



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“In view of what Paul says in Ephesians 1:13-14 and 4:30 would you say that redemption has a state which is still in the future?”

I find that one of the more serious, and in many cases unrealised, problems with which the Christian neophyte is faced is that of acceptance without understanding. Let me hasten to add that I am fully aware that acceptance of the Gospel *without* complete understanding is almost inevitable, but I am equally aware that the first question put to the Ethiopian eunuch by Philip was, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” It is plain that *the stated* facts of the Gospel are easy to follow and obey (see 1 Cor. 4:1-4), but once having embarked on *that* road, the hearer of the Gospel or the Christian neophyte very quickly becomes confused when the stated facts are distorted; it is *then* that we need the assurance of understanding so that we can avoid the quicksand of distorted truth.

Why do I mention this? Simply because I find a disturbing lack of understanding of the great themes of the Bible; faith, repentance, redemption, justification, sanctification, etc., among present-day Christians. I know that there are those who will say, “Well, what you are saying may be true, but so long as you live a good Christian life (whatever that may mean) then everything will turn out fine”. But if such a person has ever seen the face of a child or an adult, beleaguered by facts about many things, light up when the dawn of understanding comes then this surely must be a vindication of what I am saying. Anyway, let us look at one of these great themes - redemption.

Man's Condition

In order to understand subsequent teaching we *must* start here. In the first two chapters of the Roman letter Paul catalogues the moral degradation to which Gentiles had sunk, and in doing so he illustrates their ungodly nature. He then, in the latter part of chapter 2 and all of 3, turns his scathing attack upon the Jews, those self-righteous ones who were so critical of others and so hypocritical themselves. His tragic conclusion is “There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth,

there is none that seeketh after God" (3:10-11), and further on he says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (3:23).

So the drama of man's miserable condition is unfolded starkly. He is held in bondage by Satan. He is incapable of doing anything himself to alleviate his condition. The law, although "holy, and just, and good" (7:12) could do nothing except to illustrate the true magnitude of sin; Paul says, "But sin, that it might appear sin, worked death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (7:13). The law was good because it pointed out with great clarity the awfulness of sin, but it could not save man from his sin, not from sin's terminal consequence. Nowhere else, apart from the Roman letter, does Paul put the great dilemma of man's condition before us quite so bluntly and forcefully. How could a *just* God countenance His own *unjust* action, as He would have to, if He justified the ungodly? But God had to do *something* because of the promises He had made so long before, so He sent His own standard of righteousness; as Paul puts it, "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of (objective genitive, in) Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference" (3:21-22). Paul gives the reason for this action on God's part, "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (3:26). So man's condition *could* be alleviated, but what a price had to be paid!

Redemption (the Ransom)

There are two words in the Greek language which signify the meaning of the verb 'to redeem'. One is the word EXAGORAZO which denotes 'to buy out', and which has the meaning of the purchase of a slave with a view to his freedom. The other word is LUTROO, and this word is used to signify the release of someone by paying a ransom price. You will no doubt recall the words of Jesus to His disciples as recorded by Matthew, "And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:27-28). So we have the idea of being *bought out* of a state of lawlessness, in which we were held in bondage by sin, and the ransom which had to be paid was the life of Christ, God's righteousness, hence Paul, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Rom. 3:24-25).

We must now bring the teaching together. Everyone was and is held in the bondage of sin. We had to be redeemed so that we could become the purchased possession of God, and the purchase price was the blood of Christ, therefore, Peter can say, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Pet. 1:18-20). We are saved by grace through the blood of Christ, and as redemption is a necessary part of salvation, and if we are *now* through our acceptance of Christ and obedience to Him new creatures *in* Him, then I believe it logical to argue that we are *now* redeemed.

The Sealing

We must now turn our attention to the passages in the Ephesian letter. In the first few verses of this letter Paul sings the praises of God and His bestowed grace in Christ Jesus. "In whom *we have* redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (1:7). He then goes on in verse 13. "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in

whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory". The One who does the sealing is God, as Paul explains in his second letter to Corinth, "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath annointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. 1:21,22). The 'earnest' is the 'down-payment' of all that God has promised, and the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts is the witness to us that God is sincere. We are authenticated as God's children, and His gift of the Holy Spirit signifies to us the pledge for the final inheritance in Christ.

Simply because there is the idea of permanency in sealing, we must never accept the idea of 'once saved, always saved', God nowhere promises that. We must never forget that the tomb of Christ was sealed, but He came out. Circumcision was also looked upon as a seal, but the fact of being physically circumcised could not stand in the place of faith in Christ. No, the earnest of the Holy Spirit in our lives is God's guarantee to us that *He* will never break *His* promises, but as for us, we must follow the exhortation of Paul in Eph. 4:30, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption". We can and do grieve the Spirit; we can even quench the Spirit, thereby demonstrating that we care nothing for the promises of God, but we must take note of the warning of the writer of the Hebrew letter, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good work of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Heb. 6:4-6).

We are redeemed now. What *is* in the future is the final inheritance in Christ. There are many blessings laid *out* for us here, but there are many more laid *up* for us in heaven; God has guaranteed that by giving us His Holy Spirit. Let us wait in faith for the realisation of those blessings.