

Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim It

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It's a delight to be with you again here at Providence Church. We have enjoyed so much the fellowship that we've had with you people and prayed for you, as we know that you have prayed for us as well. We consider it to be a joy to be a part of this church and to know many of you and have gotten to know many of you more over the years. Our primary purpose this time for coming back was to participate in the ACBC Conference which took place in Indianapolis, Indiana. I was one of the speakers at that conference. Forty years ago, as Ty mentioned, we began an association of people who were committed to the word of God, to give us everything that we need for living and for godliness. It was at that point called NANC, which is the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors, and then a couple of years ago, decided to change the title to ACBC, which is Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, and this year we met in Indianapolis with about 2,000 people who were there; last year they met in Louisville, Kentucky and there were about 2,000 people there as well, and I happened to have the privilege of being the person who instigated ACBC in Africa and now we are organized as an affiliate of ACBC in the United States, but it's in Africa and we have our own conferences there. This year we had a conference on "The Sufficiency of Scripture." We had two speakers from the United States, three speakers actually from the United States. Heath Lambert came and ministered and also Ernie Baker who was a professor of counseling at Master's University, and then Barb Enter from your church came and she spoke to the ladies on what the Bible has to say about solving the problems of women. We have another conference coming up which will be in August of 2017. I'd appreciate your prayers for that. This year's conference will be on the subject of racism and we have 23 or 24 topics that relate to racism that we'll be dealing with as far as what does the word of God say about these particular issues, and we know that it's a volatile subject for some people, and especially in South Africa because apartheid was in operation until 1994. So we're only 22 years past apartheid and so there are still people who are very, well, they're very easily annoyed when you speak about this subject but it's such an important one. We appreciate your prayers for that. We will also be having a couple of people from the United States joining us, Dr. Charles Ware, who is a black man who is the President of Crossroads Bible College, will be one of our speakers. Dr. Nicolas Ellen, who was actually one of my students at Master's College, now he has his doctorate from Southern Seminary, but he'll be coming to speak.

And then we will have many speakers from South Africa who have in the last, well, we came to South Africa in 2005, I hesitate to say this but it's true. One of the reasons we went to South Africa rather than staying in the United States was because we were told that there is no place in all of Africa where you can go to get training or teaching on biblical counseling and that was the particular statement that tipped the scales in terms of why we went to South Africa. No place, not only in South Africa but in all of Africa and so we went and we began a training program to train men and women in what the word of God has to say about understanding the nature of our problems, the reason for our problems, and the solution to our problems. And during the past 11 years, we've had the privilege of teaching several hundred Africans and just this year we had the wonderful experience of having one of our black...South Africa is 80% black, 20% white, and there are some Indians and Chinese as well, but mostly it's black and to this point, we have not had many, any in fact, black people who have been trained in biblical counseling and this year we have one of our dear brothers from a very poor area of South Africa, the Venda area. He passed the theological exam, the counseling exam and he also had 50 hours of supervised counseling where I happened to do the supervision and he was accepted into ACBC here in the United States.

So we're grateful for what God has done. We're also grateful for the way that you folks have prayed for us. We pray for you. We get the prayer requests, Carolyn sends them on to us regularly, and so if you were mentioned in those prayer requests, you were prayed for over in South Africa. I do want to give praise to God. We are growing to the point where we've been sending students over to the United States to finish off their training in biblical counseling to get a graduate degree, but that is immensely expensive and so even though we've had, by this time we've probably had seven or eight men that have come, they give about half of the credit for the graduate degree, for the courses that we offer, then they come over here to finish it off. But we're now in the process of seeking permission and approval from the South African government to be able to grant the graduate degree in South Africa which means that it won't cost them the tremendous amount of money as it costs now. So you pray about that and I just want to give praise to God. We, of course, to get the approval from the South African government, we need to fill out all kinds of forms which we've done. We have a man who is familiar with the process who is helping us, but it's going to cost us about \$10,000 to get that particular approval, and I happened to mention this to a group at the ACBC Conference in Indianapolis and a man that I had never met before came up to me and said, "My wife and I would like to give you the \$10,000." And he did, because Carolyn told me this morning that the check had come in and so you might pray about that, that the South African government will look upon that in a favorable way and grant us the privilege of granting a graduate degree in the area of biblical counseling right there in South Africa.

