

Praise God For Redemption

Living In Awe Of A Savior Who Sends Your Guilt On A Trip—One Way!

Introduction

Last night several thousand people assembled at McNichol's Arena in Denver to watch some professional athletes demonstrate their ability and creativity in the NBA slam dunk contest [Slide 1]. Now what do you suppose people were doing when this was going on? Do you suppose there were some people there who might have been worn out from a stressful week and who said to themselves: "This would be a good time for a quick nap?" [Slide 2]. Do you think there were some people looking at their watches wondering when this event was going to be over so they could get home and do something more interesting? [Slide 3]. Do you suppose people just sat there blanked faced and bored as player after player tried to outdo each other with exceptional dunks? [Slide 4]. NO WAY! If you have ever been to a sporting event or even a concert—people go nuts. They stand and shout. They whistle and applaud. Some like Olympic judges will hold up posters with numbers on them to show their admiration.

You don't see this in the animal world. You'll never see a penguin jump into water—and then other penguins hold up cards with a 9.5 or a 9.8. You will never see a Cheetah running at nearly 70 miles an hour while other cheetahs pound their paws on the ground and roar with approval. Why? Because only people—people made in the image of God—were created to ascribe worth and value. Only people were created to be *moved* by the extraordinary. The fans in McNichol's arena last night were doing exactly what God made them to do. And none of us should have a problem with that. The problem is when people squander their capacity for awe and wonder on the creation itself—and totally miss the Creator. The cherubim in Isaiah 6: 3 remind us that the whole earth is full of God's glory. God made everything. The grandeur of a Redwood tree [Slide 5] and the beauty of a lily [Slide 6]. Even the seeming misarranged duck-billed platypus [Slide 7] is a tribute to God's amazing creativity. He created everything just right. Right down to the details of our lives. He created "soft" to sleep on and "firm" to walk on. He designed the human eye with an amazing capacity to focus on everything from the "micro" to infinity! The human finger is so full of nerve endings that you can *feel* a single hair—yet you can use that same finger to reach and grip things. The *whole earth* is full of His glory!

If you had been at McNichol's arena last night and a man was sitting next to you, sleeping through all the contests that went on—or perhaps he was totally immersed in a crossword puzzle—what would you think? Something is seriously *wrong* with this guy! Can't He see what is going on down there on the basketball court? The whole earth is full of God's glory! Yet people miss God's glory. [Slide 8]. They are oblivious to His "slam dunks" in nature because they have exchanged the truth of God's glory for a lie and so they worship and serve created things rather than the Creator himself! (Romans 1:25).

But do you know what is even more tragic than people missing out on the glory of God in creation? It's God's people losing sight of the glory of God in their *redemption*. Peter calls this problem over in 2 Peter 1:8-9: [Slide 9].

8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

In verse 8, Peter is saying that in the life of a growing Christian, there is an expected harvest of fruit in our lives. But he also understands that there will be people who are not producing this harvest of fruit. And so he explains here the reason. That fruit comes about through daily growth and development of character qualities which he mentions in verses 5-7. In other words, none of us has arrived. **We all** need to be growing and will continue to need to be growing until God's work of sanctifying us is done and we are glorified and with him in heaven. So what is it that keeps us from growing? Verse 9: We have forgotten what God has done for us in Christ. We have forgotten our identity in Christ. We are suffering from [slide 10] "**identity amnesia.**" You ask: What is identity amnesia. Here are some common symptoms [slide 11]:

- Focus is on my **achievement** (personal accomplishments).
- Focus is on my **acceptance** (gaining the approval of others).
- Focus is on my **past experience** (focusing on the difficult things that have happened to me: "I was abused; I got involved in some pretty serious addictions; My marriage fell apart). The truth is: None of those things are identities. They are experiences. But if you have become a genuine believer in Jesus Christ, none of those things defines you. But if you forget who you are in Christ, you will inevitably seek to replace your identity with something else. And I am afraid that all too easily happens in our lives. My sin-cursed heart is trying to constantly cause me to forget who I am in Christ and to seek to give me a shallow identity that keeps me from the Extreme Makeover that God has promised to do in my life.

Paul wrote the book of Ephesians to remind us of our ultimate identity and to call us to live in light of it. And when that happens, you can begin to see God's slam dunks—His incredible grace at work in your life and for His glory!

So who are you? If you are a follower of Christ—

- You have chosen to be holy (v. 4).
- You have been adopted to be like your elder brother, Jesus (vs. 5-6).

Tonight—there is another aspect to your identity, another jewel of God's rich mercy that you need to understand. It is in verses 7-8 of Ephesians 1:

7 In him (Jesus)(notice how the praise hymn has moved from the first stanza which focuses on the Father to the second stanza which focuses on the Son) **we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. [PRAY: Follow pattern of Ephesians 1: 17-18.]**

Transition: Praise God for redemption! We sing it a lot. But how much of it do we really grasp. As with the doctrine of adoption, there are two powerful realities connected with our redemption. There is a comfort—and a call. First, you need to understand...

