

The Atoning Work of the Son

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- [0 : 00] Let's turn back to God's Word to Ephesians chapter 1, page 976, Ephesians chapter 1. And this chapter is so rich and nourishing for us that we can meditate on it for a long time and come back to it. As I was saying last night, verses 3 to 14 are focused for the weekend. In Greek is one gigantic sentence. It's broken up for us in the ESV into five sentences. I think in the NIV it's eight. But in Greek it's one big sentence. It's one huge outpouring of praise from the Apostle Paul to the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And this one long section of praise, this doxology has as its theme, God is a God of salvation.
- [1 : 13] And in this section of praise, Paul stresses that when God saves us, all three persons of the Godhead are at work. When God saves you, that is a work of God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. And last night we looked, as we've said, at the work of God the Father. And so this morning we're looking at the work of Jesus, at the work of God the Son in saving us, his role in salvation. And the key word for us this morning, if there's one word for us in this communion service, is the word redemption. That's the word I want to unpack with you, redemption. Being redeemed by God. What does that word mean? And in fact, that is our first point this morning. If you are a note taker, you can write point one.
- [2 : 20] What is redemption? What is redemption? That's the first point. What does this word mean? It is amazing that God and his wisdom has given all these crosswords. Not a crossword like we do in the back of a paper, but words to do with the cross of Jesus Christ, which explain to us what it means to be a Christian and what Jesus is when he died on the cross. All these words like reconciliation and propitiation and redemption. And it's good for us to come back again and again to these important words. And the word of today is redemption. What is redemption? Redemption is to set someone or something free by the payment of a ransom. Redemption is to set someone or something free by the payment of a ransom. For example, if a country invades another country and they take over that country and then they take slaves, they take people back to their own country as slaves.
- [3 : 33] The victors carry back slaves to their own land. If in ancient times it was discovered that some of those slaves you have taken back to your own land were very important or of noble blood back in the country you've just conquered, then you might want to earn lots of gold by saying to the country you've just defeated, well, if you want to buy back these noble men or noble women for hundreds of pieces of gold, then you must pay this ransom.

And the conquered country could indeed at times redeem the slaves, buy them back if they paid this enormous ransom price.

Or to look at God's own word and the Old Testament background to the word redemption. Let me just read from Leviticus 25, 47.

And that gives the Old Testament background of the word redemption. If a stranger or sojourner with you becomes rich and your brother beside him becomes poor and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner with you or to a member of the stranger's clan, then after he is sold, he may be redeemed.

After he is sold, he may be redeemed. One of his brothers may redeem him or his uncle or his cousin may redeem him or a close relative from his clan may redeem him.

[5 : 07] So this is someone who's got no money to pay his debts. All he has is himself. He sells himself into slavery. God says that he may be bought back and freed from slavery if a ransom price is paid.

And there are all kinds of ways to calculate that in a fair way laid down in Leviticus 25. In Scottish culture, it's not a word we tend to use that much.

Redemption. I guess some of us, hopefully not too many of you, could think of the pawn shop. If we fall on hard times and we can't pay the lecky bill or the gas bill and we've no food and we're hungry and we've got no money and we're in serious trouble and so someone, so perhaps a mother, just to feed her children, will take her engagement ring and go into the pawn shop and get £150 for it just so she's got enough food.

And then, in the future, because she loves that ring, it belonged to her mother. If in the future she is able to buy back that ring and set it free again, then she will do that.

Or you could think of the story of the wee boy who spent weeks and weeks building a toy boat and he poured all his energy and time and love into making this boat but as he was sailing the boat, on the river, he loses the boat.

[6 : 50] And the boat is gone and he's so upset. But then, in his own town, the boy sees the boat in a second-hand shop for £10. And even though it really belonged to him, he knows that it's now in the shop and to free that boat, he needs to go and buy it back.

He needs to go into the shop, pay the £10 and, as it were, set that boat free and buy back the boat which belonged to him. And so, in all of these examples, redemption is something that we need to grasp.

That, at first, liberty has been lost. Our liberty has been lost. We are enslaved. We're slaves. And redemption is about setting that thing or that person free through paying a ransom.

And that is point one. What is redemption? Redemption is to set someone or something free by the payment of a ransom. And God takes this word, redemption, and it's a crossword and it's a wonderful picture for us to explain what it means to be a Christian.

What it means to be a Christian. It's a marvellous picture because until we become Christians, all human beings are slaves to sin.

[8 : 16] Before we put our trust in Jesus, we are slaves to sin. And we desperately need someone to buy us back, to set us free, to pay the ransom price.

And the good news of the Bible is that we can be set free from bondage because that is exactly why Jesus left heaven and came to earth.

He came from heaven to earth to redeem us. He left the glory of heaven and came to earth and suffered and died to pay the ransom price for our sin to set us free.

Had he not done that, we would still be slaves to sin. Mark 10, 45. Perhaps the most famous verse in the Gospels about Jesus and redemption.

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

[9 : 20] Jesus' life was the ransom. The price that needed to be paid to set us free was the very life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 20, 28.

Paul says, Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God which he bought with his own blood.

Jesus has bought us with his own blood. And so as we celebrate the Lord's Supper together, for those of us who are in Christ, those of us who love Jesus, we take the wine to our lips and we eat the bread and we remember that Jesus, he paid the ransom price for us in his own body.

So that's the first thing. What is redemption? Secondly, why is redemption an unpopular truth for some people? Why is redemption unpopular for some people?

You would think surely this is great, this is good news and it is good news. But for some people it is an unpopular truth. And some people disagree with God's diagnosis of our problem.

[10 : 42] And as is often said, the heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart. Some people, as you know, would be outraged at the very idea of being slaves to sin.

And maybe you're here this morning and you're not a Christian. And maybe you don't think you're a slave to sin. But the Bible says, if you're not a Christian, actually you're a slave to sin.

Let's turn to John 8. We can keep our finger in Ephesians 1. But let's turn to John 8 and we can see the Jews who were offended by this truth.

That all of us until we become Christians are slaves to sin. We see it in John 8 verse 31. So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples.

And you will know the truth. And the truth will set you free. They answered him, We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say you will become free?

[12 : 06] Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.

That's what Jesus says. That until we know him, Until he gives us new hearts, We are slaves to sin.

And that was extremely outrageous to the religious leaders of Jesus. They did not like that one bit.

But that is true. Jesus, if he says that he's a ransom, And he said that, didn't he? In Mark 10, I've come to give my life as a ransom.

But that presupposes, That assumes that we are slaves. Until we become Christians. Because if everyone in the world was free, Then why would Jesus have to come and die?

[13 : 04] He wouldn't. He only needed to come and die for us. Because we were slaves to sin. We see this in Ephesians 4, 17.

As later on in this letter, Paul speaks about how we used to be. Now this I say and testify in the Lord, That you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, In the futility of their minds.

They are darkened in their understanding, Alienated from the life of God, Because of the ignorance that is in them, Due to the hardness of their hearts, They have become callous, And have given themselves up to sensuality, Greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

That's what we were like before we were Christians. Greedy to practice every kind of impurity. Jerram Bars, in a little book he wrote, I can't remember the title of it, I think it's maybe just called Rescue, Or something like that.

He says, In our natural state of mind, We are rebels against God. We see evidence of God's existence, And love, But we suppress that, Or ignore it.

[14 : 25] We are told about the love of Christ, And we turn away. We know that we have been made to worship, And serve our Creator, But we persist, In looking for something else, To worship.

And that's a great way of describing it. That people in the world, That people in the world, Who aren't Christians, They know deep down there's a God. That's the teaching of Romans 1.

But they persist in looking for something else, And I'm sure those things in Livingston, Are the same things that people seek to worship, In Fife, Or wherever you might live.

That whether you're poor, Or rich, Or somewhere in between, There's this love of money. Slaves to the love of money.

And again, That can be something, That poor people experience, As well as rich people, Or those in between. People without Christ, Are slaves to sin. Or we could be slaves, To our holidays.

[15 : 33] It's almost like, Life is barely bearable. But we've got, Those couple of weeks of holiday, To look forward to. And there's a sense of course, We all look forward to our holidays.

But, If that's your God, If that's the absolute thing, That you live for, Then, You're a slave to that thing. We know there's all kinds, Of different addictions, Don't we?

You might be a shopaholic, Or a workaholic, Or an alcoholic, Or a drug addict. All these different things, That we can be slaves to.

And the irony is, That people, Who push God out of their lives, Those who aren't Christians, They might think they're free, But they're not free. They're actually slaves.

They think they're free, And say, I don't need God. I don't need a God, Telling me what to do. I can do anything I want. I'm free. But actually, It's a form of slavery.

[16 : 33] Because, They're free to live selfish lives, To care little for others around them, And even less for God. That's not freedom, But it's slavery.

And so the challenge for us this morning, If you're not a Christian, If you're not a Christian, To hear from God's word, That you can only be free, If Jesus sets you free, If he redeems you.

And, Ask yourself honestly this morning, What are you living for? What is your God? What makes you tick? What are you living for? And if it's something other than Jesus, Then it will not satisfy.

It will be like drinking salty water. You drink and you drink, But it never quenches your thirst. It's a form of slavery. And if that's you, You need to come to Jesus, And say sorry to him, And apologize to him, And ask him, To forgive you, Of your sin, And ask Jesus to set you free.

And he will. That's the marvelous truth of the gospel. That if you ask him to set you free, He will do just that. Redemption. It's not always a popular truth.

[17 : 56] Because it assumes, That without Jesus, You're a slave to sin. We see it in the Old Testament. Over and over again, Deuteronomy 9.26, I prayed to the Lord and said, Sovereign Lord, Do not destroy your people, Your own inheritance, That you redeemed, By your great power, And brought out of Egypt, With a mighty hand.

Or Psalm 74, verse 2, Remember the nation you purchased, Long ago, The people of your inheritance, Whom you redeemed, Mount Zion, Where you dwelt.

And in the Old Testament, Of course, The greatest picture of redemption, Is that of, God's people, The Israelites, Being set free, From slavery, In Egypt.

God's people, Being set free, From slavery, In Egypt. That is the great, Old Testament picture, Of redemption.

Isn't it? But it's only, A picture. Of course, It happened, It's history. But, The whole act of redemption, Is a signpost, In the Old Testament, Pointing forward, To what Jesus, Was going to do.

[19 : 13] We know that, Slavery in Egypt, Awful as it was, Making bricks, Without straw, Having your, Little ones, Taking, Taking away, Those little, Israelite boys.

Awful, Awful slavery, In Egypt. But we know, From God's word, There's a worse, Kind of slavery, That the Old Testament, Slavery in Egypt, Points to, And that's slavery, To sin.

The spiritual debt, We owe God. The fact that we are, Without Jesus, Under God's, Condemnation. That we are, Separated from a holy God, And that God is, Angry with us, If we're not, Christians, Yet.

That's a, Worse, Kind of slavery, Than even, The slavery, In Egypt, To be slaves to sin, And under, The wrath, Of God.

So let's move, To my third point, Which is, Why then, Is redemption, The best news of all? Why is redemption, The best news, Of all?

[20 : 21] Well we, We see in the passage here, Ephesians 1 verse 7, We read those words, In him, In Jesus, We have redemption, Through his blood, The forgiveness, Of our trespasses, According to the riches, Of his grace.

Notice, Where redemption is. The very first couple of words, Of verse 7, In, Him, Who can buy us back, From slavery?

Only, Jesus. Being set free, Can only happen, If Jesus, Sets us, Free. He is the one, Who buys us back, From slavery.

No one else, Can do that. There are lots of different religions, In the world, But none of them, Apart from, None of them can provide, Redemption, Freedom, Except, For Jesus, Jesus Christ.

Who else has, Died for your sins? Who else, Has risen again, From the dead? Is there anyone else, Who can redeem us? Is there anyone else, Who has paid the price, For our sins?

