

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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Redemption's Precious Cost

And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. (1 Peter 1:17–21, KJV 1900)

Rather than implying that God's sure redemption through the perfect success of His appointed Surety fosters ungodliness, Peter links a godly life with that knowledge. Implied in this passage, clearly stated later in the chapter and throughout Scripture, we find that God's love is the proper motivating influence to the godly life, not how many stars we earn for our heavenly crown. One attitude is wholly self-centered and self-serving; the other is God-centered, and God-glorifying.

In the era leading up to the Reformation, a Dominican priest in Germany became infamously known for his aggressive fund-raising through selling indulgences. Johann Tetzel (1455-1519) is credited with the quip, "As soon as a coin in the coffer rings / the soul from purgatory springs." History indicates that, as Luther's preaching spread in Germany, Tetzel's coffers felt the impact in diminishing funds. Luther despised the idea of people effectively buying their way into heaven with money. Given our study passage, Peter would have been equally critical of Tetzel's philosophy.

Forasmuch as ye know.... Those who know the New Testament gospel of grace have this knowledge. The more clearly they learn from Scripture and from the gospel about the true cost of their redemption, the more they bow in worship of the God who paid that precious price on their behalf.

For the apostles and Jewish believers in the first century, the thought of redemption conveyed a rich meaning from Mosaic Law. Leviticus 25 explains the process of redemption. Several pertinent points from that lesson enrich our New Testament view of Jesus' redeeming work.

1. The debt was a legal debt. It consisted of money really owed. Such is the case with our "Sin-debt," the legal obligation that we owed to God because of our sins.
2. The debt was beyond the man's ability to pay. He could exhaust every resource available to him, but the debt far exceeded his ability. Such is the case with our sins. *None of them can by any means redeem*

his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:) That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption. (Psalms 49:7-9 KJVP)

3. The only person who was allowed to redeem a man who could not pay his legal debt and was therefore assigned to servitude till the debt was paid was a "Near kinsman." Only a relative could step up to the debt and pay it. Again, the same truth applies to our redemption. The price that Jesus paid was not a potential, provisional payment with an uncertain outcome. Nor was it a price paid for strangers or by a stranger. The "Kinsman-Redeemer" paid the price of redemption for His family.
4. The price was paid to the man who held the debt. The legal and moral debt for our sins was against God and His righteous Law. Jesus paid that debt by giving His life to the Father for the debt incurred by His chosen family.

As absurd as this point seems, at least one bizarre notion in historical theology suggested that Jesus paid our redemption price to Satan. Both Origen and Pelagius are at times credited with promoting this view. The offense of our sins was against God, so God, not the devil, held the debt, and Jesus paid redemption's price to God. No Scripture ever implies that Jesus paid redemption's price to the devil. The idea is utterly absurd. The logic of this errant idea is equivalent to a burglar breaking into your home, stealing your possessions, and then the law requiring you to pay the burglar to return your property.

...from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers. In Scripture, "Conversation" sometimes refers to more than what people say. It rather includes the person's whole conduct or demeanor, everything he says or does. The fifth chapter of Romans, as well as many other

passages, identifies that sin is inherited through Adam to all of his offspring, all of humanity. Peter here adds the actual behavior of sin to the inheritance factor. We live in a broken world where sin appears where ever you look. You see it in your family, in your workplace, in the neighborhood where you live. You can't go anywhere in this world that you do not see sin. And prior to the new birth, we had a deep affinity for that sin; we gladly picked up the practice of the sins that we observed around us.

Do not miss Peter's point in this passage. The redemption of Jesus not only paid the price for our inherited sin, our sinful nature, but for our actual sins that we commit. If Jesus had merely removed the weight of inherited sin, but left our practice of sin in place, the guilt would have remained, and our debt would have righteously condemned us before God and His righteous law. "...he shall save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21) Jesus' death didn't merely reset the "Adam scale" to zero; it removed that scale and put us in the arms—and heart—of our Lord Jesus Christ for eternal safe keeping from both the inherited tendency and our actual practice of sin.

But with the precious blood of Christ.... Every animal that was sacrificed under the Levitical priesthood of the Old Testament gave its life. The priest didn't merely remove a portion of the sacrificial animal's blood. The animal died. When Scripture refers to Jesus' blood, the intent is to remind us that Jesus gave His life for our sins. Sometimes Bible students will refer to His "Life-blood" that He gave for our redemption.

The value of Jesus' life, given freely by Himself for all of His chosen people, cannot be measured. Every attempt to impute some form of value on it fails and often leads to theological confusion. For example, the "Sufficient-Efficient" idea supposedly began with Andrew Fuller. The idea in this confusing notion is that Jesus' death is "Sufficient" for all humanity, but that it is "Efficient" only for the elect. Supposedly, if Jesus had chosen to redeem even one additional person more than He did redeem, He'd have been required to suffer more or to die more, an utterly confusing and illogical idea. If you consider the most common form of transferable value, money, the "Sufficient-Efficient" analogy fails. Take a look at a bill in your wallet, say a twenty dollar bill. The bill's sufficiency and its efficiency are identical. It is sufficient to purchase merchandise valued at \$20.00; it is also efficient to purchase that same item.

Interestingly, the people who adopted Fuller's idea eventually slipped down the slippery slope of Arminian-leaning beliefs regarding eternal salvation. Even those who stopped short of Arminian salvation by works, fell into various mechanisms that require the individual to do something that in some way contributes to or is instrumental in his new birth and eternal redemption.

Scripture never addresses the hypothetical "Sufficient-Efficient" idea at all. It creates a tension between Jesus' ability to save and His purpose to save His elect. Scripture knows no such tension. His purpose to save "...his people from their sins" is identical with His final, finished work. Both were aimed specifically at and fully accomplished the redemption of all whom the Father chose in Christ before He created this material universe. (Ephesians 1:3-6) God's ability is not limited by any concept of human philosophy. He intended the redemptive death of His Son to be both efficient and sufficient for the redemption of His chosen people.

The price of our redemption was fully paid by Jesus, not partially paid. Peter doesn't write that Jesus reduced our debt from impossible to manageable. He liquidated our sin-debt! We owe nothing toward that debt. The debt we owe today is one of love and gratitude to Him for merciful redemption. He does not write that we were almost redeemed, but we must do one minor thing to complete the transaction. He writes in terms of redemption fully accomplished. The past tense verb affirms that the transaction was completed in Jesus' death. The full payment was conveyed to the Father. The Father accepted that payment, and affirmed for all to see and to know that He had accepted that payment by raising Jesus from the dead.

...as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.... Peter adds to the priestly symbolism of Jesus' death. The animal that was killed in the annual sacrifice under Levitical priestly law was a goat, not a sheep. It is likely that Peter here is referring to the Passover lamb that was slain and eaten as a reminder to Old Testament Jews of God's redemption of their ancestors from Egypt. What a rich spiritual lesson this idea stirs in our minds. The same One who was our "Near Kinsman," who cared enough to release His priceless, "...precious..." blood to pay our sin debt, is also our Passover Lamb on whom we feed as we live. John also united the two concepts into one.

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. (John 1:29 KJVP)

And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! (John 1:36 KJVP)

You seldom see an exclamation point in Scripture, but you see one here. Praise to the Lamb who redeemed us and who feeds us daily!

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church
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Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor