

Chapter 6

Of “Saint Paul the Apostle: His Life, Theology, and Works”

(By Fr. Matthew the Poor)

Part 1

Theology of Redemption

From Theories to Life Applications

There are as many aspects of Christ’s redemption as man’s sinfulness and his stance in front of God:

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| (1) If captive to sin? | Redemption is liberation, |
| (2) If unfulfilling to God’s dues? | Redemption is absolution, |
| (3) If culpable towards God’s justice? | Redemption is justification, |
| (4) If disobedient to God’s commandments? | Redemption is forgiveness of past sins, |
| (5) If opposing to God’s righteousness and His will? | Redemption is reconciliation, |
| (6) If perishing in hopelessness? | Redemption is restoration of life and giving hope. |

Sinfulness in all its aspects causes these failings in front of God;

Redemption is the loving initiative of the Father, through the Son, to abolish sin’s power and dominion over us with all its consequences.

Thus, Christ’s redemption retrieves for man all his manifold correct position in front of God: freedom from captivity, release from all debts of sin, forgiveness of all sins and transgressions, reconcilment after enmity that hid God’s face from man and bestowing the light of eternal life out from the darkness of death.

Three Theories on the Theology of Redemption

How was Redemption accomplished by Christ’s sacrifice on the cross? How can we understand it?

1. Is it a **ransom** by blood, paid as a price? And to whom was it paid?
2. Is it an **atonement by substitution** where He bears our punishment, in our place; a soul for a soul?
3. Is it **appeasement** (conciliation) to God’s face in His wrath?

These were the three theories that church scholars have addressed across all the past church eras. And now we have to examine them together to mend their shortcomings and reach the true meaning of redemption.

First – The Theory of Ransom by Paying the Price

The Greek word used in the original text means the act of “loosening” of bondage or “releasing” of debt. This is supported by Saint Paul’s repeated references to “*Christ purchasing us*”, “*appropriating us to Himself*” and paying our price which is His “*blood*”, i.e. the “*blood of the Son of God*”.

He even plainly stated, “*Who gave Himself a ransom for all*”, (1 Tim 2:6). Here, “redemption” or “ransom” means the act of releasing the neck, as the captured slave gets a steel band around his neck.

To understand the meaning of Redemption in the New Testament we need to trace the concept back to the Old Testament when God selected Israel to be His own possession, under certain conditions:

- “*Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, **you shall be a special people to Me** above all nations; for all the earth is Mine*”, (Ex 19:5). But when they failed to fulfill His conditions He sold them out:
- “*For, they are a nation void of counsel, nor is there understanding in them ... Unless God has **sold** them, and the Lord **delivered** them up?*” (Deut. 32:28, 30)

After the Lord sold them and scattered them among the gentiles, He subsequently returned them to His ranch and restored them to their land. But while the Lord has sold them out, He did not deliver them to anyone neither did He sell them for a price. Even so, when He redeemed them, or released them from captivity, it was not with a price either. As Isaiah the Prophet has revealed:

- “*For thus says the Lord: “You were **sold for nothing**, and you shall be **redeemed without money**”, (Isaiah 52:3).*

The Lord sold them for nothing. It was their evil actions that distanced them from the Lord. Neither did their restoration to God cost Him anything, since both actions did not alter their position as bond-servants; before and after.

Not so in the New Testament where our restoration to **God has changed our nature to a new nature united with His nature; i.e. from bondservants to beloved and holy sons, which must happen at a heavy cost, including the descent from God’s heavenly glory into the nature of a bondservant, and His death by shedding His blood on the Cross.**

Before Christ, the “**selling**” happened on both sides: The people sold God, rebelled against Him and corrupted all their paths, and God abandoned them at no cost. Even during the time of Christ the people and their priests added to **selling Him** by their corrupt worship, unrighteousness and evil behavior, that they **sold Him** for 30 pieces of silver, as prophesied by Zachariah the Prophet, “Then I (the Lord) said to them, ‘If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; and if not, refrain.’ So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me, ‘Throw it to the potter--that princely price they set on me.’ So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord for the potter.” (Zach. 11:12-13).

Let us now turn back to Saint Paul to collect his sayings on redemption and subdivide them into two parts: The first, on “**purchasing**” and “**price**”; and the second group on “**ransom**” and “**redemption**”:

The First Group:

- Acts 20:28, “*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he has **purchased with his own blood.***”
- Tit. 2:14, “*Who **gave himself for us**, that he might **redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.***”
- 1 Cor. 6:19-20, *What? know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have of God, **and you are not your own?** For you are **bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.***
- 1 Cor. 7:23, *You are **bought with a price; be not you the servants of men.***

It is clear that by the deed that is immersed in blood we, His People and His Church, are no longer our own but are owned by Him Who died for us and rose.

The Second Group:

- Gal. 3:13, “*Christ has **redeemed us from the curse of the law ...***”
- Gal. 4:4-5, “*But when the fullness of the time was come, God **sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.***”
- Eph. 1:7, “*In whom we have **redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins ...***”
- 1 Tim 2:6, “*Who gave himself a **ransom for...***”

Here, we come to the real question: If redemption was achieved by paying a very valuable price, the Blood of the Son of God, to whom did Christ pay it?

The incorrect meaning of redemption: Was the ransom paid to Satan?

(To be contd.)

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