



# CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: Ephesians

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## Redeemed

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Our worship this morning is very appropriate. As we have focused on the greatness and goodness of God in song, we're going to focus on that same greatness and goodness in Word. God has revealed himself and the depths of his character and his love to us in his Word through his Son, Jesus Christ. We open our Bibles together now, confident that what we've just been singing about is not just song, but it is truth.

We're in Ephesians, chapter 1. Just as a reminder, Ephesians is a first-century letter written by the apostle Paul to Christians who are living in a time and place in which it is really hard to be a Christian. It's really hard to follow Jesus in Ephesus in the first century. If it were for that reason alone, we can be really confident that this study on Sunday mornings, verse by verse through Ephesians, is going to be relevant for us who are trying to live godly lives, to be Christians, to follow Jesus in this God-ordained time and place for us to be alive and to be his children.

We saw last week that Paul writes this letter to these Christians but he doesn't start out with sympathy. In fact, you don't really see sympathy anywhere in the letter. Remember, he's writing chained to a guard in a Roman prison cell. He doesn't offer the Ephesians some shallow, oversimplified recipe for your best life now. That's not what he's writing.

No, he begins with praise to God for what he calls **"...every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places..."** Instead of focusing on their earthly struggles, he's going to lift them up into heaven, so to speak, and pull back the curtain of all the blessings that are theirs, because Paul knows that when we really and absolutely understand who God is and what he has done for us, we can actually rise above our struggles with praise on our lips. He knows that.

You see, the miracle of the Christian life is not that all of our struggles disappear, but that we actually become stronger in our faith in the midst of our struggles. The miracle of the Christian life isn't that the life just gets easier. The miracle of the Christian life is that in the midst of the struggles, we keep singing. We keep worshipping. We keep trusting God even more. That's the miracle. Wouldn't you agree?

Last week, we talked about the spiritual blessings Paul listed at the beginning. The blessings of being chosen by God before the foundations of the world, the blessings of being made holy and blameless, the blessing of being predestined for adoption as his sons, as his children, through faith in his Son, Jesus.

Now, he's going to pull the curtain of those blessings back a little further. He's going to open it up and he's going to want us to remember that we have been *redeemed*. I think *redemption* is probably the single most beloved term in the Christian vocabulary. *Redeemed, redemption...*

I think it is because out of all the things he's listing here in chapter 1, redemption is the only one he stops and dedicates four verses to in this one blessing, this one doctrine, alone. I think that's because the name *Redeemer* brings the cross into view and it reminds us that Jesus has not only given us salvation, but he paid a mighty price for it.

If you were to look through a hymnal and just flip through the songs, the hymns, you would see that one of the most common themes in every hymn in the Christian heritage is redemption and referring to Jesus as the *Redeemer*, because that brings into focus the cross and what he has done for us.

You see, as we face the struggle of living for God in this godless world of ours, Paul wants to take us to the cross, of all places. Paul is saying, "I know it's hard. Let's go to the cross together." So, if your Bibles are open and you're ready, let's go to the cross together in Ephesians, chapter 1. Let's stand now for the reading of God's Word. I'm going to pick it up in verse 3. We've already covered these first six verses. We're going to cover a few more.

**"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.**

**In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his 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."**

Father in heaven, O God, I pray that this mystery that is revealed in the redemption of our souls through Jesus would become clearer and clearer today. God, may your praise always be on our lips, especially when we're in that valley. God, I pray in the power and presence of your Holy Spirit and because of Jesus Christ that our hearts would be opened wide to the goodness, the greatness of the blessings that are ours in Christ Jesus. Amen.

In the original language, what we just read, and in the verses following all the way to verse 17, is all one continuous long sentence. It's the longest run-on sentence in the New Testament. In this sentence in chapter 1, Paul is stacking one great truth upon another in an effort to adequately give God the praise he deserves for our salvation. That's what he's doing.

