

REDEEMED AND FORGIVEN
Ephesians 1:7

Intro: The Lord has given two ordinances which are to be practiced by the Church: baptism and the Lord's Supper. The first is to be observed once for those who have believed in Christ; the second is to be observed over and over again in the fellowship of the Church. The frequency of times when the Lord's Supper is to be observed is left to the discretion of each local church. Some observe it every week. Others observe it every month. Some, twice a month, or more. Some less frequent--once every three months.

This is all quite different from what God told Israel to do. They had many ordinances (prescribed practices, those ordained by God). The Church has only two--two which are to be observed by all of the Lord's people.

One thing that both of the Church's ordinances have in common is that they both have to do with the Gospel. We all know from experience that it is easy for us to get away from the Gospel in our thinking and living from day to day. If Christians are to remain healthy in their faith, and if a church is to remain spiritually healthy in its fellowship and ministry, the Gospel must always have priority. All of the teaching of the Church has its roots in the Gospel. When a church quits preaching the Gospel of the grace of God, it really ceases to be a church, and certainly its usefulness as an instrument of God comes to a halt. Therefore, it is important that believers periodically observe the Lord's Supper, to have their hearts redirected to the Gospel.

The importance of the Gospel can be illustrated from any book of the Bible, and that is especially true in the NT. If there were no Gospel, God would have no people who would be distinctly His people. There has never been any act by any person since the foundation of the world that delighted the heart of God any more than that which the Lord Jesus did when He died on the Cross. This is clear in Ephesians. As Paul began the Epistle, his heart was obviously filled to overflowing with praise to God for the Gospel. This is apparent from verse 3 on--down to verse 14--all having to do with the Gospel.

To prepare our hearts for the observance of the Lord's Supper tonight I want to direct your attention to verse 7. Verse 8 probably should be read with it, and considered with it.
(Read.)

What are the main points in this verse, expressed and implied? They focus upon the two main words of the verse: "REDEMPTION" and "FORGIVENESS." What do they mean?

Well, the second tells what was accomplished by the first. Our translators have captured that even by their punctuation of the verse. Redemption means, essentially, the forgiveness of sins.

But what is redemption?

Redemption is the obtaining of a deliverance of some kind by the payment of a certain price. Forgiveness is the release of the person who has been redeemed from any further obligation in connection with that for which the redemption was required.

Now looking at the verse a little closer we see that the problem was "sins." The one who has paid the price of redemption is Christ, the One referred to by "in whom" at the beginning of the verse. The price was His blood, His death. And through His death Paul said "we," that is, we believers, now "have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." And, since this was completely undeserved on our part, it had to be by grace "wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence" (v. 8).

But now let us go back to the verse and look at five outstanding truths which we are concerned with in this verse, and in connection with the Gospel.

I. THE HOLINESS OF GOD.

Obviously the One we have to do with in salvation is God. Salvation is required because He is a holy God. He has never sinned, and cannot tolerate sin. He has pronounced judgment against all sinners. They are under the penalty of eternal death. People never really understand the Gospel or their need for the Gospel unless they begin with God.

Paul wrote to the Romans,

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18).

The Gospel, on the other hand, reveals "the righteousness of God" (Rom. 1:17).

When the children of Israel sang on the shores of the Red Sea after their great deliverance from Pharaoh and his army, they sang,

Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? (Ex. 15:11).

Now, because God is holy, we can see . . .

II. THE ABSOLUTE AND HOPELESS GUILT OF THE SINNER.

Just as the Bible declares that God is holy, so the Bible declares that man is a sinner. He is a sinner by nature, and he is a sinner by choice, by practice. This includes all of us. This includes every person who has ever lived, with one exception: the Lord Jesus Christ.

By sin we are totally depraved, that is, the effects of sin are to be seen and felt in every part of our being. "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10, quoting Psalm 14 and 53). The problem is so gigantic that men are hopelessly lost and under divine judgment. There is nothing that any man can do to redeem himself, nor can any other person, or persons, help him. We are all in the same hopeless condition.

But this is where our rejoicing can begin, and our verse shows us where there is hope. It is in . . .

III. THE GRACE OF GOD.

Note the actual words which Paul used: "the riches of his grace." He was speaking about the riches of God's grace. God was not under any obligation to us. He did not have to do anything for us--BUT HE DID!

And, if you go back to the beginning of what he was saying about salvation in this passage, you will see that there is a very special meaning to the word "us." He was speaking of "us" as a chosen group, an elect group, "chosen in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be"--WHAT?--"holy and without blame before him." Not "without blame" before angels, before each other, but before HIM!

You see, God was guaranteeing that His redemptive work, would not be in vain.

But how could this be? He is holy. We are sinners. We cannot help ourselves. True, He is not only a God of holiness and righteousness, but a God of grace. But what does that mean?

Now we come to the good part, the good news. This is why it is called, the Gospel.

The answer to man's greatest need is found in . . .

IV. THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST.

Our salvation was obtained when Jesus Christ died on the Cross, and shed His blood to secure our release from the penalty that we were under because of our sins. Cf. 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18. And John said, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

This is the meaning of the broken bread. This is the meaning of the grape juice in the cup. As Peter praised the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in 1 Pet. 1:3 he praised him for "the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." And later on, in vv. 18, 19 he reminded those scattered strangers that they "were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." He had not sin. He did not need to die. But He died to save all who had been chosen by the Father, all who would eventually put their faith in him.

But, as the writer of Hebrews said, "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission," no forgiveness. Apart from the death of Christ, even the elect of God would be without hope and without forgiveness and without salvation.

But, as people commonly say today, what is the bottom line?

V. THE FORGIVENESS OF THE BELIEVING SINNER.

What does "forgiveness" mean? It means that the sinner has been released from his penalty. His debt has been paid by another, the Lord Jesus Christ. He does not have to go to hell IF he is trusting in Christ.

Look at Eph. 1:13, 14. Note the emphasis that Paul made on trusting, believing. No one will escape hell and the just penalty for his sin except those who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But what sins does this cover? All of them. For how long? Forever!

Col. 2:13 says of those who believe that God has forgiven you "all trespasses." And Heb. 10*17 promises us, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember **no more**."

Concl: Is this not cause for us to come to the Lord's table and to rejoice that this is our privilege. Only those who have believed belong here because they are the only ones who are forgiven--forgiven by God in His wonderful grace because Christ has died to save "us" from our sins.

May we be enable to give God great glory tonight as we observe the Lord's Supper.