

Redemption

Unmitigated, enigmatic, pulchritudinous, diffident: how many can explain the meaning of these words and use them in a sentence?

We tend to read them in a book and move on, because we can't be bothered stopping and looking them up in a dictionary.

We can do the same when reading the Bible.

We read words like justification, sanctification, atonement, regeneration, propitiation, words that are liberally scattered throughout the New Testament, and have no idea of their meaning.

But if we don't understand a key word in a sentence, we won't understand the sentence, and if we don't understand the sentence, we won't really understand the passage we're reading.

In this message, we're looking at the meaning of redemption.

1. Back to the beginning

First, we need to go back to the beginning of the humanity.

The first man and woman were presented with a choice; a choice that would not only affect them but also all of their descendants.

That choice was whether to obey God or Satan.

Guess what choice they made?

Romans 6:16

Do you not know that to whom you present; yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness?

John 8:34

... Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.

These two statements are very revealing, because they explain to us the true nature of what happened back in the Garden of Eden.

When Adam and Eve chose to obey Satan, they became part of his kingdom.

They became slaves, and a powerful force came into world.

The Bible calls it sin.

There's a difference in the Bible between sin (singular) and sins (plural).

Sins are the actions we do that aren't pleasing to God.

Sin, or the power of sin, is the driving force behind it.

Sin is the power that motivates, whereas sins are the results of that force being activated or in control.

If the power of sin is in control, the natural result is sinful actions.

Gravity is a force and when we drop a ball, the action of dropping is the result of that force acting upon the ball.

Even when the ball is stationary, the ball still has a tendency to go down.

The force of gravity is always acting on the ball.

For instance, try putting a ball on a flat board and then tilting the board.

The only way to stop the ball from having the tendency to head towards the centre of the earth is to remove the force of gravity.

Otherwise, there's always that pull acting upon the ball.

In the same way, sin is what causes humanity to have a tendency towards sinning.

It's not just a learned behaviour.

You see this with children.

What happens if you tell a small child not to touch something?

What's the one thing they want to do?

And what happens if you find muddy marks on the carpet, or toys left lying around?

You ask, "Who did this?"

And it's amazing how the mud got there all by itself.

Nobody is ever responsible.

You don't have to teach a child how to lie, how to be mean, or how to be disobedient.

Do you know why?

They inherited that from you!

We call it the sin nature.

2. Laws are powerless against sin

Gravity is the force that pulls an object towards the centre of the earth at an accelerative rate of 9.8 metres per second squared.

Just imagine that, in their great wisdom, our government passes an Anti-Gravity Act:

1. Thou shalt not fall.
2. When thou jumpest from a height, thou shalt remain stationary, suspended in mid-air.
3. Thou shalt need no artificial aids such as hanggliders, parachutes etc.
4. Thou shalt not accelerate at a rate of 9.8 metres/sec sq.
5. Thou shalt not hit the bottom.
6. If thou dost, thou shalt do thyself no harm.

Think that those laws will make any difference as to whether or not gravity will still do its job?

You can jump off that building and hope to fly, but there's a powerful law at work – gravity.

You can try never to do wrong and always do what is right, but there's an even more powerful law at work – the law of sin and death.

And laws don't stop people from doing the wrong thing.

There are laws against stealing, speeding, cheating, drugs, and still people do all those things.

Think about that child that's been told, "Don't touch that cake."

What's the one thing he wants to do?

He wants it, and now you've told him he can't have it, he wants it even more.

I've seen a child inch closer and closer to something they aren't allowed to touch, looking their parent in the eye and then they touch it.

And the one question on their mind is, "If I disregard the Law of Gravity and jump from this ten storey building, will there be consequences? Can I get away with it?"

Here's what the apostle Paul says:

Romans 7:14-15

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. (15) For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practise; but what I hate, that I do.

In frustration, Paul said in Romans 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

In other words, what is the solution to our slavery to sin?

3. Redemption

If a slave marries and has a child, the master doesn't say, "Hey, I'll let the child go free."

No, a child born to slaves is also a slave.

So when Adam chose to disobey God, and obey Satan, and so became a slave to sin, all his descendants after him became slaves.

In fact, the great principle of procreation, according to Genesis 1, is that each species reproduced "according to its kind."

Elephants produce elephants, sharks produce sharks, humans produce more humans.

And sinners produce more sinners.

This is where redemption comes in.

The Oxford Dictionary defines redemption as: Gain or regain possession of something in exchange for payment.

Literally it means to "buy back."

Here are some examples:

You have a big bill, but you have no money to pay it, so you pawn your grandma's gold ring.

When you return to the pawn shop to repurchase the ring, that act of buying it back is called redemption.

Back in the days of the Roman Empire, a slave could save up and buy his freedom. He'd go into the temple treasury, pay the money into the treasury, and he'd be free. Technically, according to their beliefs, he was purchased by some god or other and might still have some religious obligations, but in reality he was free.

That was redemption.

For the Jews, it was a little different: Let's say I'm the owner of an ox my ox gores someone and he dies. The first time it happens, I'm okay. I'm not accountable for the actions of the ox. But if I've already been warned about my ox's tendency to have a go at people, not only would the ox be stoned, but so would I. There was only one way out. I might be allowed to pay for my life and thereby avoid the death penalty. (Ex 21:28-30)

That was redemption.

4. There were usually three ingredients to redemption

First, there was the intervention of a third party.

Because mostly in the Bible when redemption was an option, people were unable to redeem themselves.

For instance, God intervened and redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt.

In the same way, Jesus has intervened for us to redeem us because we were unable to redeem ourselves.

Second, there was the payment of a redemption price.

This is also called a ransom.

This had to match the value of what was being redeemed.

In our case, it's the human soul that needed redeeming, and not just one soul, but redemption for the whole world.

How much is that worth?

Mark 8:36

For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?

The whole world is not enough to pay for one human soul, let alone all the souls that ever lived.

So we have to be redeemed with something that's of infinite value.

1 Peter 1:18-19

knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, (19) but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

The third ingredient is the actual release from slavery.

We have been delivered by the blood of Christ from slavery to sin, its guilt, its power and its penalty.