

Redemption. Nassau. 7 April 2013.

My subject for this morning is that of 'Redemption', and my reading is taken from the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans ... chapter 3 ... from the latter part of verse 22 to the close of verse 24 ...

There is no difference (no distinction): for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God, but we are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

Whereas the word 'redemption' can convey many different ideas in English, the Greek word which the apostle used in our reading was properly a commercial term borrowed from the marketplace, with the meaning 'to deliver ... to release ... from bondage on payment of a ransom'.

This morning, I plan to approach the subject of redemption under three simple headings ... namely, (i) what Christians are redeemed **from**; (ii) what they are redeemed **by**; and (iii) what they are redeemed **for**.

First then, what Christians are redeemed from.

The New Testament makes it clear that all true believers are set free from both the power and the penalty of **sin**.

The Lord Jesus Himself declared that 'everyone who practises sin is the bondservant (is the slave) of sin'.¹ By nature we were well and truly 'under' sin's power and dominion,² 'sold under sin', as the apostle Paul expressed it³ – sold, that is, under sin as under a cruel slave-master – bound by sin's chains, altogether unable to unshackle ourselves.

And before he ever introduced the thought of 'redemption',⁴ Paul had first demonstrated that (left to themselves) everyone ... of every race and rank, of every creed and culture, both the moral and the immoral, both the religious and the irreligious ... that (left to themselves) everyone – without exception – stands guilty before God ... with no excuse to plead. There are, of course, as the apostle knew well, degrees of sin, but nobody, he made clear, approaches God's standard.⁵

But, thank God, all was not lost. For that was by no means the end of the story. For Paul wrote elsewhere, concerning 'our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ', that He 'gave Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity'.⁶ ... And it is 'in Him' (our Lord Jesus) – and in Him alone – that 'we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses (of our offences)'.⁷

But as Christians we are redeemed, not only from sin, but from **the curse** which God has pronounced on all who fail to observe His Law in its entirety and at all times.⁸ For – wonder of wonders – on the cross the Lord Jesus took our place and assumed responsibility for our indebtedness. As sinners we came under the curse of God's condemnation because we had broken the Law of God, but He (the Lord Jesus) redeemed us from that curse by bearing it for us.^{9,10}

But as Christians we are redeemed, not only from sin and from the curse of God's broken Law, but from a futile and meaningless way of life. The apostle Peter spelled it out clearly. ... Writing to believers, he said, 'you were redeemed, not with corruptible things, such as silver or gold, *from your empty manner of life* handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, with the blood of Christ'.¹¹

He reminds his readers that they had been redeemed from their previous – and purposeless – lifestyle ... a way of life which utterly failed to satisfy.

Some time ago, I was reading a speech given by Prince Charles at the Inauguration of The Prince of Wales's Institute of Architecture. About half way through, he stated, 'Despite all the dramatic changes that have been wrought by science and technology, and all the remarkable benefits they have indeed brought us, there remains deep in the soul ... of mankind a persistent and unconscious anxiety that something is missing - some vital ingredient that makes life truly worth living'.¹²

Yes indeed, without Christ in the life 'something *is* missing'!¹³

And it is from a frivolous, fruitless and futile life that Christ has redeemed us.

But as Christians we are redeemed, not only from sin, not only from the curse of God's broken Law, and from an empty and meaningless way of life, but from 'bondage to the fear of death'.¹⁴

Let me illustrate. Ten months ago a young missionary couple in their late twenties died approximately half way between the towns of Chitokoloki and Chavuma in the North-Western Province of Zambia. The husband, Jay, was trained as a bush pilot and aircraft mechanic. It was only late last February that he and his wife Katrina went

to serve a remote mission hospital situated at Chitokoloki on the East bank of the Zambezi River.¹⁵ The small Cessna plane which Jay was flying hit an electricity pylon and plunged into the river during a return trip after he and Katrina had dropped off a nurse in another town. Just six weeks before the fatal plane crash,¹⁶ Jay wrote ...

'There is nothing sad about the death of a Christian. The only sadness (and I do not intend to belittle this aspect) is in the loss of companionship by those left behind ... I will close with a quote from C. S. Lewis ... "You don't have a soul. You are a soul. You have a body".¹⁷ And I know', Jay added, 'that when this body dies, my soul will get a new one'. The young man who wrote those words certainly knew what it was to be set free from bondage to the fear of death!