[21 : 37] No, But the good news is, Jesus has. In Krakade, One high school I go into, There's a chaplaincy team, And, One of the chaplains, Came in one morning, Wearing a jumper, It was around Christmas time, And at first I thought, There's a lovely Christmas jumper, But actually when I got, Closer to her, It was all the different, Religious symbols, Of all the religions, In the world, All over her jumper, I guess as a, A chaplain, She was coming in, And saying, It doesn't matter, If you're a Hindu, Or a Buddhist, Or a Sikh, Or a Christian, It's all fine, But we know, That's not what the Bible says, Because being set free, You can't be set free, By following Allah, You can't be set free, By being a Jehovah Witness, Or a Mormon, Or a Buddhist, Because we read, These first two words, In Ephesians 1, 7, It's in Him,

In Jesus, We have redemption, It's in Jesus, And nowhere else, Notice too, In verse 7, The word, Trespasses, In Jesus, We have redemption, Through His blood, The forgiveness, Of our trespasses, What are trespasses?

There are sins, There are willful, Acts of rebellion, Against, Against, Against, A holy God, And yet, They can be forgiven, And that's what we celebrate, That's a big part, Of what we celebrate, In the Lord's Supper, That, All our sins, Past, Present, And future, All our trespasses, Are forgiven, Because, Of the blood, Of Jesus Christ, Verse 7, The forgiveness, Of our trespasses, That famous verse, In Micah 7, Verse 19, You will cast, All our sins, Into the debt, Of the sea, That's what God does, When He forgives us, It's not pleasant, For us to think back, To, The way we were, Before we were Christians, The things that we did, It's not pleasant,

Even as Christians, To think back, At the ways, We have let, Our saviour, Down, The people, We have really hurt, The lies, We have told, The people in need, In our past, And we didn't help them, All the good things, That God has, Done for us, And, And we haven't always, Thanked Him, For what He's given us, All these sins, All these, Trespasses, But God says, I'm going to wipe them clean, And that's the beauty, Isn't it, That's the simple, But profound truth, Of being a Christian, That we can be set free, From all those things, From the guilt of it all, From the stain of it all, Because, Of the blood, Of Jesus, We can have, The slate, As it were, Wiped, Clean, And so, Ephesians 1,

Verse 7, It's so beautiful, In so many ways, It's exclusive, It's in Jesus, It's in Jesus, And nowhere else, It's in Him, We have redemption, Freedom, Through His blood, The forgiveness, Of, All our trespasses, According to the riches, Of, His, Grace, So we're thinking, About ransom, We're thinking, About being slaves, And then being set free, After the payment, Of a ransom, Let's just think, Of how great, That ransom price, Was, It wasn't, So many cases, Of silver, Or gold, We read, In 1st Peter 1, 18, For you know, That it was not, With perishable things, Such as silver, Or gold, That you were redeemed, From the empty way of life, Handed down to you, From your ancestors, But, With the precious,

[26 : 00] Blood, Of Christ, A lamb without blemish, Or defect, We have been redeemed, And it was so costly, Because, The price, Was the blood, Of, Jesus, Christ, And so as we, Celebrate, Being free, In Christ, And as we drink, The wine, And take the bread, We remember, That God's grace, Yes it's free, Free for us, But we don't, But it wasn't cheap, It had an enormous cost, An enormous, Ransom price, God, The father, Gave the best thing, That he had to save us, Romans 8, 32, He who did not, Spare his own son, But gave him up, For us all, How will he not also, Along with him, Graciously give us, All things, The only way, The only way, That God, Could deal with your sin, And my sin, Was blood,

That was the only way, For justice to be done, Because God is holy, He can't just sweep our, Sins under the carpet, And ignore them, And say, Oh that doesn't matter, Our sins do matter, And so they have to be paid for, Paid for, By the blood, Of Jesus, And note that, In this verse, Ephesians 1, 7, It doesn't say, In him we have redemption, Through his death, Although that's true, It says more than that, It says, That we have redemption, In his blood, The blood of Jesus, Needed to be shed, And that, Should remind us, Of how awful, And serious, Our sins are, We know how, We make a mess of things, And we, We can see how, Serious sin is, In terms of relationships, Maybe you've even got siblings, That you don't really, Speak to much, Anymore, Because of something, In the past, Sin, Spoils relationships, Of course as Christians, We need to sort that out,

