

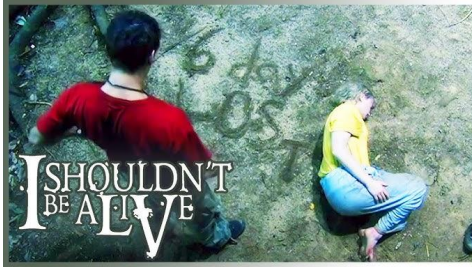
Ephesians 1:7-8

Blessed to Have Redemption Through His Blood

Main idea: Jesus rescued us!

There's a great tv show called "I Shouldn't Be Alive," have any of you seen that?

[Picture of "I Shouldn't Be Alive"]



In every episode of the show, a person or group of people get lost in some dangerous situation and struggle to survive, whether in a desert, or an ocean, or a jungle, or some other impossible circumstance to survive in. And in every episode, the situation gets so bleak that we would fully expect for the person or group of people to die. There appears to be no hope at all. But then, against all odds, the person is either rescued or they somehow find their way back to civilization, and they make it.

Now, we could look at this show and talk about how it's like our situation before we knew Jesus, how we were lost in our sin and felt like we had no hope, but then Jesus came and rescued us.¹ But in actuality, this doesn't even come close to our situation. In actuality, our situation was much worse. Because we weren't just close to dead, the Bible says that we were dead in our trespasses and sins.² So Jesus didn't just rescue us when we were close to not being able to make it on our own, but even made us alive when we were dead.³

We're going to talk more about that when we get to chapter 2 of Ephesians, but this week, we're simply going to praise God for rescuing us when we could not possibly rescue ourselves.

Ephesians 1:7-8

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he richly poured out on us with all wisdom and understanding. (Ephesians 1:7-8)

Father, thank You for redeeming us and forgiving us when we could do absolutely nothing to redeem ourselves. Thank You for pouring out Your grace on us so that we might know You and rest in Your love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

As we continue studying this first part of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, which appears to be the longest sentence in the Bible,⁴ we continue to read about all the spiritual blessings that we have in Jesus.⁵ We've

¹ Romans 6:23, 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 1 Peter 1:18-19

² Ephesians 2:1

³ Ephesians 2:4-5

⁴ Ephesians 1:3-14 appears to be one long sentence in the Greek

⁵ Since we even have EVERY spiritual blessing in the heavens. Ephesians 1:3

already seen that we're blessed to be holy and blameless in Jesus,⁶ and we're blessed to be adopted into the family of God as God's sons and daughters.⁷ But this week, we're going to see how that's even possible at all. In light of the fact that we're all sinful people, why would God bless us?

This week, we're going to see how all of the blessings that we have in Christ revolve around this word "redemption." In Jesus, we have redemption through His blood.

[Picture of the word for "redemption"]

Strong's Concordance

apolutrósis: a release effected by payment of ransom

Original Word: ἀπολύτρωσις, εως, ἡ

Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine

Transliteration: apolutrósis

Phonetic Spelling: (ap-ol-oo'-tro-sis)

Definition: a release effected by payment of ransom

Usage: release effected by payment of ransom; redemption, deliverance.

The Greek word apolutrosis literally means deliverance, or the paying of a ransom in order to set a slave free.⁸ Apart from Christ, we were slaves to sin,⁹ and all of our lives were affected in some way by our sin.¹⁰ But in Christ, we are set free from sin.¹¹ We're free to live the way God intended, no longer bound by the chains of our sin.¹² As we've already seen several times in Paul's letter to the Ephesians church, we're set apart for God's purposes.¹³ We're called holy and blameless.¹⁴ God saved us from a life of meaninglessness so that we have a life of purpose.¹⁵ In every way, Jesus is our Redeemer.¹⁶

We saw images of this redemption several times throughout the Old Testament. Boaz redeemed Ruth as her Kinsman Redeemer, so that she would be his bride even though she wasn't even an Israelite.¹⁷ God redeemed Israel by rescuing them from slavery in Egypt.¹⁸ They were to be His holy nation, kingdom of priests, a people for His own treasured possession.¹⁹ And even when they strayed, and were exiled from the Promised Land because of their sin, God redeemed them again and brought them back.²⁰

William Barclay writes about this word:

In every case the conception is the delivering of a man from a situation from which he was powerless to liberate himself or from a penalty which he himself could never have paid. - William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible*

⁶ Ephesians 1:4

⁷ Ephesians 1:5-6

⁸ Strong's #G629

⁹ John 8:34

¹⁰ Galatians 5:19-21, 1 John 3:8

¹¹ Romans 6:6, Galatians 5:1

¹² John 8:36

¹³ Ephesians 1:1

¹⁴ Ephesians 1:4

¹⁵ Matthew 28:18-20, Romans 8:28

¹⁶ John 3:16, John 14:6

¹⁷ Ruth 4:9-10

¹⁸ Exodus 6:6

¹⁹ Exodus 19:5-6

²⁰ Jeremiah 29:11-14

This is what God does for us in Christ. Because we sinned against God, we dug a pit for ourselves, and walked right into it.²¹ And we can't dig ourselves out! We were powerless to liberate ourselves from the penalty of our sins.²²

But redemption means that we're delivered from death.²³ What we couldn't do for ourselves, God did for us.²⁴ And we have this redemption, it says, through His blood, talking about the blood of Jesus. When Jesus died on the cross, it was an act of God's love not only to show us how much He loved us, but in order to actually do something about the condition we were in.²⁵ Romans 6:23 says:

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

So even though we've all earned death because of our sin, God gives us life, even eternal life, as a gift.²⁶ Jesus paid the ransom to deliver us from our sin with His own blood.²⁷

You know, God makes the rules, so He didn't need to do it this way.²⁸ God is not bound by any external force on Him to force His hand.²⁹ God can do whatever He wants. And yet, God wanted to shed His blood for us to show us several things.

1. Jesus shedding His blood on the cross shows us how serious of a thing sin is.

Sin is no light and playful thing. It's absolute evil.³⁰ Disobeying God is rebellion against God, and God wanted to show us that it would take far more than a slap on the wrist to pay the price for such a massive rebellion.³¹ Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.³²

²¹ Romans 6:23

²² Ephesians 2:1-3

²³ Colossians 1:14

²⁴ Galatians 2:16, Ephesians 2:8-9

²⁵ Romans 5:6, Romans 5:8

²⁶ Ephesians 2:8-9

²⁷ This is referred to as the Ransom Theory of the Atonement. There's some theological debate concerning who Jesus paid this ransom to. Who did Jesus need to redeem us from? In other words, who or what was making sure every sin was paid for, and that justice was satisfied? Some theologians believe the ransom was paid to Satan. They say that because of our sin, Satan had some ownership over our souls, and therefore some leverage over God, so that God had to, in a sense, appease Satan with the death of Jesus, so that we could be freed from Satan's control. And this theory certainly touches on some truths, since all who are not following Christ are following Satan. But the problem with this theory is that Satan has no authority to tell God what God must do. God is in charge, and God makes the rules. Other theologians say that the ransom needed to be paid not to a person, but to concepts such as the grave, death, or even justice. Since the wages of sin is death, and since God's justice demands that no sin go unpunished, the only way we could possibly and logically be forgiven is that these concepts of death and justice are satisfied. But once again, I would say that God makes the rules, so the only reason these concepts would need to be satisfied is if God made it to be that way. So I believe, as do most Christian theologians today, that God actually paid the ransom to Himself to redeem us. When Jesus died on the cross, it was to satisfy His own wrath toward sin. It's kind of a weird thing to think about, but the Bible teaches that God saved us from His own wrath. God is holy and blameless, and He wants us to be holy and blameless. So He came down as Jesus, a man like one of us, and died in our place, and rose from the grave, and gave us His Holy Spirit, all to redeem us from the curse that we brought upon ourselves with our sin.

²⁸ Psalm 115:3

²⁹ Proverbs 19:21

³⁰ 1 John 3:4

³¹ James 1:15

³² Hebrews 9:22

2. Jesus shedding His blood on the cross shows us the wrath of God toward sin.

God intensely hates sin, because sin is completely contrary to His character.³³ God is absolute good,³⁴ and sin by its very nature is the opposite of good, so God hates sin with a passion.³⁵ So God's wrath actually isn't in opposition to His goodness, as some people seem to think of wrath, but God shows wrath toward sinners exactly because He's good and will not allow sin to remain unchecked forever.

This, by the way, brings a more biblical understanding to Paul's statement that it's God's kindness that leads us to repentance.³⁶ God's kindness even includes His wrath, and God shows wrath precisely because He desires for all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.³⁷ This leads us to the third thing and most obvious that God showed us when Jesus went to the cross.

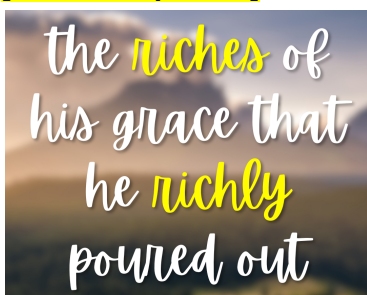
3. Jesus shedding His blood on the cross shows us the love of God toward sinners.

This is the extent to which God went to save us: He shed His blood and died for us.³⁸ So even though sin is serious, and God intensely hates sin, God loves us so much that He took His wrath upon Himself, so that we could experience His love and grace.³⁹ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses.

Because the thing is, all of our sin is ultimately against God.⁴⁰ As much as we may at times have sinned against others, whether through careless words, intentional actions, or even just a lack of compassion for those hurting around us, every sin, even when against others, is ultimately done against God.⁴¹ Sin wouldn't even be sin without the fact that sin is contrary to God's character. As we've already said, God is good, so anything that we do that isn't good is an attack against God.⁴² So as much as it's good to seek forgiveness from those that we offend in this world, and we ought to do that, it's even more important that we receive God's forgiveness, which comes through the blood that Jesus shed for us on the cross.⁴³

And God did this for us, as it says at the end of verse 7 going through verse 8, according to the riches of his grace that he richly poured out on us with all wisdom and understanding.

[Picture of phrase]



³³ Psalm 5:5, Psalm 11:5, Proverbs 8:13

³⁴ Psalm 34:8

³⁵ Psalm 5:4-5

³⁶ Romans 2:4

³⁷ 1 Timothy 2:4

³⁸ John 1:1-2, John 1:14, Romans 5:8

³⁹ Isaiah 53:5, 1 John 4:9-10

⁴⁰ Psalm 51:4

⁴¹ Even when they clearly sinned against man, the people in the Bible acknowledged that they had in doing so, sinned against God. Genesis 39:9, 2 Samuel 12:13, Luke 15:21

⁴² Isaiah 59:2, Colossians 3:6

⁴³ 2 Corinthians 5:21

In that phrase, “the riches of his grace that he richly poured out,” Paul uses two different words to talk about God’s riches.⁴⁴ The first is to point out just how great God’s grace is. God doesn’t just show grace; He shows abundant grace! He has a wealth of grace greater than we can comprehend!⁴⁵

Picture the mansion of money from that show Ducktales.

[Picture of money vault from Ducktales]



In the show, Scrooge McDuck would go into his money vault, dive into his money, throw it up into the air, and even count all of his just by swimming in it.

[Picture of Scrooge McDuck diving into his money]



Whenever I watched that show as a kid, I always thought it would be so cool to have that much money! It’s more than I would ever need, right? I could buy whatever I want, I could give it out to anyone who ever had a need, and I would never have to worry at all about having enough! I don’t think I’m alone in having dreamed about having that much money, right?

But in reality, God’s wealth of grace is even greater than that!⁴⁶ Because Scrooge McDuck in the show could count all of his money, but God’s grace is greater than we can possibly imagine! We can’t fathom the riches of God’s grace! We can’t measure the extent of it.⁴⁷ It’s so much more, and so much greater, and yet it’s silly that we’ve wondered at times if God’s grace is big enough to cover even my sin. The Bible is abundantly clear: it is! Where sin abounded, grace abounded all the more because of the riches of God’s grace.⁴⁸

The second reference to riches in these verses is a verb that we translate as both a verb and an adverb, how God richly poured out His grace on us, or some versions say He “lavished” His grace on us. The idea is really

⁴⁴ πλοῦτος (Strong’s #G4149) and περισσεύω (Strong’s #4052). We might note that the second does not necessarily have the connotations that we might associate with “riches” (pertaining to wealth), but certainly carries with it the notion of abundance.

⁴⁵ 2 Corinthians 12:9, Hebrews 4:16, James 4:6

⁴⁶ Titus 2:11-14

⁴⁷ 2 Corinthians 9:8

⁴⁸ Romans 5:20-21

that God caused His grace to superabound toward us. He didn't just slap a little grace on us like a bandaid; He overwhelmed us with His grace, because that's what we needed.⁴⁹

It would be like if someone was in need of a major surgery, like a gunshot wound, but thought he could walk away with a little first aid. A gunshot wound is a major medical emergency, no matter what you may have seen on television! It's going to take a little more than some alcohol wipes and gauze to treat properly.

But so often in life, we settle for the bandaid. We want to go about living as if there's nothing wrong, when God wants us to bask in His grace! He wants us to see just how great our sin is, and how His grace is even greater, and then live with confidence according to the knowledge of His grace on our lives.⁵⁰

Paul says that God showered us with this grace with all wisdom and understanding. Nothing about any of this caught God off guard.⁵¹ Our sin didn't catch Him off guard. His response of grace wasn't a last resort to save us. No, God knew exactly what He was doing from the very beginning.⁵²

When Jesus walked the earth, the Bible records that Jesus knew what was in a man.⁵³ He knew what He was getting into. He knew that He would be betrayed and abandoned by His disciples.⁵⁴

The book of Hebrews says that Jesus is the high priest who could sympathize with all our weaknesses.⁵⁵ He was familiar with all our struggles, all our temptations, and all of our pains.

And despite all that, or maybe we should say because of all that, Jesus was willing to go to the cross, and die for us.⁵⁶

God knew exactly what we needed. God is wise and has all understanding. And God knew to what extent we failed, and even continue to fail. God knew that it wouldn't take just a little forgiveness, but a whole lot of forgiveness. God knew that forgiving us would cause Him pain, and tears, and even Jesus's own blood, and yet God was willing and even wanted to pay that price to show us how much He loves us.⁵⁷

Some of you may remember what happened in 2009 to US Airways Flight 1549.⁵⁸

[Picture of US Airways Flight 1549]



⁴⁹ Ephesians 4:7

⁵⁰ 2 Peter 1:2

⁵¹ Jeremiah 1:5, Acts 2:23, Romans 8:29-30

⁵² 1 Peter 1:20

⁵³ John 2:25

⁵⁴ Matthew 26:31-35

⁵⁵ Hebrews 4:15

⁵⁶ Luke 9:51

⁵⁷ John 3:16

⁵⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/US_Airways_Flight_1549

Just after taking off in New York City, the aircraft was struck by a flock of birds which were sucked into its engines, causing the plane to lose power. To avoid crashing, the pilots glided the plane to a belly landing on the Hudson River just off the coastline of Manhattan. Despite being in a situation that could have ended in tragedy, not one life was lost. All 155 souls on board climbed out onto the wings of the plane on that frigid cold day. Of course, there was no time in this process to consider handbags or baggage, briefcases or cell phones, or even coats and hats. All of that was left behind so that they would be rescued before the plane would be claimed by the icy waters of the Hudson River.

But the reason I'm sharing this story isn't about because the people were saved, but because somehow, all those personal items that they left behind have since been returned to their rightful owners as well, fully cleaned up and restored, as if they'd never been lost in the first place.

You see, the airline hired a company that specializes in disaster recoveries. When the plane was hauled out of the Hudson for inspection by accident investigators, the disaster recovery company gathered up all of the people's personal items to return them.

At first, everything was soaked and smelled of jet fuel. But every item the company found was defrosted, cleaned, and meticulously restored to its original condition.

Finally, many months later, Maryann Bruce, the passenger in seat 5D, was delivered back to her all of her possessions from the flight: her briefcase, purse, mink coat, and a carry-on suitcase with all its contents, including a large diamond ring given to her by her husband for their 25th wedding anniversary.

Included in all of these returned items was even her boarding pass for seat 5D. "I plan on framing that," she said.

Here's the point. US Airways put in all that work to redeem all of those possessions because they knew how valuable all of those belongings were to those who lost them in the crash. But you are so much more valuable to God!⁵⁹ God loves you with a relentless love, and He sent His Son Jesus to die for your sins, so that you would be redeemed, forgiven, and saved in Him.⁶⁰

Last year, a man named Amou Haji passed away at the age of 94.⁶¹ Amou's claim to fame was that he was called "The World's Dirtiest Man" because he was known for not having bathed for over 60 yrs!

[Picture of Amou Haji]



⁵⁹ Matthew 10:31

⁶⁰ John 15:13, 1 Peter 3:18

⁶¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amou_Haji

Amazingly, Haji lived a long and mostly healthy life, believing that bathing would make him ill. But at some point in 2022, his neighbors finally convinced him to bathe and seek medical examination. And a few short months later, Haji grew ill and died.

Some have speculated that his shower actually killed him, saying that it washed away all the good bacteria on his body so that harmful bacteria spread unchecked, but that's not likely the case. The truth is, regardless of our personal hygiene habits, we will all die.⁶²

Spiritually speaking, we are all filthy. No amount of soap and water can wash away the sin that defiles us.⁶³

Yet unlike the ineffective soap and water the locals used to try to cleanse Haji from his filthy past, there is a washing and renewing which can not only cleanse us from our sins, but also give us the redemption and forgiveness that we need.⁶⁴

As the old hymn proclaims, "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!"

⁶² Hebrews 9:27

⁶³ Romans 6:23

⁶⁴ Isaiah 1:18