

Series: *Colossians – Christ Above All*

Title: "Prisoner, Criminal, Slave: Three Pictures of Redemption"

Speaker: Rev. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 9/27/2009

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The Bible contains many very concise and powerful statements that describe the salvation of the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Last time we saw one of those, in Colossians chapter one, verse thirteen – that God the Father “has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated [or conveyed] us into the kingdom of His dear Son” – or as the New King James Version has it more accurately, “the Son of His love.” We are delivered out of the power of darkness. That power has been broken. God has picked us up and moved us into a different country, spiritually speaking. Spiritually speaking, we are no longer citizens of this present evil world. We are citizens of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is our eternal citizenship when this world and its evils have passed from the scene. Verse thirteen is powerful statement of what happens when God saves us.

And verse fourteen of Colossians chapter one is another of those short, powerful statements about our salvation. And let me read it along with verse thirteen to give the full thought: “He [that is, God the Father] has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated [or conveyed] us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” – “in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”

### **Redemption: A Present Reality**

Notice first of all that redemption is something that every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has, right now. “In whom [that is, in Christ] we have” – present tense – “redemption through His blood.” If you are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ alone

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today as your Savior from sin, then you *have* redemption. This is not merely something for the future, although there is a future aspect to redemption, as we shall see. But we have it now. And the wording here is definite and emphatic. "We have redemption through His blood." It is not an uncertain thing. It is a certain thing. We have redemption, and it is guaranteed, because it has been paid for by the blood of God the Son Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Release and Liberation**

What does it mean to be redeemed? Well the word in the original language of the New Testament means "a release or a liberation that is brought about by the payment of a ransom." A release or a liberation that is brought about by the payment of a ransom.

It was a word that was used in the case of a person who was a prisoner of war – someone who has been taken prisoner in a war, and a ransom was paid to get that person out of the prison camp, to purchase his freedom from imprisonment by the enemy.

It was also a word that was used in the case of a person who had been convicted of a crime, and condemned to die for that crime. But someone would come and pay a great price to win the release and pardon of the person who had been condemned to death.

And, this word for redemption was also a word that was used in the case of a slave when someone else – a family member or a friend, perhaps – would pay for his release from slavery. That is how this word translated "redemption" was used.

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## **The Fourfold Bondage of Sin**

Those three things are pictures that precisely describe the condition of every human being who is not a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ. Every person who is born into this world is born in sin. And the Bible tells us four things about our sin problem:

First of all, our sin is *original*. That means that it has its roots in the first sin of the first parents of all of mankind. Genesis chapter 3 tells us that God created Adam and Eve in perfection and gave them a commandment to obey, but of their own free will they chose to disobey Him. And Romans chapter five, verses 12 to 21, and First Corinthians chapter fifteen, verses 22 through 45, tell us that because all mankind are Adams descendants, when Adam fell into sin all mankind fell with him, and bears Adam's guilt. So our sin, first of all, is original sin. It comes down to us from Adam.

Secondly, the Bible tells us that our sin is *habitual*. Because of our inherited sin nature, we are in a state of depravity. We suffer from the loss of Adam's original righteousness that he had before he fell into sin. And therefore we are sinners by habit and practice. We read of this in Romans chapter three, Romans chapter six, Galatians chapter five, Ephesians chapter four, and many other places. The result of original sin is that all men commit acts of sin. First Kings 8:46 tells us that there is no one who does not commit sin. Romans 3:22 and 23 says that "there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." In other words, as Adam's descendants we commit sin in our thoughts, and our words, and our actions, and we

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neglect the good things that we ought to do, and we do that because we are sinners by nature. We are not sinners because we sin — we sin because we are sinners.

And thirdly, the Bible tells us that sin is *universal*. We've already touched on that. Since all mankind are Adam's descendants, sin is universal. Scripture tells us in Romans chapter five, verse twelve that Adam's sin and its effects have passed on to all men, and that in the eyes of God we have all sinned in Adam, not to mention the sins we have committed ourselves. Romans chapter three, beginning at verse ten, says this, and this is a series of quotations from the Old Testament:

As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." "Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps is under their lips"; "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known." "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

And that is exactly the position of every human being outside of Christ – guilty before God. The sin problem, the curse of sin, is universal.

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And fourthly, the Bible tells us that sin is *systemic*. It is pervasive. It permeates our natures. No part of us is unaffected. Every part of man is affected by original sin. First Corinthians 2:14 and Second Corinthians 4:4 both tell us that man's intellect is blinded, apart from Christ. Romans 1:22 tells us that all men apart from Christ have become "futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened." Ephesians 4:19 tells us that because of this blindness, mankind is "past feeling" – callous – concerning the things of God. And First Timothy 4:2 tells us that every unbeliever's conscience is "seared with a hot iron" – the image is that an area of the body that has been so damaged that it can't even feel pain anymore. And the Apostle Paul goes into great detail about the nature and the effects of sin in Romans chapter one, beginning at verse eighteen, all the way through chapter three, verse twenty. Paul shows us that man bears the effects of sin in every part of his being. This is the doctrine of mankind's total depravity.

### **A Brief Word About Catholicism and Total Depravity**

I want to say just a brief further word about the Biblical doctrine of our total depravity. Roman Catholicism denies what the Bible has to say about the consequences of original sin. And this denial is part of Rome's system of false doctrine which claims that man is not totally depraved, and therefore is capable of helping to save himself from the wrath of God.

But the Roman Catholic view totally contradicts the clear teaching of God's Word. Let me give just three further examples. Genesis 6:5 – "The Lord saw that the

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wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Jeremiah 17:9 – "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Ephesians 2:1 – the Apostle Paul says that those who have been made alive in Christ were previously "dead in trespasses and sins."

This is the true picture of the human condition. Our sin problem is as desperate as it can possibly be, and we cannot save ourselves. We cannot contribute anything to our salvation. As Paul says in Titus chapter three, verses four and five, our salvation is "through the kindness and the love of God our Savior" and it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by His mercy [that] He saved us."

And so the word redemption, and the pictures of redemption, are the absolutely perfect description of what God has done for us. It is exactly what He has done through the blood of Christ.

### **Redemption: Prisoners of War Ransomed**

The picture of the prisoner of war is appropriate. We read this is Psalm 107, beginning at verse one:

Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

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They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city for a dwelling place.

Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness.

Those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, bound [that is, prisoners] in affliction and irons – because they rebelled against the words of God, and despised the counsel of the Most High, therefore He brought down their heart with labor; they fell down, and there was none to help.

Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their chains in pieces.

Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!

We were in bondage because of our rebellion. We were prisoners in the enemy camp. We could not escape. We could not purchase our own freedom. But God through the blood of Christ redeemed us from that bondage. He paid the ransom price. He purchased our freedom from Satan's dominion.

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## **Redemption: Death Row Prisoners Pardoned**

Also, the picture of the condemned prisoner being redeemed from the death penalty exactly describes our position. We came into this world already condemned, John chapter three tells us. We are like the criminal who has been condemned to death. There is no hope. All that awaits us is for the death sentence to be carried out. But in Ephesians chapter two, beginning at verse four, we read these glorious words – “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).”

“But God!” Things were absolutely hopeless. And we were absolutely helpless. We could not save ourselves. But God, in the riches of His mercy, loving us with exceedingly great love, comes into the world in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and pays the ransom to buy us out of condemnation. He takes away our death sentence by bearing that death sentence Himself. That is what God required. Without the shedding of blood, Hebrews 9:22 tells us, there is no remission of sins. So Jesus Christ purchased our redemption on the cross with His own blood. He freed us from the death penalty for our crimes against God. So this picture of redemption, of freedom being purchased for a condemned criminal, applies to every believer in Christ.

## **Redemption: Slaves’ Freedom Purchased**

And the picture of the slave is also appropriate. We are slaves to sin. Our sin is original. Our sin is habitual. Our sin is universal. Our sin is pervasive. We are

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complete slaves to sin. We are under the bondage of it apart from Christ. But God has redeemed us from that bondage. We read in Hebrews chapter two, beginning at verse fourteen, that Jesus Christ came into the world and took on a body like ours, sharing in flesh and blood, so that

through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage [that is, to slavery]. For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham [that is, to those who are effectually called to salvation by God]. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

### **All Because of Christ's Blood**

Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ have been redeemed. And our redemption is through the blood of Christ. "Redemption *through His blood*," Paul says here in Colossians 1:14. Now some Bible translations omit this phrase "through His blood." If you are using the English Standard Version, the New International Version, the Revised Standard Version, the various Living Bible paraphrases, or the New American Standard Bible, you will not find the phrase "through His blood" in Colossians 1:14. And that is because those translations and paraphrases are based upon inferior Greek source texts. But the King James Version and the New King

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James Bible *have* that phrase – they have it right. Redemption is “through His blood” – there can be no redemption without the blood of Christ.

A great many Evangelicals want to minimize the blood of Christ today. Evangelical preachers don't want to preach about the blood of Christ, because they think it offends people. Well, the Bible tells us that the blood of Christ does offend people. The Bible speaks of “the offense of the cross.” Paul says in Romans 9:33 that Christ and His cross and His shed blood are a stumbling stone and a rock of offense to many. But, he says, “whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” And Paul says in First Corinthians one, beginning at verse 23, “but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” No true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and no faithful preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, is ashamed of, or offended by, the blood of Jesus Christ.

### **Redeemed: Are You Living Like It?**

Let me conclude today by asking two questions. First of all, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ today – if you are trusting in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation from sin, by grace alone, through faith alone, apart from works or ordinances or sacraments of any kind – then are you living in the light of your redemption? Or, are you still living like a prisoner of Satan? Are you still living like a condemned criminal, spiritually speaking? Are you still living like a slave of sin?

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Or are you living the life of the redeemed? Are you living a life that is pleasing to God? Paul says this in Romans chapter six, beginning at verse 15:

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.

### **Do You Need to be Redeemed?**

Perhaps you are listening today and you have never received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin. Perhaps you are listening today, and spiritually speaking, you are still a prisoner in the devil's camp. You are still standing condemned and under the death penalty before God because of your sins. Today you are still a slave to sin. Let me tell you that there is good news. Jesus Christ has paid the ransom price to redeem sinners, to free the prisoner, to wipe out the death penalty, to free the slave. And if you will believe the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior from the power and penalty of sin right now, He will redeem you and set you free.

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