Now, all of the Bible, of course, is wonderful and we're grateful for all the truth of God's word but over the years, now 66 years of having been a Christian, 57 or 58 years in ministry, there are certain verses, of course, that stand out. When Carol and I got married 59 years ago, we chose as a text for our marriage which has been our marriage text for 59 years, Romans 14:7-8 which says, "None of us lives for himself and none of us dies for himself, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's," and we have taken that as

our text for our marriage, but in terms of other areas of our lives, there are other verses that just stand out for us and this morning I want to preach to you from one of my favorite texts in all of the Scriptures, it's a text which is found in Ephesians 1:7, but if you're going to get the context of this verse, I want to read beginning at verse 3. Ephesians 1:3-7.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight

Father, this is your word. We love you and because we love you, we love your word. We're thankful that you're a God who speaks, you speak through your word which is settled forever, and in it we know that we have everything that we need for living and for godliness. In it, Lord, we have everything that we need to teach us, to reprove us, to correct us, to train us in righteousness so that we might be thoroughly equipped unto every good work. We thank you for your word and I ask, Lord, this morning that you would help us to understand this wonderful text and to receive the teaching that you have for us. Use your word to do its intended purpose of exalting yourself, bringing us to Jesus Christ in salvation, and then helping us to grow in him and become more like him. We pray that you would speak to us for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

One Sunday morning back in the 19th century, Charles Spurgeon came to his pulpit and he said something like this, he said, "Today in this congregation there is a man who has not been present in our services for a long time. He's been living in another country and now after that lengthy period of time, he's returned and he's here today. Well, today when he hears me preach, he's going to say that I'm still preaching the same things I was preaching before he left for another country. He'll say of me and my message that I'm not saying anything new and he will be right and for that I am glad because I don't have and I don't want to have the attitude of the Athenians as described in Acts 17. The Bible says that they got together and they always wanted to hear some new thing." Well, Spurgeon said, "I'm not like them because my heavenly Father has commissioned me to preach the Gospel, to stand by the cross and to tell people about Christ who loved them and gave himself for them, and by his grace, I intend to do that until the Lord calls me home."

Now, that's a paraphrase of what Charles Spurgeon said but it's an accurate paraphrase and, my friends, I want you to know that Spurgeon's commitment is my commitment. As long as God allows me to live, I'm committed to preaching the Gospel. I'm not here to invent a new message, I'm here to preach the same message that Spurgeon and many others like him have preached. I do that because as a pastor and counselor, God has commissioned me in 2 Timothy 4:2, "to preach the word in season, out of season, to

reprove and rebuke with all longsuffering." I stand with Paul who said, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." He also said, "I have determined to preach the cross of Christ, I am resolved that I'll preach nothing but the cross of Jesus Christ."

Now, I and every pastor have been commissioned by God to preach the message that Paul preached. In Ephesians 1:3, Paul says that we who believe in Christ have been "blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," and then in verses 3 through 14, Paul goes on to mention some of the blessings that we have received in Christ and among the numerous blessings he mentions is the blessing which is described in verse 7 and what I want to do today is take that verse apart and see what it says. I want to dissect this verse and glean from it what we can about the blessing that it describes for us.

Now if we look at this text, we find the word "redemption." Now, the word "redemption" is a word that in its widest sense describes everything that God does for the Christian and in the Christian from the time he repents until he is taken home to be with Christ. In 1955, a theologian by the name of John Murray wrote a book called "Redemption Accomplished and Applied." The book has two sections: redemption accomplished in which he describes how God accomplishes our redemption, of course, through the life of Jesus Christ perfectly keeping the law for us and dying for us on the cross and then being resurrected; and then the second section of the book is about redemption applied. And in that book, John Murray describes nine different facets about redemption. He tells us that redemption involves the effectual call which means that God calls us to himself through the preaching of the word. If you're a Christian here this morning, there was a time when God called you. Oh, you didn't hear it audibly, you may have heard it through reading the word, you may have heard it through somebody else's testimony, you may have heard it through preaching but you knew that God was speaking to you.

That happened to me in November of 1951. For the first time in my life, I heard the Gospel. I had been going to church for many years, it was a liberal church, and then a friend of mine invited me out to a service, to an evangelistic service. I didn't know what it was but I went, and that night I heard the Gospel. I heard that I was a sinner. I heard that Christ died for sinners. I was challenged to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and I knew God was speaking to me and God was calling me, and frequently in the Bible Christians are called "the called according to the Lord Jesus Christ."

