

EPHESIANS

1:7-12

Introduction

Slavery was extensive in the Roman Empire. As much as one-half the population were slaves. Over sixty million individuals were considered *property* rather than *persons*.

“Redemption” is a word borrowed from the Roman slave market. It was the process by which someone could be released from slavery by the paying of the required ransom.

When Paul said, “in Him we have redemption through His blood,” his listeners and readers would have understood two things:

1. All men everywhere, whether citizens or slaves, are considered slaves in a *spiritual* sense.
2. All men everywhere, whether citizens or slaves, can be redeemed from *spiritual slavery*.

How is it that all men everywhere are considered spiritual slaves? Since Adam and Eve sinned, every descendant of theirs is born into the slavery of sin. Jesus once pointed out this biblical truth when He said, “**everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin**” (John 8:34). You cannot deny the fact that you commit sin. If you do, *you’re sinning by denying that you sin!*

You are born a slave to sin. You can only be released from sin if someone redeems you by paying the required ransom. The Bible indicates that the required ransom is death:

1. Jesus said that He came to “**give His life a ransom for many**” (Matthew 20:28).
2. Paul wrote that Jesus “gave Himself a ransom for all” (First Timothy 2:6).

All men everywhere and for all time can be released from their slavery to sin because Jesus paid the required ransom – His “blood,” signifying His death on the Cross.

You are released from slavery to sin, but that’s not all. You can enjoy your spiritual freedom in a new relationship with Jesus. To talk about how your redemption releases you to enjoy Jesus, we want to organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Jesus Redeems You To Enjoy Him In His Household, and #2 Jesus Redeems You To Enjoy You As His Heritage.

#1 Jesus Redeems You To
Enjoy Him In His Household
(v7-10)

I want you to notice the word “dispensation” in verse ten. The Greek word is *oikonomia*. It sounds like our word *economy*, and that is essentially its meaning. Our word *economy* means a lot of different things to us. Think of it like this: In high school, there was a class called *Home Economics*; we called it Home Ec for short. Home Ec was a class to teach young ladies how to properly manage a household.

That’s exactly the idea here in Ephesians. In Ephesians 2:19 believers are called “members of the household (*oikeios*) of God.” We’ll see this word *oikonomia* in a larger sense when we get to verse ten; but essentially it means managing a household. God is managing a household on the earth. When Jesus redeems you and releases you from slavery to sin, you take your place as a member of God’s household.

Ephesians 1:7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace

There are three Greek words in the New Testament that are translated by our one English word *redemption*:

1. *Agorazo* means *to buy in the marketplace*. A wife would go daily to the marketplace and *agorazo* the daily household provisions. Or the master of the house would go to the slave market and *agorazo* a slave for the household.

2. *Exagorazo* carried the idea of buying something or someone *for yourself*. In other words, the property or person was not to be sold ever again.
3. The final word is the word here in Ephesians, *lutroo*. It means *to release by paying the ransom*.

You put these altogether to get the true sense of biblical redemption: Jesus paid the required ransom to purchase sinners for Himself, never to be sold into slavery again, and released them to enjoy life in His household.

The price Jesus paid was “His blood.” Blood is a synonym for death. I’ve heard a lot of way-out theories about the physical characteristics of the blood of Jesus. Blood signifies death. Jesus died on the Cross, paying the required ransom to release you from slavery to sin.

Do you still sin? Yes, you do; we all do. But in a very real sense, you are released from sin. Paul describes your release as “the forgiveness of sins.” Forgiveness is a word which means *to send away* or *to release* as if your sins were never committed. What it means is that you are forever released from the *penalty* for sin. Jesus took upon Himself the penalty for the sins of the human race so that all men everywhere for all time might avoid the penalty for sin. The penalty for sin is death; and not just physical death. Physical death is only a symptom of the real problem: Spiritual death and separation from God for endless eternity.

Our human idea of forgiveness is that the penalty was deserved, but not imposed. God’s divine forgiveness required that the penalty for sin be both imposed and executed. Because God is Holy and Righteous, He could not simply dismiss sin. It must be punished. It was punished, once-for-all, on Calvary. All those who trust Jesus Christ as Savior and Substitute are freed from its penalty.

You are also released from the *power* of sin... One day you will be released from the *presence* of sin...

All of this is “according to the riches of His grace.” We sometimes get the idea that grace is a heavenly currency that God can bestow at will since He has so much of it. Grace is not so much a *quantity* as it is a

quality. It is not just something God has; it is something that God is. Think of it this way: If you love someone, your love is much more than the quantity of the gifts you give them. Gifts only speak of the quality of the love in your heart. You love the person because you are their lover. Just so with God's grace. He give you grace because He is your *gracer*.

Remember: We are in a section of Ephesians that emphasizes only what God does for you, and not anything you have done or must do for God. You were a slave who could do nothing for yourself. Jesus paid the ransom, securing your release and the forgiveness of your sins. All of this is because of God's grace – His unmerited and undeserved favor.

Ephesians 1:8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,
Ephesians 1:9 having made known to us the mystery of His will...

Keep the picture of the redeemed slave in your mind. The slave was redeemed, but then released. What was he or she to do with their freedom? Because they had been so graced by the person who freed them, they voluntarily went home with their redeemer to join his household. Why not enjoy the further privileges of his gracious household?

Some of those further privileges you can enjoy in God's spiritual household are *revelation* and *restoration*.

You see what is meant by revelation in the words "wisdom," "prudence," and the mystery of His will" which is "made known to us."

"Wisdom," when used of God, means *omniscience* – knowing all things. When applied to you, it means that God, Who knows all things, enables you to understand ultimate truths.

"Prudence" is the practical application of wisdom.