Jay and Katrina left behind two very young daughters ... Marina and Coral. The girls are too young to understand what has happened. For now they have simply been told that Daddy and Mummy are in a 'happy place'.

Three-year old Marina wanted to know if there were nice sunsets there¹⁸ – which was not a silly question given that Chitokoloki is famous for its beautiful sunsets.¹⁹ But, no, Marina, there are no sunsets there – indeed there is no need for any sun there.²⁰

'I know that when this body dies', Jay wrote, 'my soul will get a new one'. And one glad day – when Jesus comes – Jay and Katrina's bodies – along with those of a countless multitude of other believers – will be raised in incorruption,²¹ ... an event described in scripture as 'the redemption of the body',²² and as 'the redemption of the purchased possession',²³ ... for, although as Christians we *are* redeemed in the present, we wait for the consummation of that redemption – when God will claim His acquired property in full.

Yes, the Lord Jesus redeems His followers, not only from sin, from the curse and condemnation of a broken Law, and from a futile way of life, but from bondage to the fear of death.

Second, what Christians are redeemed by.

The Bible traces the believer's redemption consistently to the self-sacrifice and death of the Lord Jesus. As our text for this morning expresses it, this 'redemption' is 'in Christ Jesus' ... in Him alone who 'gave Himself – 'for all',²⁴ 'for us',²⁵ 'for our sins'.²⁶

Whenever I read that He 'gave Himself a ransom',²⁷ I think of God's word to the nation of Israel back in Isaiah 43, 'I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba (what we now know as the Sudan and Ethiopia) in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my eyes ... and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life'.²⁸

The prophet was looking forward over 150 years to the time of the Persian world empire. It was the Persian monarch, Cyrus the Great, who freed the Jews from their exile and authorised them to return to their homeland and to rebuild the temple there.²⁹

From Isaiah 43, it is clear that the later Persian conquest of Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan was no accident of war, but that God, the Holy One of Israel, compensated the Persian kings for the liberation of His people by extending their empire through these distant African lands and nations – which had never formed part of the earlier Assyrian and Babylonian empires. And this vast territory, God made clear, was not a gift ... it was a ransom price ... it was the incredibly large ransom price which He (the Lord) was willing to pay for His people's freedom.

And this He did, He said, because of His love for them.³⁰ But we know of a far greater ransom price paid to set us free ... a ransom price which was the expression of a love greater than our every sin.³¹

In His own words, our Lord came 'to give His life a ransom for many'.³² And so, if Isaiah foretold that many would be given as a 'ransom' instead of the 'life' of Israel,³³ the Lord Jesus foretold that He (the Son of man) would give His 'life' as a 'ransom' instead of many.

'Giving' His life refers, of course, to His dying. So too, the many references in the New Testament to His 'blood' point us to His sacrificial death for us. Earlier I commented on the words of the apostle Peter, 'you were redeemed, not with corruptible things, such as silver or gold, from your empty manner of life ... but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, with the blood of Christ'.

'Redeemed ... with the blood of Christ'. And I remember that Peter was one of those who had heard our Lord speak of giving His life as a ransom for many. But, it is not only Peter who (in 1 Peter 1) associates the redemption of the Christian with the blood of Jesus. You may recall the words of Paul in Ephesians 1 ... 'we have redemption *through His blood*' ... and of the apostle John in Revelation 1 ... 'To Him who loves us and has loosed us from our sins *by His blood*'.

Peter speaks of 'the blood of Christ' as 'precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot'. Just think of it ... the priceless blood of the spotless Lamb of God – shed to 'redeem' sinners such as you and me.

Some time ago, I came across the following story ... 'A prisoner in Scotland was brought before the Judge. As the culprit entered the box, he looked into the face of the Judge to see if he could discover any mercy there. The Judge and the prisoner exchanged glances, and then there came a mutual recognition. The prisoner said to himself: "It is all right this time", for the Judge had been his classmate in Edinburgh University twenty-five years before. When sentence was pronounced, it was (a very large fine), the limit of the law for the misdemeanour charged, and the culprit was sorely disappointed as he was led away But the Judge went at once and himself paid the fine, telling the clerk to write the man's discharge. This the Judge delivered in person, explaining that the demands of the law must be met, but, having been met, the man was now free'.³⁴

And, yes, the demands of God's law had to be met too. But, praise God, His *wisdom* devised a way for His *love* to deliver us from His *wrath* without compromising in any way His *justice*. When we speak of being redeemed and forgiven, we mean that our debt was not simply cancelled ... it was paid in full.

One of the Psalms (Psalm 49) observes that, although rich men can do many things, there is one thing which they cannot do ... that no amount of money can prevent a person dying – that this extends beyond the reach of the wealthiest of men.³⁵ 'None can by any means redeem his brother', the psalmist wrote, 'nor give to God a ransom for him ... that he should live forever, and not see corruption'. And by way of explanation he inserts the statement, 'for the redemption of their soul (their life, that is) is costly'.

But if we cannot buy our way out of dying, how much less can we buy our way out of eternal ruin. We cannot – the cost of our redemption is too great for us to pay ourselves. But there is One, who to save us from eternal ruin, has obtained eternal redemption for us.³⁶

I spoke earlier of a missionary pilot – Jay Erickson. Let me tell you of another. His name is Martin Burnham. At the end of May 2001, when celebrating their 18th wedding anniversary, Martin and his wife Gracia were kidnapped by a militant group of Muslims and held hostage. Martin and Gracia had served with the New Tribes Mission in the Philippines for 17 years – Martin being a jungle pilot delivering supplies and transporting sick and injured people to medical facilities. The Burnhams spent a year and eleven days in captivity before Martin was killed and Gracia wounded in a shootout between the kidnappers and the Philippine military. Less than one month before then, their captors told them, 'Someone has paid a ransom for you—15 million pesos'. 'At last!', Gracia wrote later, 'our hopes had finally been realized. We'd be going home! We both held our breath for the next line'. 'But', they were told, 'we are going to ask for 30 million pesos more' – which would have brought the ransom price to \$1 million.³⁷ In the event the ransom was never paid.

A million dollars was no small ransom price. But it pales into insignificance when compared to the ransom demanded – and paid – for the release of Hong Kong tycoon Walter Kwok. He was kidnapped on 30 September 1997 and was set free seven days later after a ransom sum of almost \$77 million was paid by his wife for his release.³⁸ One website I consulted claimed that this was 'the highest ransom ever paid in the world'.³⁹

But they are wrong! If you want to know the highest ransom price ever paid, you will need to ask the man with the nail-pierced hands! ... the lovely man who not only bore His cross to Golgotha, but who bore my sins on Golgotha – and in so doing paid the ransom price for my redemption.

And thirdly, what Christians are redeemed for.

Listen to the praise sung to the Lamb of God (our Lord Jesus) by the highest of the heavenly intelligences⁴⁰ ... "You are worthy ... for you were slain, and by your blood you purchased people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation". And in passing we note that by His blood the Saviour has redeemed people of every kind and background. For, as we saw earlier, He 'gave Himself a ransom for *all*'.⁴¹

But I want us to note in particular the words, 'you purchased people *for God*'.

The apostle Paul saw things the same way. Referring to the church which is comprised of all true believers, he spoke of 'the church of God which He has purchased with the blood of His own'⁴² – a reference of course to His own Son, our Lord Jesus. And it is for this reason – namely, that he (Paul) had been purchased both *by* and *for* God – that the apostle later spoke of God as the One 'whose I am and whom I serve'.⁴³

Twice in his first letter to the Corinthians⁴⁴ – but nowhere else – he (Paul) uses the expression 'you have been bought with a price' ... implying, I suggest, that he knew the Christians at Corinth would have recognised the expression. And they certainly had every reason to do so. For some little way north west of Corinth stood Mount

Parnassus, which was distinguished by temple shrines to two of the most popular of the Greek so-called 'gods' – Apollo and Serapis.

In New Testament days, a slave who wanted to purchase his own liberty would often choose to deposit his savings with the priests at one or other of these shrines. When he had saved sufficient for his own purchase price he would bring his master to the temple, where the priest would pay this over to the master ... but would do so in the name of the so-called 'god' who was worshipped there. And the slave would then go out free. But it is important for us to understand why the slave would choose to follow this procedure. The reason was very simple.

