

Ephesians 1:7—In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace,

In Him we have redemption through His blood, (1:7a)

The blood of Christ redeemed us from our sins (Ephesians 1:7a; 1Peter 1:18-19; Romans 3:24; Galatians 3:13). Stated differently, Jesus' blood paid our sin debt and liberated us from sin's grip (Galatians 5:1). Redemption, therefore, can be defined as paying a ransom for the purpose of liberating or freeing an individual from bondage. Some might say, "I think I will submit to Christ so I can go to heaven and, while on earth, bask in a lifestyle of sin." To this person I would say, "You have never met Christ." The liberation brought about through true redemption results in a zeal for obedience—not an excuse for an undisciplined, sinful existence (Titus 2:14).

After Adam and Eve disobeyed in the Garden, man, in his lost condition, was temporarily locked in sin. The only remedy was a Redeemer, a perfect God-man Who would die for the sin of man. Jesus is that perfect God-man Who said, while on the cross, "*it is finished*" (John 19:30). In dealing with the topic of redemption, Paul states in Colossians 2:13-14:

And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. (Colossians 2:13-14)

Jesus' blood was the payment required to cancel our sin debt and release us from sin's grasp. Yet His blood was also a symbol of the fact that a death had occurred. His death made the difference, for a syringe filled with His blood and applied to the cross would have been insufficient. He had to die for redemption to be made accessible to lost mankind (Hebrews 2:14-15; 9:15).

I had something happen a few years back that relates well to our subject matter. A man named Robert came to my pastor and asked for assistance. He hadn't eaten for some time and needed food and shelter. He told my pastor that he knew how to work, and that he desired to work on a farm. I was in the process of planting my crops, so my pastor called and asked if I needed help. I told him I did, so Robert moved in my home and worked with me for quite some time. A few months had passed when I sensed he was becoming restless. One morning I awoke and Robert was gone—and he had not departed empty handed. He had stolen my truck, shotgun, and a few other odds and ends. I called the local sheriff, and two days later Robert was found in northern Florida. The authorities locked him up and impounded my truck, but my shotgun was nowhere to be found.

Given my circumstances, I had two options—either press charges and have him convicted of auto theft, or send the authorities in Florida the remuneration required to have him released. I chose the second option and had him drive my stolen truck home. To describe how this set of events enhanced our relationship is impossible. He was a broken man when he returned, willing to do anything within reason for me. In fact, soon after this incident he began calling me "brother." Why? I had redeemed him from his physical bondage and forgiven his misdeed. What had it cost me? The price was approximately two hundred dollars. Jesus, to a much greater degree, paid our sin debt: "*In Him we have redemption through His blood*" (Ephesians 1:7a). Only "*in Him*" and "*through His blood*" is redemption granted—after repentance and faith are exercised by the depraved seeking salvation.

the forgiveness of our trespasses (1:7b),

All New Testament believers experience God's forgiveness, for through Christ's perfect sacrifice we have "*the forgiveness of our trespasses*" (Ephesians 1:7b).

The issue of forgiveness is one of the most important, yet misunderstood, doctrines in all of Christendom. Hence, many followers of Christ have a distorted view of the finality of Jesus' sacrifice. They believe that Christ's blood brought forgiveness for the sins committed from the time they were born until the time they were born again/saved, but that the sins committed after salvation are forgiven only through seeking God's forgiveness. If that were the case, since "*without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness*" (Hebrews 9:22), Christ would need to be crucified each time a believer confessed sin. Christ died once for all sin (Hebrews 10:12), meaning He can never die again. Therefore, every sin committed both before and after a New Testament believer accepts Christ must be forgiven when he (the believer) is placed "*In Him*" (Ephesians 1:7a). The church saint is required to confess and repent of sins committed after salvation—not to receive forgiveness, but to have communication restored with the Father. Why should we seek something we already have?

The moment we were placed into Christ, God forgave all our past, present, and future sins (Ephesians 1:7b). Passages like Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 2:13, and 1John 2:12 confirm this truth. However, 1John 1:9 appears to teach otherwise:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1John 1:9)

1John 1:9 seems to imply (on the surface at least) that sins committed subsequent to becoming a child of God are forgiven through seeking God's forgiveness once they are committed. But when examined in the Greek (the original language of the New Testament), it becomes obvious that any such use of this passage is out of context and invalid. The structure of the verbs "*forgive*" and "*cleanse*" will not allow such an interpretation. Also, should 1John 1:9 teach that sins committed subsequent to becoming a child of God must be confessed to receive forgiveness, the passage contradicts Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 2:13, and 1John 2:12—which place forgiveness in the past, coupled with completed action. New Testament believers confess sin after salvation, but not for the purpose of receiving forgiveness. They do so to have fellowship restored with the Father. (The *Romans 1-8* course produced and distributed by this ministry has much more to say regarding the subject.)

Another verse that seems to indicate that New Testament believers are to seek forgiveness on an ongoing basis is Matthew 6:12. This passage is extremely familiar due to being included in the Lord's prayer. Here Jesus said, "*And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.*" On the surface, the Lord appears to be instructing New Testament believers to ask for forgiveness when sin is committed. The question that must be answered is: "Did Jesus make this statement before or after the cross?" He made it before His crucifixion. Also consider that none of the Old Testament sacrifices took away sin, for they only covered sin until Jesus could die (Hebrews 10:4, 11). Since we must always interpret Scripture from its proper context, we should keep this truth in mind while assessing Matthew 6:12. Jesus was addressing individuals who lived before the cross; their forgiveness was yet future. Therefore, for them to seek forgiveness was proper. Things changed once Jesus died, for all sin (past, present, and future) is removed for the New Testament believer. Please don't hear me saying that the teachings of Jesus are outdated or irrelevant. I am simply communicating that all Scripture must be interpreted in context, even the teachings of Jesus.

Nothing outside of the cross will remove man's sin. The Old Testament sacrifices couldn't do so (Hebrews 10:4, 11), for they only covered the worshiper's sins (the cross removed them). Neither can we, after becoming members of Christ's body, receive forgiveness by asking God to forgive us. Why should we seek something we already have? The cross removed all our sin for all time (once we repented and believed while depraved), so may we forever enjoy the fullness of the redemption and forgiveness made available through Jesus.

according to the riches of His grace (1:7c),

God's grace is limitless. His "grace" not only permitted Him to predestine us "to adoption as sons" (Ephesians 1:5a-6b) once we repented and believed while depraved, but allowed Him to grant us redemption and forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7a-c) through our accepting His Son as Savior. His grace, like His love, holiness, wisdom, sovereignty, power, and other impeccable qualities, knows no bounds. Thus, Paul uses "according to" instead of "out of." Should the wealthy give "out of" their wealth, they could offer a small gift and fulfill their obligation. However, to give "according to" their wealth would require a substantial contribution. Because God is rich in grace, and forgave us "according to the riches of His grace," we need not be concerned that our disobedience surpass it.