

1 Peter 1:18-21

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[0 : 00] writing to as those who had been ransomed, or in the language that we have used in our version, had been redeemed. The word means the same. They had been ransomed. They had been redeemed.

You have not been redeemed, says Peter, with perishable things such as silver or gold, but you have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. The word that is used, the word that we have there translated in verse 18 as redeemed, is a word that literally means to purchase someone by paying a ransom. To purchase someone by paying a ransom. In common usage at the time that Peter was writing, it could have been used in the context of the marketplace if you were to ransom or redeem a slave, and so secure the slave's liberty. Or it could also be used as in the manner that we began, as a ransom to be paid for the release of a hostage. And this is a subject that I want to consider this morning in the light of what Peter says in these verses, from verse 18 to verse 21. And we can order

Peter's material on the subject under three headings. First of all, we're going to notice what we are redeemed from. Peter very clearly identifies what the believer is redeemed from. But then he also, and in greater depth, considers the matter of what we are redeemed or ransomed by.

Ransomed or redeemed from, but also ransomed or redeemed by. And then finally, and logically we might say that is also a reference to what we are ransomed for, or redeemed for. Ransomed from, but also ransomed for or to. So these are the three elements that we want to notice and identify in what Peter says in these verses. And we'll begin with what Peter says concerning what we are ransomed from.

Well, Peter is clear. We can read that in verse 18. The believers that Peter is writing to, and indeed all believers across the ages are redeemed, says Peter, from the empty way of life, handed down to us from our forefathers.

[3 : 00] And we can notice three aspects of what we are ransomed from, focusing on the language that Peter uses of way of life. So we're thinking of what we're ransomed from. We're noticing that we're ransomed from a way of life, an empty way of life. But concerning that empty way of life, there are three things that I want us to notice in particular. First of all, notice the nature of that way of life that we are redeemed or ransomed from. What does Peter say? You are redeemed from the empty way of life, or the futile way of life that was handed down to you. Our problem, as sinners, and we are all sinners, is not fundamentally any particular sin that we struggle with or are guilty of. Not that particular sins are not a problem. They are a problem. But that is not our fundamental problem. Our fundamental problem is a whole way or pattern of life, a way of life that Peter describes as empty or futile. The man or woman who does not know Christ, the unregenerate man or woman, the unbeliever, may be very pleasant and genuinely so. I'm not using that language in any kind of devalued sense. Genuinely, a very pleasant person. They may be very well behaved, however we judge or however we measure good behavior, and yet still be hostage to or enslaved by an empty way of life, a life that in God's estimation has no meaningful or eternal purpose. An empty way of life is a way of life where we fail to live to the glory of God, a life where we fail to love and enjoy God. It may be in relative terms, morally upright, or it may be morally dissolute. That's not the main issue. The big issue is that it is empty.

It is an empty way of life. It is a worthless way of life. It is a futile way of life, says Peter in his words here in the text that we're considering. I think that this diagnosis of the human condition resonates with more people than we might imagine. Now, it is true that we are all very adept at filling our life with stuff, with activity, with goals, with ambitions that can serve to dull the sense and reality of our emptiness. But far from God, if indeed that is where we are, then empty we remain.

And deep down, many, not all, many folk know that it is so. What are we redeemed from, says Peter. Peter says very clearly that we are redeemed from, we are ransomed from an empty way of life.

John Calvin expresses this reality of the human condition very memorably. He says thus, the whole life of man until he is converted to Christ is a ruinous labyrinth of wanderings.

Difficult to express the reality more memorably. A ruinous labyrinth of wanderings until we are converted to Christ. An empty way of life, a futile way of life, that is what we are redeemed from.

[7 : 09] But we can notice not only the nature of that way of life, but also we can notice what Peter says concerning the origin or source of that way of life, that empty way of life, that futile way of life that characterizes those who are without Christ. Where does it come from? Why do so many live such empty lives? Well, Peter says that the believers that he's writing to inherited such a life from their forefathers?

He states that very clearly there in verse 18. You were redeemed from the empty way of life, handed down to you from your forefathers. And is that not the reality we observe and experience in our own lives and observe in the lives of others?