But sin, Hurts other people, Sin, Spoils relationships, And even more than that, Sin has that, Godward dimension, Not only does it affect, Our relationship with each other, But more than that, It affects our relation, With God, Our relationship, With God, And that's even more serious, Because, If we're not Christians, We're under, His condemnation, God is angry, At us, Because of our sins, Because we've rebelled, Against Him, And our sins, Must be paid for, But that's why, We read, From Romans 3, Romans 3, 23, For all have sinned, And fall short, Of the glory of God, And are justified, By His grace, As a gift, Through the redemption, That is in Christ Jesus, Whom God put forward, As a propitiation, By His blood, To be received, By faith,

Propitiation, Turning away, The wrath of God, What is it, That turns God's wrath away, It's the blood, Of Jesus, Such wonderful, Words, There in Romans 3, 24, We're justified, By His grace, As a gift, Through the redemption, That's in Jesus Christ, Whom God took forward, As a propitiation, By, His blood, To be received, By faith, And so, If you're not a Christian, Here this morning, And I don't know you, I don't know, Who's a Christian, Who's not a Christian, But if you're not a Christian, Let me challenge you, And say, There are only two choices, Either, You pay for your own sin, In hell, Which is, An unspeakable, Option, We don't want that, Or, Jesus, Can pay, For, Your sins, So please, If you haven't already, Done so, Please, Speak to Jesus, In prayer,

And bring your sins, To him, And ask him, To set you, Free, As Christians, How should we respond, To this, Beautiful, Word, Redemption, How should we respond, As God's people, To this word, Well, Very briefly, 1 Corinthians 6, Reminds us, You are not your own, You were bought, At a price, You're not your own, You were bought, At a price, Therefore, Honor God, With your bodies, And of course, The context of that, Is sexual sin, And how, Because God has redeemed us, We must, Honor God, Because, We're not our own, We belong to God, We're his possessions, We need to live, Holy lives, And of course, We can extend that, In all areas of our lives, No matter what you're doing, Your family life, Your work life, Your thought life, What you do with your time, Your money, How committed you are, To Livingston Free Church, All these things, We need to remember,

[31 : 08] That, We're not our own, We're bought, At a price, And we need to honor God, In all areas, Of our lives, Because, Before we were slaves, To sin, And now, We're slaves, To Jesus, Before, We were slaves, To sin, Now we're slaves, To Jesus, And that's true freedom, Being a slave, To Jesus, Second Corinthians, Chapter 5, Verse 14, For the love of Christ, Controls us, Because we have concluded this, That one has died for all, Therefore all have died, And he died for all, That those who live, Might no longer live for themselves, But for him, Who for their sake, Died and was raised, May that be our response today, To this word redemption, To this amazing fact,

That Jesus, Has set us free, Our response to God's love and grace, Should be, To live, For him, No longer live selfish lives, No longer live for yourself, But for him, Who died, For us, Lastly, And briefly, Better put my watch on here, Redemption, The fourth point is this, That redemption, Isn't just about, Individual Christians, Redemption, Isn't just about, Individual Christians, Or even, People, But there's a wider, Dimension to redemption, There's a cosmic, Amazing dimension, To redemption, And I want us to close, With this, And it's very exciting, We know, The sad fact, That, After Genesis 1, When the world was perfect, And, In harmony, And fully integrated, With Adam and Eve, Loving one another, Loving God, We know,

That that perfect world, Was spoiled, We know, After Genesis 1, Comes Genesis 3, And the fall of man, And we know, That the fall of man, Caused, Disintegration, In every area of life, That sin, Got everywhere, And sin, Spoils, Four things, In relationships, It spoils, Our relationship, With one another, We know that, That people, Are jealous of each other, They fall out, They mistreat each other, Or even more serious things, Like murder, And war, And all these, Horrible things, That we see in our papers, Sin, Spoils the relationship, Of human beings, With each other, Sin also, Spoils our relationship, With ourselves, Because, That affects our mind, Our thinking, And even as Christians, We don't always think, In the right way, But it also, A affects our relationship, With the earth, That we try,

And grow things, And, If you came to our garden, The stuff that I tried to grow, I think, Almost all of it's been eaten, By slugs, The other stuff, Died, And, Maybe there's some tatties, That I'll probably salvage, Later on, But, We know that the world, Is being cursed, Don't we?