So redemption means God calls us. Redemption means that we have been regenerated, born again, in the words of Jesus in John 3. "You must be born again. Unless you're born again," Jesus said, "you will never see the kingdom of God."

Redemption involves repentance where I see my sin, I turn away from it, I abhor my sin, and it also involves me trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ in faith. It involves repentance and faith. If I've been redeemed, I have repented, and if I have not repented, I am not redeemed and it means I've also placed my faith and trust completely in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Redemption involves justification where God declares me to be righteous because of the work of Jesus Christ on my behalf. I have been justified if I am redeemed.

Redemption involves adoption where God brings me into his own family in love. We read in Ephesians 1 he adopted us. It was John Gill, the preacher who preceded Charles Spurgeon at Park Street Chapel in London, England, who said that in some ways the doctrine of adoption is one of the most wonderful doctrines in all the word of God. When God justifies us, he declares us to be righteous and he puts to our account the righteousness of Jesus Christ, but when he adopts us, he brings us into his own family and, in one sense, that's even more important than justification and more wonderful. The two, of course, go together, but I am a child of God and the Bible says, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God." The doctrine of adoption is part of redemption.

Then there is the matter of sanctification where God begins the work of not only justifying me but of transforming me experientially in the very likeness of Jesus Christ. Little children's catechism which we use with our children asks the question: what is justification? It is to be declared to be righteous. Then it says: what is sanctification? Teaching our children concepts of the word of God, and it is where God begins the process of making me like Jesus, of transforming me on the inside to make me like Christ. That's sanctification and it's part of redemption.

Redemption involves perseverance. All who are truly redeemed persevere, and one of the evidences of the fact that I'm a child of God is that I do persevere. I continue. I'm in the hand of Christ and I endure to the end. That's part of redemption.

Redemption involves being united to Christ. One of the most glorious doctrines of all of the word of God is the doctrine of our union with Christ. The word "in Him or in Christ" are found 120 times in the New Testament and it's because I'm in him, I'm united to him, that I have redemption.

Then redemption also involves ultimately glorification. One day it says that we're waiting for the coming of Christ and one day we will be like him for we will see him as he is. One day, I'm going to be totally like Jesus in my thoughts, in my desires, in my attitudes, in the way I think about life and so will you if you've been redeemed. That's the goal, to make us like Jesus Christ. Romans 8 says that he has redeemed us and in redeeming us he predestined us to be adopted, and it says that we might be conformed to the image of his Son. One day I'll never struggle with evil thoughts. I'll never struggle with any kind of desires that are contrary to the word of God. It's all going to be gone and that's glorification. That's all part of redemption and, for us, that, of course, is future.

Now, redemption is a big concept and that's why Romans 8:23 says we're waiting for the redemption. We're waiting, longing for redemption of our bodies. And in Ephesians 4:30, Paul says, "Don't grieve the Holy Spirit whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption." So there's a sense in which we have been redeemed, there's a sense in which

we are being redeemed, and there's a sense in which, praise God, one day we will be totally redeemed because we will be like the Lord Jesus Christ forever.

Now, some of the aspects of redemption as far as experience are concerned we will experience in the future, but some of them we already have. If we're Christians, one of the aspects is described by Paul, he says, "In whom we have redemption." Right now we have redemption. And then he goes on to specify what aspect of redemption we now have. He says, "Now we experience the forgiveness of sins." Psalm 32, the Psalmist said, "How blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven, whose iniquities are covered, unto whom the Lord does not impute iniquity." What a blessing it is to know that we have been forgiven. Now, we're forgiven of our sins according to God's grace, that's what our text says. It says, "in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of God's grace."

Now, we are redeemed freely. It doesn't cost us anything but it cost Jesus Christ everything on the cross, and "by grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves. It's the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." God forgives us freely. God's forgiveness is not like the forgiveness of some married people with their mates, you know, if a husband has sinned against his wife, he may say, "I'm sorry," but then he buys her a box of candy or gets her a new dress or takes her out for dinner in an attempt to earn forgiveness. We don't have to do that. The forgiveness of God is according to the riches of his grace.

Now, notice very carefully what the text doesn't say. It doesn't say that we're forgiven according to our conception of the riches of God's grace. It doesn't say we're forgiven if our sin isn't too great or if we haven't sinned more than a certain amount. It doesn't say we're forgiven if we've not lived more than X number of years in sin. It doesn't say we're forgiven if we mourn so many kilometers worth of sorrow and bitterness over our sins. In the history of the church, there was a false doctrine which was called preparationism which is for us to be redeemed, we have to prepare ourselves. Well, the Bible says, "No, we come just as we are. Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me." It's according to the riches of God's grace.

We're forgiven not according to the strength of our faith, it says according to the riches of God's grace. Now, the phrase, "according to the riches," should be translated, "in keeping with the riches of God's grace, or equal to the riches of God's grace." Now, what does that mean? Well, here's a man, for example, who is fabulously rich. If you were to come to South Africa, a few of you have been there, you were to drive around our streets, on almost every corner you would have someone standing at what we call a robot, it's a traffic light, and holding out his hand and begging for money. Now, let's say you see a man and usually they're there, they're bent over like this, some of them maybe it's a real problem, others have learned to pretend, and there they are begging for money. Let's say you're a very wealthy person and you come along and see one of those people and your heart is moved and so you give them, here in the United States it's dollars, in South Africa it's rand, and right now the rand to dollar rate is about 14 to 1, but you give them, let's say you give them 1,000 rand which would be a little less than \$100, now, if you

were to do that, you would be giving out of your riches because, yeah, your heart was moved but it really didn't cost you that much because you're incredibly wealthy. But here's another man, he's also fabulously wealthy, and one of these people approaches him, holds out their hand and sometimes they get down on their knees while you're there at the robot and they'll look up at you with a pitiful look on their face and they will be asking for a handout. And suppose one of them does that and your heart is touched and so you take your wallet out and you happen to have just taken quite a bit of money out of the bank and you give them what amounts to 200,000 rand instead of 1,000 rand. Now, at that point, you would not be giving out of your riches but in keeping with your riches and God redeems us, forgives us in keeping with the riches of his grace.

Now, how rich is God? Well, he's rich in power. He's infinite in power. There is nothing too hard for him. The things that are impossible with men are possible with God. He's rich in wisdom. Ephesians 2:7 talks about the riches of his wisdom, it says, that he "might show the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." He's rich in grace. He doesn't forgive misery or grudgingly. Isaiah 55:7 says that, "He abundantly pardons." A picture of the way God forgives is suggested for us in 1 Kings 10:1-3. You'll probably know this story. It's the story of the Queen of Sheba who heard about Solomon, about his wisdom and his riches, and so she came to check it out for herself, and when she had an opportunity to interview Solomon, it says that she said, "It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. Nevertheless, I did not believe the reports until I came and my eyes had seen it, and behold the half was not told me. You exceed in wisdom and prosperity the report which I heard. How blessed are your men. How blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually and hear your wisdom." Well, God is so rich in wisdom, in power and in grace, that the half has not been told. It will take all eternity for us to understand just how rich God has been in his redemption for us.

So we have redemption, we have the forgiveness of sins, it says we have them. Now, this suggests that forgiveness of sins and redemption is a present possession. Paul doesn't say we hope we have redemption, he doesn't say we hope we have forgiveness of sins, he says we have it. Now, this is a truth, of course, that needs to be emphasized because many today have the problem that Martin Luther had. Martin Luther, of course, was raised a Roman Catholic. He had been taught that you can never know for sure that your sins have been forgiven and Martin Luther longed to know that he was right with God and so he beat himself, he became an ascetic, which means that he denied himself many things, and he hour after hour, night after night, he would be crying out for God because he wanted to have forgiveness of sins. But he didn't have it until one day he discovered the truth of Colossians 1 which said that he made peace by the blood of his cross, and so at that point, Martin Luther knew that he had forgiveness, he had redemption, and we can know that as many.

There are many who struggle with the matter of assurance of salvation. I have counseled many in our counseling room. I remember a dear old lady who came, I could say dear old lady, she was about my age right now, but she came and she was just miserable because she wasn't sure that the Lord had really saved her. She was struggling with a lack of

assurance of salvation. Well, according to Paul, that's not the way it should be with us because we have redemption, we have forgiveness of sins. Praise God for that.

