



## A Post Tenebras Lux Study on Ephesians...

### Praise Be to the God and Father...

### Ephesians 1:3-14

<sup>NIV</sup> **Ephesians 1:3**...Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup>For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. <sup>9</sup> And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup> to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment-- to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. <sup>11</sup> In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, <sup>12</sup> in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup> And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession-- to the praise of his glory.

Recently, I received an alumni letter from Dallas Theological Seminary. In the letter, there is a great story told by Chuck Swindoll. I thought for purposes of our discussion that I would read it to you.

I have a friend whose daughter is into the whole ecological scene. Thankfully, she married a man of like passion, so it's a good match. Not long ago the two of them, along with their preschool son were driving, up the East Coast, not far from the Atlantic. They came upon a sign that intrigued them: Naturist Camp: 3 Miles, with an arrow pointing toward the ocean.

Thinking that they might meet up with some new friends who love the natural world, they turned. A couple of miles along the two-lane road, they looked into the distance and were shocked to see three people on bicycles, riding toward them...totally nude.

Realizing their mistake, they were suddenly embarrassed that their son would see the oncoming bikers before they could turn around. The dad slammed on the brakes, tried his best to do a quick U-turn as he and his wife tried to divert their son's attention. Neither worked. The boy was staring intently while his dad was steering intensely.

Both parents were amazed when they heard their boy burst forth, **"Look, Mom and Dad - none of them were wearing safety helmets!"**

Now, that's what I call staying focused.

I like that because what we are trying to do this morning is stay focused on Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. We have looked already at a lot of introductory material and sometimes that becomes a distraction. You will remember that last time we talked at length about the structure of the Epistle to the Ephesians. We talked about how the book was naturally divided into two parts<sup>1</sup>.

We called the first part the doctrinal part and the second half of Ephesians we called the ethical part. Another way to look at it is that the first half of Ephesians is about what God has done for us in Christ, while the second half is about how we ought to live in light of what God has done for us. We called those two parts the indicative and the imperative.

What I want to do this morning is narrow the scope of our study. I want to focus, for a few moments, on the structure of the first half of Paul's letter because it can also be divided into two parts. The section we are going to concentrate on this morning is Ephesians 1:3-14 and I think it is fair to say it is one, long, continuous praise directed toward God. That should seem fairly obvious especially since it starts with the words: **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ** Now, the second part of the first half of Ephesians runs from 1:15 through the end of chapter 3. It would be fair to call it an extended prayer, or at very least, it would be fair to call it the content of what Paul was praying for the Ephesians.

Notice how Ephesians 1:15 starts out:

<sup>NIV</sup> **Ephesians 1:15**...For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, <sup>16</sup> I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. <sup>17</sup> I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. <sup>18</sup> I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

Then if you will look at the end of the section you will notice how Paul ends it.

Look at verse Ephesians 3:14.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Ephesians 3:14**...For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup> I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. <sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,

<sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Now, what all this means to us practically is that the structure of Ephesians 1-3 is fairly simple to keep in mind.

First, there is a greeting in verses 1-2. Second, there is the offering to God of praise for what He has done for us in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-14). Third, there is prayer to God that He will enlighten the eyes of our hearts to fully comprehend all that He has done for us in Christ (Ephesians 1:15-3:21).

You can see how after Paul has gone through the first three chapters it is natural that he would want to work out the implications of how we should live in light of what had been discussed and that is exactly what he does in chapters 4-6.

Now, with all that in mind. Let's look together at Ephesians 1:3-14. Last week, I gave you a homework assignment to look at all the places where the phrase "**in Christ**" or "**in Him**" or anything like that appear. I asked you to try to connect those phrases to the blessing that is attached. What did you find?

What we find in Ephesians 1:3-14 is that Paul blesses God. Another way to say it is that Paul praises God. But why? He praises God because God has already blessed us with every spiritual blessing. That leads us to ask the question, "**What does Paul mean by spiritual blessings?**" He could mean blessings that are related to the Holy Spirit and certainly Paul is going to raise that point at the end of this section. That is the position that Charles Hodge takes when he writes:

These blessings are spiritual not merely because they pertain to the soul, but because they are derived from the Holy Spirit, whose presence and influence are the great blessing purchased by Christ<sup>2</sup>.

Or it could mean “**spiritual blessings**” as compared to material or earthly blessings and that would make sense in light of the fact that Paul says we have received these spiritual blessings in “**heavenly places**”<sup>3</sup>. That helps in one sense but in another it leads us to ask the question what does Paul mean by “**heavenly places**”? In the Greek New Testament the word “**places**” is not there. It is inferred by translators and it may be right. It may also be that Paul meant “**with regard to heavenly things**” or even “**the things of heaven**”. If that were the case then Paul would have meant:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all of the spiritual blessings we need concerning the things of heaven in Christ<sup>4</sup>.”

