin.” There is no such thing as a casual relationship with sin! There is no such thing as a good person who just does some bad things once and a while. If you commit sin, you’re a slave of sin. Second Peter 2:19 says, “for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.” And certainly man has been overcome by sin. Romans 6:6 says that we were crucified with Christ “that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be *slaves to sin*.” Romans 6:17 speaks of Christians before they were saved and says, “...you were *slaves of sin* ...”

Consider Scripture’s estimation of the natural man. We are so beholden to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life, that we are properly said to be enslaved to our sin. And you’re so enslaved that your slave-master has deceived you into loving your slavery. You don’t even know to groan under the afflictions of your bondage like the Israelites in Egypt. You love your chains. And more than this: you are condemned to die because of your sin. Not just because your ox may have gored someone to death, but because you yourself are guilty of committing murder in your heart, Jesus says in Matthew 5. You have broken the commands of God, and so the wrath of God abides upon you. Eternal spiritual death is what awaits you. Galatians 3:10 says, “For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, and do them’” (cf. Deut 27:26). For those who seek to attain righteousness by their works, the law requires perfect obedience. James 2:10 says, “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.” And then, because, Romans 3:23, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” all come under the curse of the law.

And so, because this is the predicament that each one of us finds ourselves in, Scripture says that Christ has come to **redeem** His people from the bondage of their slavery, to purchase us out of the slave-market of sin by the payment of the ransom price of His own life, to redeem us from the curse of the law, Galatians 3:13, by becoming a curse *for* us—by bearing the penal sanctions of that curse in our place. And so in Galatians 4:4, Paul says, “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might **redeem** those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” First Timothy 2:5–6: “There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a **ransom** for all, the testimony given at the proper time.” Jesus says it Himself in Mark 10:45: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a **ransom** for many.” The mission of His incarnation was a work of ransom, of which His own life was the ransom price that would be given in the stead of the many sinners whose freedom He purchased.

And so Paul tells the Corinthians that they had been **bought** with a price, 1 Corinthians 6:20. And in his farewell address to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, Paul says in Acts 20:28 that God **purchased** His church with His own blood. The Apostle Peter says in 1 Peter 1:18 and 19 that we were redeemed “not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.” Christian, yours was a slavery that was so unbreakable that the most precious metals and stones on earth could not suffice to release you. But our Kinsman-Redeemer does not bring perishable things for the ransom price! He brings His own precious blood—the blood of a sinless substitute, the blood of the God-man, which perfectly avails for everyone for whom it is shed! And so Hebrews 9:11–12 says, “But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered . . . not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal **redemption**.” This blood was so precious that it purchased eternal redemption for a multitude of sinners! And the Apostle John records the saints’ heavenly worship of the risen Christ for his atoning work of redemption. In Revelation 5:9, they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are You . . . for You were slain, and **purchased** for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.”

You are a slave to your lusts and passions, sold in bondage to sin—so enslaved to your taskmaster that you’ve been deceived to love and even desire your slavery! And even if you had the inclination, you have no means by which to purchase your freedom! And yet in Christ you have the precious blood of a spotless lamb paid as the ransom price of your redemption!

And take note: Christ has redeemed us, **number one**, from **the penalty of sin**. In Ephesians 1:7, Paul says, “In [Christ] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses.” And so if redemption is accomplished through the atoning blood of Christ, and if it consists in the forgiveness of sins, then Christ has died to redeem His people from the penalty of sin. The curse of the law has been broken!

And yet Christ has also redeemed us, **number two**, from **the power of sin** in the flesh. Romans 6:18: Having been redeemed from the enslaving power of sin, you have become “slaves of righteousness.” You have become “enslaved to God,” verse 22. Because you have been redeemed from sin’s power, you can, on that ground, practically put off sin and put on righteousness. “Sin shall not be master over you,” Romans 6:14, “for you are not under law but under grace.” Christ has redeemed you from the curse of the law, and because “the power of sin is the law,” 1 Corinthians 15:56, the dominion of sin is broken! You are free, Christian, to walk in holiness after the pattern of Christ Himself!

