

LIFE'S ULTIMATE QUESTION

Colossians 1:13-14

I want you to ask yourself a question today. Are you redeemed? Of all the questions you will ever ask yourself that one is the biggest. It is life's ultimate question. And I pray that you will not leave this building today without being able to say, "I know that I am redeemed". As you and I travel down life's road there are huge questions that we face at every stage. Almost every one of us laid in bed as a young child many a Christmas Eve and wondered what we would find under the Christmas tree the next morning. And I say almost because I know one who didn't. Because Monty Stamps once told me that when he and Glenn shared a bedroom as kids, that one Christmas Eve they were laying in bed, trying to go to sleep, and they began to talk about then next morning. And Monty said to Glenn, "I wonder what I'm getting from Santa Claus?" And then he said, "Glenn had been so mean to me and Keith and Lance that year that he laid there and said, "I wonder if I'm getting **anything** from Santa Claus?"

But as the years passed our questions becomes much more serious. We began to ask, "I wonder if I'll be able to pass that biology test", or "I wonder if I'll make the cut on the basketball team", or "I wonder if I'll get asked to the prom". And then we really get to the big league stuff. "Do I want to go to college or start working? And if I do go to college, what will be my major"? In other words, "What am I going to do with my life?" And the one that tops them all, "With whom will I spend the rest of my life?" And then other questions arise. Will my kids turn out OK? Will I have enough money for retirement?

But friends, every one of these is infinitesimally small to the question, "Am I redeemed?" Am I right with God because there

has been a time in my life that I know that I have been redeemed by Jesus Christ? I am not the man I used to be. I am not the woman I used to be. I've been forgiven from sin and I live a new life in Jesus Christ. Paul declared to the Colossians that they had been redeemed through Jesus' blood. So that's the question that I challenge you with this morning. Are you redeemed? And it is life's ultimate question because your answer determines your eternal destiny.

Now, you may be thinking, "Well, I can check out of this sermon, because I know that I'm redeemed. I know that I'm saved". Well, as ESPN football commentator Lee Corso says, "Not so fast, my friend". For there is much more to being redeemed than escaping hell. And you, too, need to ask yourself the question, "Am I redeemed?" For it is not only the ultimate question of life, but it is also the ultimate question of the Christian life. And there is no greater joy than when as a Christian when you can confidently say, "I am totally redeemed".

Now, as you consider whether or not you've been redeemed, I want to share with you two precious truths about being redeemed, and the first one is **the blessings of being redeemed**. Let me start by giving you a definition. The noun form of "redeemed" is "redemption", and the meaning of "redemption" is "to deliver by payment of a ransom". Jesus said of Himself in Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many". But if redemption means to deliver by the payment of a ransom, and if Jesus gave His life a ransom for many, then just what did Jesus deliver us from? Well, let's look at verse 13 and just see. There Paul says, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness.

Friends, I want you to have a clear understanding this morning of the power of darkness. For every single one of us has either lived in this power of darkness or is living this very moment.

The power of darkness is synonymous to the kingdom of Satan, the domain of the devil. And the kingdom of Satan is not a pretty place. First of all it is a place of **destruction**. It is the place where millions of women and children are enslaved in horrific sex trafficking. Where millions men and women and teenagers are enslaved to drugs and alcohol and pornography. It is a place where wives are battered and where children are molested and live in poverty. It is a place where parents break the hearts of children when they are young and then children grow older and break the hearts of parents. It is a place where misery reigns and tears flow day by day.

The power of darkness is also a place of **deception**. You see, most of those in the power of darkness, the kingdom of Satan, don't have a clue they are there. Because here's the thing about the devil. He has disguised himself as an angel of light, and he whitewashes his kingdom to make it look like a kingdom of light.

I was channel surfing a week or so ago and came across a program on something like the soul train network. And the soul brothers and sisters were doing a music video that reeked with ungodliness, that was saturated with the philosophy of the kingdom of Satan. Now, I don't know what the happy meters of their hearts were registering. I don't know if they were all as happy as kids in a candy store or if they were dying inside. But I do know this. I told Janice that they were so very bound in the darkness of sin. They were as far away from God's light and God's love as the east is from the west. And the tragedy of tragedies is they didn't know it. They thought that what they were singing about was what life was all about. And so do the millions that watch them, all of them in shackles, all of them enslaved in the kingdom of Satan.

Oh, but this group that so greatly turns us off are not the only ones who are deceived by the masquerading angel of light, the

devil. There are many whose life styles are much more palatable to us, but who are just as surely a part of Satan's kingdom as the soul train singers. First of all there are the **rich**. We know who the rich are. They are the ones who drive the Mercedes and who live in Crown Pointe. But their riches have blinded them to the poverty of their souls. Jesus said they are like thorny ground, and that the deceitfulness of their riches choke out the Word of God (Matt. 13:22). Jesus said that it was hard for them to enter Heaven, harder than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle (Matt. 19:24). And the rich young ruler is the prime example. But how the rich are deceived in thinking that riches is the fulfillment of true life.

Then there are the **respected**. They may only drive an Avalon, but their names are in the newspapers and on buildings. And their big stumbling block is pride, the sin on the top of the list of things that God hates. A prime example of the respected is King Herod, whom God struck down because of his pride and he was eaten with worms. And then there are the rich and the respected, who are the athletes, the rock stars, the movie stars. But what I want you to see is that the rich and the respected are the ones our society looks up to and praises and envies. But they are fellow slaves with the murders and liars and thieves in the kingdom of Satan, living in deception.

But in addition to the rich and respected there are the **religious**. The religious are more likely to drive the Malibus and the Civics, but they are the devout people of the world. They keep the letter of the law to a tee. They wouldn't miss church unless they were on their death bed. And they are the best in the world at spotting the faults of their neighbors and reporting them to their other neighbors, just as a warning, of course. We know who these were in Jesus' day, the Pharisees, and Jesus said to them, "The tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you" (Matt. 21:31). But how they were deceived! They

thought that they were the best of the best, but they were the worst of the worst. Don't be deceived, friend!

So we've seen that the power of darkness, the kingdom of Satan, is a place of **destruction** and **deception**. But it is also a place of **death**. All who dwell in the kingdom of Satan are spiritually dead men waiting to die. They are hopelessly imprisoned with no possible means of escape by their own strength. And when they die they go to a very real place of **eternal** darkness, **eternal** death, and **eternal** suffering; they go to hell. So friends, as Jerry Glover challenged us a few Wednesday nights ago, don't ever trivialize the devil. Don't ever make light of hell. But rather ask God to give you a heart of compassion for a world that is plunging into hell, just as you would have compassion for your next door neighbor who was trapped inside his burning house. And don't ever forget that if it were not for Jesus that you would forever be a citizen of the kingdom of Satan and a child of hell.

So that's the place from which Jesus redeemed us, the power of darkness. But now let's talk about **the place to which we've come**. Look again at verse 13. "He has delivered us from the power of darkness, and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love". Friend, if you've been redeemed you are now a citizen of Jesus' kingdom, the kingdom of God. In many places Jesus calls it the kingdom of Heaven. And I want to share with you for a few moments just what the kingdom of Heaven is like. It is a glorious Kingdom! Paul says that it is a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. And the first reason found in verse 14. Look at it. "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins". The law of God had declared us guilty sinners and condemned us to death. Paul said in Gal. 3:10 that the law had cursed us. But in v. 13 he says, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, for it is written, '*Cursed is everyone*

who hangs on a tree". Jesus bore our curse, and for all who trust in Him, there is no more punishment for their sin.

