

THE REDEEMING CHRIST

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."
-- Ephesians 1:7

All the doctrines, precepts, parables and miracles of the New Testament point to and center in the plan of redemption. Redemption has reference to our ruined, wretched, lost condition in consequence of the fall. It is a term used to signify entire deliverance from the consequences of sin. We are guilty sinners. We are naturally in the prison of Satan and held fast by him. Christ dies on the cross to redeem us from sin. Redemption effects deliverance.

I. Man is Lost and Demands a Redeemer.

"We were conceived in sin and born in iniquity." "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way."

1. The lost are without God.

The popular religions of the Roman world had many gods. These gods were deified men. They could be seen by the natural eye. On the other hand, the God whom Christianity preached was not visible. He dwells not in temples, nor is He worshipped with men's hands. Those who believed in many gods could scarcely conceive of a God who was everywhere. Therefore, those who worshipped Him were condemned as a people without a God. This accusation is taken up by Paul and thrown into the faces of those who had used it against Christians. He says: "You were dead in sin. You were without Christ. You were without God. You were without hope. You were aliens from Israel."

What a description! "Without God," yet the whole universe is full of God. The sun shines for all. It shines for the rose in the garden, the violet in the meadow, the grain in the field, and the pine in the forest. God is the God of all, but all do not accept Him as their God. There are people who go to church, and yet they are as much without God as the ancient Gentiles or the blind idolaters were.

An individual without God is like a ship on a storm-tossed sea without a compass. It drifts with the tides. In the darkness the pilot does not know which way to steer it. He cannot trust in providence for he has no providence to trust in. He has no anchor to cast. Such is the state of lost men. They have no God to trust in. A man without shelter, without clothes, without friends, without comforts, is in a terrible plight. But just think of a man without God! Yet people turn and flee from God as if He were an enemy instead of a friend. Where do your joys come from? Do they come from your family? It will be broken up. From business? It will be discontinued. God is the one source of strength and joy. Yet if you are lost, you are without Him. You are thus in moral darkness, spiritual blindness, lost in the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, the lust of things, and the intoxication of pleasure.

When people are without God, they are left to mourn with no source of comfort. Without God, you are left in darkness and despair.

2. The lost are without Christ.

They may live amidst riches, luxuries, pleasures; in a country rich in heritages, literature, business, commerce, and power, but without Christ they are lost. What a deplorable, appalling condition! Millions of Americans today are as much without Christ as the heathen are. They are helpless and hopeless without Him, yet He died on the cross to save them and they need not be without Him. He is able to save all who come to Him, but they must come to Him. He saved

the Gadarene, crazed with sin. He was naked, but Christ clothed Him with the garments of righteousness. He gave him a song to take the place of his merciless screams; a home of comfort instead of a home in the tombs. He saved Saul of Tarsus, converting him from a hounder of the church to a proclaimer of Christ; from a foe to a friend. He cleansed the sins of the drab of a woman at the well. He saved three thousand at Pentecost. You need not be without Christ. He gives bread for hunger, health for sickness, happiness for sorrow. Do you want to be without Him longer?

3. The lost are without Hope.

They are in a state of moral darkness, spiritual blindness and death. They are alienated from God. Their present state they chose in preference to one of light, peace, faith, and hope. Their affections are no higher than temporal joys. They are servants of Satan and heirs of perdition.

An inscription over the huge, hideous iron gates of the prison de la Roquette, Paris, which is set apart for criminals who are condemned to death, reads, "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here!" This inscription sends a chill of horror through those who read it. And why wouldn't it, for one without hope is worse off than the child who through lack of knowledge totters across the floor to it's mother's coffin, and seized the bright, glittering handles and rattles them in gleeful delight.

They who are without hope are like a farmer who sows, but never reaps; like a merchant who never sells a dollar's worth of goods; like a lawyer who never wins a case; like a doctor who never cures a patient. How pitiable those who have no hope! Yet it need not be so. "He that believeth on me shall never die." "Because I live, ye shall live also." "He hath begotten us again unto a lively hope." He kindles and sustains hope within the bosom.

II. Conditions to Redemption

1. There must be conviction of sin.

Sin is a destroyer. It puts out the light of joy in the heart. It causes nervous unrest, and grave uncertainty. It puts out the fires of desire for God and right; there must be conviction of sin before one desires to be saved. When conviction is felt there is hope. The three thousand were not saved at Pentecost until they were first pricked in their hearts.