But then, in addition to the penalty of sin and the power of sin, several texts in Scripture speak of man’s redemption in an eschatological sense, in which we are finally freed, **number three**, even from **the presence of sin**. In Romans 8:23, Paul comments on how believers “wait eagerly for

our adoption as sons, the **redemption** of our body.” Jesus calls that final day “your redemption” in Luke 21:28, and Paul calls it “the day of redemption” in Ephesians 4:30. Now, this is not to suggest that the redemption purchased on the cross is somehow incomplete or inefficacious until the believer’s glorification. Rather, it speaks to the fact that Christ’s perfectly efficacious redemption applied to our souls in justification will also finally be applied to our bodies in glorification. In other words, the cross has secured the consummation of our salvation no less than its inauguration. Redemption, brothers and sisters, brings us all the way home! It delivers us from the penalty of our bondage, the power of our bondage, and the presence of our bondage!

II. The Efficacy of Redemption

And so, that is the nature of redemption: securing the release of captives from slavery by the payment of a price. Secondly, let us consider the **efficacy** of redemption. And again, this is important, because those who would argue for a universal redemption—that Christ has redeemed all people without exception—must necessarily argue for an inefficacious redemption. And they do. One proponent of a universal redemption, the founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, Lewis Sperry Chafer, famously writes, “There is, then, a redemption which pays the price, but does not of necessity release the slave” (“For Whom Did Christ Die?”, 313). They say that Christ *provides* redemption, but does not definitively *secure* the freedom of the captive. But does Scripture give us any warrant for such a concept of redemption? The answer is: absolutely not. The redemption which Scripture speaks of, is a perfectly **efficacious** redemption—a redemption that always succeeds in delivering the slaves from their bondage. So let’s revisit some of those texts and see how Scripture consistently strikes the note of the **efficacy** of redemption.

Consider those first examples from Exodus 13, where an animal, or even a firstborn son, has their life spared from death because of the payment of the redemption price; and from Exodus 21, where the owner of an ox is redeemed from death through a ransom payment. It simply cannot come to pass—except by an egregious miscarriage of justice—that a man can pay the redemption price for his firstborn son’s life, and yet that son be killed. It simply cannot be that the ox-owner pays the price of his redemption, and the other man’s family puts him to death anyway. The law of God does not allow for such a thing. When the ransom price was paid, and a man’s life was redeemed, he went free.

Or consider the case of the kinsman redeemer in Leviticus 25. Remember, the family members of a man who had been sold into slavery could redeem him out of his slavery by the payment of a ransom price. What did that mean? It meant that when that price was paid, of necessity, the family member who had been sold into slavery would be released and go free. There was no degree of tentativeness or uncertainty. There was absolutely no scenario in which the kinsman redeemer would pay the slaveowner the ransom price, and his family member remain in bondage. It’s absolutely unthinkable.

Imagine for a moment if a friend of yours found himself in trouble with the law. He's been taken to jail, arraigned before a judge, and has his bail set for \$5,000. Your friend has no money to pay, but you hear all this, and you discuss it with your wife, and you both decide that you can spare that amount for the sake of your friend's well-being. And so you take the money down to the courthouse, pay the \$5,000 bail, and then... you go back home. And you come through the door, and your wife asks you, "How'd it go?" You say, "Great." "You paid the bail?" "Yup, sure did." "No hiccups or anything?" "Nope, it all went quite smoothly." "Oh, good. Well, where's Tommy?" "He's in jail." "What?! I thought you said you paid the bail money!" "I did! But, oh, honey, I forgot to tell you. There is a redemption that pays the price, but that does not of necessity release the prisoner." (Illustration taken from Boice, *Doctrines of Grace*.)

What kind of redemption is that, friends? It's a *worthless* redemption. A redemption that is inefficacious, a redemption which pays the price but does not of necessity release the prisoner, is a worthless redemption. That guy might as well have taken his \$5,000 and lit it on fire! But is that what we are to make of the ransom price of Christ's blood? That it's worthless? That Christ would treat His own blood so dishonorably? To regard it as so cheap? Of course not! Peter says, "You were redeemed with *precious* blood! Blood as of a lamb unblemished and spotless!" The blood of Christ is precious, friends! And when you suggest that He could have laid down that precious blood as a ransom payment to redeem sinners, and yet those sinners for whom He paid could remain forever in bondage to their sin, you are calling the redemption Christ accomplished through His precious blood *worthless*, apart from something that we add to it to make it effective.

John Owen says it memorably. He writes, "Redemption is the freeing of a man from misery by the intervention of a ransom. ... Now, when a ransom is paid for the liberty of a prisoner, is it not all the justice in the world that he should have and enjoy the liberty so purchased for him by a valuable consideration? ... Can it possibly be conceived that there should be a redemption of men, and those men not redeemed? that a price should be paid, and the purchase not consummated? ... A price is paid for all, yet few delivered; the redemption of all consummated, yet few of them redeemed; the judge satisfied, the jailer conquered, and yet the prisoners inthralled!" (*Death of Death*, 261). It's unthinkable! It's a worthless redemption!

And more than "What kind of *redemption* is that?": What kind of *redeemer* is that? The man who pays the bail money, but fails to release his friend from jail, is an inept fool! How utterly deprived of wisdom must such a man have to be to take \$5,000 of his hard-earned money, to hand it over to the authorities for the specific purpose of releasing his friend from his bonds, but then to be content to leave that courthouse and go home without his friend! Brothers and sisters, do we dare take Christ to be such a fool? He who is Himself the wisdom of God—would He lay down such a priceless sum as His precious blood, and be content not to receive what He paid

for? Of course not! Charles Spurgeon puts it well. He says, “A redemption which pays a price, but does not ensure that which is purchased—a redemption which calls Christ a substitute for the sinner, but yet which allows the person to suffer—is altogether unworthy of our apprehension of Almighty God” (*MTP*, 49:39).

No, when God undertakes to redeem His people from Egypt, they come out of slavery! The Exodus was not a promise to merely provide for Israel’s redemption, or to make Israel redeemable, but to **effectively deliver** them out of their bonds! Exodus 14:30 says, “Yahweh *saved* Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians.” The redemption with which God redeems His people is so **efficacious** that those who are said to have been redeemed and ransomed by Yahweh will shout joyfully in Messiah’s kingdom with everlasting joy upon their heads. Isaiah 35:9–10: “No lion will be there, Nor will any vicious beast go up on it; These will not be found there. But the **redeemed** will walk there, And the **ransomed** of Yahweh will return And come with joyful shouting to Zion, With everlasting joy upon their heads. They will find gladness and joy, And sorrow and sighing will flee away.” There is no hint of potentiality or bare provision in the Old Testament’s concept of redemption. To redeem is to **efficaciously** deliver the captive from slavery.

And so when we come to the New Testament, and we find the same terminology of ransom and redemption being used to describe Christ’s atonement, we have every reason to expect that that same notion of **efficacy** inheres in His redemptive death as we found in the Old Testament. And that is precisely what we find. Again, Ephesians 1:7 defines the redemption we have through Christ’s blood as “the forgiveness of sins.” The bondage that Christ releases us from by the shedding of His blood in redemption is the bondage of our need to pay for our own sins. Redemption does not merely *provide* for forgiveness but actually *accomplishes* it! Acts 20:28 says that Christ, the God-man, *purchased* the church of God with His own blood. What’s the meaning? Christ pays the price of the church’s freedom, so that our lives might not be lost to sin’s penalty. His blood is shed, rather than our lives be lost forever. Which means: if the shedding of blood has taken place, the loss of the sinners for whom it was shed cannot take place. First Corinthians 6:20 says we have been “bought with a price.” It’s not that a price has simply been paid. We were *bought* with a price. Christ has *obtained* something by laying down the price of His shed blood. Redemption doesn’t just mean paying a price. It means that the one who pays the price actually gains possession of what He paid for. Hebrews 9:15 reminds us that the very *purpose* for which Christ died was to *effect* this redemption, not just make it possible! Hebrews 9:15: Christ “is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the **redemption** of ... transgressions ... , those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance”! Christ doesn’t pay the price in order to make it *possible* for the called to receive an eternal inheritance. He pays the price in order to make it *so*, so that those He redeems actually come into possession of the eternal life He purchased for them.

And back in Galatians 3, we read in verse 13 that “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.” But look at the result of that, verse 14: “*in order that*”—Christ redeemed us, “in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, *so that we would receive* the promise of the Spirit through faith.” The whole purpose of redemption is so that we actually *receive* the promise of the Spirit. The redemption of Christ does not hang suspended on whether or not we will have faith! The redemption of Christ *purchases* the very faith by which we lay hold of all the benefits of redemption! And so the result of redemption is that those who should have been cursed now go free! Christ’s substitutionary death purchases not only redeemability; it necessarily frees the slave!

One theological dictionary describes the word “redemption” in this way: “In this liberation from the curse of the Law, the essential point is that it confers both an actual and also a legally established freedom ensuring against any renewal of slavery” (Büschel, *TDNT*, 1:126). That means that it is to violate the meaning of this term suppose that those who are redeemed might *ever again* be subject to the slavery from which they are redeemed! Leon Morris writes, “It is wrong to separate the legal status, gained by the complete discharge of the claims the law had upon us, from the resultant life. The only redemption Paul knew was one in which the redeemed had received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and in which they lived as those who had been adopted into the family of God” (*Apostolic Preaching*, 59). Let me put it simply: If Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, but we still must undergo the curse of the law, then Christ did *not* redeem us from the curse of the law!

But, dear people, there *are* those who undergo that curse. And so what conclusion can we come to, but that Christ did not redeem them? That precisely because Christ’s redemption *is efficacious*, it is particular, and not universal.

And so, since Scripture defines the redemption Christ accomplished by His death as the efficacious securing of freedom by the payment of a price; and since that redemption must necessarily issue in (1) freedom from sin, (2) slavery to God and righteousness, (3) the reception of the Holy Spirit, and (4) the inheritance of eternal glory, it cannot be that such redemption was accomplished for all without exception. Those purchased by the precious blood of Christ can never fail to enjoy the freedom obtained for them by their substitute. But, as sad as it is to think about, many do fail to enjoy that freedom. Many do perish under the curse of the law. And if they must suffer that curse, it cannot be said that Christ has redeemed them from that curse. The redemption Christ accomplished is particular, and not universal.

III. The Particularity of Redemption

That leads me, then, to our **third** point, namely, the **particularity of redemption**. And the point to make here is that the **particularity of redemption** is not only an implication of the efficacy of

redemption, as I've just proven. No, it's also the explicit teaching of Scripture. Just like efficacy, **particularity** is inherent to the concept of redemption from its earliest occurrences in the Bible.

You see this in the narrative of Israel's redemption from slavery in Egypt, just from the fact that it is *Israel's* redemption, and not the Egyptians'! And we see the result of that in graphic detail in Exodus 14:30. We read of the efficacy of redemption in the first half of the verse: "Thus Yahweh *saved* Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians." But then we read of the **particularity** of redemption in the second half: "and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore." This was not a universal redemption that God had accomplished! The Israelites had safely crossed the Red Sea, and the Egyptians were drowned! Yahweh had redeemed His people, and not all without exception.

In fact, throughout the narrative of the plagues, Scripture insists upon the distinction that God makes between His people, whom He will redeem, and those who are not His people, whom He will not redeem. We see that in the announcement of the pestilence in Chapter 9 verse 3: "Behold, the hand of Yahweh will come with a very severe pestilence on your livestock which are in the field..." Verse 4: "But Yahweh will *make a distinction* between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing will die of all that belongs to the sons of Israel." We see it with the announcement of the death of the firstborn in Chapter 11 verse 5: "All the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die"—from the child of Pharaoh to the slave girl to the cattle. Verse 7: "But against any of the sons of Israel a dog will not even bark, whether against man or beast, that you may understand how Yahweh *makes a distinction* between Egypt and Israel." God distinguishes between His people and those who are not His people, between those whom He has chosen and those whom He has not, between the elect and the non-elect.

But what is particularly interesting about this is the **particularity** evident in the announcement of the plague of the flies in chapter 8 verse 21. "If you do not let my people go, behold ... the houses of the Egyptians will be full of swarms of flies." "But," verse 22, "on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where My people are living, so that no swarms of flies will be there, in order that you may know that I, Yahweh, am in the midst of the land." Verse 23: "*I will put a division* between My people and your people." And while at first this just looks like a repetition of 9:4 and 11:7, Moses uses a different word here. The word "division" in verse 23 is the Hebrew word *peduth*. And *peduth* comes from the verb *padah*, one of the most popular Old Testament terms for **redemption**.