Most people follow in the footsteps of their parents, who in turn have done the same. It's not always what happens, but it's what largely happens. And when we recognize that, when we recognize that those who are living empty, futile lives are simply living the lives that were handed down to them by their forefathers, appreciating that, recognizing that to be so has implications for us in the manner in which we deal with others, in the manner in which we would seek to be sensitive to others. Let me just mention a couple of implications. First of all, we have to understand that so many, and I'm speaking here in the first instance to believers, and I speak to you as believers, that in the first instance, as you would consider and relate to and seek to reach others with this good news that can grant them fullness of life and ransom them from such an empty life. As you relate to such, you have to realize that most do not appreciate their problem. And that's not surprising. You see, if this empty way of life is a way of life that was handed down to them by their forefathers, they don't even realize it's an empty way of life. It's the life they've always lived. It's what they received. From God's perspective, we can recognize that it is empty, and in God's grace and providence He may grant to them some insight into the emptiness of their lives. But it ought not to surprise us if many don't recognize the diagnosis, indeed would scoff at the diagnosis that the Bible presents. Empty? My life? No, my life is full. That's one implication for us to be aware of. But another thing I would say is this, that while it is true that we are all morally responsible for the lives we live, even though our way of life has been handed down and we have received it in that sense, even though that is the case, it is also true that that moral responsibility doesn't preclude from us as believers seeking to have a right attitude to those who are hostages to this empty way of life. Our attitude to such should not be one of merciless judgment but of compassion, because those who are hostages to an empty way of life are, in a measure, victims. I've made it clear that they have, as we all have, moral responsibility for the life that they live. But as those who have been handed down this way of life, they are, as I say, in a measure, the victims of others.

You know, when we think today, and it's easy to very flippantly and frivolously, you know, speak of a generation, and we say, oh, this generation, it's such a nightmare, the young people today. I hope you don't speak in those ways. But you know, you hear people speaking, oh, young people today. But what are they? The life that they live. What is that life? It's the life that was handed down to them. That's the life they're living. And we need to be aware of that and conscious of that, as we would relate to others. So, not only the nature of this life, this way of life, it's empty, it's futile, but the origin of it. But then, finally, notice what Peter makes very clear, and that is the need for a radical break from that way of life. The language Peter uses when he speaks of believers redeemed from, you were redeemed from the empty way of life. The language that he uses carries a stronger sense than is captured by the word from. It is perhaps better captured by speaking of redeemed out of. And the Greek that Peter uses can be translated in that way, redeemed out of, an empty way of life. And the image is a vivid one of being removed out of one place to another.

[12 : 28] To use biblical language, we could speak of being lifted out of the fearful pit and placed on solid rock. The change described by Peter is a radical one. Man's essential problem is not solved by lifestyle changes, however welcome they might be. It's not solved by tweaking at the edges of our way of life.

We need to be ransomed out of our futile and empty way of life. So, ransomed from, but also ransomed by.

What are we ransomed by? What are we ransomed with? Peter is clear there in verse 18 and through into verse 19. You were not ransomed by perishable things such as silver or gold, but redeemed, ransomed with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. This is what we are ransomed by, the precious blood of Christ. How does that language grab you? Does it not all sound rather primitive? Perhaps to some ears, and I'm sure to many ears. I don't know if you're this morning, but to many ears, this language, not only primitive, but to many it would sound really quite repulsive to speak of being ransomed by the precious blood of Jesus. Well, we need to pause and consider what Peter is saying as he speaks of this ransom price as the blood of Jesus. And under this heading of ransomed or redeemed by, we need to subdivide what we will say. We're going to notice, and we'll do so very fleetingly, we're going to notice the identity of the Redeemer, the price paid by the Redeemer, the appearing of the Redeemer, and the vindication of the Redeemer. So, I hope you're still with me as we go through this. First of all, the identity of the Redeemer is the identity of the Redeemer. Who can redeem us out of our empty way of life? Can we redeem ourselves? Is there a DIY plan of redemption? Peter identifies and describes the Redeemer. He is Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, the eternal Son of God. And what does Peter say of Christ the Redeemer? A lamb without blemish or defect? In this description of Christ as a lamb without blemish or defect, Peter takes us from the language of the slave market of redemption to the language of the temple and describes Jesus as a spotless sacrifice. Jesus, unlike any other proposed Redeemer, needs no personal redemption, for He is spotless, without blemish, without defect. And so, He and He alone is able and suitable to serve as a Redeemer for others. The identity of the Redeemer, but then, very particularly, the price paid by the Redeemer. Ransom or redemption must involve a price.

Can you imagine your family sending the Somali pirates an empty envelope as the price of your ransom? So, too, our redemption by God's appointed Redeemer involves a price being paid, and that price, says Peter, is the precious blood of Christ. As I've already commented, in our sanitized world, many are repulsed by this talk of blood as the price of redemption. And while we see no need to shy away from the language, we do stress, as we must stress, that the term blood of Christ should be understood as it is intended to be understood, as a word symbol for the death of Christ. To speak of the blood of Christ is to speak of Christ's death in its saving purpose and effect. And in identifying Christ's death as the price of redemption, Peter is not introducing some novel idea, but simply echoing the very truth that Jesus Himself declared, as recorded for us in the passage that we read in Mark's gospel.

[17:11] For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. What can we say of the price paid by our Redeemer? Well, we can do no better than share Peter's estimation of the price paid. Peter says it is precious, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.

It is precious beyond measure and precious beyond compare, so precious that in comparison, even that which is deemed by the world as most precious and imperishable, silver and gold, are perishable in comparison. Precious to Peter, precious to every believer, and precious to the Father. In the divine scale, silver and gold are as dust and chaff, while the value of the blood of Jesus, the death of Jesus, and all that it has achieved for us, is precious beyond measure.

And a sobering and important question for all of us here this morning is this, is the blood of Jesus precious to you? Is the blood of Jesus, the death of Jesus, that which has ransomed you from your empty way of life?

Before we move on and notice some of the other aspects of this element of what we are considering, redeemed by, we do need to make quickly clear who the ransom price is paid to, this ransom price that is paid. We know what it is, but who is it paid to? Now, in church history, the idea has occasionally reared its head, I would say its ugly head, that the ransom price is paid to the devil.

[19:23] Now, while superficially plausible, we need to be very clear on this point. The ransom price that is paid, the precious blood of Jesus, the death of Jesus, is paid to God. The marvelous truth is that God is all and in all in this matter of our ransom, of our redemption. He demands that a price be paid. He provides the price in the person of His Son. Indeed, we can go further and say that God pays the price in the death of His Son. God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit pay the price.

Let's not imagine that somehow Jesus alone pays the price. The Father in giving His Son is paying the price. He demands the price. He provides the price. He pays the price, and He receives the price paid by His Son.

But Peter also speaks of the appearing of the Redeemer. He doesn't only identify the Redeemer for us. He doesn't only tell us the price paid by the Redeemer, but He speaks of the appearing of the Redeemer. Notice that in verse 20, He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Peter identifies the coming of Jesus Christ as the time of the appearing or revelation of the Redeemer. But he is also at pains to stress that the appearing of the Redeemer should not be confused with the choosing or designating of the Redeemer. Jesus was chosen or designated as the Redeemer in eternity, to use the language of Scripture, the language of Peter, before the creation of the world. Dismiss from your mind any notion that God's plan of redemption is any kind of plan B that was cobbled together in the light of man's fall. By no means. Before we were even created,

God had determined and conceived in love our redemption. Now, this is, for us, mysterious. If I can return on a second occasion and final occasion this morning to words of John Calvin, who responded to those who in his own day quibbled with the order of events. How can it be that even before man was created, even before man had fallen, there can be talk of God conceiving a plan of redemption? That doesn't make sense. How does Calvin respond? In the light of God's Word. He says as follows, does the remedy not follow the disease? That is what his accusers would claim. And how does he respond? For herein shines forth more fully the unspeakable goodness of God, that He anticipated our disease by the remedy of His grace, and provided a restoration to life before the first man had fallen into death. The appearing of the Redeemer. Yes, at God's appointed time, in the fullness of time, Christ appeared, but Christ's status as Redeemer, God's purpose that in Christ we would know redemption, determined before the creation of the world. But notice one further and heartwarming truth concerning the appearing of the Redeemer that would merit a sermon all on its own. What does Peter say?

But was revealed in these last times for your sake. Even these words alone are pregnant with possibility as we consider the love of God revealed in these last times for your sake. For your sake. You here this morning, Christ the Redeemer revealed at God's appointed time for your sake. For your redemption. For your salvation. That you might be rescued from your empty way of life. For your sake. In eternity. That God had determined that Christ would come at the appointed time that you might be saved for your sake.