I like that. But notice he has given us that blessing “**in Christ**.”<sup>5</sup> It is in Christ’s finished work that we have received the blessing. It is not in any work which we have wrought.

The theological term that is often used to define what it means to be in Christ is “**vital union**.” That is, we are “**in Him**” in such a way that the union we have, the connection we have, the relationship we have gives us life and life eternal<sup>6</sup>. That is one of the principle reasons, of course, that we deny to possibility of salvation outside of Christ. You see, God has chosen to redeem men and women and boys and girls...only they come into vital union with Christ, and Christ alone<sup>7</sup>.

Listen to what Martyn Lloyd Jones writes:

The first thing to observe is the way in which these blessings come to us. They come **“in Christ”**. Though this expression comes at the end of the verse it is vital **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”** If you leave out the in Christ you will never have any blessings at all. This is of course, pivotal and central in connection with the whole of our Christian faith. Every blessing we enjoy as Christian people comes to us through the Lord Jesus Christ<sup>8</sup>.

So that means that whatever blessing we have come to us by virtue of our relationship with Christ. And that, in turn, leads us to ask what elements make up this full spiritual blessing that we have received in Christ? That’s the question Paul answers in the rest of the section. We know that from the phrase **“just as”**. It can be taken to be either the cause of our blessings or even the manner in which we are blessed. So, we could understand Paul to be saying, **“God has blessed us with all of the spiritual blessings we need concerning the things of heaven in Christ because of the following things”**...or he may be saying, **“The way in which God has blessed us with all of the spiritual blessings we need concerning the things of heaven in Christ is in the following manner.”**

The first thing that makes up a part of the spiritual blessing that we have received **“in Christ”** is that we have been chosen.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Ephesians 1:4**...For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

Obviously, that phrase **“He chose us”** causes a good deal of the Christian church a problem. The theological term for the phrase is **“election”**. Some people deny **“election”** altogether. Others deny that it is really the choice of God; they argue that it is God responding to the choice that He knows we will make<sup>9</sup>.

I like the way James Montgomery Boice says it:

...they suppose that if God elects individuals to salvation, as this verse and others clearly declare that He does, then the value of human choice is destroyed and the motivation for a holy life vanishes. This is not what happens. Instead of destroying the value of human choices, election gives us the capacity for choosing that we did not possess previously as unregenerate persons. Before we were made alive in Christ we had a human will. But it was directed against God, not toward Him. We could choose, but we always chose wrongly. When we were made alive in Christ we received a new nature, according to which God, who before was undesirable to us, now became desirable, and we willingly submitted ourselves to Him<sup>10</sup>.

Notice, there are three elements involved in this verse. First, we were chosen **“in Christ”**. Secondly, we were chosen **“before the foundation of the world.”** And thirdly, **“we were chosen that we might be holy and blameless before Him”**.

All three ideas are important.

First, we were chosen **“in Christ”**. That means that our having been chosen is not really about anything we have done, it is instead about what Christ has done. That is important to remember when you find yourself going inward trying to figure out why it is that God graciously chose you. Even the stoic Calvin warned people regarding too much reflection on the issue. Listen to what he said:

First, then, let them remember that when they inquire into predestination they are penetrating the sacred precincts of divine wisdom. If anyone with carefree assurance breaks into this place, he will not succeed in satisfying his curiosity and he will enter a labyrinth from which he can find no exit. For it is not right for man unrestrainedly to search out things that the Lord has willed to be hid in himself, and to unfold from eternity itself the sublimest wisdom, which he would have us revere but not understand that through this also he should fill us with wonder. He has set forth by his Word the secrets of his will that he has decided to reveal to us.

These he decided to reveal in so far as he foresaw that they would concern us and benefit us... But if we have been chosen in him, we shall not find assurance of our election in ourselves; and not even in God the Father, if we conceive him as severed from his Son. Christ, then, is the mirror wherein we must, and without self-deception may, contemplate our own election. For since it is into his body the Father has destined those to be engrafted whom he has willed from eternity to be his own, that he may hold as sons all whom he acknowledges to be among his members, we have a sufficiently clear and firm testimony that we have been inscribed in the book of life if we are in communion with Christ.<sup>11</sup>

Do you get what he is saying? He's saying that if we try to understand all of the elements of divine election we will be delving into a labyrinth from which we will never escape. Secondly, he's saying that when we do contemplate our election we should not do so focusing on us but rather on Christ. That is where our confidence in election comes, not in us but rather in Him.