In fact, if you look up *peduth* in the standard Hebrew dictionaries, you'll find the gloss "ransom," or "redemption" as the definition. The term is only used three other times in the Old Testament: In Psalm 111:9 and Psalm 130 verse 7, it's translated "redemption." And in Isaiah 50 verse 2, it's translated "ransom." In Moses' mind, then, the phrase, "I will set a ransom price" is synonymous with the phrase, "I will put a division between." **Particularity**—God's

distinguishing between His chosen people and those He's not chosen—is inherent to the idea of redemption. One author makes this very observation from this text. He writes, “God was redeeming his people and thus making a distinction between them and between those who were not his people. This places particularity at the very heart of God's redemption of his people from Egypt” (Barnes, 69). At the most foundational demonstration of God's redemption of His people in all of the Old Testament, **particularity** is at the very heart of it.

And the same is true of the other examples we looked at. Exodus 21: if the owner of the ox paid the ransom price for the redemption of his life, it was *his* life that was spared, and not all without exception. Leviticus 25: if a kinsman redeemed a family member out of slavery, it was *that family member*, and not *anyone* else (let alone *everyone* else) that was released from bondage.

And so we see that same **particularity** when we come to the New Testament and read of Christ's redemption. Jesus gives His life, Matthew 20:28, as “a ransom for *many*.” In Revelation 5:9, Christ is praised by the heavenly host for having “purchased for God with Your blood”—and so there's the concept of redemption. But whom did He purchase? “Men *from* every tribe and tongue and people and nation.” Now, if John believed in a universal redemption—if Christ had in fact redeemed every person in the history of the world without exception—why wouldn't John have just said, “You purchased every tribe and tongue and people nation”? Why would He say, “men *from* every tribe”? The answer is: he wouldn't! It only makes sense because Jesus did not purchase every tribe, tongue, people, and nation, but men *from—out of—*every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. All without distinction, and not all without exception.

Now, you say, “Ok. I've heard all you've been saying about the inherent **efficacy** and **particularity** of redemption. But isn't there a text in Scripture that speaks of Christ buying, or redeeming, certain false teachers, who end up finally denying Christ? Second Peter 2:1 says, ‘But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, *even denying the Master who bought them*, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.’ What about that text? These false teachers deny Christ and bring swift destruction on themselves. They're obviously not among the elect. But it says that Christ bought them! He redeemed them! And if that's the case, then at least some for whom Christ died were not elect, and so the atonement is not limited to the elect.”

Well, that's an important objection, and it deserves an answer longer than I can give this morning. But suffice it to say that the answer cannot be what the universal redemptionist proposes—namely, that Christ has paid the ransom price of His blood in order to redeem all people without exception, but only those who appropriate that provision by faith experience its benefits. There is, in other words, a redemption which pays the price, but does not of necessity release the slave. But we've already seen what Scripture makes of that view. It would have been unrecognizable to the biblical authors. Any kind of “redemption” which leaves the one redeemed

in his state of slavery is not the perfect redemption Christ accomplished on the cross, which Scripture uniformly represents as an efficacious accomplishment that secures the release of those for whom the price is paid.

But secondly, this objection fails to consider all of what Peter says about these false teachers. Peter not only says that (1) the Master bought them. He also says in verse 20 that (2) they “escaped the defilements of the world” and had (3) “the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”; and in verse 21 that (4) they “have known the way of righteousness.” And so in whatever sense these false teachers have been (1) bought by the Master, in that same sense they have (2) escaped the world, (3) knew Christ, and (4) knew the way of righteousness. And what sense is that? In the sense that the false teachers professed to believers, and even appeared to be believers, but weren’t ever really believers.