2. Repentance is another condition to salvation.

At Pentecost, Peter said, "Repent." The importance of repentance is sounded in a note of certainty in the New Testament. It was the theme of John the Baptist. He came into the wilderness preaching repentance. Jesus preached it. He said, "Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand." "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Paul proclaimed the doctrine and necessity of repentance. The lost must come to a state of repentance -- the willingness to turn away from sin in order to be saved. Repentance is forsaking sin. Herod was sorry for the sin of having had John the Baptist beheaded and his head delivered to the daughter of Herodias on a charger. When Jesus appeared on the scene, Herod said, "It is John the Baptist come back to life again." Why did he say that? Because it was that at night he had tried to sleep and could not. He could see the bloody head of John the Baptist on a charger. He was sorry for his sin, but he did not repent of his sin.

3. Surrender to Christ is indispensable to salvation.

The sinner, lost, dead in trespasses and sin, is made alive by absolute unconditional surrender to Christ. Springtime in the soul takes place of winter, doubt gives place to faith, and hopelessness is supplanted by hope.

III. The marvelous provision of Christ.

"The forgiveness of sins according to His grace."

1. There is His boundless love.

We sing:

"Love lifted me!
Love lifted me!
When nothing else could help,
Love lifted me!"

It was His love for lost humanity that caused Him to weep over Jerusalem. For the lost He longer, preached, prayed, cried, and died. His solicitous love will lift the sinner from sin's depths. "Love never faileth."

An aged Christian lay dying. A friend called. Said the sick man, "I have just had three visitors, and with two of them I parted, but the third I shall keep with me forever." "Who were they?" asked the visitor. "The first was Faith, and I said 'Goodby, Faith! I thank God for your company ever since I trusted Christ, but now I am going where faith is lost in sight.' Then came Hope. 'Farewell, Hope!' I cried. 'You have helped me in many an hour of battle and distress, but now I shall not need you, for I am going where hope passes into fruition.' Last of all came Love. I said, 'You have linked me with God and with my fellowmen; you have comforted and gladdened all my pilgrimage. But I cannot leave you behind; you must come with me through the gates into the city of God, for love is perfected in heaven!'"

"Love is the theme, Love is supreme;
Sweeter it grows, glory bestows;
Bright as the sun, ever it glows !
Love is the theme, eternal theme."

2. There is His matchless grace.

"By grace are ye saved through faith." The grace of Christ smiled through the unmeasurable abyss of suffering. Through it the crucifiers of Christ found the way to God. When the sin of madness put out the light of life, infinite grace led through the depths of gloom until it illumined the pathway to God. On the cross grace crowned Christ as King. Grace made atonement for our sins. Grace wafted the message of salvation to all the races of mankind. It is mightier than sin. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Grace is summed up in these words, "Jesus paid it all."

"When sin-stricken, burdened and weary,
From bondage I longed to be free,
There came to my heart a sweet message,
'My grace is sufficient for thee.'"

The grace of God is inexhaustible. I have stood on the banks of the Mississippi, and there reflected that during the long centuries it had been flowing. Fields had been watered, thirst had been slaked, electricity had been generated, mill wheels had been pulled, ships had floated upon its bosom, but it flows on without waste or want.

The sun has shone in all its gorgeous, saffron-hued colors through all the ages. It has melted the snows of thousands of winters, and renewed the verdure of as many springs, and painted the golden-tinted flowers of as many summers, and ripened the yellow grain of as many autumns, yet it shines on as luminous as ever. These but faintly represent the flow of grace. The figure must stop there for one day the flow of the stream will be licked up by the flames, and that glorious sun will be quenched in darkness or veiled in the smoke of a burning world. But God's grace will flow and shine on throughout eternity to bless the redeemed.

3. There is His abounding pardon.

"Pardon there was great and grace was free." "Mercy there was great and grace was free; Pardon there was multiplied to me; there my burdened soul found liberty, At Calvary!" D. L. Moody used to tell about a man who was tried for a crime. The witnesses testified to his guilt, but he stood quiet and unmoved. The judge and jury were much surprised at his composure. The jury returned a verdict of guilty, and the judge was ready to pass sentence of death upon him. The judge told the prisoner how surprised he was that he could be unmoved in the prospect of death. When the judge had finished, the prisoner put his hand into his bosom, pulled out a document and gave it to the judge. It was a free and full pardon from the king. He was calm because he held his pardon from the king.

"Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow."