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## The Work of the Son

### Ephesians 1:7-10

**Intro:** Those who reject the idea of a triune God, who reject the doctrine of the Trinity, will argue that the word Trinity is not found anywhere in the Bible. Of course, they are correct – it doesn't appear in the Bible anywhere. This is a rather weak argument because it's also true that the word electricity doesn't appear anywhere in the Bible and yet, we enjoy the benefits of it everyday. While the word "Trinity" is not found in Scripture, the doctrine of the Trinity certainly is. In fact, it is most prominently found right here in the first chapter of Ephesians. As has been noted, v3-14 make up one long sentence in the Greek and in that sentence, Paul seems to pile one great truth upon another in his desire to adequately express praise to God for His gift of salvation. Still, there is an obvious progression in these phrases, most notably in the way they describe the work of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

In our study today we will focus on the work of the Son and as we will see in our text, the principal work of Jesus Christ in the life of the believer is redemption (7). Now, it would be incorrect to think that Christ was alone in this work or that each member of the Trinity worked independently of each other to affect our redemption because they all worked together to make possible our salvation. The work of the Father was primarily in planning our salvation. The work of the Holy Spirit is in applying it to individuals. Jesus' principal work was to achieve salvation by His death on the cross for us. All 3 persons of the Trinity are involved in this work, but Christ's role in this is central.

**7-8** – In Him – who is this? The Him of v7 is the Beloved of v6, which refers to Jesus and this is indisputable. Jesus was identified as the Beloved by the Father at His baptism (Mt 3:17, Mk 1:11) and at the Transfiguration (Mt 17:5). He was identified by the Father as the Beloved long before this through Isaiah the prophet (43:1-4). Paul is clearly transitioning from the work of the Father to the work of the Son and the first thing he mentions is Christ's work of redemption on our behalf.

Redemption is not just one of many Christian doctrines, redemption is

actually central to Christianity. Let's face it; without the possibility of redemption provided for and offered by a loving, giving God, there would be no Christianity! In fact, there is no title or name given to Jesus that's more precious to the believer's heart than that of Redeemer for that title belongs specifically to the One who died on the cross in our place. Whenever we speak that name the cross is thrust before our eyes and our hearts are filled with the shocking knowledge that not only has Jesus given us salvation but that He also paid a mighty price for it.

Redemption, as the Bible speaks of it, is really a foreign concept to our postmodern society. We normally use the term in association with coupons, lottery tickets or vouchers for free meals or upgraded status on airlines. But the term was very well known in the ancient world. A general definition for redeem meant: to purchase and set free by paying a price. In Paul's day, there were 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire and more often than not, they were bought and sold like pieces of furniture. There was also possible for an individual to purchase a slave and then set them free. This is what Jesus Christ has done for those who have believed on Him and accepted Him as their Savior.

As wonderful as that is, the definition of redeemed goes much deeper and makes the reality of Christ's work is more glorious. There are actually 3 words for "redemption" in the NT, 2 closely related to each other and the 3<sup>rd</sup> is quite different. The first is *agorazō*. It comes from the Greek noun for marketplace, *agora*. It means to buy or to buy in a marketplace. This word emphasizes the price Jesus paid for our salvation. Some balk at the word "price," arguing that any mention of a price in regard to salvation destroys grace. "Salvation is not sold, it's free". In their minds, to think of God extracting a price for His forgiveness is to make God cheap, begrudging, and mercenary. From this faulty reasoning some scholars have tried to change the idea of redemption from that of buying to mere deliverance: setting someone free without the accompanying idea of a price or ransom. But there is no getting around it - the price of redemption is Christ's death.

Of course, the idea of deliverance by payment of a price was common in the OT period. The Jews spoke of *gaal* (to redeem) and the *goel* (kinsman-redeemer). It was a principle of Jewish law that property should remain within a family whenever possible. So if a Jewish person lost his property through debt or some other means, there was a provision through which he

might receive it back again through the obligation placed upon a close relative. This relative, called the kinsman-redeemer, was to purchase the property and restore it to the family. Boaz did this for land that had belonged to the husband of Ruth.

A 2nd Hebrew word is *kofer*: a ransom price. If a farm animal killed a person, the animal could be killed in payment for the life taken. Or if there was negligence, the owner of the animal could be compelled to forfeit his life. Since there was no advantage to anyone in that, there was an arrangement in the law whereby if the man who owned the animal could settle on a price with the relatives of the person who had been killed, he could redeem either himself or the animal. This price of redemption was the *kofer*. Clearly, the idea of redemption by payment was firmly fixed in OT culture so it would just be natural for NT writers, most of whom were Jews and all of whom were acquainted with that world, would use those concepts. Of course, this wasn't exclusively an OT, Jewish concept either. We find this idea appearing in many instances the NT, Greek world also. There are examples of a standard form that was used in purchasing slaves for the purpose of freeing them. This occurred so frequently that it's evident the idea of delivering a person by the payment of a price was common in Greek culture as well.