I. Redemption is a *comfort* to you.

A. Understand what sin has done to you:

The moment that Adam and Eve decided to become their own gods, the and all mankind became slaves to sin. This happened in three ways:

1. Slaves to sin's *penalty*—Sin has alienated you from your Creator-God. How does it do that? Notice the word “sins” in verse 7. It is not Paul’s usual word for sin which means to “miss the mark.” It is a different word, lit. “trespasses” which means to deliberately step over the line. Sin causes us to step over the line of God’s authority and dares him to do something about it. A holy God could not be holy unless He declared us guilty and carried out His just judgment. But how do we *experience God’s judgment*? Ultimately God’s judgment is His unrelenting wrath for ever and ever in a place described in Revelation as a Lake of Fire and Brimstone. But our current experience of that judgment is in the form of something we call “Guilt.” “Guilt” is that function of our consciences that acts like a smoke alarm to awaken us out of our sleep of indifference and complacency to the just and inevitable coming judgment. We can listen to the alarm and begin to seek a remedy for the problem of a raging fire—or we can throw a shoe at the alarm and try to deactivate it so we can get back to sleep. But throwing a shoe or removing the batteries does not solve our real problem. It only allows us to seek a way to distract ourselves from it for the time being. This feeling of guilt, which is there to get my attention and cause me to seek God’s remedy can continue to operate even after I am saved. Not only will it alert me to current sin—but ironically current sin can cause it to recall earlier sin and even lead me beyond guilt to despair.
2. Slaves to sin's *power*—Sin has dethroned the true and Living God from the throne of your heart and placed a pretender God on the throne instead. This pretender God takes the form of whatever desires happen to be ruling us at any given moment.

Illustration: Vacation this summer and the God of peace and fun. When I allowed the god of peace and fun to rule my heart, I served that God by raging at my kids and telling them that their sibling was not their enemy—I was. I am your worst nightmare. You have ruined my ideal vacation and I will make you pay! At that moment, I was a slave to sin’s power!

3. Slaves to sin's *presence*—The effects of sin on the physical world. We experience this in the form of sickness, aging, disasters, wars and in the emotional upheaval we can face in dealing with all this etc.).

Transition: So what is God's answer for all this? Paul says: **Redemption!** So what does that mean? Unlike elections and adoptions, we don't have as much in our modern experience to connect with this word. But to Paul's audience—it was well understood.

B. Understand the meaning of God's redemption.

“To free from enslavement.”

1. Freedom from *penalty* of sin. No longer plagued with the guilt of my sin. This is what Paul is focusing on in this particular text.
2. Freedom from *power* of sin (See Romans 6:1-11). No longer under the dominion of sin's rule (Give illustration of two fields).
3. Freedom from *presence* of sin (Glorification—Individually—New body; Corporately: Members of a redeemed body—glorified in perfect unity—the Church. In fact, whole earth is filled with God's unobstructed glory. (And if you can handle this one—The Temple of God in the New Jerusalem *is* the New Heaven and New Earth!)

But there is a problem. Real estate like this does not come cheaply. And the internal freedom that the Scriptures describe—wow. The freedom to be perfectly human. To be able to use your emotions for righteous purposes. To be able to say “No” to sin and actually have the power to do it! The freedom of a conscience that can no longer wake you up in the morning or overpower you with distress at the mere trigger of a memory—how do you put a price on that?!

[Slide 14] The cost for all this? **PRICELESS!**

“**Forgiveness through his blood.**” Not just his physical blood, but His violent death in the place of sinners like us!

A powerful illustration in Leviticus 16:7-10: [Slide 15]

7 Then he is to take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. 8 He is to cast lots for the two goats—one lot for the LORD and the other for the scapegoat. 9 Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to the LORD and sacrifice it for a sin offering. 10 But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD to be used for making atonement by sending it into the desert as a scapegoat.

[Slide 16] The Scapegoat

John MacArthur, in his commentary on Ephesians points out that Israel's greatest holy day was Yom Kippur, the day of Atonement. On that day, the high Priest selected two unblemished sacrificial goats. One goat was killed and his blood was sprinkled on the altar as sacrifice. The High Priest placed his hands on the head of other goat, symbolically laying the sins of the people on the animal. The goat was then take out deep into the wilderness, so far that its could never find its way back. In symbol, the sins of the people went with the goat, never to return to them again.

That pf course did not ultimately saved the people of the OT—the Jews. It did however point to the ultimate sacrifice of Christ whose blood was shed and at the same time who became our Scapegoat. That is what our Redeemer did to redeem us! Here is a Savior who doesn't put *us* on a *guilt trip*—He sends *our guilt* on a trip—ONE WAY! This reality is described in verses like Psalm 103:12; Micah 7:19. What a comfort. What hope!

Transition: So what do we do with this comfort?

II. Redemption is a *call* to you.

God does not intend for you to be saved and then spend the rest of your life trying to please Him in your own strength. That produces Phariseeism. What does He want? Can't go into the second or third aspects. Will do that later. The focus of this passage is the first aspect—the penalty of sin.

A. Apply this truth to your life. Recapture your identity so you can praise Him.

B. Apply in relationship to others (4:29-32).

Conclusion

Start warming up for the Song of the Redeemed to your Redeemer!