

Devotion for March 29, 2024 – Good Friday

1 Peter 1:18b-19 (EHV)

How much is a person worth? In the ancient world, the cost of a slave could be compared to “new” car prices today, depending on the person’s age and skill set. Buying a slave was not cheap. Neither was buying your freedom if you were a slave. Why am I talking about this on Good Friday? Because today commemorates the day the LORD bought our freedom. With the apostle Peter as our guide, let us consider the price he paid and what it means for us under the theme: **You were redeemed.**

The letter of 1st Peter encourages Christians to lead holy, God-pleasing lives. Why? Our sermon text tells us:

*You were redeemed from your empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, not with things that pass away, such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like a lamb without blemish or spot.*

The word “redeemed” is very special in the Bible. It means “to buy back.” The idea of redemption played a considerable role in Biblical Judaism. God set Old Testament laws concerning how indebted land, people, and certain animals could be bought back by their original owners or relatives. More important, however, was the spiritual truth that the concept of redemption was meant to illustrate, a truth God wanted to be taught at His temple. All the sacrifices on the altar proclaimed the seriousness of our broken relationship with God. We are incapable of “buying” our way from out under the hell we deserve because of our sins, as the Bible says: <sup>7</sup> *No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him--* <sup>8</sup> *the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough--* <sup>9</sup> *that he should live on forever and not see decay.*<sup>i</sup>

Yes, ever since the fall into sin, every human has been under a curse — separated from God and enslaved to the devil. Selfishness permeates our thoughts, and pride controls our hearts. Even the good that people attempt to do outside of Christ is like a filthy rag in God’s sight.<sup>ii</sup> Why? Because of the self-righteousness that motivates our actions. The Bible makes it clear: *“without faith it is impossible to please God.”*<sup>iii</sup>

Addiction to sinful pleasure and the idea that we are generally good before God (that we can, in some way, earn our salvation) – this is the “empty way of life” into which we all were born. Because of this, damnation to hell was our lot. We were spiritual slaves – unable to buy our freedom. We needed a redeemer.

Our gracious LORD promised to provide that redeemer. He set up the Old Testament sacrificial system to point to it. Perfect lambs (the kind that would win ribbons at the Royal Agricultural Fair in Toronto) had their throats cut, blood poured out, and were burned up at God’s temple. Why? So that the people of Israel would have a living picture of God’s promised Saviour and the perfect sacrifice he would offer to the Lord in our place to redeem us from our sins.

Jesus is that perfect Savior sent by God that all the lambs sacrificed on Israel's altar represent. He lived the perfect life of obedience to God's law that we all failed to live – thereby winning the righteousness we need to stand before the LORD. After securing that righteousness, Jesus was able to pay the redemption price required to release us from our slavery to sin, death, and the power of the devil.

What was the price he paid: \$10k/person? \$100k/person? \$1m/person? No, far more than that. He paid with his blood, pouring out his life for us on the cross. That was the redemption price God set for our freedom, which was also the price Jesus paid.

Did you ever hear the story about the horrible sinner who asked Jesus how much he loved him? Spreading out his arms, Jesus said, “so much,” and then he died. This is how much Jesus loves you, for we are all the horrible sinner I mentioned. He loves you so much that he paid the rarest, most precious price in the universe to save you: the sinless blood of history's only sinless man (who also is the true God). This is what you are worth to the LORD.

There is one more topic I would like to discuss before I end this devotion. Did you notice what Jesus redeemed you from? Our text says that *you were redeemed from your empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers*. In other words, Jesus didn't just save us from hell for heaven; he also saved us from a meaningless, fruitless existence on this earth.

Let's reflect on that thought for a moment: Jesus didn't save us so we can feel good doing the meaningless things that our culture holds dear, like scrolling through reels, shorts, and TikTok videos, gossiping on Snapchat or Twitter, and lusting over all the stuff we can buy on Amazon or Temu. He didn't shed his blood so we can use all his blessings selfishly with little thought of him or our neighbour – doing all we can to retire well with a lovely house, many toys, and great memories. While those things may seem important now, they are all genuinely meaningless. Why? Because they don't last forever. They will all be left behind and forgotten at our death. The only thing that lasts forever is our relationship with the LORD. He saved us so we can find genuine joy and happiness in him – understanding that everything he commands and instructs in His Word is for our good. The only thing that truly matters is that his kingdom (Christ's reign in people's hearts through the Gospel) comes to us and others. The more we meditate on Jesus and share the Gospel with others, the more we find true purpose, meaning, and joy in our earthly lives as we look forward to the glory to come.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: throughout this Good Friday service, you have heard about the great price Jesus paid to redeem you. Rejoice that God values you that much for his mercy's sake despite your sin and rebellion against Him. Therefore, let the love Christ showed you move you to love him back. How? By serving him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness – ever mindful of what Jesus redeemed you from, what he redeemed you for, and the price he paid. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Psalm 49:7-9 NIV84

<sup>ii</sup> Cf. Isaiah 64:6

<sup>iii</sup> Hebrews 11:6 EHV