

Redemption

F. B. Hole.

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Not only has sin plunged us into guilt, and brought us face to face with condemnation, but it has entangled us in bondage of a very fearful sort; a bondage from which we are utterly unable to extricate ourselves.

Then, as regards the Gospel, not only does it proclaim forgiveness in relation to our guilt, and justification instead of condemnation, but it reveals to us God, acting as a Redeemer, delivering His people from bondage, and thereby freeing His inheritance from all the encumbrances under which formerly it lay.

There is a good deal about redemption in the Old Testament, and one of the words used for it has the meaning, it is said, of, "freeing, whether by avenging or repaying."

In Exodus we find the great type of redemption. To the children of Israel, who were just downtrodden slaves, Jehovah said, "I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm, and with great judgments" (Ex. 6: 6). So this was clearly a case of redemption by **avenging** their wrongs upon Egypt; though we also see the **repayment** of what they owed to God as sinners in the steed blood of the lamb. When all was effectively accomplished we find Israel on the further banks of the Red Sea, singing, "Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth Thy people which Thou hast redeemed" (Ex. 15: 13).

A striking **illustration** of redemption is given to us in the book of Ruth. Boaz redeemed Elimelech's inheritance by payment, and this involved the raising up of the name of the dead by the taking of Ruth. Boaz took both to himself — the wife and the inheritance — by right of redemption.

Both in the type and in the illustration bondage of one sort or another was in question. In the type, Israel were in sore bondage under Pharaoh, and again and again in reference to them Egypt is called, "the house of bondage." In the illustration, the inheritance of the dead Elimelech was in danger of passing into other hands, and the widow and daughter-in-law of lapsing into a condition of servitude. This disaster was averted by the action of Boaz as their kinsman-redeemer.

Turning to the New Testament, we find that redemption as well as justification is mentioned in Romans 3. We are said to be, "justified . . . through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." This serves

to emphasize an important point; namely, that these different aspects of the work of Christ and its effects are most intimately connected, so that we cannot have one without the other. Yet, though never to be divided the one from the other, they are clearly to be distinguished. The earlier part of Romans 3 has brought before us not only the guilt and condemnation of sin, but also its bondage. The word itself is not actually used until chapter 8 is reached, yet the idea is there, for the Apostle says, "We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." To be "under sin" is to be under the power of it, that is, to be in bondage to it. Christ has done the great work which avails to pay off all the liabilities under which we lay, and thus redemption is in Him for us.

If we read on through the Epistle to the Romans, we discover, in Romans 6, 7 and the early part of 8, how we are actually set free from the tyranny of sin and the yoke of the law; all of which had proved us to be in "the bondage of corruption." This phrase is actually used in Romans 8: 21, where we learn that the whole earthly creation lies under its thrall, but that all shall be delivered and brought into "the liberty of the glory of the children of God." When the Lord comes and the children of God stand forth in their glory, then there will be proclaimed a jubilee of liberty for all creation.

For that moment we wait, and in verse 23 it is said that for us it will be, "the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Here again redemption appears, since the point in question is deliverance from bondage; and the redemption of our bodies is presented to us as a freedom gained by avenging, as it says, "I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction" (Hosea 13: 14). This scripture is alluded to and applied to the resurrection of the body in 1 Corinthians 15: 55. In that glad day the bodies of all God's saints will be delivered from the grip of death, the last enemy.

The redemption work of Christ also comes rather prominently before us in the Epistle to the Galatians. We read that, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law" (Gal. 3: 13), and this was by paying the price on our behalf, for it adds, "being made a curse for us."

But not only did we lie under the curse of the law but the law itself held us in bondage. We were "in bondage under the elements of the world" (Gal. 4: 3). Lower down in the chapter, Paul speaks of, "the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage" (Gal. 4: 9). The word translated "elements" has the force of "principles," and is so translated in Hebrews 5: 12. We may at first be inclined to wonder that such terms as these — almost contemptuous terms — should be applied to the law, which was given of God, but the "we" of Galatians 4: 3, clearly indicates Jews, just as the "ye" of verse 6 indicates the Galatian Gentiles. **Both were** under bondage to the principles of the world. The law of Moses made no difference as to this. It brought in the demands of God, but they were to be met according to the principles of the world. The root principle of the law was that the favour which men were to receive from God was to be wholly determined by what they rendered to Him in obedience. This is altogether a principle of the world, whereas grace is not. There was no bringing in of principles which lie outside the world altogether, as is the case in Christianity.

From the principles of the world, whether found in Judaism or elsewhere, weak and beggarly as they are, Christ has redeemed us that we might receive the adoption of sons. Such is the mighty grace of God.

Redemption, as we have seen, extends even to the resurrection of the body, and this side of the matter we again find in the Epistle to the Ephesians. While we read of, "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph. 1: 7), we also read of the earnest of the Spirit being, "until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Eph. 1: 14), and of our being, "sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4: 30). The first of these passages speaks of that which is ours today, and which

never will be more ours than it is to-day. The second and third speak of redemption in a form for which we wait. **All** that Christ has bought by His death shall be taken from beneath the sway of the usurper and of every adverse power. As far as our bodies are concerned the moment will arrive at the coming of the Lord Jesus for His saints. That having taken place, the Lord will set His hand to the work of redeeming by power from the hand of the enemy all the rest of the possession which He purchased by His blood.

