

Meeting With Christ

Practical and Exegetical Studies on the Words of Jesus Christ

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Based on sermons of Pastor Eric Chang

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YOUR REDEMPTION IS DRAWING NEAR (1)

Luke 21:28

In the last few lessons, we have been talking about the signs that will be seen at the Second Coming of Christ. These signs will cause terror in the world but will bring joy to those who are anticipating His return. And it is in that context that Jesus declared that the believers' redemption is about to take place. Let's read this passage. Luke 21:25-28.

*Luke 21:25. "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves,
26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.
27 "And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.
28 "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because **your redemption is drawing near.**"*

A ransom to pay

The Lord Jesus is saying, 'When all these things begin to occur, i.e., the intensification of evil, strange things happening in the heavens, the restlessness of the nations, then you will know that My coming is very near. Raise your heads and rejoice because your redemption is drawing near.'

Today I would like to look at this word 'redemption.' What does 'redemption' mean, and in what sense is it 'drawing near'?

The word 'redemption' in the Scriptures is essentially the same thing as 'salvation.' 'Your redemption is drawing near' means 'Your salvation is drawing near.' Take for example the first chapter of Luke, Luke 1:68-73. These are the words of Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist.

*Luke 1:68. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished **redemption** for His people,
69 and has raised up a horn of **salvation** (you see, redemption and salvation put together) for us in the house of David His servant--
70 as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old--
71 **salvation** (here you have the word 'salvation' again) from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us;
72 to show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant
73 the oath which He swore to Abraham our father,*

74 to grant us that we, being **delivered** (which has the same meaning as 'being saved') *from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear...*

Here we can see that salvation is understood in terms of redemption and vice-versa. What then is redemption? The word 'redemption' is borrowed from the language of the marketplace when a purchase is made. You get something, you redeem an object, by paying a sum of money. Used in the biblical context, it basically means to be set free from bondage, the bondage of sin, and that freedom is bought at a price. The price paid to set a person free is called a ransom. In the ancient world, to be redeemed means that if you were a slave and somebody paid a ransom, you were said to be redeemed. Therefore redemption is not like blowing up a jail and setting up the prisoners free. A price has to be paid. If a slave belongs to a certain master, the ransom will be paid to that master, and the slave would be free from that master. He would now belong to the person who bought him.

Sometimes a person may decide to redeem a slave and, in his kindness, simply let him free, if that person wanted to be free. But then, out of gratitude, that person may not want to be free. He might say, 'Let me continue my life with you. There are not many people who are willing, for no other reason than pure kindness and pure generosity, to set a slave free. I would like to remain with you. I would like to be your servant, if you would accept me for that.' And then, it is possible that the new master, the person who redeemed the slave, decides to treat this redeemed slave as a member of his own family. He would no longer treat the slave as a slave, but he would adopt that slave as a son or a daughter.

From the spiritual point of view, the Bible tells us that every human being is a slave. Every person on earth is in bondage to sin, and sin is viewed as a debt. Jesus expressed this in the Lord's Prayer when He said, *Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors* (Matthew 6:12). By virtue of our sins, we are indebted to God.

Now, if sin is viewed as a debt, then it means that a substitution can take place. It means that the settlement of our debt can happen by a payment. And it is not necessary that I should be the one who actually produces the payment as long as it is done in my name.

The reality for the Christian is that Jesus reimbursed our spiritual debt. He paid a price to set us free from our bondage to sin. This price was His own life, His own blood. You see, redemption is not just a question of being set free. It involves the notion of a cost. A price has to be paid to set us free. In Ephesians 1:7, we read that the price is the blood of Christ. *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.* The blood represents life. If you lose your blood, you die. When Paul talks about Jesus giving his blood, or redeeming us with His blood, it means that He is giving His life to set us free.

The term 'redemption' therefore leads to the imagery of the marketplace. This imagery helps us to understand the atonement and how justification takes place. We understand that it is the result of a settlement in full by the Lord Jesus for the debt that we have accumulated because of our sins.

Showing gratitude

Now, if we are truly redeemed, the appropriate reaction should be one of gratitude. We are grateful to the person who, for no other reason than pure kindness, bought us in order to set us free from slavery. We all know how hard is the life of a slave. You are left in loneliness. You are left in bondage. You are left with no direction or purpose in life. You are left with an emptiness in your heart that cannot be filled. You have no future. That is the kind of life that a non-Christian has. When we are redeemed by a ransom of great cost, the cost of the blood of Jesus, then our response must be one of gratitude and of love. Just as He gave Himself totally for us, so must we respond totally to Him. The true Christian is a person who, out of gratitude, loves God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength.

This is what we read in Mark 12:29-30: *Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 'And you shall love the Lord your God with **all** your heart, with **all** your soul, with **all** your mind, and with **all** your strength.' This is the first commandment.* This is the first and most important commandment of God. Notice the repetition of the word 'all'. All your heart, all your soul, all your mind, all your strength. The word 'all' here indicates that it involves the whole person. The heart, the soul, the mind, the strength, these are different aspects of the person. And each of these involves a total commitment of the person towards God.

Waiting for our adoption

Let's go back to our main passage, Luke 21:27-28. There is another point that I need to highlight.