The appearing of the Redeemer. But then finally, under this consideration of redeemed by, what are we redeemed by? The vindication of the Redeemer. As a final point in considering what or who we are ransomed by, notice the vindication of the Redeemer. Was the price paid adequate? How can we know?

[24 : 21] Well, we know the price was fully paid and that God's righteous demands were fully satisfied in the vindication of the Redeemer. What does Peter say? In verse 21, one God who raised Him from the dead and glorified Him. The Father's vindication of Jesus and His work.

We might say the Father's vindication of Himself or of the Godhead's plan of redemption. That vindication is to be seen in the resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Jesus.

Ransomed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. But then finally and more briefly, ransomed for. Ransomed for. What are we ransomed for? What are we ransomed to? Well, we can return to the point that we make concerning the language of Peter, ransomed out of. Remember at the beginning when we were speaking of what we were ransomed from, and I suggested that more helpfully we could think of that as being ransomed out of. Well, if we return to that language, if we are ransomed out of an empty and futile life, it rather begs the question, where are we ransomed to? And Peter answers that question also.

We are ransomed to a life of faith and hope. Verse 21, Through Him you believe in God who raised Him from the dead and glorified Him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

[26 : 02] Ransomed for. Two, a life of faith and hope. From a life without purpose to a life that is purposeful. From a life that was empty to a life that is full. From a life that was going nowhere to a life that is heaven bound. From a life without God and without hope to a life of faith and trust and hope in God.

From an empty way of life to an eternal way of life. And we can say one further thing. This eternal way of life that we are ransomed to involves the pursuit of holiness. And this brings us back to

Peter's whole purpose in this passage. Those of you who have been able to hear the previous messages on these verses will remember that, that Peter's underlying concern in what he is saying is to motivate God's people to holiness. And in this matter, he is doing the same.

To appreciate the price that has been paid for our redemption is to provide grounds or incentives for holy living. We are to live in reverent fear in the light of God as our judge, as we considered last Sunday morning. But we are also to live in reverent and grateful fear in the light of God as our redeemer. To consider and to appreciate and to value the price of our redemption, the precious blood of Christ. To value that price that was paid is to stimulate us to live lives of holiness and sacrificial service. It is the logic that is captured by C. T. Studd, who forsook fame and fortune as a wealthy man and as a renowned sportsman back in the nineteenth century, to forsake all that, to serve as a missionary in India.

And he declared the following, You see, he captured the logic of what Peter is saying. He's saying, consider the price. Consider the blood that was shed on your behalf. Consider the price that has been paid that you might be ransomed, that you might be redeemed. And in the light of an appreciation of that great price paid, live a life of gratitude. Live a life of service. Live a life that is pleasing to the one who has so redeemed you. What are you worth? Are you worth ten pounds? Ten thousand pounds? Ten million pounds?

More, much, much more. The precious blood of Jesus shed on Calvary as your ransom price. Let us pray.

[29 : 15] Heavenly Father, we come before you and we ask, we ask that by your Spirit you would help us to appreciate and value the precious blood of your Son Jesus, to appreciate and value the price that you paid in handing over your Son to such a debt in our place, that by that means the ransom price that was due, be paid and value the same. And this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

We'll close our service this morning by singing the whole of Psalm 130. We'll find that in the Scottish Psalter on page 421. Psalm 130, we'll sing the whole of the Psalm. We'll sing to the tune Martyrdom. And as we sing, let's notice and in gratitude sing the wonderful words with which the psalm closes. And plenteous redemption is ever found with Him. And from all His iniquities He Israel shall redeem. Psalm 130, we'll sing the whole of the Psalm. We'll stand to sing. of the Psalm 12 with a song. And from all His iniquities from above, we will be ■■■ oh and To thee I guide, my voice for do forgive.

Under thy supplication's voice, give an attentive ear.

Lord, who shall stand in thy, O Lord, shouldst for iniquity?

[31 : 42] But yet with thee forgiveness is, that fear thou mayest fear.

I wait for God, my soul doth wait, my hope is in his word.

More than may land, for morning was, my soul waits for the Lord.

I say, Lord, that may land, who was the morning I to see.

Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with mercy's dear.

[33 : 18] And when he runs redemption, his heaven I've come with him.

And from all his iniquities, he his word shall redeem.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and always.

Amen.