However, the real reason why we must retain the idea of a price in discussing redemption is that the key NT texts all refer to it. There's **Mt 20:28** where Jesus says, the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. What was Jesus talking about here? Obviously, He was saying that He was going to buy us out of slavery to sin at the cost of His life. **Titus 2:14** speaks of Jesus as the One who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. When this verse says that Jesus gave Himself for us it means He gave His life to redeem us. His life was the price. Finally, there's **1 Pt 1:18-19**, the clearest text of all: knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. The idea of Christ's life being the price of redemption is inescapable. Salvation *is* free in that it costs the sinner nothing but it cost God everything to provide salvation to a lost world.

The second NT word for redemption, which makes the concept richer, is *exagorazō*. It's the same word as the 1<sup>st</sup>, but with the prefix *ex*, meaning "out of" added to it. *Exagorazō* means "to buy out of the marketplace," with the thought that one thus purchased might never return there again. This is a particularly blessed thought for believers because it speaks to the permanent nature of redemption. Speaking in strictly spiritual terms, the redemption in mind here is from sin, and the promise of this word is that we might never be sold under the power of sin again. In the ancient world, we can imagine that a well-meaning, merciful person might purchase a slave to work in their home but then tire of the slave's performance and so just sell them off again. This must've happened so often that a slave's position was never really secure. Not so with Christ! Jesus bought us to take us out of the slave-market of sin, never to return. Having been purchased at the infinite cost of the blood of God's own Son, there's no one who can possibly top that price and hope to purchase us away from Him!

The third NT word for redemption is unrelated to the other 2 (*luō*) and it means: to loose, set free or deliver—by the payment of a price. Here too is a beautiful and encouraging thought for Christians. For it is not merely that we are bought out of the marketplace of sin, never to be returned there. A person could be bought on the slave block, never be sold on the block again but nevertheless continue for the remainder of his life as a slave. This is not what Jesus does for us. He buys us from sin to set us free! In fact, His blood sets us free from the requirements of the Law ([Gal 5:1](#)), free from slavery to sin ([Rom 6](#)) and free from the power of Satan and the world ([Gal 1:4](#), [Col 1:13-14](#)). As long as we know that the death of the Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished all this for us, we'll continue to love and serve Him as our Blessed Redeemer.

But even this is not the entirety of His wonderful work for us for Paul goes on to add the glorious phrase, the forgiveness of sins. We might think this is synonymous with redemption but, while it *is* related, it holds a particularly special meaning. One of the definitions for forgive conveys the idea of to carry away. This reminds us of the ritual that took place on the Day of Atonement when the High Priest would send the scapegoat into the wilderness ([Lev 16](#)). There would be 2 goats brought to the temple for this ritual. First the priest would kill one goat and sprinkle its blood before God on the mercy seat. Then he would lay his hands on the head of the surviving goat and confess all of Israel's sins over it. Then the goat would be released

into the wilderness and lost (along with all of Israel's sins). On the cross, Jesus fulfilled both of these requirements: His blood was shed for us (redemption) and He removed our sins from us so that they might never be seen again (forgiveness - **Ps 103:12; Jn 1:29**). No written accusation stands against us because our sins have been taken away!

All of this, our redemption and the forgiveness of sins, has been accomplished according to the riches of His grace...

This redemption and forgiveness given to us comes according to the measure of the riches of His grace. These were not small things won by Jesus on the cross; they were immense! And, in making them freely available, He made His grace abound towards us. Was it unwise of God to lavish such wonderful blessings on guilty sinners? Not at all! in fact, it is in all wisdom and prudence that He gives these blessings to us.

**9-10** – Paul has spoken of the riches of God's grace and we have begun to open up and reveal some of those riches but there are more in the chest! Part of what belongs to us under the riches of His grace is the knowledge of the mystery of His will. God's great plan and purpose, which was once hidden, is now revealed to us in Jesus. Paul's use of the word mystery is sort of ironic in that many read what he's written here and are still mystified! But they shouldn't be. In NT language, a mystery is something that's hidden to the unsaved but is clear to the Christian. This revelation is given to us by His good pleasure and for His own eternal purposes. But what's the mystery?

What Paul reveals in **v10** is that God's ultimate purpose in redemption is to bring all things in heaven and on earth together again under Jesus Christ! Paul uses an odd term to describe when this will happen: in the dispensation of the fullness of times. The idea behind the word dispensation reflects a plan or a strategy such as the plan that a head of household would establish for the management of the household or a plan for the management of any kind of business. In theological terms, the word refers to God's plan for dealing with certain groups of people.

We may think of a dispensation to be a block of time but it's actually a plan; both the way and the means that God has chosen to deal with different people. You wouldn't know it by looking at it but our own government has a special congressional committee slated with developing a plan to manage and pay for the government. It's called the "Ways and Means" committee. Of

course, since it's the government, you can be sure that they spend way above their means. I learned this economic trope a long time ago and it has never failed me: If your outgo exceeds your income then your upkeep will become your downfall. Young people, take this to heart because Uncle Sam sure hasn't.

So, what's the plan? That when the time is right, God will bring everything in heaven and on earth together again in Jesus Christ! The key to understanding the full meaning of this phrase is a word which most translations omit. It's the word *again*, and it occurs in Greek in connection with the verb *gather together in one*. The verb is a strange one. The root of the verb means *head*. Variations of the word can mean *headstone* or *cornerstone*, the main point of an argument, a summary, or even a scroll in which all things are summed up. The word actually says that it's God's purpose to bring together, unite, [or] sum up all things again in Jesus Christ. In other words, everything was together in Jesus once, ceased to be united to Him through the Fall, but is to be reunited in Him again by redemption.

Ever since sin came into the world, things have been falling apart. 1<sup>st</sup>, man was separated from God ([Gen 3](#)) then man was separated from man, as Cain killed Abel ([Gen 4](#)). Later, people tried to maintain a kind of unity by building the Tower of Babel but this was done in the flesh in rebellion against God's command so God judged them and scattered them around the world ([Gen 11](#)). God eventually called out Abraham and put a distinction between the Jew and the Gentile, a distinction that was maintained until Christ's death on the cross. Sin is literally tearing this world apart, but in Christ Jesus, God will gather everything together in the culmination of the ages and every human being is part of this great eternal program.

Now, don't misunderstand - this is not a doctrine of universalism, the doctrine that all fallen creatures will be saved. That is repudiated in other places, including places that quote Jesus Himself ([Mt 25:41,46](#); [Mk 9:47-48](#); [Jn 3:36](#); [5:28-29](#); [12:48](#)). It's the teaching that all things will be subjected to Christ—some willingly as those who have been redeemed by Jesus joyfully exult in His rule, some unwillingly as evil is nevertheless restrained and all are forced to acknowledge Jesus as Lord of all – every knee will bow...every tongue will confess ([Phil 2:10-11](#)).

God's ultimate plan, the dispensation that supercedes all others, is to bring

together (ultimately resolve) all things in Christ; either through Jesus as a Savior or through Jesus as a Judge. This resolution will happen in the fullness of times. The Greek for gather together has the idea of to unite or to sum up. It was used for the process of adding up a column of figures and putting the sum at the top. Paul's idea is that God will make all things add up at the end and right now, He's in the process of coming to that final sum. This is the great resolution and deliverance that even creation groans for ([Rom 8:18-22](#)), the day when every wrong will be righted and every matter resolved according to the dictates of God's holy love and perfect justice.

This perfect harmony that will be restored will be a harmony in man and between men. Harmony in creation, on the earth and in heaven and all this under the blessed Lord Jesus Christ who will be the head of all! Everything will again be united in Him and under Him. And wonder of wonders, when all this happens it will never be undone again. All will be re-united in Him to all eternity. That's the message; that's God's plan. That's the mystery that's been revealed to us. Things so marvelous you'll never hear anything greater, not in this world nor the world to come.

Note one more thing: Paul specifically states that redemption is in Jesus Christ alone. In Him we have redemption and no where else. There's no possible redemption for lost sinners outside of Jesus Christ and His redeeming blood. Jesus doesn't redeem us by His sinless life or His moral example. He doesn't redeem us through His power or His love; redemption is only through His blood; through the giving of His life on the cross. Matthew, Mark and Luke each record the Lord's statement that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins. This means that forgiveness can only be received while you are on this earth. After you die, it will be too late.

In our text, through the Apostle Paul, God is calling each one of us to *consider* the greatness of His great plan for the ages but even more importantly, He's calling us to consider our place in that great plan. Will you rejoice to see Him as your Redeemer and savior or will you feel the dread of having to face Him in His capacity as a holy and righteous Judge? The choice is yours – but the offer of redemption and forgiveness still stands and it is yours for the taking! 😊