

Thoughts From Other Minds:

Q. 29. How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?

A. We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit.

The redemption purchased by Christ — A redemption ... is a purchase. And hence He who purchased in this case is called the Redeemer. ... “The Son of man came to give His life a ransom for many.” ... Scripture everywhere teaches that the fallen state of man is a state of guilt and bondage, from which Christ has redeemed His people by laying down His life as a ransom for them. (1 Cor 6:20; 1 Pet 1:18-19). ...

“Two things are principally to be considered in the respect that forgiveness hath to the blood of Christ — (1) The way of its procurement; (2) The way of its administration by Him. The first is deep, mysterious, dreadful. It was by His blood, the blood of His cross, the travail of His soul, His undergoing wrath and curse. This also adds to the mysterious depth of forgiveness, and makes its discovery a great matter. The soul that looks after it in earnest must consider what it cost. . . To see the mystery of the love of the Father, working in the blood of the Mediator, to consider by faith the great transaction of divine wisdom, justice, and mercy therein — how few attain unto it! To come unto God by Christ for forgiveness, and to behold the law issuing all its threats and curses in His blood, and losing its sting, putting an end to its obligation unto punishment, in the cross; to see all sins gathered up in the hands of God’s justice, and made to meet in the Mediator, and eternal love springing forth triumphantly from His blood, flourishing into pardon, grace, mercy, forgiveness — this the heart of a sinner can be enlarged into only by the Spirit of God” (Owen). ...

effectual application — “There are three sorts of works whereby our salvation is completed and accomplished. 1. Immanent in God toward us, as His eternal love set and passed upon us, out of which He chose us, and designed this and all blessings to us. 2. Transient, in Christ done for us; in all He did or suffered representing of us, and in our stead. 3. Applicatory, wrought in us and upon us, in the endowing us with all those blessings by His Spirit, as calling, justification, sanctification, glorification” (Goodwin).

by his Holy Spirit. “The Father provides the Saviour, and the purchase is made of Him; the Son is the purchaser and the price, and the Holy Ghost is the great blessing or inheritance purchased (Gal 3:13, 14). This inheritance was the grand legacy which Christ left His disciples and the Church in His last will and testament, John 14-16. This is the sum of the blessings of eternal life which shall be in heaven.” ... “Christ made His will by His death (Hebrews 9), but the Spirit is His administrator. Christ’s blood and purchase gave us, by His redeeming us, *jus ad rem*; but the Holy Ghost, by applying it, *jus in re*; He gives us possession, livery, and seisin” (Goodwin).

Alexander Whyte, *A Commentary on the Shorter Catechism*
http://shortercatechism.com/resources/whyte/wsc_whyte_029.html

Camperdown Noorat Terang Presbyterian Pastoral Charge

6 November 2016

Sermon: “Partakers of redemption – by the Spirit”

Scripture: John 1:1-13, 3:1-15; Titus 3:3-8

Sermon Notes

Introduction: We who name ourselves ‘Christians’ must know what we believe and why we believe it. Some say ‘doctrine divides but love unites’ - but truth rightly believed produces love (1 Peter 1:22-23).

The ‘living and abiding word of God’ is the Bible, the written word of God—and so to know what we believe and why we believe it we must know the Bible. But it is a big book, and so we have catechisms to help us understand it.

The Westminster Assembly produced two catechisms; many believe that their famous Shorter Catechism, intended for children but used in our day for the instruction of candidates for the ministry, was the cream of their efforts.

This catechism is not only an excellent summary of the main doctrines of the Faith, and well worthy of rote learning and understanding; it is also useful for preaching these doctrines; we pick up at the vital question of how we receive the benefits of Jesus’ death on the cross at Q. 29.

1. Redemption purchased

We are likely to encounter ‘redemption’ in sporting reports: ‘Aussies chase redemption in Test Series’; after a 3-0 drubbing in Sri Lanka they will regain respect by winning against South Africa!

‘Redemption’ means ‘a deliverance effected by the payment of a price, a ransom.’ So in a kidnapping, the kidnappers demand the payment of a ransom before their victim will be set free.

If you borrowed from a pawnbroker he would retain your item of value until you were able to redeem it by paying what you owed plus interest. In the ancient world slaves could redeem themselves, and prisoners of war could be ransomed.