Then notice also that it's forgiveness of sins that we have. Now, the word "forgiveness" translated here is a very strong Greek word which means "to send away," it means "to remit," it means "to cancel; to erase." I remember hearing about a certain woman who called herself a Christian but she had a problem with another woman in the church. She was really bitter toward this other woman and so her pastor came to her one day and said, "You know, the Bible says you are to forgive." She says, "Oh yes, I have forgiven but I won't let that woman in my house." Now, the truth is she hadn't really forgiven because when God forgives he remits, he sends away, he cancels, he erases. Some people may think that forgiveness is not a wonderful thing but thank God he says in Psalm 103:12, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." Isaiah 44:22, it says he "blots out our sins, our transgressions." He just blots them out. In Micah 7:19, he "casts them into the depths of the sea." Hebrews 10:17, he says, "I'll remember your sins no more."

Remember the story of the little girl who came home from school one day, she had just started going to school and she was really amazed that what happened when her teacher wrote something on the blackboard and then would wipe it off with an eraser, and the little girl said, "Mommy, what happens to the words that my teacher put on the blackboard when she wipes them off?" Well, the mother said, "Well, they are erased." The little girl said, "Yeah, but Mommy, what happens to them?" The mother said, "They just disappear." She said, "Well, where do they disappear to?" And she kept pressing her mother for an answer and finally her mother used every word that she could think of for what it means to erase and then she said, "Honey, take my word for it, they are gone!" And that's what's true in reference to our sins, he will remember them no more and he will bring them up not again. The Bible says, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifies." Who will condemn us? No one because when God forgives, he wipes the slate clean.

So the text says we have forgiveness but notice it says we have forgiveness of our trespasses or forgiveness of sins. Paul doesn't say we have forgiveness of some of our sins. And I have heard of husbands and wives who have said, "You know, if my husband or my wife does certain things, I'll forgive them, but if they ever do a certain thing," usually it's infidelity, "I will never forgive them. I'll forgive them any other sin but not that sin. I'll forgive for their thoughtlessness. I'll forgive for their insensitivity. I'll forgive them if they do not pay attention to me, their inattentiveness." Well, God doesn't say, "I'll forgive you of some of your sins," he says, "I'll forgive you of all of your sins."

When he forgives, he forgives us of all of our sins of commission and all of our sins of omission. You see, sin is not only doing what we shouldn't do, sin is not doing what we should do and God forgives us of whether it's commission or omission.

He forgives us of our sins of our childhood and of our youth. And I remember sitting down one day when I was a young man, and thinking back on the way that I had really

taken my parents for granted and was not appreciative. I was so convicted that I began to shed tears over my lack of appreciation for my parents and I sat down and I wrote them a letter asking for their forgiveness. Well, God forgives us those sins. When God sent the flood, the Scripture says that all the tops of the mountains were covered. All of them. And when God forgives us, he covers all of our sins whether it's the sin of blasphemy, whether it's the sin of stealing, whether it's the sin of lying, whether it's the sin of mental or actual adultery, whether it's the sin of hard-heartedness, of being callous and careless, covetous, bitter, rebellious. God forgives us all of our sins. We read of the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 6, Paul says that they had been drunkards, revilers, swindlers, thieves, covetous, fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate and homosexuality, but God washed them, justified them, and sanctified them of all their sin. That's what happens when we repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, he forgives us of all of our sins.

I remember reading about a man by the name of Brownlow North. Brownlow North was a Scotsman and before he became a Christian, he was extremely wicked and sinful and then he became a Christian and the Lord brought him into the ministry. On one occasion, Brownlow North stood before a group of people about to preach to them, and before he preached, someone gave him a note and the note laid out the sins of Brownlow North and the note said, "If you preach today, I will expose you." Brownlow North took that little piece of paper, he read off the horrible things that he had done, sins of commission, sins of omission, and after that he said, "And it's all true, but it's also true that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all sin." And how wonderful it is to know that regardless of what our sins are, when we truly repent of our sins, he forgives us.

Now, he forgives us through his blood. Not simply through the teaching of Christ, not simply through the example of Christ, not simply through the life of Christ, but through the blood of Christ. When I was in Rome a number of years ago, I came to a place that was called the Scala Sancta and on the Scala Sancta, which was a stairway, they had transported that stairway from the Holy Land and supposedly they said that the little dark marks on that stairway were places where the blood of Christ had fallen. So I stood there and I watched as people crawled up that stairway, bowing over, kissing the little reminders of the blood of Christ and the idea was that there was something about kissing the blood, touching the blood, that would save them. There was something mystical, something magical about that blood.

That's not what it means to be forgiven through his blood. It means that through the death which he died on our behalf. It means that because Jesus died in my stead, because he suffered for my sins, God was holy and just, could not simply overlook my sin, the penalty for my sin had to be paid. It was a crime against God. And so Jesus Christ came as my substitute and he lived the life that I could not live, kept the law perfectly, and then went to the cross to die on behalf of the sins that I had committed and now the Bible says, "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He died on our behalf. "In his own body," says Peter in 1 Peter 2:24. "He bore our sins in order that we might be dead to sin and alive unto righteousness."

The hymnwriter put it this way,

"Nor silver nor gold hath obtained my redemption,
Nor riches of earth could have saved my poor soul;
The blood of the cross is my only foundation,
The death of my Savior now maketh me whole.

"I am redeemed, but not with silver,
I am bought, but not with gold;
Bought with a price, the blood of Jesus,
Precious price of love untold.

"Nor silver nor gold hath obtained my redemption,
The guilt on my conscience too heavy had grown;
The blood of the cross is my only foundation,
The death of my Savior could only atone.

"Nor silver nor gold hath obtained my redemption,
The holy commandment forbade me draw near;
The blood of the cross is my only foundation,
The death of my Savior removeth my fear.

"Nor silver nor gold hath obtained my redemption,
The way into Heaven could not thus be bought;
The blood of the cross is my only foundation,
The death of my Savior redemption hath wrought."

And so Paul says we have been blessed in that we have forgiveness through his blood. And then one more thing in the text that I want you to see, it's found in this little two letter word which says that in him "we" have redemption through his blood. It's not everybody has it. It's not everybody has forgiveness of sins, but we have it. Well, who are the "we"? In the context, if you go back to verse 4, it's those who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. If you go back to verse 1, it's those who are the faithful, those who are believing savingly in Christ Jesus. In verse 5, who are the "we"? It's those who have been adopted as sons through Jesus Christ to himself. We have redemption and you do too if you have truly repented, if you truly believe, if you truly turn from your sin and cast yourself upon Christ, surrendered your life to him and said, "Lord, you are my Lord. I depend entirely upon you. I have nothing to offer God but I trust in you."

Now, would you know the blessing of Ephesians 1:7? Well, if you would know the blessing of that wonderful text, you must come to the Lord in the words of that wonderful old hymn, not specifically the words but the truths which are described in that wonderful hymn,

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure;
Save from wrath and make me pure.

"Not the labor of my hands
Can fulfill Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Savior, or I die.

"While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyes shall close in death,
When I rise to worlds unknown
And behold Thee on Thy throne.
Rock of ages, cleft for me
Let me hide myself in Thee."

Well, it's those who have come with that attitude expressed in that wonderful hymn who are trusting completely in the Lord Jesus Christ, depending upon him, it's to those that Paul says, "You have redemption. You have the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace." And since that's true, then we rejoice in the truth of verse 3 which says we have been blessed, incredibly blessed, with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. If that's true of you, rejoice. Shout for joy. If that's true of you, go out and tell others about this wonderful Savior.

We used to sing a hymn which was called "I Love to Tell the Story of Jesus and His Love," you remember one of the verses says,

"I love to tell the story
For those who know it best.
Seem hungry and thirsty
And hear it like the rest."

And if you ever get tired of hearing the old old story, you'd better check your spiritual qualifications because those of us who are saved know that our only hope is to be found

in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and we've been blessed. Let's tell others about that. And if you're here this morning and you know that you can't say, "I know I'm redeemed. I know my sins are forgiven. They're gone. I know that the blood of Jesus Christ has been applied to my heart and my life." If you have no assurance of salvation, I invite you and I challenge you to reflect upon the truth of Ephesians 1:7, in him you can have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace. How blessed we are to be people who are forgiven and part of the family of God.

Thank you, Lord, for the wonderful opportunity this morning just to reflect on your word. It is so clear, it is so plain, it is so simple and yet so profound. We pray that you would work in us as those who are believers and help us never to take redemption, forgiveness of sins for granted and treat it lightly but to realize there is not a more wonderful blessing that we could receive in this world than the blessing of knowing that God has forgiven us and that we truly are redeemed through the blood of Jesus Christ. And I pray even today, Lord, for the children who are here this morning, for the young people, and for adults as well, who have never really closed with Jesus Christ, who have never come in saying, "Foul, I to the fountain fly, Wash me, Savior or I die." Even today, Lord, work in their hearts and bring them to Christ we pray for Jesus Christ's sake. In his name, amen.