Making out that it was in fact the 'god' who had paid the price for the slave's freedom ensured that the slave could not be taken into bondage again. The fiction of conducting the transaction in the name of the 'god' meant that henceforth the freed slave became – in name – the property of the 'god', and that he was therefore forever free from bondage to any man. Clever!

Let me quote the inscription on the wall of one of Apollo's temples ... 'Apollo bought from Sosibius of Amphissa, for freedom (that is, on condition that she shall be set free), a Roman slave girl whose name is Nicea with a price of 3½ minae of silver. The price he has received. The purchase price Nicea committed to Apollo for freedom'.⁴⁵ I hope you didn't miss that all-important expression, 'bought ... with a price'. But, as you can see, Apollo's part was a mere fiction. His name was simply lent to the transaction to protect the girl from any future demands that she be taken back into slavery. In reality Apollo didn't even exist – let alone pay 'a price' for the slave's redemption.

In truth, of course, the former slave had purchased his or her own redemption ... he or she therefore owed nothing to the supposed 'god' whose property he or she had nominally become. But it is very different with Christ and the Christian. For, as we have seen, our Lord Jesus actually did pay a real and bitter price for our redemption. And we do therefore owe Him much ... we owe Him everything. The apostle points out that, as Christ's purchased possession, believers belong neither to themselves ('you have been bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body'), nor to others ('you have been bought with a price; do not become slaves of men' – do not be enslaved to human opinions and ideas).

Which leads me to the story behind what is, as far as I can tell, the first well-known hymn written by Frances Ridley Havergal.⁴⁶ In 1858, when just 21 years old, Miss Havergal spent one term studying in Dusseldorf in Germany. While there she saw Domenico Fetti's famous painting 'Ecce Homo' – under which were the words (in Latin), 'I suffered these things for you. What have you done for me?' – which words inspired Frances to write the familiar lines :

*I gave my life for thee,
My precious blood I shed,
That thou might'st ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead.
I gave my life for thee;
What hast thou given for me?*⁴⁷

But let me refer to another hymn ... written 120 years later ... written jointly by Melody and Keith Green.⁴⁸ Melody composed the first two verses, both of which speak of our Lord Jesus as 'Redeemer', but it was her husband Keith who added the last verse :

*When I stand in Glory,
I will see His face,
There I'll serve my King forever,
In that Holy Place.*

Some five years later,⁴⁹ along with several missionaries, Keith saw the Saviour's face 'in glory', for he died when the small Cessna plane in which he was travelling crashed just after take-off from a private airstrip in Texas.⁵⁰

Keith Greene and Jay Erickson had much in common – not least that they both died in their late twenties and that they both died when a light aircraft crashed. Indeed all three men I have mentioned this morning are linked by light aircraft. Remember that Martin Burnham was a jungle pilot in the Philippines. But, far more important, they were linked together by that of which I read at the outset – namely, by 'the redemption which is in Christ Jesus ... leaving each of us to answer the question, 'Have I embraced that costly redemption for myself ... by trusting in Him – the Lord Jesus – alone?'

Footnotes

¹ 'Everyone who practises sin is the bondservant (slave) of sin', John 8. 34. Cf. Rom. 6. 17.

² 'We have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin', Rom. 3. 9.

³ Rom. 7. 14.

⁴ Rom. 3. 24.

⁵ Rom. 3. 23.

⁶ 'Our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity (lawlessness) and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession', Tit. 2. 14. I may well be that Paul had his eye on the words of the Old Testament psalm, that 'with the Lord ... is plentiful (abundant) redemption; and He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities' – but not Israel only.

⁷ Eph. 1. 7.

⁸ Deut. 27. 26.

⁹ 'All who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not continue in all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them" ... Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us--for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree", Gal. 3. 10-13.

¹⁰ 'When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law', Gal. 4. 4-5. At God's appointed time, the Lord Jesus came into the world – 'born of woman, born under the Law' – that He might 'redeem those who were under the Law'.¹⁰ In His life He satisfied the requirements of the Law by His undeviating obedience to all its demands, and in His death He satisfied the claims of the Law in terms of the curse pronounced upon disobedience. This He did, of course, not on His own account, but on behalf of those who because of their disobedience were under the curse.

¹¹ 1 Pet. 1. 18-19.