The Law provided that if a man’s ox gored someone to death and if he had been warned but had not kept it in, he was to be put to death. But if a ransom were imposed on him, ‘then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is imposed on him’ (Ex 21:29-30).

In the lovely story of Ruth, Boaz was a ‘kinsman redeemer’ of her family’s, with the right to pay the price that would restore the family land to the family and to take Ruth as his wife.

In the New Testament ‘redemption’ is used to describe what Jesus did by his death on the cross. Jesus said that he had come ‘to give his life as a ransom for many’ (Mk 10:45, cf. also 2 Tim 1:5-6; 1 Pet 1:18-19; Eph 1:7).

Why, if the writers of the catechism meant 'salvation' did they call it 'the redemption purchased by Christ?' Because 'redemption' is a special kind of salvation, salvation that rests not simply on God's love, but also on his justice; the forgiveness offered in the gospel has been paid for by the Son according to the will of the Father.

As the man whose life was forfeit because his ox had killed someone, so our lives were forfeit because we had sinned; as his life could be spared by a ransom, so also could our lives, not a ransom of money, but of Jesus' life for our life. Boaz is a picture of Jesus, our kinsman-redeemer, paying the price and taking us for his bride.

There is a wonderful richness in understanding gospel salvation in terms of redemption, a deeper security, a greater joy. We who believe in the Lord Jesus are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus' (Rom 3:24); the gospel is the good news of redemption (Rej 367, 63, Jesus paid it all!).

2. Redemption applied

The Old Covenant priests offered many sacrifices, but Christ secured an eternal redemption by his own blood (Heb 9:11-12) - and we are made partakers of this redemption by faith, for the gospel offer is 'believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved'.

But how can we who are by nature and practice the slaves of sin believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, saving faith is not from us—it is the gift of God (Eph 2:8-10). Before we can exercise saving faith we must experience that creative work of the Spirit that Jesus called 'born again' and 'born of the Spirit'.

So the catechism is faithful to him when it says 'We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit.' 'Born again Christians' is a nonsense, for every true Christian is born again; Jesus said that to be his disciple we must be born again (Jn 3:3).

Nicodemus thought of another physical birth – but Jesus made it clear that meant as spiritual birth, by the Spirit of God (vs. 5-7). Some think that by 'water and the Spirit' Jesus meant 'baptism and the Spirit'; some teach 'baptismal regeneration', that the new birth is by water baptism—but then Jesus says 'by the Spirit'.

By saying 'water and the Spirit' he may have been referring to Old Testament scriptures such as Ezekiel 36:25-27; so the apostle Paul speaks of salvation in terms of 'the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit' (Titus 3:5-7).

We cannot 'get ourselves' born again, any more than we can 'get ourselves' born the first time! Jesus doesn't tell him to get himself born of the Spirit, but to believe in him as the Israelites of old believed in the bronze snake for salvation.

The Spirit is mysteriously sovereign in the birth, as the wind (Jn 3:8), but he uses the scriptures (1 Pet 1:23); we can know we have been born of the Spirit because he has changed us to new creations (2 Cor 5:17). Everyone born of the Spirit knows old loves gone and new loves come, for Jesus, for his word, for his people.

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My Notes:

Questions for Reflection:

1. Why do sports writers use 'redemption' in cases where a losing person or team may win in a forthcoming event, and how faithful to the meaning of the word 'redemption' is this use? Consider scriptures like Ex 21:29-30, Ruth chs 3 & 4; Mk 10:45; 2 Tim 1:5-6; 1 Pet 1:18-19; Eph 1:7).
2. How does 'redemption' deepen our understanding of the salvation that God has provided through our Lord Jesus Christ, and give us greater sense of security and a deeper joy than we might otherwise have? (Rom 3:21-26).
3. What sort of redemption did Jesus secure, and how? (Heb 9:11-12). How do we offer this redemption to outsiders? (Eph 2:8). Why is the catechism faithful to scripture when it says that we are made partakers of this redemption by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit?
4. How does Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus help us counsel someone who asks 'how can I get myself born again, of the Spirit'? (cf. also 1 Peter 1:23).
5. How can we know that we have been born of the Spirit? (2 Cor 5:17) What three loves replace the loves we once had before being born of God?