This coming redemption by power is a great theme of Old Testament prophecy. It is particularly prominent in the latter part of Isaiah. Israel needed redemption for he was being trodden down by the Gentiles and hence is addressed as "thou worm Jacob;" and Jehovah announces Himself as, "thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 41: 14). Having introduced Himself in this light, He continues to speak of Himself as Redeemer until Isaiah 63 is reached, where the prophet sees Him in vision, coming forth from Edom and Bozrah, because at last, as He says "The day of vengeance is in Mine heart, and the year of My redeemed is come." The redemption of the true Israel of God means vengeance upon all their foes.

Yet in the midst of these striking chapters with their many promises of a coming redemption by means of the avenging might of God, we get a most marvellous prediction concerning the yet deeper matter of redemption by means of the death of Christ. We read, "Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money" (Isa. 52: 3). This is followed by the heart-moving chapter wherein the blessed Servant of Jehovah is portrayed as the suffering, dying One, whose soul is made an offering for sin by Jehovah Himself. The Redeemer is going to "come to Zion, and to them that turn from transgression in Jacob;" (Isa. 59: 20), but this is only possible inasmuch as He has first redeemed them without money as the result of the travail of His soul.

It is to this scripture perhaps that Peter referred when he wrote, "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" (1 Peter 1: 18-19). Isaiah 52 speaks of our being "redeemed without money." Isaiah 53 of the One who "had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth," and yet "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter" for our redemption.

We sometimes hear people speak of "the finished work of redemption." Is it quite correct to speak thus in view of the fact that we still wait for the redemption of our bodies?

Not quite correct, no doubt. But when people speak thus they are probably dwelling in their minds exclusively upon the work of redemption by blood. That part of the great work is indeed finished, and never to be repeated. Propitiation has been made once and for all, so when it is a question of that, or of forgiveness, or of justification, there is no future aspect to be considered. But there is a future aspect of redemption, as we have seen. And it is well to remember that, and to speak with care lest we obscure the finishing touches which are to be given to the work of redemption in the days to come.

On the other hand, seeing there is this future aspect of redemption, is it quite right if we speak of ourselves as having been redeemed? Ought we not rather to speak of ourselves as being redeemed?

"We have redemption through His blood." So says the Scripture twice over — in Ephesians 1 and Colossians 1. Therefore we cannot be wrong if we say with all boldness that **we have it**. But it is

through His blood, you notice. Redemption, in that aspect of it, is wholly in the past. The redemption of our bodies is wholly in the future. But redemption is never presented in Scripture as a process which is going on. It is never said that we are being redeemed day by day, though there is such a thing as day-by-day salvation.

Is it not a rather uncomfortable doctrine that redemption, a certain part of it at least, lies in the future? Might there not be a loophole here for just a little uncertainty to creep in?

If redemption were a human work, or if even a small human element entered the question, there would be uncertainty right enough — not just a little creeping in, but floods of it sweeping everything before them. We may well thank God that it is a work not human but Divine. God never leaves His work uncompleted: this we may see in the history of the typical redemption which He wrought in Egypt. He did not redeem the children of Israel by the blood of the Paschal lamb and then forget them, so that they remained under the taskmasters of Egypt. No. All those whom He redeemed by blood He also redeemed by His mighty power clean out of Egypt. Each, down to the youngest child, had to go; not even a hoof was to be left behind. God will complete His work concerning us. Every one redeemed by the precious blood of Christ will be there when at His second coming He redeems the bodies of His saints.

Is redemption the great end that God has in view for His people?

No. It is not the end in view, but rather the all-important means to that end. In the old dispensation the purpose that God had in view was that Israel should be His own peculiar nation, serving Him in the land He had given them. He had to redeem them out of Egypt in order that this might be brought to pass, for they could not serve Him so long as they were in servitude to Pharaoh. In our case the end in view is of a much higher order.

It is His purpose that we should be sons before Him in love. Ephesians 1: 5-7 speaks of this; and we find that redemption is necessary as a means to that end. Colossians 1 shows that we are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; and again redemption is mentioned as necessary for this. Peter, in his first epistle, instructs us that God purposes to have us as a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to Him by Jesus Christ; but as a preliminary to this he speaks of our having been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.

Other scriptures to the same effect might be cited. God has many thoughts for us His people, but their fulfilment is only possible upon the basis of redemption. First we must be redeemed from every adverse power. Then God has His way with us to carry out His bright designs.

The book of Ruth shows us that in Israel only certain kinsmen had the right of redemption. Has this any significance for us?

Undoubtedly it has. To purchase was one thing — anyone might do that: to redeem was another. The nearest kinsman had the first right, but one had to be a kinsman to have any right of redemption at all. There is no kinship between angels and men: hence no angel could redeem a man even if he had possessed the power to do so. The Lord Jesus did not become an angel; He became a Man and thereby established that kinship which qualified Him to become our Kinsman-Redeemer. How important then is the true Manhood of our Lord.

Hebrews 2 does not contain the word redeem. But it tells us that He did not take hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham, when He undertook through death to annul him that had the power of death and deliver us — that is, to accomplish our redemption.

We read in Ephesians 1: 14 of "the redemption of the purchased possession." Should we then draw a distinction between purchase and redemption?

We believe that we should. We might put it in this way — redemption involves purchase, but purchase very often has nothing to do with redemption. Believers are said to be "bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6: 20). But false teachers will go so far as "denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter 2: 1). The buying of believers involves their redemption. The buying of the false teachers, who go to destruction, did not involve their redemption; had it done so destruction would not be their end. By His death the Lord Jesus has acquired purchase rights over all things, even where He has not redeemed them.

In Ephesians 1: 14 however the point is not exactly this, but rather that what He has purchased by His death He will ultimately redeem by His power from every adverse force. It is really the distinction between redemption by blood and redemption by power.