A "mystery" in the Bible is something which was concealed in the Old Testament but is revealed to you in the New Testament. There are eleven such mysteries revealed in the New Testament. A good example would be the Rapture of living believers – called a mystery

in First Corinthians Fifteen. Although you can see types of it in the Old Testament, it is not revealed until Paul says,

1 Corinthians 15:51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed –

Wisdom... Prudence... Mystery... Put these thoughts together and you get the idea. One of the privileges you enjoy in God's household is the understanding of ultimate truths and mysteries which can be applied in your everyday living. To put it even more simply: You are released from sin to follow God in ways that give your life ultimate meaning, purpose, and direction.

How sad that we so easily return to the slavery of sin. Do we not recognize sin as slavery? Society has gone to great lengths to redefine sin as freedom, and biblical Christianity as the slavery. For example: Homosexuality, lesbianism, and promiscuity are seen as sexual freedoms. Biblical sexuality – one man and one woman in a monogamous relationship for life - is portrayed as a sexual slavery. Yet everyday we live with the awful consequences of the “freedom” we promote. I suggest mankind is in slavery to sin, and that **redefinition** it is no substitute for **redemption**.

Paul discusses the privilege of restoration when he says,

Ephesians 1:9 ... according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,
Ephesians 1:10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth - in Him.

Here is our word “dispensation” again, but in a larger context. It still means economy, God's management of His household. The phrase “the fullness of the times” means *the succession of seasons*. It teaches that there are different seasons throughout human history. God manages His household in each succeeding season, but His management during each particular season is different. For example: During the season of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, God visited them every afternoon. As far as I can tell, He's not doing that anymore! Or during the season of the Old Testament Law, millions of animals were sacrificed at the altar. As far as I can tell, He's not requiring that anymore!

It should be clear that God has managed things differently over time. There have been different seasons, different economies, different dispensations. There are more dispensations ahead of us. We live in the Church Age; it will end with the Rapture of the Church to heaven. Then God will deal with mankind during the seven-year Great Tribulation. The Tribulation will end with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to earth. Then God will deal with mankind during a one-thousand year kingdom on the earth. The kingdom will end with the Great White Throne Judgment; there will be the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. All dispensations will finally have been completed as we enjoy God for all eternity.

Throughout all of these dispensations, the way of salvation has never changed. It was always, and will always be, by grace through faith in the work of Jesus on the Cross. Before Jesus died on the Cross, believers looked forward to it and were saved; after Jesus died on the Cross, believers look back on it and are saved.

It is “according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself” that God has revealed His plan to the human race. God’s plan for history is moving inevitably towards the “gather[ing] together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.”

“Gather” is the word *restore*. It means *to restore to an original condition*. In the context of the human race, it means to restore the universe to its original condition before the entrance of sin. History is the unfolding drama of God’s redemption of the human race as He works through various dispensations in order to restore His fallen creation. It will find its ultimate fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ to rule over the earth for a thousand years, and then beyond the thousand years on into eternity future.

You are redeemed, released from sin, to enjoy Jesus in His household. You can enjoy His revelation now as you live life anticipating the Rapture. You can enjoy His restoration now as well. The God Who will restore all things ultimately can restore any thing you give to Him while you wait.

#2 Jesus Redeems You To
Enjoy You As His Heritage
(v11-12)

As we look at these two verses, I want to remind you again that we are still talking about what God has done for you, and *not* about what you do for God. It's important to remember it here because you read,

Ephesians 1:11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

The word "inheritance" immediately suggests thoughts of God's rewards for your faithful service here on earth. That might be what Paul has in mind, but I don't think it is. The construction of the sentence could refer to your inheritance; **but it could also refer to you being Jesus Christ's inheritance!** If so, it means that Jesus redeems you **to enjoy you** – both now and forever – as His special reward and inheritance.

Do you think of Jesus enjoying you as a special treasure? He does.

We encounter the word "predestinated" once again. I remind you once again that it has nothing to do with whether you are selected by God to be saved or damned. **No one is ever predestined either to be saved or damned.** Predestination only describes the destiny of those who are saved. It describes what God does for saved people.

Here you learn that, once you are saved, you are predestined to be Jesus Christ's inheritance. You are and will always be His special, prized possession throughout eternity. He will beam with joy as He presents you faultless before His Father's throne in heaven.

All of this occurs "according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will." "Works" is the word for *energy or power*. "Counsel" is *a deliberate purpose*.

Simply put, this means that all of this was and is God's perfect plan for the universe and He will accomplish it in His time by His own power.

Are you having a hard time, especially as you look around, seeing how Christians can be a prized inheritance? Verse twelve gives you a perspective:

Ephesians 1:12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

Commentators are disagreed about exactly who the “we” are “who first trusted Christ.” “First trusted” is a compound word meaning *hope in advance* or *hope before others*. Some some say that this verse is a reference to the very first Christians who, like Paul, were all Jews. They were the “we” who first had hope in the Messiah, who hoped before others, and whose hope was now realized.

The word could be less limited and refer to Paul and any of his converts who had first hoped in Jesus before preaching to others.

Regardless exactly *who* is meant, *what* is meant is this: God’s plan to redeem mankind from slavery to sin by Himself paying the ransom should be “to the praise of His glory.” God alone can and should be praised and receive all the glory because mankind had nothing to do with it! It is all a work of grace. For endless ages every man and woman who inhabits eternity will be a special inheritance of the Lord Jesus Christ by whom God alone will receive praise and glory.

Conclusion

Picture the slave market in Ephesus. You are a slave. Someone comes along and pays the required ransom to redeem you. You are released from your slavery. You are not purchased to be his slave; you are given your freedom.

Given your freedom, you follow your redeemer to his household. There he graces you even more with privileges as a member of his household.

You’ve been set free in just this same manner. Follow your Redeemer; let Him grace you with all the privileges of membership in His household.

