

Leviticus 25:47-55 & Ephesians 1:7-8

The Grace of Redemption

The apostle Paul introduces his epistle to the Ephesians with a thanksgiving to God for the rich blessings He has given to us. Rather than simply offer up a brief word of praise and getting right into the heart of the matter, Paul finds himself offering up an extensive word of blessing in which he piles one phrase upon another is praising our Triune God for His glorious gift of grace.

In **vv. 3-6** Paul concentrates on the work of the Father in whom our entire salvation originates. Because our God is Himself eternal, Paul begins his praise by dwelling on eternity. He moves from eternity past to eternity future to describe our heavenly blessings in Christ. Our salvation was no afterthought or some act of God in which He responds to our prior decision. Rather, Paul stresses the work of salvation as being wholly of God's grace alone. Even before we were born into this world, even before the creation of this world, God set His love upon us in selecting us out of the mass of humanity to predestinate our adoption into the God's family of love. From eternity God chose us in Christ so that on the Day of Judgment we would stand before Him holy and blameless. He set forth our eternal destiny of pure joy in the family of God before we were ever born. He planned to adopt us as His own children who would experience the complete and full expression of His love toward us through Jesus Christ. He was not content to simply display His gracious will toward us in some humble manner. Rather, He made it a point to lavish His graciousness upon us. The abundance of the grace shown toward us is displayed in the fact that He graciously chose us in the Beloved.

God's grace is clearly the theme of Paul's praise. Paul stresses the grace of God because he wants us to understand that the fact that we were once "children of wrath" (**2:3**) but now we are the children of God ("joint-heirs with Christ;" **Rom. 8:17**) is not due to anything found in us. The basis of God's choosing us and deciding our eternal destiny before the world was created was wholly because of His good pleasure alone. The reason we are no longer destined for God's wrath, but instead we have become His children in love is solely hidden in the eternal character of God's nature. Before the world was ever created, God took the highest pleasure to fulfill His eternal will in choosing us and writing our eternal destiny to show forth His love toward His adopted children.

However, in the display of this marvelous grace, God's ultimate intention was for Himself. He has lavished this grace upon us so that we would praise Him alone for the abundance of His glorious grace. Therefore, Paul is leading us all to fulfill the plan of the ages by blessing God for blessing us with heavenly blessings in Christ.

Paul concludes His focus upon the work of the Father with the point that He has graced us "in the Beloved." Here Paul brings us from eternity to now focus upon the history of redemption. God's choice of us in eternity is incomplete until that grace has been manifested within time and space. Though God's eternal will sets the plan of salvation before the Triune being as an architect sets his blueprints in front of the constructor of the building, the gospel remains only a plan until the work is accomplished. Therefore, Paul moves from the eternal plan to the omnipotent completion of that plan in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

In **v. 6**, Paul not only mentions "the Beloved" to tell us that the grace of God is given to us only as we are incorporated into the person of the eternal Son, but to point forward in his praise to the fulfillment of God's plan in the redemption price paid by Jesus Christ (**vv. 7-8**).

In **vv. 7-8**, Paul now turns his attention to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, which merited our eternal salvation in time. Here Paul will concentrate on what is known in theology as the "passive obedience" of Jesus Christ in which He willingly laid down His life for elect sinners to purchase them for God. The reason we have become the children of God is not limited to God's eternal choice, but because we have been bought by Christ and united to Him so that we might join with Him in His eternal inheritance.

In **v. 7**, Paul says, "In Him we have redemption through His blood." The result of this work of redemption is that our sins have now been forgiven by God. Paul uses the word for "trespasses" rather than the common word for "sins," in order to stress that what has been forgiven is our violation of God's law. A "trespass" comes from two words meaning to pass across something in the sense that God's law has set a definite boundary around man and man has cut across that boundary.

In order to understand Paul's use of the word "redemption" we have to look at two things: first, the use of "redemption" in the OT and second, Paul's understanding of the basis of man's relationship to God under the law.

