

Redeemed

Building a Christian Mind

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Bible Verse: Ephesians 1:7-8
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I invite you to turn to the book of Ephesians for our time in God's word in preparation for the Lord's Table. If you've never been here with us on a Communion service, we let the word of God speak and then we respond by taking Communion. We celebrate Communion about six times a year every couple of months, roughly speaking, and it's always a special time. This tradition of having Communion on Thanksgiving week is one of my favorites at Truth Community, to be honest with you. I always look forward to it and to just be able to do this in the regular flow of our teaching is precious indeed.

I'm going to read from Ephesians 1:3 to 8. I'll try to keep things simple here this evening. As Paul is praising God, you could say he's giving thanks to God for the riches that are ours in Christ, and we've been looking at this text over the past two Tuesdays, he begins in verse 3,

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed 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 upon us, in all wisdom and insight

There's so many ways to look at this passage in verses 3 through 14. It's an explicitly Trinitarian passage. Paul speaks of the Father in verse 3. He speaks of Christ in verse 5. He speaks of the Holy Spirit in verse 13. All of the blessings of salvation flow to us from the Triune Godhead, you could look at it that way. The goal, the ultimate goal, the final goal of salvation is that God would receive glory from his people. You see it in verse 6, to the praise of his glorious grace. In verse 12, to the praise of his glory. In verse 14, to the praise of his glory. It's interesting how there's a three-fold reference to the members of the Godhead and a three-fold praise that parallels that. We've been looking at it in terms of the different terms that Paul uses, the different pictures, the different doctrines

that he teaches us about the nature of salvation as it is applied to us who God has saved and drawn to himself.

We looked at the doctrine of election in verse 4, that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. The matter of your salvation in the counsels of God was settled before God created the heavens and the earth. There was no possibility that having been chosen by him before the beginning of time that you could ever be lost. You had to be saved in time but the outcome was assured because God had determined it before the beginning of time. And notice in verse 5 that all of this, salvation, blessing, was God's idea. This is not something that man came up with. This was not something that man worked out and does on his own. It's something that God has done and that's why all of the praise goes to him. You see in verse 5 that this predestination unto salvation is according to the purpose of God's will. It was God's will alone that was the determinative factor into whether we would be saved or not. The exercise of our faith, our repentance, our movement toward God is all secondary and in response to what he originally did. It's not something that we initiated on our own from our dead and sinful hearts. You see that also in verse 11, that, "In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will." Look at those threefold words, there's a theme of three that is prevalent here this evening, isn't it? There in verse 11, God's purpose, God's counsel, God's will, with the result that "we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory."

I remember many, many years ago in a church long ago and far away, Nancy and I had not been married very long. There was a special music number. and a very talented singer, a sweet young gal at the time, as far as that goes, but the lyrics of the song struck me, and I've referred to them from time to time over the course of my ministry. I don't remember all of the lyrics, I just remember the chorus and the emphatic nature of the chorus speaking about salvation, mind you, said, "I made my choice and my choice set me free." Now think about that. Beloved, I hope that none of you would ever want to sing a song like that, that none of you would ever think like that in speaking about your salvation, to stand on a platform and sing, I'm not being very unfair to the writer of that song, to sing praises to yourself about what you did, your choice, and what you did made you free. Oh, the thought of that should just be abhorrent to every true believer. Salvation, there's nothing in Paul's writings here as he praises God in that 202 word in the Greek text, single sentence from verse 3 to 14, it's one sentence, 202 words, all praising God, there's nothing in that talking about the power, the glory of the choice of man. It's all about the wisdom and the power and the goodness and the love and the mercy and the counsel and purpose and will of God and that's why God gets the praise. And so we realize that God has done something on behalf of us. God has done something for his people that they could not do for themselves, that we could not choose on our own, and because we recognize the goodness, love, mercy, patience, and kindness of God in what we are going to celebrate here at the table, our hearts are full. Not of ourselves. God forbid that our hearts would be full of ourselves when we come to the Lord's Table but rather our hearts would be filled with what God has done.

And so we looked two weeks ago at the doctrine of election, verse 4, God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. God chose us, we said, God chose us based on his own will, his own purpose, what he determined for reasons known only to him. He chose some and not others unto salvation so that if you are in Christ, you are the object of God's special, electing, merciful love before time began. He chose you based on reasons of his own, not because he looked down the corridors of time and saw that you would believe on your own power and then he elected you based on that, you know, he kind of reversed engineered it as he looked ahead and then decided, "Well, if you decide for me, then I'm deciding for you." What a low conception of God. What a low conception of salvation to have, that God would do it on the basis of what he saw that we would do. Look, what that teaches, and look, that's what most people who teach on election will tell you, it's wrong. It's not biblical. Think of what that does. That turns God into the responder to man rather than man being the responder to God. There's no possible way in any universe that God rules over that that's a right view of anything. It's not possible. I don't care who teaches it. It's not possible that that's correct. It's in direct contradiction to the clear words of this text. It's the clear contradiction of what Jesus said to the disciples in John 15, "You did not choose me, but I chose you."

And so the origination point in salvation that we remember here tonight is what God did, what God wanted. This is what God wanted. We're here tonight because this is what God wants. You're in Christ because that is what God wanted. God chose you for salvation and you say, "Well, there's nothing about me that would prompt that. Why would he do that precisely?" Precisely. People misrepresent a high view of salvation, the biblical view of salvation, by saying that it causes people to be proud. "Oh, God chose me and aren't I somebody great?" That's not at all the biblical picture. That's not at all the response that's in a true believing heart. Election is the most humbling doctrine of them all, to realize that there was nothing in me and yet God chose me? All praise to him, nothing about me. It's humbling to realize that I received something I did not deserve and that God wanted that before the beginning of time.

Well, that was two weeks ago. Last week we looked at the doctrine of adoption. Look at verse 5 with me, just by way of brief review. In verse 5, Paul says that God "predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will." Again, God predestined this, he predetermined it. It was according to his purpose, according to his will. You see the triad again? Predestined, his purpose, his will, there is no room for the pride of man anywhere in this. You can read the text for yourself in simple terms and see it but what adoption is telling us is that God took you from your former father, the devil, and brought you into his family. We speak to God, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be your name." God adopts us into his family. He severs the former ties that we had being under the dominion and the evil lordship of Satan, he severs all of those relational ties with the kingdom of darkness and transfers us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, so that our hearts cry out to him, "Father!" There is a familiar intimacy with God that we have because he's put within us a spirit of adoption, a recognition, a deep spiritual understanding in our hearts that we belong to him and we can speak to him in those terms, "Dear Father, trusted, trusted Father." We speak to him in those terms.

I remember one of the very, very, very, very first times of prayer that I had as a new Christian. I could not have been a Christian more than a very few number of months, if not just a few weeks, and I was in a small group, you know, they'd broken down into small groups for prayer, and I had never done anything like that before and so, you know, I would have been a little more comfortable being in the middle of a pride of lions at that time, rather than with people who were praying at the start anyway. But I remember hearing these young people, it was a group of college students, I remember hearing them pray and it struck me so much that I remember it some 40 years after the fact. I don't remember exactly what they said, but I remember the affectionate, trusting, intimate way in which they spoke with God, and how they spoke to him as Father. And I had never known anything like that, you know, "Dear God, bless me, do this, I want this, I want that, God, do that, amen," kind of thing. But there was this unhurried affection, this sense of just an evident sense that they knew something that resonated with me, but I had never been exposed to it before and what I didn't know at the time that I know now is that I was hearing the outflowing of the spirit of adoption in their hearts. They could speak to God like that because they belonged to his family. And now, you know, those of us that are in Christ, we have that same privilege to speak to God on terms of intimacy, of knowledge, of trust. That's all from the spirit of adoption, and that God has brought us into his family. He delights in being our Father. I like to think of Christ as our elder brother in heaven. Scripture says that Christ isn't ashamed to call us brethren because we come from the same Father and so we have Christ, we can think of him, God our Father, Christ our brother.

It's remarkable to be in a family like that, isn't it? Those of you that come from broken homes, or have had broken marriages, or perhaps alienated from loved ones, from children, or parents, or siblings, all of that, well, the earthly relationships may be fractured like that, but boy, praise God to be in a family like that. God our Father, Christ our brother, the Spirit indwelling us, praise be to his glorious name. And yet there's more for tonight. There's more. We saw that we are chosen, we're adopted, and tonight we're looking at the fact that we are redeemed, that we are redeemed, and we see that in verses 7 and 8. We see that these blessings of salvation, as we consider the doctrine tonight of redemption, we see that these blessings of intimacy, of assurance, came at a great, great cost that we did not pay. There was a price paid to save you, beloved, from your sins. There was a price paid to deliver you from the dominion of the devil and that brings us to the doctrine of redemption. The doctrine of redemption. We see it there in verse 7, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight."

What is redemption? Let me give you a definition. I'll try to say this slowly so that you can kind of take it in if you're jotting notes, that's fine too. But redemption is the act of God in which he delivered us from sin. Redemption is the act of God in which he delivered us from sin based on the price which Jesus Christ paid with his blood. We sang it in that last song, "He who paid salvation's price with his blood and with his life." Christ paid a price for our redemption.

Now, how important is the doctrine of redemption? How central is it in our thinking about our salvation? How much does it orient our hearts toward the taking of the elements in Communion in just a few short moments? Well, one writer said it this way, he said, "No word in the Christian vocabulary. deserves to be held more precious than Redeemer, for even more than Savior, the term Redeemer reminds the child of God that his salvation has been purchased at a great and personal cost. The Lord has given himself for our sins in order to deliver us from them." Pretty bold statement, but to this writer, to this theologian, he says that he would esteem the label of Christ as our Redeemer even higher than Savior because Redeemer brings forth to our minds the fact that Christ paid a personal price in order to be our Savior. And the doctrine of salvation, as I said earlier, it's humbling. It's humbling. It's gloriously humbling. It's joyfully humbling. It should be humbling to your heart, if you're a Christian, to remember that God chose you, you did not choose him. That you were outside of God's family and yet God adopted you into it. God intervened to help you. After all of your sins, your sins of the flesh, your blasphemies, your hatred, your anger, your resentment, your grudges and, you know, a thousand catalogs of sins, like those, and us being like that, dead in trespasses and sins, hostile in mind, alienated, separated from God, without hope in the world, but God did all of this to bring us to himself. There's almost, almost, maybe a preliminary, in a preliminary sense, you almost protest against it. You almost protest against it, saying to God, "No, no, in light of who I am, for you to do all of this for me, God, no. That's just beyond too kind. You've lavished too much. It's too much, Lord." And yet you immediately transverse across the no and say, "Oh God, thank you. Thank you. Forgive the fact that I would initially even resist. Just thank you for all that you've done to be so good to me."

And so in the doctrine of redemption, Scripture teaches us that Christ paid a painful price for us to receive salvation. This did not just happen because God flipped a switch. It's not because God took some kind of spiritual eraser and rubbed out your name from the condemnation side and then just wrote your name on the other side without any kind of price being paid to accomplish that. This was a real sacrifice on the part of our Lord Jesus Christ. He really left the glories of heaven above. He really humbled himself to come to earth and to be born of a virgin and to live on this earth for some 30 years with an appearance of an ordinary man and enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself, the hostility of the religious leaders of the day, and feeling the burden of human sorrow and weeping over the tomb of Lazarus, and weeping over Jerusalem, and then going to the cross and, you know, his seven words from the cross, and handing his mother over to the care of John the Apostle, and he said, "Woman, behold your son," and, "Man, behold your mother." All of these things, and yet all of that merely preparatory to the eternal sufferings that he endured in the darkness that followed as God poured out his wrath on him as the substitute for sinners who would believe in him. And you just get lost contemplating all that Christ suffered on our behalf. Think about it from the perspective of Christ, beloved. In the incarnation, Christ left the glories of heaven, the eternal glories of heaven, and came into this world knowing in advance what the outcome of that would be. He knew going into the assignment, so to speak. He knew going into the assignment that there would be this massive cost that he would pay. Who does that? Who does that? Who abandons a royal throne for the sake of the rebels of his rule? Who does that? Who

is that kind? Who is that selfless? Who is that loving? The Lord Jesus. He and he alone is like that.

Let's talk briefly about this doctrine of redemption. I want to talk to you about the fact of redemption and the focus of redemption here this evening. The fact of redemption. The language of redemption is drawn on first century culture, you could say. There were many, many slaves in the first century. Human trafficking is nothing new, and slaves belonged to their masters, but they could be set free if someone would pay a ransom price for him, for the slave. The payment of that price that would be given to the owner of the slave in order to purchase that man so that he could be free from his slavery, the payment of that price was called redemption. It was the necessary expense to obtain freedom, you could say. Now Scripture takes that picture and applies it to our salvation, you know, and the mere fact that we're said to be redeemed tells us that we used to be slaves. We don't like to think that way. We're far too proud. We're far too independent, especially in our American culture. We're far too independent. And the Jews said, "We've never been enslaved to anyone," and Americans aren't any better in thinking that way. But Scripture tells us that you belonged to someone else. You belonged to something else. Jesus said in John 8:34, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. You know why you couldn't break your sinful habits before you came to Christ? It's because they owned you, you didn't own them. You were a spiritual slave to a spiritual principle of sin, and sin wasn't simply something bad that you did, it was an evil force that controlled and owned you so that Scripture likens it to slavery, and you acted on your impulses and you acted on your evil habits without the power to break them. Oh, you might try, you might stumble out of it for a little bit like a dog returning to the vomit, there you were returning to your sins. But not just a slave of sin, Scripture says that you belonged to someone else, to someone else, to a personal being who acted as your slave master. Scripture says in 1 John 3:8 that the one who practices sin is of the devil. Is of the devil.

Now just between sin and Satan, being dead in trespasses and sins, beloved, look, we can't look back on our spiritual past as Christians now with any sense of pride or merit or something in us prompting the action of God because he just had to have us. God would have been just fine in his glorious essence without us. It wouldn't have detracted from the essential glory of his nature to be without us at all. He didn't need us to complete something that was lacking in himself. And when you remember that you were a slave of sin, just to glance back mentally for just a moment of the sins that marked us before we were in Christ. I know some of you were drunks. I know some of you were slaves to sins of the flesh, others slaves to false religion that you professed, and on and on we could go. Nothing about that appealing to God. It's a real, true picture that you were a slave of sin, and then in a way that you didn't even realize and recognize that in addition to being a slave to sin, that you were a slave to Satan himself, the evil serpent who originated the temptations that led to the fall of man, and he was a wicked taskmaster indeed. There you were, a slave. What's going to happen to you in that darkness? What's going to happen to you as you were blind in that dark room with no lights and no windows and dark black chains were wrapped around your soul as an evil black force called the devil taunted and tormented you at his despicable, evil delight? Where was there any release, any freedom to be had in that condition?

Well, today's passage gives us a basis upon which to praise God with a fresh sense in our hearts, to come to the Communion Table with an even deeper sense of appreciation and thankfulness and praise in our hearts to God. Look at verse 7 with me with those things in mind. "In him we have redemption through his blood." In him a price was paid to deliver you from your slavery to sin, Satan, and self. When salvation then, redemption then, solves the problem, it solved the problem of your slavery to sin and Satan. In that dark black room with your helpless soul wrapped in dark black chains, with a dark black force ruling over the atmosphere in which your prison took place, you were in no position, you had no ability whatsoever to purchase your own release, to pay for your own release. There was nothing you could do. You were helpless. Scripture speaks in that way. In fact, I want to point this out to you. Turn back to the book of Romans 5 with me for just a moment. In the New American Standard, Romans 5:6 says, "For while we were still helpless," here in the ESV it reads, "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." Verse 8, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Verse 10, "if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." Helpless, weak, enemies, sinners. That's the way it was. That's the way that we were and so to now be in Christ and to have the doctrine of redemption brought to our attention through the word of God, we realize how magnificent Christ is, how magnificent the gift of salvation is, that something was done to deliver us when we could not save ourselves, that a price was paid in order to release us from that dark, dingy, damp dungeon where there was no hope, there was no window to let any light in whatsoever. And yet, just as the angel entered into the dungeon and set Peter free in the book of Acts, in a physical sense, Christ came into our spiritual dungeon and set us free through the payment that he rendered on the cross of Christ.

The doctrine of redemption, that one word, summarizes for you, it crystallizes everything that the death of Christ did to deliver us and the fact that a price was paid, that Jesus Christ paid a price for you and in the words of Christ in John 10, he did it voluntarily. He said, "No one's taken my life from me, but I lay it down on my own accord." He laid it down on his own accord. He willingly did this. He wanted to do this. Can you imagine? Think of how easily you react against people who offend you, how easily you can take offense when something doesn't go your way or someone looks at you or says something to you crossly and maybe you have a hard time forgiving, or look at it from the other perspective, we've all been there where you've done something, you've said something, you regret it, but the other person holds it against you and nothing that you can do can seem to change their mind. That's human nature. That's sinful human nature. But it's not the nature of God. It's not the nature of Christ. Rather than holding it against us and pulling out the whip, the spiritual whip that he could have used on us with justice, he laid the whip aside, took up the towel, as it were, speaking metaphorically here, laid aside his garments, wrapped the towel around himself and then went and washed our dirty feet by shedding his blood at the cross, paying the price that God required for sinners to be released from slavery to sin.

Now beloved, if you can't love Christ after hearing that, if your heart isn't full of praise and gratitude and respect and awe and praise at Christ, man, I wouldn't be real confident that you're a Christian. How could any Christian hear these things and not have his heart bend and bow down before Christ for redemption? And look in Ephesians 1:7 with me again, "In him we have redemption through his blood." You could say that the price of redemption was the blood of Christ himself. Christ suffered a violent, degrading death to secure your redemption. In Philippians 2 we read that he humbled himself to the point of obedience to death, even death on a cross. He went to the very bottom of human existence in that first century society. A cross, a crucifixion, was the most degrading, humiliating, painful, pain-infested death that anyone could die at that time and Christ went to that point in order to save you from your sins. He poured out his blood in sacrificial death to save you. Why? Why was that necessary? Well, God, you know, you read the early books of the Bible and in Exodus and Leviticus in particular, you see that God had established the principle that holy, innocent blood had to be shed in sacrifice and substitution for the sinner if they were going to be able to meet with God. In Christ, what those shadows foretold, Christ fulfilled. In Hebrews 9:22 it says, without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin, and God required holy blood, perfect blood, infinite blood, human blood, and guilty sinners don't have innocent holy blood to offer up for their own sins. There's no one else in humanity that had any innocent blood to offer, let alone for it to be sufficient to atone for the sins of someone else. We were desperately lost, desperately enslaved, and here comes Christ, gentle, riding on a donkey that, I'm speaking metaphorically here, that carried him to the cross in humility, in gentleness, in self-sacrifice, without retaliation, praying for those that crucified him, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing." Who is like that? To pay a price like that from such a lofty position to such a lowly position for such a languid sinner as you and me?

Now look again at our text, verse 7. We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, forgiveness being the idea that God does not hold our sins against us any longer. He does not take them into account as he deals with us. Psalm 103:12 says that as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. Elsewhere Scripture uses the picture that he's buried our sins in the depths of the sea. When God looks at us, he no longer sees our sin. He sees us clothed in the righteousness of Christ. He accepts us on the full same basis as he does Christ himself, because he accepts us based on the imputed righteousness of Christ. He accepts us based on the fact that Christ paid for our sins. And so there is complete forgiveness, meaning that God no longer holds our sins against us, he does not take them into account in his dealings with us. They are no longer a barrier to us going to heaven. They are no longer a barrier to our access to him in our standing before him.

The forgiveness of our trespasses. See, it's not just that you had made some mistakes. Let's put an end to this kind of nonsense verbiage that minimizes the guilt of our sin and spares us a little bit of pride. Beloved, when Scripture says that you were a sinner, it's saying far more than the fact that you had made some mistakes. You know, you made mistakes on your third grade arithmetic papers. Sin is something far more than that. Sin is culpable rebellion against God, rejection of him, defiance of his law. No, it's not that you

made mistakes, you committed willful acts of disobedience against God in your heart, in your affections, in your motives, in your words, and with the deeds of your hands. There was this thorough-going rebellion by nature against him and so your trespasses indicate how much you had violated the boundaries of God. God says, "No trespassing," and you say, "Oh yes, I'll go right where I want to go, thank you very much," and crossed over the boundaries.

What can we say? There was responsibility for them, there was accountability for them, and those trespasses had to be punished. Every sin ever committed will be punished, either eternally in hell or imputed to Christ on behalf of the one who believes. But your sins needed to be punished. There was a price to be paid for them and you were without excuse for all of that rebellion, had nothing to say to recommend yourself to Christ, and yet, or you could say, but God, but Christ said in love, goes to the cross, pays the price of your redemption so that you could be eternally free from the penalty of sin, be delivered from the slavery of Satan, and be made a slave of a different Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. And now we no longer sit in a dark room with black chains around our soul. Now, as others have said, we sit in willing bonds at the feet of Christ, glad to have this Master and not wanting the chain that connects us to him to ever be broken. And it never will be, because nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

And so in Christ, your sins are forgiven. In Christ, God has permanently canceled your responsibility for those sins. The responsibility for them was laid on Christ. He paid the price, the benefit of that payment credited to your account so that there are no longer demerits in your standing before God. And I'll just say it one more time, beloved, Christ did this voluntarily. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. No one has taken it away from me, but I lay it down on my own initiative." Christ voluntarily paid the price so that you, you who could not satisfy the debt on your own, so that you could be adopted into the family of God. I ask you, beloved, what manner of love is that? What kind of love is that? That's the fact of redemption.

Let's go to our second point here before we come to the Lord's Table. This will be very brief, the focus of our redemption. The focus of our redemption and going back to the song that I alluded to, "I made my choice and my choice made me free," to use that as a contrast to what the true focus is, what redemption does is even the most basic consideration, like we've made here this evening, the most basic consideration of redemption causes us, delivers us into a recognition of the greatness of the kindness and the mercy of God.

Look at verses 7 and 8 with me. After we've seen that we were chosen, we're adopted, we're redeemed, look at the end of verse 7, all of this is "according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us." Grace, there's that word that God extended undeserved favor to those who deserved his judgment instead. Instead of getting the judgment we deserved, we've received favor from God. We've received benefit from God when we deserved the exact opposite of it. And look at it, you know, you just look at the words and let the words speak to your heart. It's not just that God showed grace to us. It's not just that, beloved, it's that God gave us grace richly, abundantly, We went to the greatest

palace in the world, so to speak, and the owner of that house put on a lavish banquet for us and out of the riches of all that he had, according to the infinite measure of his grace, it was according to those riches that he poured it out on us. He did not do this reluctantly. He was not a miser about it. He did not say, "Oh, well, all right, come on in," make you feel guilty as you're coming. This is according to the riches of grace. Not just grace, the riches of grace. And it's not just that he gave the riches of his grace to us, look at it there in verse 8, he lavished that grace upon us. God lavishly poured the blessings of grace upon your unworthy soul when you deserved judgment instead. He poured out, he let loose a thunderstorm of mercy, a thunderstorm of faithfulness. He opened the floodgates of heaven and it all rained down.

He wasn't stingy. He didn't send a little drizzle. He sent showers of blessings upon us. In the old days we used to sing a hymn, "There will be showers of blessing." I don't know if any of you remember that, but I remember one line in particular as I stand here. "Mercy drops round us are falling, but for the showers we plead. Saying, God, we see some of the evidence of your kindness. We see your benefits in mercy, but Lord, it's like a drizzle. Send the showers." Well, in salvation, in Christ, in redemption, God just sent forth a relentless rain of mercy upon us. Not a couple of drops here and there. He opened the faucet, and it's been running in our hearts ever since. An open faucet of grace, letting forth the purest streams of the water of God's goodness and kindness, pouring into our souls, washing us from sin, refreshing our hearts, and satisfying our thirst in a way that that thirst never returns.

Beloved, God has rained down his blessings on you without measure and what do we say in response to that? Go back to verse 3. No wonder, when Paul knew that he was about to unpack these things, no wonder Paul said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Praise be to him." Verse 6, we'll go through it again, "to the praise of his glorious grace." Verse 12, "to the praise of his glory." Verse 14, "to the praise of his glory." And in chapter 3, verse 20, actually let's start in verse 17 and we'll close with this. Paul's been praying that in verse 16, according to the riches of his glory. Look at the nouns and the adjectives that Paul uses throughout this to express the concept of abundance. We must put aside our meager thoughts of the goodness of God and replace them with what Scripture says are the riches of his grace, the riches of his glory, the riches of his kindness. Verse 16, "according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith--that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints," and then Paul goes on to one of these Spirit-inspired flourishes that is just taking human language to the highest mountaintops that it can possibly go, that you would understand "with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Look back just for a moment at Ephesians 2 before I read those final verses in chapter 3. We'll be looking at these verses soon in the course of our teaching. Verse 4, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us." Verse 7, "so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness

toward us in Christ Jesus." Rich in mercy, great love, immeasurable riches. Do you see it, beloved? Do you see it? We have got to stop thinking limited, small thoughts about the goodness of God to us and say, "Lord, by faith I believe what your word says, that your love is great, that your kindness is rich, it's immeasurable. It's too high, it's too broad, it's too deep. I can't sound the limits of it anywhere."

Now go to the end of chapter 3 and see the riches of God and the glory that we give to him in response. Verse 20, "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen." Brother and sister in Christ, redemption is what we remember as we come to the Table in this ordinance that the Lord Jesus appointed. It's really remarkable to think about. I mean, it's really, really remarkable to think about that in the genius of God, these infinite glories of which we've been speaking here this evening are ably represented by the simplest of symbols, the bread and the cup. The bread representing his broken body, the juice representing his blood poured out, and in these simple elements representing infinitely great doctrines for which we will praise God throughout all of eternity, the infinite riches of Christ represented in this time and in this remembrance.

So we gratefully remember tonight the Christ who delivered us from our sins. If you're a Christian, and you are not living in conscious rebellion against God, you're not refusing to repent of anything, any known sins in your life, we invite you to share in the Table and to do so with joy. If you're not a Christian, we just ask you to let the elements pass. This is the Lord's Table for the Lord's people and if you don't belong to the Lord, then this is not for you. Just take the opportunity to observe, watch what happens, and ask the Lord to work a work in your heart that you could share in this joy as God works in your heart.

So let's bow in prayer as the men come forward in order to service the elements. Let's bow in prayer.

Our great God and Father, we thank you for redemption and we thank you for this opportunity to remember the body and blood of our Lord and to proclaim his death until he comes. Father, tonight we believe in the riches of your grace, the immeasurable extent of your love and kindness toward us in Christ, and we thank you for it. You did not love us reluctantly, we do not return our thanks reluctantly. In response to your generous love, we give generous thanks and look forward to sharing around this Table the Supper that you have appointed for us. We praise you, Lord Jesus. We thank you for redemption. We thank you for voluntarily paying the price that we could be free, free from sin, free from Satan, free from self, and glad slaves of a great, great Savior. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

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