

Sermon Notes of Rev.Dr.I.J.W.Oakley (29-10-1995 Guisborough Evangelical Church)

Ephesians 1:7

Additional Bible Reading: Mark 2:1-12

Redemption through his blood, forgiveness of sins, the riches of God's grace

Introduction

Have been dealing with the first main section of Ephesians. Explaining varied blessings from Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit – Father, who planned salvation; Son, who put it into operation; Holy Spirit, who applies it. So far seen the work of the Father in choosing His people before Creation, and predestining them to be adopted into His family – to the praise of His glorious grace (1:3-6). Now arrive at the work of the Son (1:7-12), prior to the section on the work of the Holy Spirit (1:13-14).

Each person of Godhead works with others to procure salvation, but each has a special ministry within the cooperative work. The work of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, brings us face to face with the centre and essence of the Christian Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:4). This is basic and fundamental, the first rung on the ladder, if we are not clear here, there will be total confusion about the rest of the Christian faith.

Most fundamental need of every one and how God in His great grace has met our deepest and primary need. Urgent matter to stand aside from our opinion about these things and simply listen to this text and indeed the rest of the New Testament because they all speak with the same voice.

Our greatest need

If asked about greatest need in life, what would be your response? If God asked 'what would you like me to do for you?', what would you ask for? What do you need most from God? All sorts of things no doubt come into mind. Whatever we think, there is one overwhelming and permanent need, whether we recognise it or not, we need our sins to be forgiven.

Four men took paralysed man to see Jesus. Let him down through roof. Jesus saw his tragic condition, but put His finger on the real need: **Son, your sins are forgiven** (Mark 2:5). Perhaps the four friends felt like protesting – the man is paralysed, never mind his sins! But Jesus went to his real need. Important to hear what the divine physician says we need most. Need His diagnosis of the situation. The world's assessment – "As long as we have our health...", "As long as we have our little nest egg to help us over difficult patch..", "As long as the children find good jobs and are happily married...". But God knows and sees all, and sees life not as it touches few years on earth, but in relation to eternity. Sees we need sins forgiven, blotted out, taken away, remembered no more.

There are eleven words used for "sin" in the New Testament. *παράπτωμα* means trespass, false step, transgression, departed from God's Law, chosen own way in life, pleased ourselves. The text takes for granted that we are all guilty of this – having

defied God, His Law and His love. We have deliberately and defiantly ignored His voice and gone our own way. And the Bible adds – unpopular and unfashionable though it might be – that God reacts. Sin is serious. Not just what sin does to me and the unhappiness it brings, or to others and the misery and destruction in relationships. But what it does to God. It brings His displeasure, His judgement, His condemnation. It separates us from God. (Isaiah 59:1-2). Unless that barrier is removed, there are disastrous consequences in this life and the next. Urgent need for those sins to be forgiven, the judgement lifted, the condemnation removed, set free from bondage by a ransom - redeemed.

People want God to make them happy and empower them, to solve the problem of sin, and help them with problems. But to get this, must begin with guilt and forgiveness, and a right relationship with God. Christ cannot help us till we are forgiven. Bible sums up our plight – **All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way** (Isaiah 53:6).

The source of our forgiveness

The riches of God's grace (Ephesians 1:7) – God's sheer unmerited favour is our only hope. Need to look to God, not ourselves. To do this, our thinking has got to change completely. We automatically think the solution is in ourselves. If we are wrong with God, then surely we must try to compensate him or buy Him off, by trying to be a Christian, trying to follow Jesus' teaching, going to church.. No! the solution is in the riches of His grace. Forgiveness cannot be earned, merited, deserved. There is nothing I can do – my work, my worship, my prayer – no use at all. My only hope is in the riches of His grace.

The best men or women who ever lived could never deserve to be forgiven – all have sinned. The emphasis here is that our hope is in God's free unmerited favour. So many find this a hard lesson to learn. So unnatural to us. When in difficulty, the first thing we do is to look to ourselves. Surely if I keep the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount, that will help and I will be acquitted? Try it – soon discover hopeless failure here.

Only hope is God's free grace. The wonder of the Gospel – we are, at one and the same time, objects of God's judgement because of our guilt, and objects of His love because of His grace. **With you there is forgiveness, therefore you are feared** (Psalm 130:4). And in His grace God has actually done something for us to set us free and bring forgiveness. He sent His Son. **For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost** (Luke 19:10).

The ground of forgiveness

So what has God done for us in His Son? How is He the solution to our problem? **In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins** (Ephesians 1:7). Some words here need explanation. Forgiveness is one aspect of redemption. Redemption means being set free through payment of a price, c.f. slaves set free as long as a price was paid. Word also used in connection with a pawn shop – a pawned article can be reclaimed as long as a price is paid to buy it back – they “redeem” it.

We have redemption – been set free, a price has been paid. What price? His blood, the Death of Jesus, Jesus laying down His life as a sacrifice for us. Therefore we can be set free. Some people have objected to the reference to “blood” in hymns, sermons, Bible passages, as gruesome, offensive, off-putting, a reference to the slaughterhouse. See the blood as a symbol or a picture of His life laid down in sacrifice for us. Because He died, we can be set free, and that means firstly that we can be forgiven. The price is paid, someone has died. That brings forgiveness and redemption. This is the Bible truth we remember every time we sit at the Lord’s Table.

Some may object – “I forgive others, no-one has to die before I forgive. Why could God not do the same?” Reason – God is different from us. We forgive as private individuals, and furthermore we are sinners ourselves, and therefore have a duty to forgive freely. But God is different – Creator, King, Sovereign, Lord and Ruler of Universe. He upholds moral law of the universe. C.f. judge upholds civil law, ensures justice is done and wrongdoing is punished. There would be outrage if a judge let someone found guilty walk free. Our awakened conscience testifies to need for atonement, not satisfied with cheap pardon. God, as the upholder of moral law in the universe, has to deal with sin, a punishment has to be borne. The law has been broken, a penalty has to be paid. Justice has got to be done.

Now comes amazing bit – good news – God, having sentenced us, then sends His Son into the world, and on the Cross Christ takes punishment in our place. Result – set free, fully forgiven, because the debt has been paid, the work has been done. **The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all** (Isaiah 53:6). **Son of Man came to give his life as a ransom instead of many** (Mark 10:45). **He bore our sins in his body on the tree** (1 Peter 2:24). Justice has been done. Penalty has been paid. Debts have been settled. Done through another – a substitute – so the sinner can be set free. **Therefore there is no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus** (Romans 8:1).

Right at the core and centre of the Gospel. God’s amazing grace and love in providing substitute and a Saviour. Cross first of all shows up our sins and guilt, and the seriousness of sin. Sin is so terrible, and such an affront to God, that we could only be forgiven if this happened to Christ. Then having condemned us, the Cross sets us free. Reconciles us to God. Restores us to His favour. Brings us right into God’s presence. How it shows how irrelevant and useless are the pleas of men: “I’ll do my best, I’ll try harder”. If that were the way, why did Christ come and why did He die? If we imagine we can save ourselves, we clearly do not understand the Christian Gospel.

Where found?

In Him or **In whom**. He is absolutely vital and essential and central in this matter. Christianity is Christ. Cannot bypass Him. When we are in Him, united to Him, joined to Him, fully trusting in Him, then we are forgiven. Get Christ – and get redemption and forgiveness. **The Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins** (Mark 2:10). Thousands have discovered it. Need Him, not just a teacher or an example to follow. Need Him as Saviour. In Jesus, pardon and forgiveness are provided, proclaimed and presented, and sealed on conscience.

There is a story of a poor brick layer who fell from scaffold, badly injured, and only had short time to live. A minister urged him to make his peace with God. The dying

man opened his eyes and said “Make peace with God, sir? Peace was made for me 1900 years ago on the Cross by Him who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

And *only* in Him. Throw away all other confidences and hope. Depend only on Him. Spurgeon wondered that men did not tire of his preaching because he did nothing but hammer on this one nail. “With me it is year after year, None but Jesus, None but Jesus”.

Assurance of forgiveness

We have redemption. We can be sure we have forgiveness and redemption. Not just “we hope”, or “we expect we may have”, but “we have”. Not a pious hope but a present experience and confidence. **Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ** (Romans 5:1). Christ offers, we take it by faith, and it is ours. At once condemnation is lifted, at once we are reconciled, at once we can know that when we pray we are heard, at once guidance and peace are available, at once we have access to God. At once we look forward to future – to death, and all that lies beyond, with confidence. At once we have assurance of eternity with God.

Ours immediately and utterly given freely, without money and without price (Isaiah 55:1). Sins not only forgiven but forgotten. Never to be held against us or mentioned against us. **I will remember their sins no more** (Jeremiah 31:34). **As far as the East is from the West, so far has he removed our transgressions from us** (Psalm 103:12).

Conclusion

Are sins forgiven? Peace with God? Content to go through life with unforgiven sins on heart, and to go before God face to face still with unforgiven sins? Do you know God? Live life of fellowship with Him? In right relationship with Him? Is there nothing between you and God?

Or to put it another way, have you come to Christ? Total trust in Him, fallen at His feet with great gratitude received gift of redemption, and worshiped Him

To those who know the Lord, who have been saved by His grace and redeemed. Remember **You are not your own, you have been bought with a price** (1 Corinthians 6:20).

*“Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”*

Give self back to Him again. Go on and live on Jesus, live with Jesus, live in Jesus, never go away from Jesus. May He be dearer to you every day of your lives.