

We live in the age of self-help, self-improvement. Self self self. Especially in the New Year. The gym is the worst in January, right? You seen the Jim Gaffigan piece, where he talks about all the mirrors in the gym. He's like I don't want to see myself – that's why I am at the gym. But some do like those mirrors. I want to look at something while I work on myself. Looking at my self magazine and read articles on how myself can improve myself while I work on myself.¹

We have been in a series on the cross of Christ, and the message of the cross says we don't need self-improvement but redemption. We need rescue, deliverance. We don't need an improved version of the self, we need to be redeemed and made new. Not a face-lift but heart surgery. Not a software update but a whole new operating system. We're not just in bad shape; we're in bondage. / This morning let's consider how the cross accomplishes redemption: What How Why

What? What is redemption? The NT redemption word group means deliverance by payment of price.² Which immediately pushes us to ask **how**? If we are delivered by payment of price, what is the price? The price is the blood of the Lamb. The price was blood sacrifice. Rev 1:5: he has "freed us from our sins by his blood." 5:9-10: "And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Eph 1:7: "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace." Rom 3:22b-24: "For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," Heb 9:15: "Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant." 1 Pet 1:18-19: "knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, 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."

We are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. This language of course comes from the Exodus. When a 1st C Jew heard "redemption," there mind went straight to Egypt and the great act of deliverance in the OT. It was the Jewish mastery story.³ **Exod 6:6-7, 12:1-13. /** God redeems his people and makes his home with them but they rebel and Israel goes into exile again. But the prophets promise a New Exodus: **Ezek 20:33-38 Isa 43:16-21, 51:1-11.** Jesus comes and accomplishes the new exodus: redemption through his blood. Luke 9:30-31 at Jesus' transfiguration: "And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure (*exodus*), which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." 1 Cor 5:7: "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fMTiEqJ84I8>

² Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 27

³ Rutledge, *The Crucifixion*, 223.

Jesus brings redemption. As Luther says, redemption from the unholy Trinity: sin death and devil, but more. Redemption from the power of the devil. We spent four weeks on that aspect of redemption in December, so we'll move on. What else are we redeemed from?

We have been redeemed from sin. Redeemed from the penalty of sin. I love how the prophet Micah ends his book: "Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:18-19). The final epithet of our sins should read: "buried at sea."

Turn over to Gal 3:10-13. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law. The Law requires perfection. You must abide by all things. We don't and so we incur the curse. But God. Jesus redeemed us from the curse – and then those next verses are incredible: *by* becoming a curse for us. In our place. Are you kidding me. Greater news cannot be conceived. As theologian Donald Macleod puts it, "We scarcely dare let our imagination dwell on the paradox that God himself became a *katara* in place of us, enduring himself the curse due to *our* violations of *his* law."⁴

We have been redeemed from the power of sin. Rev 1:5b: "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood." We have been freed from slavery to sin. Keep your finger in Gal, but turn back a few books to **Rom 6:12-23**. You see the reality is no one is free. Sometimes people reject the Christian faith because they don't want to be bound. They want to be free, but the truth is they are not. They are slaves. They have some lord – whether it be their job, relationships, money, power, status, beauty, family, substances, or pleasure. And looking to anything to give you that which only God can give is what we call sin. What fruit are you getting? Romans 6 just calls it slavery to sin. The end of those things is death.

But thanks be to God. Jesus is the only Lord who liberates. You can move from slavery to sin to slavery to righteousness, which is the good and fruitful life. Christ moves us from bondage to liberation, from slavery to freedom. As my guy William Cowper wrote in a hymn I want sung loudly at my funeral: "O dying Lamb, Thy precious blood, Shall never lose its power, Till all the ransomed church of God Be saved to sin no more. E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply, Redeeming love has been my theme, And shall be till I die." We've been redeemed, ransomed, saved, sanctified, and sealed.

We have been delivered from Death. The wages of sin is death. We have earned it. But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. / Okay, so what is redemption? Deliverance by payment of a price. How? The blood of the unblemished lamb:

Why? To what end? What is our redemption unto? What is our freedom for? Well we just saw for the good and fruitful righteous life, but I stopped short in Gal 3. **Gal 3:13-14:** so that – purpose clause for this redemption. So that we Gentiles might receive the blessing of Abraham, which Paul here defines as

⁴ Macleod, *Christ Crucified*, 233.

the promised Spirit. These are the twin gifts of the new covenant: full and final forgiveness of sins and transformation from the inside out through the gift of the Spirit. The cross makes us right with God and then remakes us right. It achieves a change of status and a change of heart.⁵ And all this through faith.

What else? Is there more? **Gal 4:4-7.** We are adopted. Children of God. “Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it! Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb! redeemed through His infinite mercy - His child, and forever, I am.”⁶ And he mentions the Spirit again, by whom we cry Abba. We have a Father who sends the Son and the Spirit and will give us an inheritance. **5:1, 13-15.** True freedom is found in self-forgetfulness and self-giving love.

Titus 2:11-14: “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” Similar to Rom 6, huh, which shouldn’t surprise us. To redeem *us*. A people. From all lawlessness and to purify a people, zealous for good works. We are turned from slavery to the self to others. God doesn’t need our good works but our neighbors do. That’s the good and fruitful life. 1 Pet 1:18: “God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life” (NLT).

Listen to 1 Cor 6:19b-20: “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” You are not your own. You are not your own. You are not your own. Your life is not ultimately about you. Don’t live for self. Be like Paul: “I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself.” Gal 2:20a “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” Jesus died for all so that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and rose again (2 Cor 5:15). Your life is not yours. Your time is not yours. It’s his. You’ve been bought with a price. Your money is not yours. It’s his. You’ve been bought with a price. Your talents and gifts are not yours. They are his. You’ve been bought with a price. Your home is not yours. It’s his. You’ve been bought with a price. Your stuff is not yours. It’s his. You’ve been bought with a price.

You are not your own. You were bought. Ransomed. Redeemed. The Lord purchased you with precious blood. Heidelberg Catechism question 1: “Q. What is your only comfort in life and death? A.

That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. . . .” He owns us. We are no longer slaves of sin but slaves of Christ.

Isaac Watts: “Alas and did my saviour bleed and did my sov’reign die. Would he devote that sacred head for such a worm as I? Was it for sins that I had done, He groaned upon the tree? Amazing pity! grace unknown! And love beyond degree! But drops of grief can ne’er repay, The debt of love I owe; Here, Lord, I give myself away, ’Tis all that I can do.” And dearly beloved please believe this, slavery to Christ is true freedom. As George Matheson put it, “Make me captive, Lord, and then I shall be free.

⁵ Macleod, *Christ Crucified*, 224.

⁶ https://hymnary.org/text/redeemed_how_i_love_to_proclaim_it