Luke 21:27. And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to take place, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

Notice that redemption, here, is future. Your redemption is drawing near. The time when you will be set free is near. When those signs are happening, you will see that even then our redemption has not yet come. But it is drawing near. It is drawing near to what? Verse 27. To the coming of the Son of man. When Jesus comes back, then we will be redeemed.

The Greek word for 'redemption' is *apolutrosis*. It is used 10x in the NT. Apart from its occurrence here in Luke 21:28, it is used by Paul 7x, and in Hebrews two more times. And Hebrews is considered by many as a Pauline writing. When Paul speaks about redemption, it is as a present reality, but he also means that the fullness of that redemption will be in the future. We do have the experience of being set free, but we are not yet fully set free. What do I mean? Let's read Romans 8:22-23 where Paul makes this point quite clear.

Romans 8:22. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

*23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, **waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.***

Notice. We wait for our adoption as sons. Are we not adopted when we commit our life to God? Why then should we wait for the adoption if we have already been adopted as sons and daughters of God? True, the believers are now the children of God and partakers of adoption. But they have not yet been admitted to the full privileges of their adoption in God's family. This is still in the future. It is the same thing with redemption. Our full redemption is yet to come. Why? Because we are still waiting for the redemption of our bodies. Our bodies have not been redeemed. Our bodies are still subject to death. Death is still going to overtake our body. And sin is still in the flesh as Paul said in Romans 7. Sin is still lodged in our bodies. Therefore we groan, Paul says. In our earnest desire, we are groaning for that redemption which is yet future, when our bodies will be set free from sin and from death, when we will put on a body that is incorruptible. At that point, our body will be immune to death and free from sin. But we don't have it yet. We only have the foretaste of it. Full redemption is yet to come.

You see, the Bible tells us that at the time of the resurrection of the dead, there will be a new union between the body and the soul. This will occur at the same time as the Second Coming of Christ. At that moment, both our body and soul will be perfected and suited for the life of immortality. Any improper desire, any inclination toward evil will no longer exist in us. Our body and our soul will

be made partakers of a perfection which is in complete conformity to the will of God. This is full redemption. But we have not reached that point yet.

Sealed for the day of redemption

Let's take another passage. Ephesians 4:30.

*Ephesians 4:30. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed **for the day of redemption**.*

'Sealed for the day of redemption.' Notice that the day of redemption is future. We have already received the seal of the Holy Spirit in our life. We have received the foretaste of God's power in our life. And Paul adds that we were sealed for the day of final redemption, which is yet to come.

So there is a sense in which redemption is future. We are redeemed indeed at this present time. We are set free spiritually from sin. But the enjoyment of our full redemption is yet to come.

This point is just as clear when we take the word 'salvation.' Salvation is also future in the Scriptures. It is in that way that Peter speaks about salvation in 1Peter 1:3-5.

*1 Peter 1:3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for **salvation ready to be revealed** in the last time.*

Notice the last words. *For a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.* Salvation is yet to be revealed. Although the NT speaks of believers as being already saved, Peter's emphasis here is on a future salvation, on the final and complete fulfillment of our salvation. This future experience of salvation will be free from the limitations imposed by our mortal body. When will it be revealed? *In the last time*, i.e., at the time of the final judgment, when the Lord Jesus Himself will appear.

Here Peter says that we are being protected by God's power, through faith, for that salvation that is yet to be revealed. We thank God that He protects us, that we can depend on His power. But we have to understand that God's power does not work automatically, regardless of the attitude of the believer. It is as the person trusts in God that he experiences God's power to guard him.

Matthew 24:13 makes the same point. *He who endures to the end shall be saved.* The promise of ultimate salvation is given to the one who endures to the end, whose faith remains enduring, by God's grace, by God's power. God's power does not work apart from the personal faith of the individual. In fact, we can say that the disciples' faith in God is what God uses to energize and sustain His people.

How does this kind of faith look like? A person with a genuine faith is diligent and vigilant. He loves God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind and with all his strength. He seeks to follow God and to please Him in all that he does. He desires to live a holy, righteous and pure life serving the Lord Jesus. He gives all that he is and has to spread the love of God around him. True faith is a total commitment to obey the commandments of God, and that trusts the power of God to protect him through all the trials of life. The person who has this kind of faith has the assurance that God's power will guard him until the end when salvation will be revealed.

Saved from the wrath of God

Here is another passage that presents salvation as future. Let's turn our attention to Romans 5:9.

*Romans 5:9. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, **we shall be saved** from the wrath of God through Him.*

Notice the words. *We **shall be saved***. Salvation is future. What have we experienced now? We have experienced justification. We have been justified by the blood of Jesus Christ. God, because of his holiness, could not accept us without taking into account our sins. He had to deal with our sins. This was done through the death of His Son. We are justified on the basis of what Jesus did on the cross. It is an acquittal that sets us free from our bondage to sin.

So *we shall be saved*. Saved from what? *From the wrath of God*. In 1Thessalonians 1:10, Paul speaks about 'the wrath to come.' This is the wrath of God that will come on evil at the end time. You see that judgment is yet to come. How come we are not saved from the wrath of God now? Because full redemption has not come yet. But it is drawing near.

We will continue our study of redemption in our next lesson. We will look at what can happen between our current redemption and our future redemption.