Returning to verse 4, we see that we were chosen before the world began. That means that we were chosen apart from any works that we had done either good or bad. We were chosen not because of who we were but because of who Christ was and what He did.

Finally, in verse 4, Paul says we were chosen to stand holy and blameless before Him.

I think that is particularly important. We were chosen with the result that we would be holy and blameless before Him. We weren't chosen because we were holy and blameless or even because of a decision that we would make; we were chosen because God wanted us to stand before Him in the righteousness of Christ, pure and holy. Now, I want you to consider the importance of that from two perspectives. First, we were chosen in order that we might become holy and

blameless before God. That implies that before we were converted we were not, in fact, already holy and blameless, which means that God's choosing us was not based upon any foreseen merit on our part<sup>12</sup>.

But notice now the second aspect of being holy and blameless before Him. That is the purpose God had for choosing us in Christ<sup>13</sup>. We ought to be taking our growth seriously. It is not enough to say we were chosen; we ought to strive with all of our being to grow in holiness. It is through the agency of Word and sacrament that has given us the tools to grow and we simply can no longer use the argument of election to excuse our sloth. Paul is already foreshadowing for his readers the direction he will go in the second half of Ephesians.

Now, look at verse 5.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Ephesians 1:4**...In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

God in Christ predestined us to be adopted sons. He did that because of His kindness towards us. Now, think about the picture Paul is painting here. He is saying that once we were orphans, set adrift in a sea of sin. We were aliens separated from the faith of Israel. We were alone without hope in the world. But now everything is different. We have been brought into God's family. We have become the heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. God not only now hears our prayers but He hears them as His adopted children and He pours out His kindness on us.

But that is not the end of the spiritual blessings we have received.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Ephesians 1:7**...In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understand

Not only have we been chosen in Christ, and adopted in Him, we have also been redeemed from our sins through His precious blood. Now, there are two ways in which we can understand this passage. First, we have redemption which equals the forgiveness of sins or we can understand redemption and forgiveness of sin to be two related but different things.

Usually, the idea of redemption has to do with being purchased<sup>14</sup>. In the ancient world, it was most often used in the context of being purchased out of slavery. For example, a slave could be redeemed out of slavery by the payment of a certain price<sup>15</sup>. Obviously, because it is connected here with forgiveness, it means that we were redeemed from the slavery of sin but we were also redeemed from God's wrath. The instrument of redemption was the precious blood of Christ and the result of the redemption was that our sins were nailed to the cross and blotted out in the atoning work of Christ.

I think it is also clear how these two issues of redemption and forgiveness are associated with adoption. We have been redeemed from the slavery of sin and our sinful slate has been wiped clean but even more God has now declared us to be sons and daughters in Christ. But not only has He chosen us in Christ, predestined us to adoption, and redeemed us from the penalty and power of sin, he has also revealed to us the deep mystery of His kind intention toward us. Look at verse 9.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Ephesians 1:9**...And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup> to be put into effect when the

times will have reached their fulfillment-- to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

Now, I'm going to skip over this section lightly because we will be discussing it in much greater depth later in chapter 3. Suffice it for the moment to say that Paul thought the inclusion of Gentiles with Jews in the Church of God was an extraordinary event, an event that absolutely caught the world by surprise. But he still has more to say about another element of the full spiritual blessing we have received in Christ. Look at verse 11.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Ephesians 1:11**...In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, <sup>12</sup> in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory

The idea in this passage is almost completely obscured in our translation. Most scholars agree that the idea is not that we have obtained an inheritance but rather that we have been made a part of God's inheritance<sup>16</sup>. Now this idea is critical to understanding not only the next few verses but to understanding the rest of Ephesians as well. You can get a sense of what Paul is driving at by looking at other Old Testament verses that communicate the same idea.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Deuteronomy 14:2**...for you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession.

And the same idea occurs in...

<sup>NIV</sup> **Malachi 3:17**...**They will be mine,"** says the LORD Almighty, **"in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him.**

You see throughout the Old Testament God spoke of the nation of Israel as His own inheritance, His own possession. What Paul is saying is that now this new people, the Gentile believers in Ephesus and throughout the world have been included into that select number of God's household. They have now been made a part of God's possession in the exact same way as all Jewish believers of all time.

That is what Paul means when he notes the difference in verse 12 between **"we who were the first to hope in Christ"** and those in verse 13. I want to read verse 13, but first I want you to notice the difference in verse 12 between the **"we"** contained there and the **"you"** that occurs later on in verse 13.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Ephesians 1:13**...And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession-- to the praise of his glory.

Do you see what Paul is saying? He's saying you Gentiles have also been made a part of God's inheritance. You have even been sealed with the Holy Spirit as a **"down-payment"** or pledge of your inclusion into God's inheritance and that **"sealing"** with the Holy Spirit is looking forward to the day when God finally redeems or collects His own possession.

Now, Charles Hodge has rightly noted that a seal could be used for one of three different reasons: (1) it could signify that an object is true or genuine. *That is the way it is used when it appears on U.S. currency. You see the seal and you know that the money is guaranteed to be genuine.* (2) it could be used to mark a thing as one's property. *That is the way it is used when something like a name plate is applied. An*

*imprinted Bible, seals that Bible as a certain person's property. (3) it could be used to make something fast or secure. That is the way the term is used in the gospels when the Sanhedrin sealed Jesus' tomb or today when a court seals documents<sup>17</sup>.*

But one of the unique differences between all of those uses and the way Paul uses the term here is that all of those uses are external. Paul is saying that we are sealed by the Holy Spirit and the idea is that we are internally sealed. During the next few weeks we'll talk at length about specifically what Paul was trying to get across here and which one of these definitions most aptly applies. I think you can see why Paul starts this section of with a blessing directed to God for all the wonderful spiritual blessings that He has given to us In Christ and they are not just a long list of blessings they are indicate that we have full spiritual blessing in Christ.

We have been chosen to be holy and blameless. We have been predestined to adoption as sons. We have been redeemed from the penalty and even the power of sin. We have been informed of God's great work and we have been made a part of God's inheritance. Finally we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit. I think when we consider all that we have in Christ, our response has to be the same as Paul's, **"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."**

Are there any questions?

Let's pray.

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Wallace, *Ephesians, Introduction and Outline* (Notes on Ephesians available at [www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org)), 11. [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=1332](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=1332)

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1991), 28.

<sup>3</sup> John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 35. He writes: "What Paul stresses here is that the blessing God gives us is spiritual. A contrast is probably intended with Old Testament days when God's promised blessings were largely material."

<sup>4</sup> Stott, 35. "Heavenly places"...that is, the unseen spiritual realm.

<sup>5</sup> Stott, 22. He writes, "This key expression of the letter thus occurs in its very first verse, To be 'in Christ' is to be personally and vitally united to Christ, as branches are to the vine and members to the body, and thereby also to Christ's people. For it is impossible to be part of the Body without being related to both the head and the members. Much of what the epistle later develops is already here in bud."

<sup>6</sup> Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*.(Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 247. He writes: "Through use of the expression "in Christ" — which occurs thirty-four times in Ephesians—Paul describes the corporate solidarity of believers with their resurrected and exalted Lord. The *syn-* ("with") compounds also help express this notion, especially in Ephesians 2:5: he made us alive *with* Christ, he raised us *with* him, and he seated us *with* him. As people who are united with Christ, believers have redemption, forgiveness of sins, a heavenly existence, access to the Father, knowledge of the truth and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13–14; *see* Holy Spirit). They possess a new existence created by God and characterized by righteousness (Eph 4:24).

<sup>7</sup> F.F. Bruce, *Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1977), 210-11. Bruce writes: "Nor is the Spirit's ministry confined to believers' individual lives: in uniting them to Christ, he unites them one to another. Paul's conception of the church as the body of Christ is inseparably bound up with his doctrine of the Spirit; 'in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and an were baptized by one Spirit' (1 Corinthians 12: 13). In the narrative of Acts John the Baptist's promise that the Coming One would baptize with he holy Spirit is viewed as fulfilled on she day of Pentecost; indeed, the authority of the risen Christ is cited for this (Acts 1:5; 11:16). The 'togetherness' of the church from Pentecost onwards is emphasized in the narrative or Acts (cf. 2:44; 4:31) in a manner which may be thought to pave the way for Paul's teaching, but it is Paul who gives distinctive expression to the idea of all believers, whatever their race or social status, united in a common life as fellow-members of a body, with the Spirit as the source and principle of its corporate existence and its bond of unity, each member discharging for the good of the whole that function with which the energizing Spirit has endowed it. "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." But the prime function of the indwelling Spirit in the believing community, as in the individual believer, is for Paul the reproduction of Christ-likeness for His people, until the whole of the body attains 'the measure of measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.'"

<sup>8</sup> David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God's Ultimate Purpose: An Exposition of Ephesians One* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth Trust, 1978), 58.

<sup>9</sup> Reformed theology has historically looked at election as a subset of predestination. That is, predestination is looked at as the larger category having to do with God's predetermination of the

eternal state of individuals. Election then would then be God's decree to save some, while reprobation would be God's decree to pass by the rest. Cf. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1939, 1941), 114.

<sup>10</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 10.

<sup>11</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*: translated and annotated by Ford Lewis Battles. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1986), chapters 21 & 24.

<sup>12</sup> R.C. Sproul, *Ephesians: An Exposition of Ephesians* (Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 26. Sproul writes: "We are living in a time when there has been a wholesale attempt to reconstruct Christianity apart from its central locus on personal salvation. That is to say, it seems as if people today want Christianity without redemption. But we cannot avoid the fact that at the heart of the teaching of Jesus and of the apostolic message is a God who redeems his people."

<sup>13</sup> John Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth Trust, 1998), 52. Calvin writes: "It is true that the whole life of our Lord Jesus Christ has become our ransom, for the obedience which he yielded in this world to God his father was to make amends for Adam's offence and for the iniquities for which we are in debt. But St. Paul here speaks expressly of his blood because we are obliged to resort to his death and passion as to the sacrifice which has power to blot out all our sins. As for that reason, God has set forth in types under the law that men could not be reconciled to him except by that means."

<sup>14</sup> Sinclair B. Ferguson and J.I. Packer, *New Dictionary of Theology*. electronic ed. (Downers Grove, Illinois : InterVarsity Press, 2000, c1988), 560. He writes: "**Redemption** is a concept found in the OT to express the action of a relative in setting free a member of his family or buying back his property (Leviticus. 25:25ff.) or in general that of purchasing something for a price. A ransom-price is paid to secure the release of what would otherwise be under forfeit (e.g. Exodus 21:30). Religiously God acts as redeemer by powerfully delivering his people from captivity (Exodus 6:6-7; Is. 48:20) or even from sin (Psalm 130:8). A ransom may also be paid to God in the form of a sacrifice or offering, to deliver people whose lives would otherwise be forfeit (Exodus 13:13). There is dispute whether, when the action of redeeming is ascribed to God, he is regarded as paying a price to set his people free; certainly cost and effort are applied, but the thought of a price being received by somebody from him is absent (Isaiah 43:3 is metaphorical; cf. 52:3). The term was also applied to the setting free of slaves in the Graeco-Roman world on the payment of a ransom to their owners; this could be done in various ways, one of which involved a religious ceremony in which the slave was the object of a fictitious purchase by a god so that he was free of earthly masters. The terminology used is somewhat different from that employed in the NT, and has led recent scholars to doubt whether the origin of the NT metaphor lies in this area; nevertheless, the manumission of slaves would surely have formed an excellent and relevant illustration of redemption.

In the NT the starting-point for the use of the concept is found in the sayings of Jesus, which state that no-one can give anything in exchange for his life (Mark 8:37; cf. Psalm 49:7-9), but that the Son of Man came to give his life a ransom for many (i.e. for all; Mark 10:45 as paraphrased in 1 Timothy 2:6; cf. Titus 2:14). Jesus thus does what God alone can do (Psalm 49:15) by giving his own life, and the use of the noun *lytron* makes it quite clear that he gives his life in exchange for those whose lives are forfeit and thus sets them free. The death of Jesus is thus conceived as the sacrifice

(Acts 20:28; Romans 3:24; 1 Peter 1:18) through which we are set free from our sins and their consequences, in other words through which we receive forgiveness (Colossians 1:14; Ephesians 1:7). Redemption is by faith in Christ (Romans 3:24f.), and there is no longer any need to keep the law, as the Jews supposed, to secure salvation (Galatians 3:13; 4:5). Believers, however, can also be said to have been purchased by God to become his people; he has paid the price for them (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23). Thus the term 'redemption' can be used in quite a broad sense to express the general concept of salvation and deliverance (*e.g.* Luke 24:21)."

<sup>15</sup> Sproul, 27.

<sup>16</sup> Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Raids: Baker Book House, 2002), 227. Hoehner writes: "This coincides with Israel as God's possession for she too was to praise him. Fourth, for this term to refer to the believers' possession of redemption the forgiveness of sins and the sealing of the Spirit is redundant. Rather, it is because of these benefits that the believers are God's possession. This takes it a step further. Not only do believers possess these benefits, but moreover God possesses the believers because of all he has done for them."

<sup>17</sup> Hodge, 63.