You get the sense that as Paul is writing this first chapter of this letter, he's listing the blessings that are ours, these doctrines, and then he stops, backs up, and says, "That's still not enough!" Then, he writes a few more blessings and doctrines. He looks and he goes, "No, there's one more!" He's just adding doctrine upon doctrine in this chapter, all for the sake of opening our hearts to the amazing blessings and what they mean for us as we live out the Christian life.

Today, Paul comes in verse 7 to the heavenly blessing of our redemption. Here's what I think we need to start out with.

1. *Our redemption was our greatest need.* I think that's why he dedicates four verses. That's why he stops at redemption and just totally peels it back and unpacks it for us. The word *redemption* comes from six words, actually, in the Greek language. They're all legal terms. While it would be really fun to unpack every one of those six Greek words from which we get the word *redemption* and how they all relate to our salvation, we don't have nearly the amount of time for that, as fun as that is.

I wish I could do that for you, but today, we're just going to look at the word Paul picked for *redemption* in verse 7. It has a historical meaning and it has a spiritual meaning. Historically, *redeeming* someone or something refers to paying a ransom to release a person from slavery. During this time in human history, around the first century BC and AD, the Roman Empire had as many as 6 million Jews at one time, most of which were captured in wars. So, buying and selling slaves at this time in human history was a major business.

If you wanted a slave for your household, you would have to buy one from that slave's owner. You couldn't buy a slave unless their current owner put them on the market. Under this system, you could redeem a slave from the slavery under this owner, but they would still be a slave. They would just still be a slave under a different owner. So, when Paul uses this word and writes it to the Christians in Ephesus, this was a very common word. It was a very common way of life. They understood its meaning, but Paul, now, is going to apply it spiritually.

Spiritually speaking, *redemption* is about Jesus paying the ransom to buy a people for himself, setting them free from their slavery to sin. Paul takes this whole idea and applies it to our souls. You see, the Bible explains that after Adam and Eve rebelled against God in the garden, every human descendant is born into this world enslaved to sin.

Our hearts' desires and motives are all corrupted by the spiritual virus of sin. We're all born that way. No person who has ever been born and lived is free from sin's control or its consequences. The Bible teaches that. In Romans, chapter 3, verse 10, it says, "There is none righteous. No, not even one." In the same chapter, Romans, chapter 3, verse 23 says that's true because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Every single person is unrighteous and has sinned.

Now, if you doubt this, you obviously have never had children, first of all, specifically a 2-year-old or a teenager. Or, secondly, you don't have cable. It's possible, I guess. Or, thirdly, your opinion of yourself might be way too high.

You see, Christianity has two distinctive doctrines. The first one is original sin, and the second one is salvation. No other world religion claims these two doctrines. Original sin, which we just talked about, is being born sinful with hearts already corrupted by sin. We've inherited the spiritual DNA of our first parents. That's original sin. That is the very bad news that no one wants to ever tell us.

Psychologists and others in our culture say we can't be blamed for our sinful choices. It's not our fault. It's the fault of either our genetics, our environment, or something else for which we're not responsible. This whole mess in which you see the human race right now... Our culture, our world is trying to tell us, "It's not your fault."

They continue to tell us, "All you can do is cope with your own self-destructive tendencies and every day figure out how to not do stupid things as to bring danger or harm to yourself or others. That's how you have to cope with the mess you see in the world. Just try to figure out how not to do too-stupid things. Don't let your selfish, sinful nature take over so much that you're going to bring harm or danger to yourself. On top of that, you need to guard yourself against others who are doing stupid things to bring harm and danger to themselves and, ultimately, to you."

That's how we cope. That's how we live in a world that doesn't want to hear the bad news of original sin. You see, God, who cannot lie, says sin is your fault and you are guilty. God doesn't lie. In Genesis, chapter 6, verse 5, we read, "**The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**" That's the doctrine of original sin. That's the bad news no one ever wants to tell us.

The other doctrine distinct only to Christianity is *salvation*. We have a sin disease and only God can save us from it. Salvation is the good news no one else has the right to tell us except God himself. You see, Christianity declares that sin is not our *design*; it is our *disease*, and it must be destroyed. That's the message of Christianity.

So when Paul reminds us, in verse 7, that "**In him we have redemption...**" he's calling us to remember that our spiritual freedom has been purchased by Jesus. The implication of this for us as we're trying to live out our Christian life in this world is that when we're overwhelmed by the world's sinful rebellion against God and against God's people, Paul is encouraging us to start praising God, because you have been redeemed from that slavery.

He's saying, "When you get up tomorrow, don't be discouraged and overwhelmed by the crazy mess we're making of this world as human beings. Just start here. Praise God. You've been rescued from that slavery." It's not a moment of pride; it's a moment of gratitude, because if it wasn't for our redemption, there we would go. Our redemption was our greatest need.

2. *Our redemption required Jesus to die for us.* It doesn't just happen by osmosis. We just don't wake up one day and go, "Oh, I must be redeemed!" No, when Paul says in verse 7, "**In him we have redemption through his blood...**" he's describing Jesus' death. The name *Redeemer* is the name specifically connected to the cross of Jesus. Because God is holy and just, he cannot ignore our sin. It must be punished. If he ignored it, he wouldn't be holy. If he didn't punish it, he wouldn't be just.

The debt we owe for our sin is death. Left unpaid, we remain completely enslaved and justly condemned to hell forever. We can't save ourselves from this death. That's why God sent his Son. In fact, you know during the Last Supper, Jesus said his blood was being poured out for the ransom of many. Jesus himself knows. "You can't save yourself from what I need to die for." Though he didn't deserve it, he willingly took our punishment upon himself.

Get this. Understand this. Because Jesus was sinless, he satisfied the holiness of God. Because he died for our sins, he satisfied the justice of God. His death is the substitute for our death. That's why Peter wrote, in 1 Peter, chapter 1, "**...you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers...**" Going all the way back to Adam and Eve.

**"...not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."** He's reminding them of the Old Testament sacrificial system. He's saying now we have been purchased at the infinite cost of the blood of God's own Son, because everything else in the universe was corrupted by sin and perishable. Nothing else in the universe was holy or eternal enough to pay for our sins forever. Only Jesus. You see, our redemption was our greatest need. Our redemption required Jesus to die for us.

3. *Our redemption brings complete forgiveness.* Underline the word *complete*. This is really important. Jesus' shed blood isn't like posting bail. I think some people have this confused in their heads. Jesus dying on the cross for us and shedding his blood for us doesn't just get guilty people out of jail for a while, only to return condemned. No, *redemption* means God wiped the slate clean. He wiped the slate clean of what got us in sin's slavery in the first place.

Just look at verse 7. "**In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses...**" The Bible goes out of its way to explain the wonder of God's forgiveness. Maybe you have forgotten it and you have need of remembering the wonder of the forgiveness that comes from your redemption through his blood.

In Jeremiah 31, verse 34, God says, "**I will forgive their [wickedness], and I will remember their sin no more.**" In 1 John 1, verse 9, it says, "**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**" Every ounce of it. In Psalm 103, verse 12, it says, "**...as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.**" There's a great separation between us and our sin.

In Micah, chapter 7, here's what the prophet says. "**Who is a God like you, pardoning [sin] and passing over transgression...? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our [sins] underfoot.** [He]

**will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea."** Our redemption, which is through the blood of Jesus, completely frees us from sin's guilt and condemnation.

I think the sad thing is too many Christians today are depressed about the dumpster of their past sins. Some of you sitting here cannot get past the horrendous sin and failures of your past, sins that God no longer remembers or counts against you. He has caused this great separation between us and our sin.

You see, when Paul wrote this, the distance between the east and the west and the depths of the sea represented infinity to the Israelite people. God's forgiveness is infinite and complete because no one could possibly top the price Jesus paid for it. There's nothing else left in the universe that can forgive you more or longer.

So, I ask, are you still holding onto your sin, sin you have confessed and repented of? Sins God has forgiven? Sins God doesn't even remember? Because God is God, he can make himself forget about the sins he has forgiven you of. So when you keep bringing them up to God, God has no idea what you're talking about.

That's kind of a weird thought, isn't it? Yet God says he remembers them no more, so stop bringing stuff up from your past that you've confessed to God and repented of, and he has forgiven. Stop bringing it up to God! He has freed you from that slavery, guilt, and condemnation. Can any of us say amen to that? Amen!

4. *Our redemption is a forever grace.* This is just a little bit different from what we were just talking about. In verse 6, Paul just calls us to praise God for his glorious grace. In verse 7, Paul reminds us that our redemption is fueled by the riches of his grace. Look at verses 7 and 8. **"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us..."** God has lavished and keeps lavishing his grace on us.

I looked that word *lavish* up in the Greek. This is what it means. It means over and above. It means excessive. It means a surplus of. God doesn't just give us just enough grace to get us forgiven. "Just enough! That's it! Not an ounce more!" He doesn't forgive us like that. Paul says he *lavishes* his grace on you, way more than you ever need, and it never ends.

It's in such surplus, such excess... Just imagine standing at the foot of Snoqualmie Falls and just letting that water just hit you. It'd probably kill you; I wouldn't recommend that. Yet imagine if you could. The sense of all that water that's rushing over the top of those falls... It just keeps coming and coming forever. That's what Paul is saying. Our redemption is a forever grace.

Oh, when you wake up tomorrow and you walk out into that world that is just so messed up because of sin... You were once a sinner like that, but now God's grace just floods your life. Yes, redemption in Jesus is undeserved but it's free. Yet more amazing than that is that his grace never runs out. It never runs out!

Lamentations 3 says, "**The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.**" His love, his mercy, and his faithfulness never end as he keeps lavishing his grace and forgiveness over those he has redeemed.

I love this passage. I found this passage this week and I thought, "Why have I never seen this?" Have you ever done that, read your Bible, and think, "When did God put that in there? I've read this a million times"? This is one of those passages. I read it, I reread it, and I thought, "I've never seen this passage before."

Ecclesiastes 3:14-15 says, "**I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him.**" God has done it so people would be in awe of him. "**That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already has been...**" You've never seen it either, have you?

I read that and I thought, "The implication of this for the redeemed is staggering. He loves us with the same fullness of his grace on our worst days as he does on our best days. For the redeemed, the forever riches of God's grace mean (and we say it around here a lot) there is nothing we can do to make God love us more, and there is nothing we can do to make God love us less. That's what Paul is writing to us.

The application of that is *we can and we must love each other with this same kind of grace*. We don't bring up the past. We don't dwell on the past sins of those who hurt us once they've repented and sought God's forgiveness and our forgiveness. What might the church be like if we applied the same grace and love God gives to us to each other? How different would the church actually be?

Why has God done so much for us? Why has he chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world? Why has he made us holy and blameless by his shed blood? Why has he predestined us to be adopted as his children and now redeemed us by his blood, lavishing his grace and forgiveness on us forever? Why has he done all this for us?

5. *Our redemption is leading to everything coming under the authority of Jesus again.* God's plan and purpose for our redemption, which was planned before the foundations of the world (verse 4), was to redeem all that was lost when sin destroyed the heart of man and separated us from God.

We see in verse 9 that he has lavished all this grace upon us (verse 8), "**...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...**" He's telling us the purpose and plan for this mystery we know as *redemption* is "**...for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.**"

If something is being united, it means it is un-united at this moment. Something has been separated and now it's being reconciled. It's being brought back together. Paul uses the word

*mystery* here. It's one of his favorite words. He uses it five times in the book of Ephesians. It's not mystery in the sense that we can't understand it. No, that's not what he means by *mystery*. It's mystery in the sense that what was formerly unknown to us before the death and resurrection of Jesus is now revealed. Through our redemption by grace, Paul is saying, in verse 8, we receive wisdom and insight into God's ultimate plan and purpose. The death and resurrection of Jesus further unveils the moving plan of God's redeeming of history. He's bringing all things under the rule and reign of Jesus, just as they were before Adam and Eve rebelled.

Now, the coolest thing is when every trace of evil and rebellion has been removed from the earth, God will establish this incomparable unity of all things that remain. When God's plan is done, it cannot be undone. That's the movement of God's redemptive history. Right there, as the centerpiece of God's redemptive history, is your redemption and mine.

What I'm about to share with you requires me to admit something. I need to admit to you that I am not a big Shakespeare person, or a fan. I know nothing about Shakespeare literature or anything he has ever said or done, so I admit that to you now. Yet in my study of this passage, I came across a pastor who was talking about this passage, and he brought up Shakespeare. I thought, "That's curious! I wonder what he's going to say about that!"

He compared the Christian hope to that of much of the world, at least as Shakespeare saw the world. Apparently, in this play, *Macbeth*... I've never seen it and never read it. Does anybody know *Macbeth*? You've read it or something? Do you read it or watch it? Both? I don't know. I don't know anything about it.

I found this curious. He said *Macbeth* pessimistically declared that all life is "...a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." Apparently, according to *Macbeth*'s view of the world, when you look back, everything is worthless, stupid, and means nothing. This in turn means if everything that has already happened (history) is nothing, then anything that's going to happen is also stupid and nothing.

I would conclude that apart from the wisdom and insight God provides through the sacrifice of his own Son on the cross for the Redeemed, *Macbeth*'s hopeless conclusion is in fact inescapable. He's right. Apart from the redemption of man's soul through the death and resurrection of Jesus, there is no hope.

Fortunately for us, we now know, through open spiritual eyes, that human history is written by God and every second of it belongs to God. He's going to see it through to the fulfillment of his own redemptive purpose. Part of that purpose was to send his Son to pay the price that will free, release, and save sinners from slavery of the guilt and condemnation the sinful heart deserves.

So when you wake up tomorrow and you walk out that door into the world, if Paul were writing this to us today, if he was writing it to you, he would say, "Don't be overwhelmed by that office, that boss, those students in your classroom, those crazy parents of the students in your classroom, the suffering you see when you go to the hospital or the doctor's office, or wherever.



Don't let it crush you. Look up and praise God that he has redeemed you and saved you from the slavery of all that. His plan is ultimately working toward the removal of all of that evil for the completion of bringing everything he redeems under the rule and reign of our Redeemer." Let's pray.

O God in heaven, I pray with all my heart that somehow, you will have just opened our hearts a little wider and our eyes a little bigger to see every day the implication of our redemption. God, I pray we would be a church filled with people not overwhelmed by sin's rebellion in our world but blown away and blessed by what you have done to save us from it.

God, I pray...O, I pray...that we wouldn't be a people thinking somehow you're going to remove all our struggles but that we would be a people knowing you will walk with us through the midst of them and that we would be a people who would keep on singing, "You are good; you are good." Thank you for saving us. In Jesus' name, amen.

It could be and it is true that some of you are sitting here right now and you're not redeemed. You realize in this moment, by God's grace, that sin is still your greatest disease, and you have not come to Jesus Christ and called upon him to save you and forgive you by putting your faith in his shed blood on the cross for you.

If that is what you are realizing, that is a tremendous gift from God right now. It was no accident that you're sitting here. It's not by coincidence that you just showed up, or someone convinced you to come or dragged you to church, or you just drove by and thought, "Hmm, I wonder what's going on in there." None of that is by accident. God knew you would be here and God wanted to show you once again the cross and what it means for you.

If you want to take that step of faith by surrendering to Jesus Christ as your Savior, the people standing up here right now would love to help you do that. They want to just give you something to go home with to help you take that first step of faith by surrendering, confessing your sin repenting, admitting you need a Savior, and trusting him to save you. I hope you will do that before you walk out of here. That's why they're standing here.

Next Sunday, we're going to be back in Ephesians 1, and we're going to look at just one word. That's it, one word in the next verse. I hope you're here. See you then.