

# Ephesians

## Ephesians 1:7-8 - Redemption through his blood

The summary to Ephesians 1:5-6 was, “To the Father there is no greater gift he could give us than coming to know his Son and the love that he has for us. And it’s in the next few verses that we see how the Father made his Son’s love for us real.”

And we see exactly that in **verse 7**, because it’s “in him (Jesus) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.” But notice who set it up this way - it’s “in accordance with riches of God’s grace,” **verse 8**, “that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.” So it’s the genius and love of the Father at work here, in which case it deserves a good look at what ***redemption through Jesus’ blood*** means, and especially when it’s tied in with the love Jesus has for us.

So how did Paul make redemption through Jesus’ blood real for us?

Well, if we’d been alive in Paul’s day when he wrote this verse about redemption, it would likely have leapt off the page for his readers because of what their world was like back then. It was the Roman world in the middle of the first century, where roughly a third of the people in the cities were slaves, and slave markets were a common sight. So slaves were very much a normal and acceptable part of that culture, and also an important boost to people’s social status, because the more slaves you had the higher up the social ladder you were. One member of the Roman elite had four hundred slaves just to look after his private residence.

A slave, meanwhile, had no more status than a cow or a piece of furniture. Your owner could do whatever he liked to you, including kill you and not be punished for it either. You existed to be used. You could also be bought, sold and rented out, and if you ran away you’d be hunted down, branded on your forehead with letters denoting you as a runaway, or have a metal collar locked round your neck. Other punishments included whippings, breaking joints and bones, crucifixion, being thrown to wild beasts in the arena, or being burnt alive. And if you worked as an agricultural labourer, or in the mines, the conditions were so hard and toxic they’d ruin your health. And through all this you were utterly powerless, and only strict obedience to your owner’s every whim would keep your miserable and often brutal life intact.

But there was one thing that made obedience tolerable, that even made a helpless slave want to work hard, and that was the prospect of a Roman law called *manumission* that allowed slaves to be freed from their slavery and be given full Roman citizenship with the right to earn a living, and even hold office. How you got your freedom, however, was totally up to your slave owner, some of whom gifted their slaves with freedom, but the standard practice was the slave buying his freedom at a price set by the owner. Pay the ransom price and you were free.

So there was a way out of slavery if you came up with the cash. Pity the slaves, then, who couldn't come up with the ransom money. They lived and died as slaves, some with their metal collars still locked round their necks.

Coming up with the ransom money, therefore, was crucial to their freedom, which suited Paul's purpose perfectly in giving us a picture of how real Jesus' love for us is, because Jesus willingly and generously paid the required ransom to free us. And that's what Paul wanted to get across in his use of the word *redemption* in verse 7, because in Greek it's a combination of two words that actually meant the ransom paid for a slave to set him free. In the culture of slavery in that day, therefore, redemption really meant something.

But it also means something in our culture today, because we use the word redemption too, defined as "the action of saving or being saved from sin, error, or evil." So we too accept there's a slavery we're trapped in, but just like the slaves in Rome there is nothing we can do to free ourselves either, because the ransom price for our freedom from sin, error and evil is way beyond our means too. But this is where Paul's use of the Greek word for redemption helps us out, because it means **the price to free us has been paid**.

That same Greek word for redemption meant something even more too. In Greek it's *apolutrosin* (appo-loo-trosin), which includes in its meaning "buying back from, or repurchasing, or winning back, what was previously lost." And that would have meant a great deal to a slave back then who'd **been free** in his earlier life but had his freedom snatched away by becoming a captive in war, or because of poverty, or - as often happened - being kidnapped by pirates and sold into slavery. In some form or other, then, he'd been a free man, but had to forfeit his freedom because of circumstances beyond his control.

And that meaning has carried through to us today, because redemption is also defined as "the action of **regaining possession** of something in exchange for payment." It's talking about repossession, getting back something we've lost, or had to forfeit - exactly like the Greek meaning in Ephesians 1:7.

In our terms today it would be like finding yourself desperately short of cash, so you head down to the local pawnbroker with the precious heirloom Grandma gave you. The pawnbroker happily loans you money in exchange for the heirloom, and if by a certain date you pay back the loan plus interest you can have Grandma's heirloom back. In other words, you can get back what you lost, or had to forfeit. And what a relief, I imagine, that is.

So Paul is using a word that would pop out with great meaning to people in his world, who knew about manumission and the chance to get back the freedom they'd lost. But it also pops out with meaning for us today too, because it takes us back to the Garden of Eden where we were free as birds. It's how God started us off, but we lost our beautiful freedom from "sin, error and evil" after being hoodwinked into forfeiting our freedom for a fruit. Like the pirates of old who captured men to sell them into slavery, we were captured and sold into slavery by a pirate serpent, and like the slaves of old we would have lived and died as slaves without any means of escape or earning our way out of it either. We were stuck with evil like the metal collar locked round a slave's neck. And we were at the mercy of whatever evil wanted to do to us, as we see in the awful things that evil is doing to people in our world today.

But again we see the love of Jesus for us, because he not only paid the cost of freeing us from being helplessly enslaved to sin, error and evil, he also paid the cost of **getting back the freedom we lost**. Because he knows what we lost in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve had enjoyed a guilt-free, shame-free, error-free, fear-free, evil-free life, so that under God's personal tutelage they could direct their God-given skills to what God had created them for, to develop the planet he'd made for them, starting with agriculture, animal husbandry, and the use and extraction of metals, resins and minerals (all hinted at in Genesis 2). The world, as they say, was their oyster, meaning they could achieve anything they wished with God as their personal, loving, and constant guide and teacher.

And that's what Jesus wanted to buy back for us. But this is where redemption really makes Jesus' love for us real, because the ransom required to get back what we lost was **only payable in blood**. And not any old blood like our blood or the blood of animals either; it had to be **his blood**.

But why his blood? Because, **Hebrews 9:12**, it's "by his blood he obtained **eternal redemption**" for us. So his blood went much further than freeing us from sin, error and evil, and restoring what we lost in Genesis, because we were still stuck with having to die. In Jesus' blood, however, the Father provided the ransom price for freeing us and restoring what we lost **forever**.

Paul then explains back in **Ephesians 1:7** what was in that ransom price that made freeing us and restoring us forever possible; it's "the **forgiveness of our sins.**" In Greek it's *aphesis* (ar-fur-cess) *paraptoma* (par-rap-toma), which gets the point across that no matter how, or how many times, we stepped outside or broke God's law, our criminal record has been wiped clean. Our conscience has been completely emptied of all guilt. We are free of it all. But taking note of the cost too, because "**without** the shedding of blood there is **no forgiveness,**" **Hebrews 9:22.** So the shedding of Jesus' lifeblood was also the cost of our forgiveness.

But why did the Father set it up this way? What was in blood that in his mind would be sufficient to free us?

Well, we know from **Leviticus 17:11** that it's the circulation of blood through a body that gives it life. So by requiring blood as the price to free us, it gets the point across that **nothing less than life itself** is sufficient to pay it. And that gets the point across that Jesus was willing to pay that price of life itself for us - because we couldn't pay it, could we? If the ransom price for our freedom was **our** lifeblood, well that wouldn't work, because without blood we're dead. It's like a Roman slave only getting his freedom back if his head is chopped off, and what good is his freedom then? He's dead.

So it had to be Jesus' lifeblood, which meant Jesus had to become a human being like us. He needed blood circulating through his body to give him life, so without blood his life would end too. And only the loss of his life would then suffice to pay for ours. And this too was required by the Father, but why?

Because, **1 John 4:9**, "This is how God showed his love among us. He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him." It's all based on love. God's ultimate goal is to have us live forever with him, with all the rights of citizenship in his kingdom, free from ever again being slaves to sin, error and evil. But how to get that into our heads that he loves us that much? It's by Jesus paying the ransom price of his lifeblood for us.

But again, why blood? Well, there's no ignoring blood. The sight of blood oozing from a wound, or watching a surgeon's scalpel cut into skin and the blood welling up behind it, or witnessing an animal's throat slit, or mopping up blood after an accident, is enough to make a grown man faint. But did God deliberately design it this way so that blood - in its consistency, its stickiness, its colour and even its taste - would sear its way through our consciousness and make us realize how much our life depends on it? And how much, therefore, our **eternal** life too depended on Jesus willingly giving up his lifeblood. And blood that was just as real and just as red as ours.