Verse 1 says that these false teachers were “among you,” and that they “secretly introduced” their destructive heresies into the fellowship. These weren’t outsiders who never claimed to be Christians, who all of a sudden showed up and began to openly contradict the Gospel! No, these men had been former church members—insiders who strayed from the teachings of the Apostles (Schreiner, *FHHC*, 390). They gave every appearance that they had a saving knowledge of Christ! They professed to belong to Him. And then they defected from the fellowship of the faithful, proving that they never really belonged to Christ in the first place. As John says in 1 John 2:19, “They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.”

And so Peter can say that they “escaped the defilements of the world.” But they never really did escape the defilements of the world, otherwise we’d have to say that true believers lost their salvation. No, Peter’s speaking of them according to their appearance. They claimed for themselves, and they appeared to all others, as if they had escaped the defilements of the world. But that was not really so. The same with the designation that they knew the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: it had seemed so, for a time. They professed so, for a time. But in reality it was not so. The same with verse 21: they had never really and truly “known the way of righteousness”; they had only appeared to have known it. They professed to have known it. Scripture often speaks with the judgment of charity, even going so far as to call Judas one of the disciples of Christ (John 12:4).

Peter speaks the same way in 2 Peter 2:1. These false teachers had never really and truly been “bought” by the One they once claimed to be their “Master,” but they appeared to have been so redeemed, and so Peter speaks of them according to what they professed. He’s saying, “These false teachers deny the Master *they claim* had bought them” (because Peter sees the concept of Christ dying for someone as synonymous with that person being a Christian). Therefore, 2 Peter

2:1 does not teach that Christ has atoned for the sins of those who will finally perish. As a result, it provides no support for a universal intention in the atonement, and thus it poses no contradiction to the doctrine of particular redemption.

Conclusion

And so we have beheld from God's Word the **nature, efficacy, and particularity** of the redemption that Christ accomplished in His atoning death on the cross. And I return at the end to where I started at the beginning: this is the redemption we need, friends. We do not need a redemption that pays the price but does not of necessity release the slave. We don't need a redemption that leaves us imprisoned. We need the redemption that releases us, that frees us, that breaks the bonds of our slavery to sin and delivers us into the freedom of the slavery to righteousness!

And the only kind of redemption that does that is an **efficacious** redemption. And the only way you can have an efficacious redemption is if it is a **particular** redemption. And so protect the particularity of redemption, GraceLife. Protect it in your thinking. Protect it in your evangelism. Don't be duped into thinking you're magnifying the atonement by claiming it was for everybody. You're not magnifying it; you're watering it down. What you think you gain in quantity, you lose in quality.

Just as a practical illustration of that, I was reading this week a passage from John Flavel's masterpiece, *The Fountain of Life*. And in one of the sermons recorded in that book, Flavel counsels doubting believers to plead for assurance on the ground of the preciousness of Christ's blood that was shed as the price of their redemption. He says that when you are doubtful of your salvation, pray this way: "Lord, I am not only thy creature, but thy redeemed creature; one that thou hast bought with a great price: O, I have cost thee dear! for my sake Christ came from thy bosom, ...and is it imaginable, that after that thou hast in such a costly way, even by the expense of the precious blood of Christ, redeemed me, thou shouldst at last exclude me? ... Will [God] be content ... to recover [my soul] to himself ... by the death of his own dear Son, and after all this, cast it away as if there were nothing in all this? 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit:' I know thou wilt have a respect to the work of thy hands; especially to a redeemed creature, upon which thou hast expended so great sums of love, which thou hast bought at so dear a rate."

Do you hear how he prays? "Father, Your own dear Son has died for me. He has shed His infinitely precious blood to redeem me. Could Father and Son lay down such a great price to purchase my soul, and fail to get what You paid for? Can such a priceless sum as the blood of the God-man be paid for the prisoner's release and he remain in bondage forever? No, that's unthinkable. Christ's blood is not worthless; it's precious. And therefore I know it will bring me all the way home." What a glorious foundation to stake your life, your soul, your eternity on! So

much better than the quicksand of assessing the quality of your faith! Friend, your faith will always be imperfect! It will always be variable! But praise God that it is not the strength of your faith that saves you, but it is the strength of the Christ to whom your faith unites you that saves you! It is the preciousness of the blood of Christ to whom faith unites you that saves you!

And that is what the **particularity** of redemption safeguards.