OT Picture of Redemption

In the OT, God has given us a wonderful picture of redemption. In **Lev. 25**, God is giving Moses the regulations and theological basis for the different Sabbaths. He has already discussed the Sabbath day, which is recorded in **chap. 23**, and now his focus is upon the Sabbath year and the Year of Jubilee, or the seventh Sabbath year. Within the context of the Year of Jubilee we learn about the law of the "kinsman redeemer." In the ancient world if someone incurred a large debt that he couldn't pay he could sell himself into slavery to work off his debt. In **Lev. 25**, God gives three ways this man can be released from this slavery/bondage. First, a kinsman (usually a brother or some other relative) could pay off his debt during his enslavement and free him from bondage (**v. 48**). By this payment, the kinsman or brother would be buying off or redeeming his brother. A second way in which he could be freed from his slavery would be if he could work long enough to accumulate sufficient funds to purchase his own freedom (**v. 49**). But third, if the other two means were not possible then the one who sold himself into slavery could work hard for his master knowing that in the year of Jubilee, or the seventh Sabbath year, his freedom would be certain (**v. 54**). The Year of Jubilee served as a picture of Yahweh Himself becoming the kinsman redeemer for His own people and just as Yahweh redeemed Israel from under the bondage of the Egyptians, then on the seventh Sabbath year Yahweh Himself would liberate any Hebrew slave who had been forced to sell himself into bondage to his master. Therefore, the Year of Jubilee reminded Israel that since Yahweh redeemed His people from slavery in Egypt, then no individual Israelite could be permanently enslaved by another Israelite. As a Sabbath, the Year of Jubilee pointed to the fact that all of Israel was to enjoy God's Sabbath rest.

In the OT prophets, the Year of Jubilee became associated with the coming of the Messiah in which He would inaugurate the age of perfect liberty. He would bring about the day in which Israel would be released from all debts and enter into the fullness of joyous worship in Yahweh's temple (**Isa. 61:1-3; Dan. 9:24-27**).

Now before we see the fulfillment of the law of the kinsman redeemer and the Year of Jubilee, we must turn to Paul's understanding of man's relationship to God under the law.

Paul's Understanding of Law

At the heart of Paul's understanding of redemption is man's relationship to God based upon keeping His law perfectly. In his epistles, Paul uses the term "law" as a synonym for "covenant," almost always to refer to the Mosaic Covenant. There are three typical characteristics about Paul's understanding of the "law." First, Paul sees the law as a historical covenant made with Israel, with a specific beginning (**Gal. 3:17**) and end (**Gal. 3:25; cf. Matt. 5:17-19; Rom. 9:4-5; 10:5**). Second, Paul sees the law as a unified whole in which all the specific laws given in Genesis through Deuteronomy all make up "the one law of Moses" given uniquely to Israel as a historical covenant. In other words, although the traditional three-fold division of the law as ceremonial, civil, and moral might be useful in theological discussions about the law, it finds absolutely no support biblically. When an Israelite, like Paul, heard the term "law of Moses" he only thought of "the one law/legal code" given as a covenant to the nation (**Ex. 34:27-28; Deut. 4:12-13; 5:1-3; 9:7-11, 15; Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 10:11-18**). Finally, Paul sees that law as a "legal" covenant which is binding upon the whole nation to be kept perfectly to receive God's blessings or if broken to be cursed by God (**Lev. 18:5; Rom. 10:5; Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10**).

In **Romans 5**, Paul sees another legal covenant expressed historically with Adam as the federal head of the entire human race. Here another particular expression of the law of God is given to mankind as a legal covenant in which Adam is obligated to obey every detail in order to have eternal life. If Adam chooses to disobey God's law in any degree he will forfeit the hope of eternal life and will instead receive the payment and curse of eternal judgment. When Adam disobeyed the legal covenant of that particular expression of God's law he not only forfeited eternal life for himself but the entire human race. Therefore, Paul sees all mankind under the curse of the law of God.

To shut the mouths of all mankind, God has given a typological picture of man's fallen condition under the curse of the law in the nation of Israel. In Israel the legal covenant given to Adam is recapitulated under Moses in a new and much more detailed expression of God's law. This particular historical expression of the law of Moses was given uniquely to Israel as a nation to show the depth of man's depravity in which God required Israel to fully obey the law to receive God's blessings in the land. Paul sees Israel under the law as a typological picture of the entire human race. Here we are able to focus in upon one particular nation whose relationship with God is based upon the keeping of the law. Think of Israel as a case study within the history of redemption so that man can look at this one nation and see what is true of all mankind under the legal covenant given to Adam. Therefore, Israel is a type of Adam showing all mankind what being under the curse of the law looks like.

If we focus our attention upon Israel, understanding this historical Mosaic covenant as a picture of man, then we can see that just as Israel owes perfect obedience to God even so all mankind equally owes perfect obedience to God. Paul pictures the law of Moses given to Israel as a "certificate of debt" hanging over the head of the nation. Israel is seen as a nation of slaves under the oppressive bondage of the law. And just as Adam before, Israel failed to keep this legal covenant of the law of Moses. Therefore, this "certificate of debt" has become a curse upon the nation. However, as a picture of the condition of man, Israel shows us that all mankind is under the oppressive bondage of the law and because no man can keep the law then all are under the curse of God. Sinful man, enslaved under the shackles of the law, has now incurred an infinite debt that he cannot pay and therefore he is now under the curse of God.

Now, with Paul's understanding of man's relationship to God under the law, we turn back to the law of the kinsman redeemer.

Earlier we mentioned three ways an Israelite could be released from self-imposed slavery. It is clear that under the law no man can fulfill the second manner of release in which he can purchase his own freedom. Because the law that has been violated or trespassed/transgressed is given by an eternal God in which we have offended His nature then the debt we have incurred is itself eternal and can never be paid by finite man. Also, as we will see in **chap. 2** of Ephesians man cannot even make a positive movement toward God because he is now dead in his sins (**2:1, 5**).

Therefore, the only hope that we have is through the first means of being released. We must have a kinsman/our brother pay off our debt and redeem us from the bondage and curse of the law. It is certain that no "natural" or earthly brother will do because all men are under the same curse. Therefore God Himself has to become our brother to act as our kinsman redeemer. This has been accomplished for us in eternity. In **v. 5** Paul said in love we were predestined to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ and in **v. 6** that this grace has come to us "in the Beloved," which is clearly a title for God's Son as seen at His baptism (**Matt. 3:17; cf. Luke 3:22**) when God declared from heaven, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

Before the world was created God prepared your redemption by predestinating your union with His own Son so that Jesus Christ would become your kinsman redeemer to purchase your freedom from the law.

But what could Jesus Christ possibly use to purchase your redemption? What could pay off your eternal debt to free you from the curse? Paul tells us that we have been "bought/purchased with a price" (**1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23**) and the purchase price was the blood of Jesus Christ. At the cross our eternal God, our elder brother cancelled our debt and freed us from bondage to the law (**Eph. 2:14-16; Gal. 4:3-7 [redemption, blood, slavery, sonship] --> 2:19-21 and 3:13 --> 5:1; Col. 2:13-15; Rom. 7:4-6; 8:1-4, 15; Heb. 9:15**).

Jesus Christ has set us free from that old way of life; a life of bondage of relating to God under the law. Our relationship to God is no longer based upon our law-keeping to determine our standing before God, but now it is based upon Jesus' law-keeping on our behalf. Therefore, since Jesus Christ paid off our debt, freeing us from the curse of the law in which our sins have now been fully forgiven, our relationship to God is now and forevermore one based upon grace.

But remember that there was a third way in which a slave could be redeemed from bondage and that was by Yahweh Himself in the Year of Jubilee. As we said earlier the prophets began to associate the Year of Jubilee as coming in the age of the Messiah (**Isa. 61:1-3**). Luke sees this day as coming in the person and work of Jesus Christ (**Luke 3:21-23; 4:1, 14, 16-30**). Jesus brings in the Year of Jubilee, the seventh Sabbath year, for us. He is our seventh Sabbath, He is our Jubilee, He is our Sabbath rest.

Jesus, our kinsman redeemer has paid our debt, our sins have been forgiven, and we have been set free. In all of this God has lavished upon us the riches of His grace so that Jesus Christ our Sabbath rest now says to us all:

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 “Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and YOU SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. 30 “For My yoke is easy, and My load is light” (**Matt. 11:28-30**).

Amen!

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