

CHRIST'S REDEMPTION

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."
Romans 3:24.

This verse deals with a fundamental doctrine. Without the redemption that is in Christ Jesus religion offers no permanent basis for peace or joy, and no adequate hope for whole-hearted service. I am anxious for us to see that the redemption in Christ does four very vital things for us. It gives us:

I. A New Standing Before God.

Man's normal standing before God is expressed in these words: "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3:18.

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John 3:36.

"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Galatians 3:10.

From these scriptures we can readily see that normally a man stands before God under the burden of condemnation, under the weight of His curse, and under the blight of His wrath. But the redemption that is in Christ Jesus gives him a new standing before God. We are delivered by the redemption from the weight of God's condemnation. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:1. It removes the blight of God's wrath. I Thessalonians 5:9. And it removes the weight of God's curse. Galatians 3:13.

Some of you have read Victor Hugo's work, Les Miserables. In it he tells the story of the French peasant who was thrown from his cart and pinned beneath its wheels. A crowd of men gathered about and were vainly seeking to deliver the unfortunate teamster. Jean Valjean, once a convict in the galley ships, then an honored mayor of a city, came upon the scene, and seeing the man who, without immediate relief, was soon to be crushed to death, cast himself upon his breast and crawled under the loaded cart, and with almost super-human strength lifted it from the unfortunate peasant and held it there until he struggled out free.

We, like that peasant, were being crushed to death beneath the weight of sin. Jesus Christ cast Himself in great humiliation upon the cross and bore for us the weight of sin and condemnation that crushed us down. He placed Himself in our position of jeopardy, that we might stand in His place of liberty, and that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53: 4-6.

The basis of redemption is the worthiness of Christ, as expressed in His death. He was worthy as a man; without fault, perfect in every feature of His character. He was worthy as a preacher: "Never man spake like this man." He was worthy as a miracle-worker. The storm was subject to Him; disease fled at His touch and word; the very demons were obedient to Him; He willed and it was done. As we look at Christ He stands out above all others as God's ideal of perfect character. We

have God's pronouncement as to what perfection means in His statement, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."

"Worthy art Thou . . . for Thou wast slain." The worthiness that brings redemption is through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. The basis of redemption is the worthiness of Christ as revealed in the cross. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

"Being justified gratuitously," that is as a gift, justified without merit. We are justified not upon merit of our own, in character or good works, but "justified gratuitously by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

As to the price of our redemption, God tells us that "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." I Peter 1:18-19. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Ephesians 1:7. We are redeemed by nothing short of the blood of Christ.

II. A New Condition In The Sight Of God.

Man's normal condition is one of uncleanness. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores." Isaiah 1:5-6. "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts." Romans 1:24. What ocean waters cannot do for even what we call our slightest sin, the blood of Jesus Christ is able to do for that which we consider the deepest sin. "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Zechariah 13:1. Isaiah said, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isaiah 1:18. John wrote, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." I John 1:7.

It was this cleansing power of the blood to which Paul referred in the words, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." II Corinthians 5:21. His power to cleanse led God to say, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Psalms 103:12. How far is it from here to the east? If you should travel for a million years, you still would not reach the east. How far is it from here to the west? If you should travel with a lightning sweep a million years, you still would not reach the east. How far is it from here to the west? If you should travel with a lightning sweep a million years, you would not have reached the west. What God means to say by this verse is this, that the believer in Jesus Christ has his sins removed from him by this limitless space of two infinities.

III. A New Character From God.

Man's normal character as it relates to God is that of open rebellion against Him. "Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High." Psalm 107:11. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Romans 8:7. The carnal mind does not mean some awfully bad mind that only wicked people have, but the mind with which all of us were born.

Salvation would be sadly incomplete if God simply took off our shoulders sin's burden, and washed from our hearts sin's stain, and yet left in our hearts the

seeds of a nature sadly in love with sin. What would heaven be to us, if we were doomed to spend eternity there, out of harmony with God, loving the things that are evil? But, thank God, because of our faith in Christ, a new character has been imparted to us from God. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." II Corinthians 5:17.

So the redemption that is in Christ Jesus gives a new nature, a new character from God. Zacchaeus was a tax tyrant, whose ear was deaf to the cry of the widow or the moan of the orphan. One day he met Jesus, and he believed on Him, and at once there was a change in his attitude toward the poor sufferers, for he said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." Luke 19:8. He believed in Christ and had received a new nature from Him, and he was but fulfilling the scriptures that said: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Galatians 2:20. It could be said of him: "He is a new creation."

IV. A New Fellowship With God.

Man's normal relation to God is not one of fellowship. "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." Psalm 10:4. As Paul wrote the Ephesian Christians, "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Ephesians 2:12. So the scriptures teach that man's normal condition is that of an alien and a stranger and one who, when he looks upon his sins, instead of rushing to God for forgiveness, flees from Him.

We are not in fellowship with God by nature, but are aliens and strangers instead. There is a fascinating fiction afloat which they call the universal fatherhood of God. It is the teaching that all men are the children of God. God's Word stands squarely against any such fictitious assumption, however much it may appeal to a sentimental mind. Paul says: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." Galatians 3:26. Anybody who rejects Jesus Christ has no right to claim God as the father, nor to call Him such. God is the Father of the believer only. No man is the child of God unless he has become such through believing in the Son of God.

If we look to the unknown future, the fellowship, the comradeship, and the presence of God, vouched to us by the presence of Christ, helps and comforts and buoys up our hearts. This fellowship also comforts us in the hour of death. The Psalmist said, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Psalms 23:4. If Christ is my substitute in everything else, He will also be my substitute in bearing for me the darkness of the grave that I might have through Him the everlasting light of His presence.

But, more still, the fellowship of God based upon the redemption that is in Christ helps us when we come to consider that unknown eternity. To every unbeliever eternity is a leap in the dark. To every believer eternity is but faith's taking hold of the hand of the Father and stepping out into undimmed light. Our Saviour said: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:2-3. Heaven is where Christ is. We may tremble at the verge of eternity, but let us make the leap, and we shall find that underneath are the everlasting arms.

"All hail the power of Jesus' name
Let angels prostrate fall,
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all!

Let every kindred, every tribe
On this terrestrial ball,
To Him all majesty ascribe
And crown Him Lord of all."