It's a serious point, That by, The sweat of your brow, You will call, For food, That, The world is cursed, Our relationship, With the earth, Is broken, Our relationship, With ourselves, Is broken, Our relationship, With each other, Is broken, Our relationship, With God, Is broken, Until we become Christians, Because, Of sin, Affecting, Absolutely, Everything, We are broken people, Living, In a broken world, That's what we are, Disintegration, Broken people, Living, In a broken world, That would be quite a negative way, To end the communion service, Wouldn't it?

[35 : 15] So let's, Move from that, To something quite wonderful, Something quite marvelous, That we read about, In Ephesians chapter 1, And this is what it says, Let's read it together, Let's just read from verse 7, And we'll read on, In him we have redemption, Through his blood, The forgiveness, Of our trespasses, According to the riches, Of grace, Which he lavished upon us, In all wisdom, And insight, Making known to us, The mystery of his will, According to his purpose, Which he set forth, In Christ, As a plan, For the fullness of time, To unite all things, In him, Things in heaven, And things, On earth, That is amazing, Verse 10, Friends, Is amazing, Because God's saying, For the future, In terms of redemption, That he has a plan, In his own time, In the fullness of time, That all the,

Fragmented, Disintegrated, Brokenness, Of the world, Will all be united, In, The person, Of Jesus Christ, So through Adam, Came sin, And brokenness, Through the second Adam, Jesus, Will come, Integration, Peace, Perfection, Wonderful things, And, That's what God says, His plan is, For us, His people, And for the universe, His plan, Verse 10, Is that in the fullness of time, He will unite, All things, In Jesus Christ, We look forward, To holidays, Yes, But we can look forward, To something, Much better than that, And that is, That one day, Jesus will come back, And, The earth will be, Remade, It will be heaven, On earth, And everything, Will work properly,

We'll have perfect bodies, Perfect minds, There'll be no more sin, The relationship, The relationship, We have with each other, Will be perfect, The relationship, We have with God, Will be perfect, And with ourselves, We'll be, At complete peace, And with the earth, And it's all, Going to be, United, In Jesus Christ, Then, Every knee will bow, And tongue, Confess, That he, Is Lord, And that's why, In the Lord's prayer, We pray, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, On earth, As it is, In heaven, And one day, It will be, Because God's plan, Is to unite, All things, In Jesus Christ, So we have so much, To thank God for, In the price, That he has paid, This is only possible, Because Jesus, Has paid, For it all, He's paid the ransom price, With his blood, And because of that, We are free, And one day,

And one day, The freedom, Is going to go, To a new level, Because we'll be perfect, And, Everything, Will be, United, In Jesus Christ, Let's look forward, To that, As we celebrate, The Lord's supper, Together, Let's pray, Let's pray, Father God, We thank you, That you did not, Leave us, In slavery, We thank you, Lord Jesus, That you were willing, To come, And pay the price, For our redemption, That you willingly, Laid down your life, For us, And no one, Took your life, From you, We thank you, Father, For giving us, Your son, And Father, We pray, That we would have, A renewed sense, Of being free, That we would live,

As free people, No longer living, For self, But living, For you, We ask in Jesus name, Amen, Let's sing now, From, Psalm 130, From the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 130, Page 421, Psalm 130, From the Scottish Psalters, Easy to see, Why I chose this psalm, In the last verse, As we, Praise God, As we respond, To his word, And pray, Singing to his praise, About his redemption, Lord, From the depths, To thee I cried, My voice, Lord, Do thou hear, Unto my supplications voice, Give, And attend to thee, Let's stand and sing the whole, Of Psalm 130, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen,