

Finding Our Identity in Jesus Series

Blessed with Redemption (Ephesians 1:7-8)

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At A Glance:

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These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.

Blessed with Redemption

I. Introduction

A. Illustration: Moran Stela Yanai

1. On October 7, 2023 Moran Stela Yanai, a forty-year-old jewelry designer, was attending the Nova Music Festival along with about three thousand other people.¹ She was selling her homemade jewelry at the event.² Early in the morning, she saw two rockets in the sky flying toward the music festival. A little time later, she began to hear gunfire. When Moran began to understand what was happening, she tried to flee in her vehicle like many others were doing.
2. While talking to the police on her phone, Moran was instructed to leave her car, which was stuck in a line of vehicles anyway, and hide in the trees and wait for the police to come. However, there was no place to go to hide.
3. After trying to hide by climbing up in a tree for forty minutes, her small group started to hear people speaking Arabic coming toward them. Once she was easily found, the masked Hamas individuals began to celebrate and praise Allah. They took a video of Moran being found and posted it on Tik Tok. Incredibly, the first group of men released her and let her go.
4. A few minutes later, Moran was found again by another larger group of terrorists, and once again, she was released. Following her second release, Moran screamed loudly, which drew attention from a third group who ran toward her. This time, they aggressively dragged her along the ground and ripped off the jewelry she was wearing. She was taken to a car and driven to Gaza, where she remained for 54 days until her release.

B. While most people assume they will never be taken captive or kidnapped, you already have been and don't even realize it. You are not captive physically, but you are spiritually. Your freedom has been taken away, and we live under the powerful influence of what the Bible calls sin—an internal impulse and tendency to do what is morally wrong. When we try to only do what is good and right, we quickly discover how hard it is to consistently avoid doing what we know is wrong. We realize we don't always have the strength and ability to do the good we want to do, and we keep doing the wrong we want to stop doing (Rm. 7:14-21).

C. According to Ephesians 1:7-8, freedom from our spiritual captivity of doing what is wrong is one of the spiritual blessings we are given by Jesus. Continuing to live in bondage, weighed down with shame and guilt, does not have to be a regular part of our life with Jesus. We don't have to be oppressed and dominated by specific habits of wrongdoing. The power of God can lead us to freedom as a spiritual blessing from Jesus.

¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XOOmAGP_4mw

² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LeeS_9X3Ucg

II. Blessed with Redemption

- A. Disciples are blessed with everything they need to live the way God wants. We have been given holiness by being pulled out of the world by God and set apart for His purposes. We are blessed with blamelessness in which all our spiritual and moral faults are diminished and corrected so that we can live spiritually fruitful lives; this will be perfected in the future. God the Father adopts us as a child of His and works in our lives so that we turn to Jesus so that our spiritual condition is secure. As a child, we live in the favor of God as we enter a new type of relationship with God that is warm, friendly, and blessed. All these spiritual blessings are provided to us through Jesus and our attachment to Him.
- B. Another blessing found in the long list of spiritual benefits provided by God is:
⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our wrongdoings, according to the riches of His grace ⁸ which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight (Eph. 1:7-8)
- C. Jesus works in us so that we experience redemption (“In Him we have redemption through His blood”, v. 7). Redemption is one of those Biblical terms that may be familiar to experienced disciples but causes confusion for anyone not familiar with Biblical terminology. We don’t often talk about redemption outside of a spiritual discussion.³ Redemption is an unfamiliar word to many, and we don’t know what it means, so it will be important for us to clarify what redemption is. Broadly speaking, redemption means to be rescued or delivered from a dangerous situation or from enemies.⁴ In the Bible, it most often adds the idea of a ransom—paying a price to buy the person, animal, or object back. The fundamental idea of redemption is that of the setting free of a thing or a person that has come to belong to another.⁵ Salvation (being made right with God) may be a free gift, but it is not free of any cost. Someone had to pay to make our rescue from spiritual danger possible.
- D. Perhaps you have been watching the news lately and you’ve been informed of the current situation going on with Savannah Guthrie’s mother Nancy. Savannah Guthrie, who works in television (mainly on the Today show), has been dealing with her mother being kidnapped from her home in Tucson, Arizona. A video has been released of a masked man appearing on her security camera, armed and wearing gloves. A ransom letter was sent to Arizona television stations KOLD and KGUN demanding \$4 million in bitcoin by Thursday Feb. 5th.⁶ In a message from Savannah and her siblings to the kidnappers, she said, “This is very valuable to us, and we will pay.”
- E. Paying money for the safe return of a person who has been kidnapped is an example of what the apostle Paul is talking about in redemption. God, through Jesus, made a payment for His spiritually adopted children to restore them to Himself. God bought us back from our own

³ Or worse, we talk about redemption in ways that are inconsistent with the Biblical language such as, “I need to redeem myself” meaning I’m going to make up for some mistake I’ve made.

⁴ Kenneth D. Litwak, “Redemption,” in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum et al., Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

⁵ Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 10, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 58.

⁶ <https://people.com/nancy-guthrie-ransom-note-multi-million-dollar-demands-deadline-11900782>

spiritual captivity to sin and its consequences. Jesus said that anyone who does wrong is under the influence and power of our corrupted nature as if we were a slave (Jn. 8:31-36). We do wrong, even when we don't want to, and we can't seem to stop doing what is harmful to ourselves and those around us. This destructive dynamic is what we are rescued from.

F. Here is how costly human redemption is:

⁷ No one can by any means redeem another Or give God a ransom for him— ⁸ For the redemption of his soul is priceless, And he should cease *imagining* forever— ⁹ That he might live on eternally, That he might not undergo decay. (Ps. 49:7-9)

G. The human soul, the immaterial part of who we are that is connected to our body, is extremely valuable—it is priceless (“For the redemption of his soul is priceless”, v. 8). Because it is so “expensive” to redeem even one person, no amount of money is enough to redeem someone (“No one can by any means redeem another OR give God a ransom for him”, v. 7 and “he should cease imagining forever”, v. 8). It is impossible for us, as human beings, to redeem ourselves or anyone else. We are unable to compensate God enough for all the times we've failed and hurt Him. Any amount of material wealth that a person might offer to God to pay God off so that their soul might be saved will be rejected. No strategy of self-sufficiency or trying to gain a positive response from God will be effective. We simply do not have the resources to do so, like a ransom note that exceeds the price of all our belongings and bank accounts. There is nothing we can do to save ourselves or anyone we love. The cost is simply too great; it is beyond our ability.

H. Jesus described the great cost of redemption by asking a question:

²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶ For what good will it do a person if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul? Or what will a person give in exchange for his soul?” (Mt. 16:24-26)

I. Jesus asked a brilliant question: what can be given as a payment for your soul (“Or what will a person give in exchange for his soul?”, v. 26)? Even the richest person in the world, who hypothetically had all the wealth available to them because they possessed every valuable thing in the entire world, would not have enough money to buy their soul. This is how helpless we are to save ourselves. We are in significant spiritual danger, and there is no way out—we are powerless to rescue ourselves. This is why we need someone from the outside to help us.

J. The spiritual situation we find ourselves in is as if we had to have surgery with the world's greatest surgeon. Image being in dire medical need. You had to be flown to another country where the world's best surgeon in your area of need worked. You were medically transported across the world. The world's leading surgeon and team of specialists worked your case. The treatment was extensive, requiring many surgeries, various treatments, and a long recovery time in which you were in the best, most expensive hospital in the world for a few years. When you were fully recovered, you were medically transported back home. After a few days home, you get the mail and notice a medical bill in your mailbox. As you sat down and opened the bill, you saw how large it was and realized you would be making payments for the rest of your life,

until your last breath. Your grandchildren's grandchildren would still be making payments long after you were gone. There is no conceivable way you will ever pay off your treatment in your lifetime. That is what redemption is like.