Several days ago our new secretary told me that her neighbors with children are all up in arms because two sex offenders may be moving into their neighborhood. Friends, a sex offender who has completely rehabilitated oftentimes still carries a curse around on his head. For some people just won't forgive, no matter how repentant he is and no matter how radical the change. Oh, but Jesus forgives him! And Jesus not only forgives him, but He restores his innocence just as if he had never sinned. And my sins and your sins, which God hates just as much, Jesus has forgiven and buried in the deepest sea. And we are clean and righteous before a holy God, redeemed by the blood of Jesus, citizens of the kingdom of Heaven. But not only citizens of the kingdom, but sons and daughters of the King, with free access to God's throne 24/7! And joint-heirs with Jesus to all the riches of heaven. What an unspeakable standing! And all because of redemption.

But redemption is much more than **forgiveness** of sin. Redemption is also **freedom** from sin. OH, beloved, please don't miss this. The gospel that saves is the gospel that sanctifies! Jesus did not come only to redeem you from the penalty of sin, but from the power of sin. Look at 1 Peter 1:18-19. Peter says that we have been redeemed from our aimless conduct by the precious blood of Christ. That word "aimless" means "vain", or "futile". Friends, do you know how people in the kingdom of Satan live their entire lives? Well, we saw that Satan's kingdom is a destructive kingdom, and many live their lives in aimless destruction, destroying others while seeking their own sinful pleasures. These people we'd say are just plain evil.

But even though we all have wicked hearts, most people aren't that evil and mean. But they live a life filled with futile busywork. They work to make a living and then fill the rest of their

lives with activities that give pleasure for the moment but have no eternal value whatsoever.

Now, that can sound a bit harsh on the surface. What about those who are not Christians but who work hard in research, seeking cures for terminal diseases? What about unsaved agriculturists, who find ways to make farming more productive in third world countries? Do they live aimless lives? That's a good question. Because these people do bless the world with temporary good. But the answer is that their conduct is ultimately aimless. Because they are seeking to provide life support to dying men on a dying planet that will one day be burned up. They are laying up treasures on earth and not in heaven. Their motives might be pure, but they are merely painting a weather beaten old barn that is just about ready to cave in. And just like Solomon said, "...vanity of vanities, all is vanity" (Ecc. 1:2).

But beloved, that's the way that all in the kingdom of darkness live. They live for the moment, for that's all there is. And the sad reality is that this is how many Christians live, too. We live catering to our flesh. We live with little thought of Kingdom business. We live for the moment, just as those in the kingdom of Satan. But beloved, our Lord Jesus redeemed us from such a selfish, sinful attitude! And if we seek a cure for cancer, we do it for the glory of God. If we seek to win football games, we do it for the glory of God. We do nothing without a higher, holy purpose. Whether we eat, drink, or whatever we do, we do all for the glory of God. I ask you, young or middle aged person in the workforce, do you do your job for the glory of God? And are your leisure pursuits done for the glory of God? I ask you, mother and housewife, do you keep your home for the glory of God? I ask you retiree, do you spend your days in activities that glorify God? Or are you just coasting out on your glory train to Heaven? Oh, beloved, I exhort you, be delivered today from aimless conduct! That's why we are redeemed.

But our redemption from sin is much more than being freed from our aimless conduct. Look at Titus 2:14. Paul writes that Jesus died for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, every sin that so easily ensnares us. Oh, how our sins can wreck our lives. They destroy peace in our homes. They destroy peace on our jobs. They destroy peace with our friends. And most of all they destroy our peace with God! And we live in guilt and defeat day by day. But the blessed truth from Jesus today is that we don't have to! For we've been redeemed from every lawless deed! Paul tells us in Romans 6:13-14,

"And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace".

What sin are you struggling with today? I declare to you that Jesus has redeemed you from that sin! And right now I urge you to confess it and throw it off and as Paul said, put on the new man, the man that has been redeemed (Col. 3:10)!

We are redeemed from the penalty of sin. We are redeemed from the power of sin. And finally, one day we will be redeemed from the presence of sin (Romans 8:22-23).