

Redemption

by H. A. Ironside

LET us now consider the second great word: Redemption. This comes before us in the first Epistle of Peter, chapter 1, verses 18 to 21.

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you. Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

The word "redemption" is one that runs all through the Bible; in fact, we can say without any suggestion of hyperbole that it is the great outstanding theme of Holy Scripture. This important truth runs through the Book like the proverbial red strand that, we are told, runs through the cordage of the British navy. Everywhere, from Genesis right on to Revelation, you find God in one way or another presenting to us the truth of redemption—redemption in promise and in type in the Old Testament; redemption in glorious fulfillment in the New Testament.

What do we mean when we use the term "redemption"? Ordinarily, and in Scripture too, the word means to buy back, to repurchase something that has been temporarily forfeited; or, it means to set free, to liberate, as we speak of redeeming one from slavery; or, it means to deliver, as to redeem one from some grave danger.

Back there in Israel in olden times, if a man fell into difficult circumstances, found himself burdened with debt, he might mortgage his entire property, and if that was not enough to satisfy the claims of his creditors, he could even mortgage his own strength, and ability, his own physical powers. He could sell himself into a kind of slavery until his debt was paid. Sometimes, he found himself hopelessly thus enslaved. Scripture says, however, "After that he is sold, he may be redeemed again." One of his brethren may redeem him, or, if he is able, he may redeem himself. It would be almost impossible in most instances for anyone to redeem himself. Probably, the only way would be if he suddenly fell heir to some vast estate. But on the other hand, if he had a rich relative who cared enough for him to undertake to meet the liabilities and discharge them, he might thus be set free.

The one who did this was called a kinsman redeemer, and he was a

wonderful type of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Hebrew word is *goel*. He comes before us in Scripture long before the time of Israel. Even in the book of Job you read of him. It was the *goel* that Job spake when he said, "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth."

Then one may, as I say, have forfeited his property. Well, some wealthy one could come and pay off the mortgage and thus redeem the property. We are used to such transactions today, and we attach that meaning to the word "redemption."

Now, in thinking of man, we know he is a sinner, sold under judgment. It was his own fault. God says in His Word, "You have sold yourselves for naught; and ye shall be redeemed without money." It is not possible for any man to redeem himself from the sad condition in which he finds himself because of sin, but that is why we need a kinsman redeemer who is more than man, one who is divine as well as human.

When we turn to consider this subject of redemption in the New Testament, we find it presented in three different ways: first, redemption from judgment. That is redemption from the guilt of sin, which is through the atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ. But that is not all. It is not only the will of God that we should be redeemed from the judgment due to sin, but Scripture also has a great deal to say about redemption from the power of sin, so that we might be redeemed from those evil habits and unholy ways which at one time held sway in our lives. This redemption is through the indwelling Christ, through the risen Christ working in the power of the Holy Spirit, who makes Christ real to His people down here.

And then Scripture speaks of a third aspect of redemption: the redemption of the body. I have been redeemed as far as my soul is concerned, if I am a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. I am daily being redeemed from sin's power, if I am walking in subjection to the Holy Spirit's guidance. But though I am thus redeemed in measure, I am made to realize every day that this very body of mine is often a hindrance instead of a help in regard to my practical deliverance; but I am looking forward to the time when the body itself shall be redeemed and made like unto the glorious body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then I shall be redeemed from the very presence of sin and from all the evidences of its corruption.

Here in the first Epistle of Peter, the apostle carries our minds back to a wonderful event that took place in the land of Egypt centuries before, that event which the Jewish people to this day celebrate annually in the Feast of the Passover. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt, suffering

under Pharaoh's cruelty, and God, you remember, said, "I am come down to deliver them," and He told Moses of something that was to take place whereby, He says, "And I will put a difference (or literally, a redemption) between my people and the Egyptians." That redemption was made by the blood of the passover lamb; and it is to this that the apostle Peter is referring typically in his first Epistle when he says, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation (empty behaviour) received by tradition from your fathers (ancestrally handed down); but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

God gave directions to Israel through Moses for every household to seek out a lamb, and they had to be very careful as to their choice of a lamb. There must be nothing about it that marred it in any way, as it was to be a type of Christ, God's holy, spotless Son. There must be no blemish of any kind, either outwardly or inwardly. This lamb had to die, and then they were to take the blood that was shed and caught in a basin, and sprinkle it upon the lintel and the two side posts of the door of the house wherein they dwelt. And God commanded them to go into the house and shut the door, for He had declared that He would pass through the land of Egypt that night, and smite all the firstborn, but wherever the sprinkled blood was seen, the firstborn and all the family would be secure, for Jehovah said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

The blood of the lamb shed so long ago was God's picture of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ which was shed on Calvary's cross fifteen hundred years later, but to which we now look through the mists of nearly two thousand years. How can that blood avail for our redemption today? The blood had to be sprinkled of old on the actual lintel and door posts and then they were safe inside. It is centuries since Christ has died. In what sense, then, can we be made secure from judgment through the blood that He shed so long ago?

We read in the Epistle to the Hebrews of having our hearts sprinkled by the blood of Christ. How is that blood applied to our hearts? Through simple faith. In the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 3, after dwelling on the lost condition of all men by nature and practice, the apostle says in verse 23 and on, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"; and then adds: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus"

(Romans 3:23-26). What is he telling us? That the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus is all-availing, that it is sufficient for all men everywhere, that it settled for the sins of all men in past ages, who looked on to the cross in faith, and it settles now for all in the present age and in all the years to come, who look back to that cross in faith—"through faith in his blood."

In other words, when we trust the One who shed His blood at Calvary, then we are numbered amongst those who have redemption through the sacrifice that He offered, and that means that we are secure forever from the judgment due to sin, just as Israel, sheltered beneath the blood of the passover lamb, was secure from the judgment that was to fall upon Egypt, for God said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." So today, we who put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ are redeemed from the judgment that is hanging over this poor world—the judgment that sin deserves. And so we can enter into the meaning of that Scripture which says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

Some of you have only lately come to Christ; you have not known the Lord very long. Oh, I beg of you, do get this clear. Your salvation, your security from judgment does not depend on anything that you can be or do. It depends upon the work that the Lord Jesus did for you on Calvary, the redemptive work that He accomplished when He suffered in your place upon the Tree, and you enter into the good of that redemption through faith in Him. When Satan comes to tempt you, when you discover things in your own heart that you did not realize were there, just meet him with this: the redemption that is in Christ Jesus has settled everything, has made me free, has given me deliverance from the judgment of a holy God.

The believer is said to be redeemed from the curse of the law. He was exposed to that curse because of sin. God has declared, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." We have failed; we have broken God's law; we are under that curse. But our Blessed Redeemer was made a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Redemption guarantees our safety from judgment.

When we turn to the Epistle to Titus, we have another aspect of redemption. In chapter 2, verses 11-14, we read:

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world: looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem

us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

It cannot be too often insisted that salvation is not of works, that no works of ours could avail for our redemption; but here in this message we have another side of the truth emphasized, and that is that our blessed Lord not only died to redeem us from the judgment due to our sins, but He died to redeem us from all iniquity, that is, from all lawlessness. And sin is lawlessness. He died, as Mrs. Alexander's beautiful old hymn put it, not only to save our souls, but "He died to make us good." The gospel has not accomplished its purpose if it only frees people from judgment. It has not completed its work until it presents every believer in the glory, fully conformed to the image of God's blessed Son.

We have been called to holiness, to purity of life, to uprightness of behavior, and if any of us who profess the name of Christ are playing fast and loose with unholy things with worldliness, with carnality, with impurity, with things that defile these temples of the living God, these bodies in which the Holy Spirit dwells; if we are in any way living so as to bring dishonor upon the name of the One who died to save us, we are just to that extent thwarting one of the purposes for which Christ died. He died to redeem us from all iniquity. Here the word "redemption" is used in the sense of deliverance. He died to deliver us from all iniquity, to draw us away from evil things that peril our Christian experience and that would wreck and ruin our lives.

Redemption was illustrated in a stirring news article that appeared in our daily papers recently. Many read the story of those men shipwrecked in the South Pacific in connection with the world war. A number of them were huddled upon a raft and only one of them was able to swim, and he a big, burly colored man. When those sailors saw nothing but death and despair before them, this man sprang into the sea and towed that raft as he swam for over six miles through shark-infested waters, until he brought them all to a place of safety. That was redemption, and that man was a redeemer.

Our Lord Jesus not only risked His life, but gave His life, not only to save us from judgment, but also to "redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Dear young Christian, I beg of you, do not allow yourself to be careless as to this aspect of redemption. Do not be content to know that you have trusted Christ as your Saviour from hell, and forget that you are called upon to live a heavenly life here upon this earth. Do not be content to say that at a given time or at a certain meeting you went into an inquiry room and told the Lord Jesus you would trust Him as your Saviour. Remember that in doing that you received Him not only as

the Saviour of your soul but as the One who is to be Lord of your life, the One who died to redeem you from everything that is unholy.

We read, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Do not let it ever be said of you that you are not concerned about good works, and do not ever tell people that because salvation is not works, it does not matter what kind of lives they live. Our Lord Jesus Christ says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." They cannot see your faith, but they can see your works, and if your life is not in accordance with your faith, they will soon realize it and will put you down as a fraud and a hypocrite, and instead of your influence being for good, it will be for evil.

James says in his Epistle, "Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works." You cannot show your faith without works, and so in that sense faith without works is dead. Justification is by faith, absolutely without works, but the same Scripture that tells us that, puts emphasis on our works as the evidence of our salvation. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 2, we read: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." But Paul immediately adds, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." That is our practical redemption. If one Scripture tells me that "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief"; another Scripture says, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." Our Lord Jesus, the living Saviour, has sent His Holy Spirit to dwell within us, in order that as we walk in the Spirit we may find this practical redemption from the power of evil in the life.

But there is a third aspect of redemption, and that is brought before us in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. In verse 22 we read: "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." "We ourselves groan within ourselves." Of whom is he talking? Christians. Groaning Christians? Yes! Oh, I thought Christians were always happy; I thought they were always shouting and singing! Well, you have a lot to learn. Thank God, it is possible to joy even in the midst of sorrow, and Christians have their griefs and sorrow and trials. But

they have a wonderful Saviour to carry them through those trials—One to sustain and help them in every hour of distress.

One of our chief causes of groaning is that of physical infirmities, and that is what the apostle is talking about here. In our unconverted days our groaning was caused by our sins. We cried out in pain as we longed for deliverance. Then we were groaning in bondage. Now as Christians we groan in grace, because of physical infirmities that are often such a hindrance in our lives. Perhaps you were just getting ready to go to prayer meeting one night. (I hope you love the prayer meeting.) But you did not get there. You were preparing to go, when suddenly you came down with such a sick headache that you had to stay at home. When others were gathered for prayer and praise, there you were, lying on the couch sniffing at camphor, and you were saying to yourself, "What a wonderful day it will be when I get a new body and a new head that will never ache." Well, that is what the apostle means when he says, "We that are in this tabernacle [body] do groan." We are so often hindered by physical weakness, but we are looking on to the day of the redemption of the body. We have the firstfruits of the Spirit, but we are looking forward to the full "son placing," for that is what the word "adoption" means. Then we shall be fully conformed to the Son of God.

When will that be? In Philippians, chapter 3, verses 20-21, we read, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body." When our Bible was translated, the word "vile" did not mean something wicked and corrupt, but it meant something of a humiliating character, so this might be translated, "Who shall change the body of our humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." He is drawing our attention to that wonderful event which should now be the hope of the Christian, and I am thinking again of you young Christians. He wants you now to get before your soul as the lodestar, the blessed hope of the Lord's return. The One who died for you on the cross is coming again, and He is coming to receive you to be with Himself. He could not have you there in the glory as you now are. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." So in order that you might be suited for the place to which He is going to take you, He will give you a new body, a glorified body; and when you receive that, you will be fit for a place in the Father's house.

He said before He went away, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." And we learn from other Scriptures what will take place in order to prepare us for the

Father's house. The first Epistle of the Thessalonians, chapter 4, is a wonderful passage as to this. It says, "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." That is the time when the body will be changed, and our redemption will be complete. Already we have the redemption of the soul; we have been redeemed from judgment. We are experiencing day by day, as we walk in obedience to the Lord, practical redemption, redemption from the power of sin. When our blessed Saviour returns, our redemption will be complete—spirit and soul and body will be fully conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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