- K. While we are helpless and don't have the resources to redeem our own soul, God is not. God made the costly payment for our soul on our behalf using the extremely valuable life of Jesus:
- ¹⁷ If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *on earth*; ¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ. (1 Pet. 1:17-19)
- L. Redemption is like when we are temporarily staying in a hotel; our life in this world is only a short stay. Since this life doesn't last forever, we should live this life with the knowledge that we will stand before God one day and be accountable to Him for everything we have done in this life. We all know that God's assessment of our lives, on its own merits, will not have a positive outcome (which is why we feel guilty). If God were to assess us based on the deeds we have done throughout life, we will be found guilty of violating the moral standards of God. We all know that we do what we ought not do. This is what the children of God are redeemed from.
- M. In Christianity and the perspective of God, the payment is not monetary or material; it is moral and spiritual.⁷ The payment that was required to save us from the judgment and punishment of God was the life of Jesus ("knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ", vv. 18-19). As valuable as our individual soul is, Jesus is so much more valuable than us that His life offered to the Father is capable of rescuing every person who has ever lived. Jesus' life and soul is so valuable that it is enough to pay the price to redeem humanity in its entirety! As human beings are worth more than many animals, so Jesus is worth more than many people (Mt. 10:31, 12:12).
- N. If you think you are a child of God, then we need to develop the perspective that my life belongs to God-it is not my life to do whatever I want with it (1 Cor. 6:19-20). I have been bought by God at a very high price, so I am no longer in charge of my own life. I can't just do whatever I want to do. I have an obligation to God to live how He instructs me to live. If you think your life belongs to you and you are free to move it in whatever direction you want and you can spend your time and money however you want, you do not yet have a Biblical view on your identity in Jesus. God paid a very heavy price for you. Your life is not your own; you belong to God, and you are under obligation to live for God. If you respond to this truth by thinking it is oppressive and cruel, you are making yet another mistake. Living according to God's plan and design as a servant of Jesus is the most blessed quality of life you can possibly live.
- O. Even though we are free because of the work Jesus is doing in us, this doesn't mean we can use that freedom however we want. We need to use our freedom in service of God (1 Pet. 2:16). Instead of being under the power and control of sin, we are now under the power and control

⁷ R. David Rightmire, "[Redeem, Redemption,](#)" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, electronic ed., Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 664.

of God (Rm. 6:12-14, 17-19). As children of God, we have died to ourselves so that Jesus is living in us and through us (Gal. 2:20).

- P. Essentially, as children of God who are following Jesus, we need to hand over the ownership rights of our life to Jesus. We no longer live for ourselves, but for Jesus, who died for us as an act of love toward Jesus (2 Cor. 5:14-15). Living as if Jesus is the owner of our life can be accomplished in both small and big ways. In a small way, our love for Jesus can be expressed by the decision to spend ten minutes in the evening reading the Bible instead of using that time on social media. We demonstrate that our life is not our own when we sacrifice a small amount of our time to spend it on activities that are pleasing to God. A person may demonstrate Jesus' ownership of their life in a big way by deciding to quit their current career and enter full-time ministry. Whether it is a small decision that only takes a few minutes or a large life-altering action, we can direct our life and make decisions with the understanding that our life belongs to Jesus. Our life is no longer just about doing what we want to do, it is about doing what Jesus wants us to do.

III. Blessed with Forgiveness

- A. Like most of the other spiritual blessings given to us by God through Jesus, the blessing of redemption brings with it other benefits that come in a bundle. Redemption isn't experienced in isolation. When we are rescued from spiritual danger and bought back to God in redemption, we also receive a second blessing connected to our redemption.
- B. The second blessing connected to our redemption is forgiveness:
 the forgiveness of our wrongdoings, according to the riches of His grace ⁸ which He lavished on us (Eph. 1:7-8)
- C. When we are redeemed, we are also forgiven ("the forgiveness of our wrongdoings", v. 7). To be forgiven is to be formally and legally released from an obligation or debt.⁸ We are let off the hook without having to make all the necessary payments. The debt is canceled. Forgiveness is like being released from making your mortgage payments after only a few years of payments because someone else paid the remaining balance for you.
- D. What is the debt every person owes to God?
 ¹³ And when you were dead in your wrongdoings and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our wrongdoings, ¹⁴ having canceled the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.
 (Col. 2:13-14)
- E. Since God is our creator and He consistently performs good actions toward each person, humanity has an inherent obligation to obey God and do what He says in His word, much like children are required to listen to their parents. This natural and intuitive obligation exists due to the nature of the relationship between the individuals involved. Children are to obey their parents because their parents provide and care for everything the child needs. The parent is wiser and stronger than the child, and they use their capabilities for this child's benefit. We can

⁸ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Ephesians 1:7 "forgiveness"

intuitively recognize the appropriateness and moral goodness of a child aligning themselves under their parents. This type of relational dynamic is also at work in every person's relationship with God.

- F. Therefore, when any person rebels against God and acts contrary to God's standards, communicated primarily through the Bible, they create a debt because they did not give to God what was owed to Him ("the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us", v. 14). The list of our moral crimes against God includes every instance in which we have violated God's word. Each time we fail to live according to what is good and right, another charge is added to our heavenly rap sheet. This list of charges is hostile to us because it causes us to stand guilty before God and rightly deserve the punishment God will give us.
- G. However, for the child of God, this list of truthful and accurate charges is cleared from our heavenly record by Jesus ("having canceled the certificate of debt...having nailed it to the cross", v. 14). All the divine charges filed against us are thrown out because they were dealt with by Jesus on the cross. Jesus was killed and punished in our place so that we could be forgiven and released! As children of God, we are redeemed from every act that we've committed against God's heavenly law (Tit. 2:14, Ps. 130:8). This is a beautiful explanation of forgiveness. As children of God, we are released from our obligation to perfectly obey all of God's moral standards as communicated in His word so we can earn God's favor. Strongly infused in the idea of forgiveness is the reality of freedom. Those who are forgiven are released and freed from the obligation of making payments toward a debt. God's perfect moral standards no longer apply to us as children of God because Jesus fulfilled that requirement for us.
- H. If we truly understand the seriousness of the spiritual danger we were in and the beauty of what Jesus has done for us, how can we not respond to Jesus with a life of affection and love toward Him? How can we not delight and take joy in serving our Rescuer? How can we lack passion and not care about the things of God after all this?
- I. If you have never asked Jesus to forgive you, now is the time. How can a person turn to Jesus and ask for His forgiveness to receive all these wonderful spiritual blessings that we've been talking about? Be encouraged to turn Psalm 51:1-10 into your own personal prayer as you talk to God. Express your attitudes and desires through the words of this Psalm. From your heart, have a conversation with God connected to this passage of Scripture and ask God to forgive, cleanse, and wipe out all of your wrongdoings and guilty deeds. Plead with God to change your heart. Ask God to give you His Holy Spirit to help you transform your life.
- J. If you have already done all this, how can you act on the forgiveness God has provided for you? Children of God need to be open and willing to forgive others (Mt. 6:15, Mk. 11:26). Realizing how much we have hurt God and all the actions He has released us from motivates us to forgive the hurts others have caused us. As disciples, we need to maintain a forgiving posture toward others, generously letting others off the hook. We can't be healthy and keep a record of wrongs or hold grudges at the same time. Jesus goes so far as to say if we do this, God the Father will not forgive us. If we refuse to forgive others, God will refuse to forgive us. Having a forgiving attitude toward others is an evidence that we have been forgiven by God.

- K. As children of God, we need to be careful not to harden our hearts toward another person to the point that we are unwilling to forgive them if they repent. If in pride, we feel justified in treating others poorly because we think they have wronged us and they owe us something, our heart is not right before God.

IV. Conclusion

- A. As children of God, we can rejoice in the fact that Jesus has rescued us from the spiritual danger created by our moral failings toward God. He has delivered us from our spiritual captivity. Our salvation is a constant source of happiness that we can return to repeatedly. The more frequently we remind ourselves of the wonderful love Jesus has shown to us, the more affection for God we will have.
- B. Every child of God is freed from the obligation to perfectly obey everything God has told us to do in His word. The pressure of perfection has been taken off our shoulders. While we still strive to act the way God wants us to in every situation, we don't need to beat ourselves up or doubt our status as a child of God when we fail since we have been released from the obligation of relating to God according to our own merits.