¹² See ...

http://www.princeofwales.gov.uk/speechesandarticles/a_speech_by_hrh_the_prince_of_wales_at_the_inauguration_of_t_1731748276.html

¹³ There is a lot of truth in the words which Shakespeare put into the mouth of Macbeth when Macbeth was told that his guilt-ridden wife had killed herself. Dazed, Macbeth declared that, 'Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing'. Macbeth, Act 5, scene 5.

¹⁴ 'That through death He might ... set free all those who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage', Heb. 2. 13-14.

¹⁵ See ... <http://www.christianpost.com/news/plane-crash-in-africa-kills-young-missionary-couple-76119/> See too ... http://www.postzambia.com/post-read_article.php?articleId=27953

¹⁶ On 20 April 2012. <https://sites.google.com/site/missionflying/home>

¹⁷ Although it seems that C S Lewis never said it! <http://www.mereorthodoxy.com/you-dont-have-a-soul-cs-lewis-never-said-it/>

¹⁸ See ... <http://www.chitokoloki.com/?p=1083>

¹⁹ See ... <http://www.machaworks.org/chitokoloki.html>

²⁰ 'The city has no need of sun ... to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light', Rev. 21. 23.

²¹ 'It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption', 1 Cor. 15. 42.

²² 'We wait eagerly for ... the redemption of our bodies', Rom. 8. 23.

²³ 'You have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance to the redemption of the purchased possession to the praise of His glory', Eph. 1. 13-14.

²⁴ 'There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all', 1 Tim. 2. 5-6.

²⁵ 'Our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us ...', Tit. 2. 13-14.

²⁶ 'Our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age', Gal. 1. 4.

²⁷ 1 Tim. 2. 6.

²⁸ 'I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my eyes ... and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life', Isa. 43. 3-4. Secular historians (Herodotus and Strabo) tell us that, during the rule of that empire, Cambyses, the son and successor of Cyrus the Great, invaded and subdued Egypt, Ethiopia (including the Sudan) and Meroe – a province of Ethiopia. Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian, informs us that 'Saba ... was a royal city of Ethiopia, which Cambyses later named Meroe, after the name of his own sister'. It seems to me more than likely therefore that the 'Seba' mentioned by Isaiah was the Meroe which, along with Egypt and Ethiopia, was conquered by the Persians.

²⁹ 'Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all His people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up'", 2 Chron. 36. 22-23; Ezra 1. 1-3.

³⁰ Isa. 43. 4.

³¹ 'To Him who loves us and has loosed (freed) us from our sins by His blood ... to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever', Rev. 1. 5-6.

³² 'The Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many', Matt. 20. 28; Mark 10. 45.

³³ Isa. 43. 4.

³⁴ A. H. Strong, 'Systematic Theology', pages 767-768.

³⁵ 'None can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him (for the redemption of their soul is costly, and any ransom fails) that he should still live forever, and not see corruption', Psa. 49. 7-9.

³⁶ 'Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption', Heb. 9. 12.

³⁷ 'In the Presence of My Enemies', by Gracia Burnham, Tyndale House Publishers.

³⁸ See ... http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Kwok

³⁹ See ... <http://www.cbc.ca/fifth/kidnapped/quiz/>

⁴⁰ 'When He (the Lamb) had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb ... and they sang a new song, saying, "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you purchased people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation"', Rev. 5. 8-9.

⁴¹ 1 Tim. 2. 6.

⁴² 'Tend the church of God, which He has purchased with the blood of His own', Acts 20. 28.

⁴³ 'An angel of the God, whose I am and whom I serve, stood by me this night', Acts 27. 23.

⁴⁴ 1 Cor. 6. 20; 7. 23.

⁴⁵ Delphic inscription of 200/199 BC. See Adolf Deissmann, 'Light from the Ancient East', page 323.

⁴⁶ See ... http://www.hymnary.org/text/i_gave_my_life_for_thee

⁴⁷ See ... http://m.ccel.org/ccel/anonymous/luth_hymnal/tlh405.htm

⁴⁸ Written in 1977. See ... <http://songscoops.blogspot.co.uk/2012/05/there-is-redeemer-melody-green.html>

⁴⁹ In July 1982.

⁵⁰ See ... http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_Days_Ministries