

# CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

717 North Stapley Drive, Mesa, AZ 85203 Phone: (480) 833-7500

<b>Series:</b>	<b>Special Messages</b>		Pastor/Teacher
<b>Number:</b>			Gary L.W. Johnson
<b>Text:</b>	<b>Ephesians 1:7-10; I Thessalonians 1:10</b>		
<b>Date:</b>	<b>December 15, 2013 a.m.</b>		

## The Ultimate Rescue

A few years ago *The New York Times* carried a story about Floyd and Rita Rupp. “One balmy Summer day in 1997 Rita Rupp (57) from Tulsa Oklahoma, was on a lengthy road trip with her husband Floyd (67). For no reason in particular, she began to sense that they may be in danger. She started thinking, ‘What if someone hijacks our car and kidnaps us? No one [would] even realize we’re missing for days, and no one would come looking for us.’ So she hatched a plan.

Rita wrote a note, just in case she got kidnapped. She scrawled the note in appropriately distressed handwriting, ‘Help I’ve been kidnapped. Call the Highway Patrol.’ She also supplied her name and a helpful description of the van they were driving.

This eccentric emergency plan would actually have proven to be a pretty good idea in the event that at some point she had actually been kidnapped, and managed to dispatch the note before being incapacitated.

At the time the idea was rather harmless, albeit a bit quirky. Except for one unforeseen eventuality. Mrs. Rupp’s paranoia would have remained her private problem if on a bathroom break at a gas station the note hadn’t inadvertently dropped out of her handbag. Oops.

A conscientious attendant found the alarming note and quickly notified the authorities who then immediately issued alerts, mobilized patrol vehicles, and set up road blocks in four states.

All the while, Mr. and Mrs. Rupp were cruising along to their destination, blissfully unaware of the multi-agency, national rescue operation that been launched to save them.

Eventually, Mr. Rupp called his workplace to brag about the ocean view he was enjoying. His colleague responded, ‘You have no idea what’s going on, do you?’ Evidently, he didn’t. I wonder if this type of behavior from his dear wife was something he had grown accustomed to. (Incidentally, Floyd is a chiropractor so he is used to dealing with a recurring pain in the neck).

In the spiritual realm, many people are blissfully unaware of the epic, eon-spanning rescue operation that has been underway on their behalf for millennia. They coast blithely through life without any idea of the sacrifice and planning that has been invested in their salvation. But unlike Mr. and Mrs. Rupp, everyone does actually need to be rescued, whether they realize it or not.

As we prepare for the Christmas season, let’s use the opportunity to link the ubiquitous baby in a manger scene to the metanarrative of the rest of the Bible: God’s orchestration and execution of the ultimate rescue operation, launched in the recesses of pre-history and culminating in the advent of the God-Man Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

B.B. Warfield, in an address to incoming students at Princeton Theological Seminary, argued that “there is no one of the titles of Christ which is more precious to Christian hearts than Redeemer.” Warfield went on to say that this is so because it “is the name specifically of the Christ of the cross. Whenever we pronounce it, the cross is placarded before our eyes and our hearts are filled with loving remembrance not only that Christ has given us salvation, but that he paid a mighty price for it.”<sup>2</sup> Of course I need not tell any of you the glorious significance of the name *Redeemer*. The name of this church is a constant reminder of this central feature of the gospel.

“It is this concept of rescue which underlines much of what the Bible says about the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. He died in order to rescue us. We were unable to rescue ourselves from the power and punishment of our own sin, but ‘Christ died for the ungodly... God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us’ (Rom. 5:6, 8). One Greek word for ‘rescue’ is used in Galatians 1:4 to describe the purpose of the Saviour’s sacrifice on the cross: ‘who gave himself for our sins to

rescue us'. This term implies great danger as well as the inability of the people concerned to escape from the danger by their own efforts. On the cross, therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ achieved a special rescue operation and one which it was impossible for any human or angel to accomplish. The same idea of rescue occurs again in I Thessalonians 1:10: '...Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath'. Only believers are rescued from God's anger, but notice that it is the Lord Jesus *alone* who rescues us from this 'coming wrath'".<sup>3</sup>

## **I. REDEMPTION STATED**

Redemption, observed Thomas Goodwin, "is larger than forgiveness of sins; for redemption reacheth to glory also. Glory was to be purchased anew. And why? Because, though we were predestinated to glory in our relation unto Christ's person as our head, yet we forfeited it all, and it must therefore be bought again; and therefore the glory of heaven, in Luke 21:28, is called redemption. 'Lift up your heads, for your redemption draws nigh,' saith Christ, speaking of the latter day. You have the like place, Rom. 8:23, 'We groan within ourselves, waiting for the redemption of our bodies.' And, Tit. 2:14, sanctification itself is called redemption, 'Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' Redemption is a large word; for Christ was fain to buy all that God intended us, because we lost it."<sup>4</sup> There are *three* important terms used in the New Testament to express redemption. The first is AGORAZO. It comes from the marketplace and means "to buy or purchase" and always involves the thought of a transaction.<sup>5</sup> It closely parallels the Hebrew GAAL, "to redeem," (Ruth 4:1-8) and KOFER, "a ransom price," (Psalm 49:7). The second term is EXAGORAZO. As you can see, this is simply AGORAZO with the prefix EX and conveys the thought of buying *out of* the marketplace. The third word is LUO (and its derivatives LUTROO, LUTRON, LUTROSIS and APOLUTROSIS); it means "to loose, set free or deliver."

## **II. THE REDEEMER**

This redemption is procured by Christ; "in Him we have redemption." Paul is here speaking of Christ's work of redemption. The extent of this work is defined by the context. Who are redeemed? The very same ones that are chosen and predestinated in Him. These and no others are the recipients of Christ's redeeming work. Note that Christ is declared to be God's beloved (1:6). Chrysostom, one of the early church fathers, declared, "It is strange, infinite strange, that he that was God's beloved, whom he delighteth in as in himself, that God should ever send him to be a Redeemer, and to shed his blood for sinners. What! Was he God's beloved, and have you redemption in him too? Should God sacrifice his beloved? God chose us to be holy in heaven with him, to be sons with him there, to delight in us there. Let that plot stand, let them never come to be sinful, let me have them up in heaven presently with my Son. One would have thought God might have said this. No, God would commend his love yet further. He would let them fall into sins; to redeem them, he would sacrifice this beloved. He had so much love in his heart that he could commend it to us no way but by sacrificing his beloved. He might have chosen whether he had done so or no; he might have made us as happy in heaven as now we shall be; it needed not have cost him the blood of his Son. But now he wonderfully sets out his love to us, in that we have redemption in his beloved."

## **III. THE PRICE OF REDEMPTION**

It was through "his blood" that sinners are redeemed. Paul tells us elsewhere that we are "bought with a price" (I Corinthians 6:20; 7:23). This price is identified as being His blood. "But what is meant by his blood? His blood is only mentioned; not that his active obedience doth not go into it. Take all Christ, good brethren. But because his blood was the last part of the payment that cancelled all the bond, therefore his blood is still mentioned in Scripture. And his blood is more mentioned than the other. Why? To answer the expression of the type in the old law. There was the blood poured out, you know, and there was blood laid upon the horns of the altar, and all things were sprinkled with blood. What did the blood signify in the Old Testament? Blood in the Old Testament signified the soul of the beast; saith he, the life of it, or the soul of it, lieth in the blood. So in the New Testament still, the blood of Christ is mentioned, to signify the sufferings of his soul; and it is mentioned, too, to answer the type. In the Lord's Supper you have bread, to signify the breaking of

his body; but you shall find that he ascribeth more peculiarly his sufferings to his blood, signified by the wine, to represent the sufferings of his soul; and therefore his soul is said to be ‘poured forth.’ Fall down, my brethren, before the Lord Jesus Christ. ‘Thou art worthy to receive all honour and glory, for thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood,’ say the angels and saints, Rev. 5:9.”<sup>6</sup>

#### IV. THE RESULT OF REDEMPTION

Redemption secures for sinners the forgiveness of their sins (Colossians 2:13). Rightly did Richard Sibbes once declare, “We can never bless God too much, nor sufficiently, for Christ. ‘Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,’ Eph. 1:3. Now we may think of sin without shame and despair. O blessed state, when a man can think of his former odious, and filthy, loathsome sins, and yet not despair! Because, when he believes in Christ, the blood of Christ purgeth all away, takes away all sin. He hath taken them away.”<sup>7</sup>

#### V. THE SOURCE OF REDEMPTION

What caused God to be redemptive? “The riches of his grace.” And what is grace? I doubt if there is a biblical term that is more distorted or misunderstood. It is very typical, even for professing evangelicals, to say something like this, “If you do this, then God will be gracious.” In this scheme “grace” is something God does in response to what we do first. The grace of God cannot be earned or merited or in any way solicited from God. The word properly understood always signifies God’s sovereign freedom to exercise His love and compassion. Therefore, the love of God is called grace as is His mercy.

**CONCLUSION:** The great work of redemption which the Apostle glories in is little understood and even less appreciated in many churches today. Until we take seriously the Bible’s teaching on sin and God’s holiness, we will never be captivated the way Paul was with Christ the Redeemer. Bavinck, writing about a hundred years ago, said, “True, there are many who try to banish these serious thoughts from their minds and plunge into life as though there were no God and no commandment. They deceive themselves with the hope that there is no God (Ps. 14:1), that He does not bother about the sins of men, so that whoever does evil is good in His sight (Mal. 2:17), that He does not remember evil nor see it (Ps. 10:11 and 94:7), or else that, as perfect Love, He may not seek out and punish the wrong (Ps. 10:14). And whoever holds to the demand of the moral law and lets the ethical ideal stand in its loftiness, can only agree that God must punish the wrong. God is love, indeed, but this glorious confession comes into its own only when love in the Divine being is understood as being a holy love in perfect harmony with justice. There is no room for the grace of God only if the justice of God is first fully established.”<sup>8</sup>

#### ENDNOTES

---

<sup>1</sup> This story was brought to my attention by Clint Archer who blogs at *The Cripple Gate*.

<sup>2</sup> B.B. Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ* (rpt. P&R, 1950), p. 325.

<sup>3</sup> Eryl Davies, *The Ultimate Rescue: Christ’s Saving Work on the Cross* (Evangelical Press, 1995), p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> *The Works of Thomas Goodwin I* (rpt. Tanski, 1996), p. 122.

<sup>5</sup> This word is found twenty-five times in the New Testament with its usual commercial meaning, mostly in the gospels (Matthew 13:44; Luke 22:36), but on five other occasions it describes the “buying of Christians out of the bondage of sin (I Corinthians 6:19; 7:23; Revelation 14:3); cf. *Dictionary of New Testament Theology I*, ed. C. Brown (Zondervan, 1975), p. 268.

<sup>6</sup> Goodwin, p. 124.

<sup>7</sup> *The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes II* (James Nichol, 1862), p. 262.

<sup>8</sup> H. Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith* (rpt. Baker, 1977), p. 260.