

God's New Society

Message 2

Rescued and Protected

Ephesians 1:6-14

The Horror of Slavery

Several years ago when I was in high school I spent a week at the Hagerstown Fairgrounds. I was showing a heifer, and my job was to keep her fed, watered, and clean for the judging. In the many hours between chores I read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Although I forget many of the details, the force of the book remains with me. My parents reared me to treat all people with respect, so I had never been partial to slavery, but living as a slave vicariously through Uncle Tom and the other Negroes in the book gave me a profound awareness of the horror of slavery. Slavery's defenders will assert that most slaves were not brutally mistreated – they were too valuable for that. But no one can deny that slaves suffered horribly. The wickedness of Simon Legree could make you fear to turn the pages of the book, lest you discover some new grotesque method of destroying black human beings. Even a few such incidents were too many. But perhaps just as shocking was the disruption of the slave families. As property, slaves were bought and sold for the economic gain of their masters. Family ties played a small role in such decisions. So husbands were torn from their wives and children from their parents for the profit of their owners.

But even the best of conditions cannot erase the horror of slavery, for at root slavery destroys what men hold most dear – the freedom for which we established this country in the first place. A kindly treated slave in a pleasant home is far worse than a free man living in a dirt hut. The free man can make of his life what he wishes, but the slave is bound to the will of another. And as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* showed so vividly, pleasant conditions can change overnight. A kind master could die or suffer bankruptcy, and then his slaves would be sold to the highest bidder. The heart of the matter is that the slave has no control over his future. The horror of slavery resides most deeply in the hopelessness of a life in which one man is owned and controlled by another.

Redeemed by Jesus

In tonight's passage Paul tells us that we have redemption through the blood of Jesus. Redemption is a word that has largely fallen into disuse, but this passage is meaningless if we fail to understand it. Both the Greek and English words refer to commercial transactions. When I was a child, the supermarkets gave S&H Green Stamps to their customers, based on how many groceries you bought. My mother came home and pasted the stamps in a book, and when the book was full, she would *redeem* the stamps. By themselves the stamps were worthless paper, but when they were assembled in the book, they could be traded for household items such as dishes, pots, and flatware. Perhaps the clearest image of redemption is in the pawn shop. If you need cash right away, you can take some valuable possession to a pawn shop. The pawn broker will give you some fraction of its worth and hold the item for a certain length of time. If you get the money within the time period, you can return to the pawn shop and buy back, or *redeem* your possession for the amount you received plus a fee for the pawn broker's trouble. If you fail to return within the specified time, the pawn broker will sell your item to one of his customers. The core idea here is that *your* possession is held by someone else until you *buy it back*.

Redemption is a sort of economic rescue of something you own. Redemption involves three components: a possession, an original owner, and a new owner. When Paul says "we have redemption through His blood", we must ask, what is the possession, who is the original owner, and who is the new owner? In this passage we can see that we are the possession. We are the ones who are redeemed. We are redeemed "in Him", in the Beloved (v. 6), in Jesus Christ (v. 5). Jesus is the one who redeems us. Jesus is the original, the true owner. So who is the new owner – the one who owned us until Jesus bought us back? Verse 7 tells us that our redemption is the forgiveness of sins. This is the clue that sin is the usurper who

owned us until Jesus came to the rescue.

Paul developed this idea extensively in Romans chapter 6. Turn there and we will read verses 5-7, 11-14.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. ⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin. ¹¹ Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. ¹³ And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. Romans 6:5-7, 11-14

Paul began chapter 6 showing that when we are baptized are united to Christ. Baptism joins us to Christ with an unbreakable bond. That means that we have access to the blessings of Christ. His knowledge, riches, and power are ours. In particular, we share the blessings of resurrection. Jesus died and rose again. When we are baptized, we get the benefit of having died and risen again. It is as if we actually did die and rise again. Paul's point here is that whoever dies and rises again is no longer a slave to sin, and he goes on to tell us how to live in this new freedom. Our interest tonight is that sin is the master that controlled us until Christ came.

If you leave here tonight and go tell your roommate that you learned that Christ redeemed you from sin, I suspect that many of you would be met with a shrug. Redemption is a meaningless theological jargon for most people because they do not understand that they are enslaved by sin. If you are convinced that you are a free man, you will be indifferent to a plan of escape from bondage. It is only when you recognize your enslavement that it becomes unbearable and you long for release. Many people in America and at Lehigh hear the message of salvation in Jesus, and really do not care – for they do not see the need to be saved from anything. Many Americans like the life they have. Even when they fall into trouble or hardship, they are convinced the remedy is an adjustment in their circumstances. They do not see that the problem is in themselves – deep within the core of their being.

Sin is the worst form of slavery because of both its operation and its effects. Sin blinds the eyes and stops the ears of people so they cannot see Christ or hear the gospel. Thinking that they are decent people, they cannot understand that they are enemies of God because they do not believe in Jesus. They do not grasp that their heart, their mind, and every aspect of their being is enslaved to sin. Sin has such a grip on people, they do not even notice they are not free. It operates by capturing the whole person. Sin is the ultimate Matrix that convinces people God will accept them as long as they do not commit any terrible sins, like genocide or intolerance. People without Christ live in a dreamworld of beautiful nightmares. But someday they will wake up and see clearly the horrifying life they have been living.

Sin operates by capturing the vital perceptions of a person and rendering him incapable of correctly perceiving reality. Sin's effects are total disaster. In this life sin destroys individuals, families, communities, and nations. It happens slowly, so the effects are often not recognized. Even something so obvious as Hitler's rearming of Germany and destruction of the Jews was denied and ignored by most of the nations of the world – until he destroyed them. Sin claims to bring joy and pleasure, but it fails to deliver. Sometimes it does bring short-term pleasure, but the payoff is always catastrophic. After Christmas Ruth and I took a vacation, and the best deal on a hotel was in Atlantic City. Out of curiosity we walked through a couple of the casinos. What struck me was the gamblers. No one was having fun. Not one. I looked at their faces, and

there was no joy. Atlantic City calls itself America's playground, but it is a miserable place. Sin destroys life here on earth, but even worse, it destroys people for eternity. In the gospels Jesus repeatedly warned His audience of the danger of hell. Sin ruins life on earth and plunges its victims into eternal destruction.

Sin is the worst form of slavery because it captures the whole person and totally destroys him. Southern masters destroyed families. Hitler destroyed lives. Communism enslaved its people with fear. But in all these cases the people still had the ability to think, to dream, to hope. Sin is terrifying because it robs people of independent thought, destroys real hope, and hurls them into destruction of body and soul – all while convincing them life is good.

Notice that sin is the master of all human beings. No one is free of sin's tyranny. How can this be? How did we all come to be enslaved to sin? It all began in the garden. Adam and Eve began life in service to God, but when they rejected God's word, they became enslaved to sin. A few verses down, in Romans 6:16 Paul says, "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?" When Adam and Eve willingly obeyed sin, they became its slaves. Sin was their new owner. The children of slave are also slaves. We, the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, are also enslaved to sin. The whole human race was enslaved to sin until Jesus came.

God told Adam that if he ate the forbidden fruit he would surely die. In the centuries following his sin, Adam lived to see the horrible results of his sin. One son killed another. Cain established a culture of beauty, greed, and violence. Rape, murder, and theft were ordinary events in world God had created. Then, 930 years after that first sin, Adam died. Sin apparently triumphed. The earth was devoted to evil and death was the ultimate winner. But within this miserable existence God promised a deliverer – a child who would be born from the woman and would rescue man. Adam believed this promise – all the way til his death. Noah believed God's promise. Abraham believed, and Moses and David and Daniel – and Mary. Finally, in the fulness of time, God gave man a child who would rescue them from sin. Jesus came to set us free.

But how can man be set free? Man willingly enslaved himself to sin. In a sense sin had a legal right to rule the human race. How can man be liberated from sin? Only by death. Death is the just punishment for sin. When we die, the debt to justice is paid. Furthermore, when you die you do not sin anymore, do you? Have you ever known a corpse to steal, or kill, or fornicate? So sin can finally be exterminated by killing man. Sin's power is expressed in man, and when man dies its guilt and power is fully extinguished. So Jesus came, and as a perfect man he represented all men – and as fully God He accepted the guilt of all sin. Jesus took the guilt of our sin upon Himself and died – and when He died, sin lost its power over us.

Jesus paid the debt we owed. He redeemed us. We owed God death for our sin, and Jesus paid that debt for us, thus setting us free. But that would be small benefit if He remained dead. Jesus also rose to life, and now we may live in obedience to God. Death could not hold God in its grip. Jesus rose from the dead and lives. We who are bound to Jesus also live. We live in freedom from sin. We are truly able to love, serve, and please God. We can do what no man apart from Christ is able to do. Sin has no power over us. We are truly free!

Liberated by the Spirit

Jesus redeemed us. He set us free. But we do not know that wonderful truth until the Holy Spirit comes to us and shows us that we are really free. If Jesus is the one who pays the fine to get you out of jail, the Spirit is the officer who comes and lets you out. Verses 11 to 14 teach us the work of the Spirit in our salvation.

Verse 11 is a bit difficult because virtually every translation fails to do justice to the Greek text. The New King James Version reads, “In Him also we have obtained an inheritance...” The English Standard Version and the New American Standard Bible take a similar approach. The NIV reads, “In him we were also chosen...” The New King James translates the words better, but the NIV is closer to the meaning.

The word in question is the word for “inheritance” (NKJ), translated “chosen” in the NIV. John Stott, in his commentary says, “...the verb *kleroo*...can mean to give or to receive a *kleros*, an inheritance.” (Stott, p. 46) The question is exactly what the inheritance is. Does this passage mean that we receive an inheritance from God? Or does it mean that God receives us as His inheritance? Either translation is possible. Most versions takes it to mean that we receive an inheritance from God. That is certainly true. Last week we pointed out the incredible blessings we have received from God. And as His adopted children, we have access to all the rights and riches of divinity. Think of it, we are the heirs of God! Can you imagine anything more exciting? But although this passage teaches this, that is not the meaning of this verse.

What convinces me that this verse is saying that we are God’s inheritance is that the verb in question is in the passive voice. It makes more sense grammatically to see us being given as an inheritance than as receiving and inheritance. So I would translate this verse, “In whom also we were inherited...” This is basically what the NIV is getting at. The verb *kleroo* also incorporates the idea of choice, so it is correct to say that we were chosen. But the best translation conveys the idea that we are the inheritance of God. Through Christ, because He redeemed us, God takes us as His own.

In this Paul is echoing the many Old Testament passages in which God claims to His people as His inheritance. In Deuteronomy 9:29 Moses said, “Yet they are Your people and Your *inheritance*, whom You brought out by Your mighty power and by Your outstretched arm.” Psalm 33:12 says, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, The people He has chosen as His own *inheritance*.” The fascinating thing about these verses is that in the Greek version of the Old Testament, the same word, *kleroo*, is used for inheritance.

So what is the cash value of all this? Why drag you through all this Greek grammar? Because it shows again how precious we are to God. We are not struggling through life, faintly hoping to get to heaven by a slim chance. No! God chose you! God redeemed you! You are God’s heritage, His most precious possession! God will not let go of you whom He loved, chose, and called. You are no longer a slave of sin, you are a child of God.

But as we said last week, the fact that God chose us does not mean that we are puppets. God chose us, but that choice takes effect as we also choose Him. Verses 12 and 13 tell us that the Jews first, then the gentiles hoped in Jesus. (Here I should point out that the New King James Version uses the word “trust”, but the Greek word is the common word for hope.) At some time in history Paul and the Ephesians heard the gospel and placed their hope in Jesus. This exercise of faith is the *means*, the pathway by which they gained access to all the great riches that Paul has been describing here. Using our jail analogy, the prisoner is only actually free when he walks out of the cell. Salvation only comes to you when you hope in Jesus, when you believe in Him, when you accept His gospel.

Paul proceeds in verse 13 to describe the Holy Spirit as a seal. I never understood this until I was an adult. A seal is another thing that we do not often discuss these days. But the concept is not totally absent from our culture. A seal does three things. It certifies the authenticity of something, it protects something, and it is a mark of ownership. The seal of the United States certifies the authenticity of our money. Likewise the Holy Spirit certifies the genuineness of our sonship. A seal on an envelope protects the contents from tampering. So the Holy Spirit protects us from the evil one. And a seal pressed into a book marks it as owned by someone, like a brand on a cow. Likewise the presence of the Holy Spirit marks us as belonging

to God.

Finally, the Spirit is a down payment. God is with us now, but more is coming.

Living in Freedom

Application:

1. Do you wish to be free from slavery? Would Uncle Tom have taken his freedom if it had been offered? You can be free from slavery to sin. If you believe in Jesus you will be free.
2. Are you glad you are free? How do slaves react when they are liberated? Rejoice. Worship.
3. Tell others.

John Newton knew the cruelty of slavery – he was a slave trader. Eventually he came to see that he was the most miserable slave of all. He confessed his sin and believed on Christ. He spent the rest of his life praising God's amazing grace that set him free from sin and made him a child of God. May we do likewise.

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Ephesians 1:11-12 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. NIV

Ephesians 1:11-12 In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory. RSV

Ephesians 1:11-12 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ESV

Ephesians 1:11-12 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, ¹² that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. NKJ

Ephesians 1:10-12 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, ¹² to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. NAS

Ephesians 1:11-12 Ἐν ᾧ καὶ ἐκληρώθημεν προορισθέντες κατὰ πρόθεσιν τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐνεργοῦντος κατὰ τὴν βουλήν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ ¹² εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης αὐτοῦ τοὺς προσηλπικότες ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ.

ἐκληρώθημεν

indicative 1 aorist passive 1st person plural

κληρόω

“literally choose by lot; passive obtain an inheritance, be appointed as heir” (Friberg)

“in whom lies the reason why we were made the κληρὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ (a designation transferred from the Jews in the O. T. to Christians...)” (Thayer)

“In whom also we were inherited.” (from Stott)

note the passive voice

Psalms 33:12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, The people He has chosen as His own inheritance.

κληρονομός = heir

Deuteronomy 32:9 For the LORD's portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance.

κληρονομός = heir

Deuteronomy 9:29 “Yet they are Your people and Your inheritance, whom You brought out by Your mighty power and by Your outstretched arm.”

κληρὸς = inheritance

“...the verb *kleroo*, which can mean to give or to receive a *kleros*, an inheritance.” (Stott, p. 46)

Outline

God 1-6a

Jesus 6b-10

Spirit 11-14

Grace bestowed 6b

Redemption 7

Forgiveness 7

Mystery 9 μυστήριον

Gather all things 10

οἰκονομία = stewardship, management, administration,

οἰκονόμος = steward, household manager