

Christ on the Cross, part 9
Jesus Paid Our Debt (Ransom)

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom...” 1 Timothy 2:5-6

Debt.

In considering the word, most people think of their financial debt and their obligations to various debtors. For example, the average twenty-one year-old has five credit cards with an average debt of \$3,000, while 23 percent have credit card debt of \$3,000 to \$7,000, and 10 percent have credit card debt exceeding \$7,000.

In the U.S. there are over four credit cards in circulation for every man, woman, and child. Personal debt, excluding mortgages, averages \$19,000 per household, over half of which is on credit cards. And, over 40 percent of all U.S. families spend more each year than they earn. Simply, Americans are in financial debt.

What many people are unaware of, however, is their spiritual debt. God made each of us to honor Him by living in obedience to Him. Each time we fail in this obligation through sins of both omission and commission in our words, deeds, and motives, we accrue a spiritual debt to God. This is what Jesus was speaking of when He prayed that God would forgive our debts to Him (Matt. 6:12). Forgiveness of our debts to God requires a mediator, redeemer, and a ransom.

Mediator

The mediator is the person who is the go-between, or “middleman,” between us and God to mediate our differences and bring about resolution. As an example, Job speaks of an angel as a ransoming mediator (Job 33:23-26). To effectively represent both God and man/humankind, the mediator had to be both God and man. Therefore, God became the man Jesus Christ, who alone is the mediator between people and God (1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 9:15; 12:24).

Redeemer

The redeemer is the person who pays the ransom for the debtor. Throughout Scripture, God is spoken of as our Redeemer (Job 19:25; Ps. 19:14; 78:35; Isa. 41:14; 43:14; Jer. 50:34). Throughout church history it has been continually accepted that Jesus is our Redeemer, though there has been widespread debate as to whom Jesus paid our debt.

Origen (185-254) taught that Satan held humanity captive and so Jesus paid off Satan. Gregory the Great (540-604) further developed this concept by saying that Jesus came disguised as a man to trick Satan like a worm on a hook to capture the devil. Anselm (1033-1109) strongly denounced the teachings that Satan has authority over God, God owes Satan, or that God deals with Satan like a deceptive coward instead of a strong warrior. The Bible never states to whom Jesus, our Redeemer, paid our debt. But, it seems logical that since our debt is to God, our debt was paid to God.

Ransom

The ransom is the price that must be paid to God for our debt. The problem, however, is that Scripture plainly says that no human being can redeem the life of another person by paying their ransom to God

because only God can accomplish such a feat (Ps. 49:7-15). Because Jesus is both God and man, He alone is able to pay the price for our ransom through His sinless life and substitutionary death (1 Peter 1:18-19). Jesus, as well as other's in the New Testament testify to this:

- Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.
- 1 Tim. 2:5-6 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom...
- Heb. 9:15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

Lastly, this ransoming work of Jesus our Mediator and Redeemer means that we belong to God because Jesus has purchased us (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23). The result is a new life lived by the empowering grace of Jesus through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, so that we can enjoy the great honor of living in obedience to God so that He receives glory and we receive joy as we live in congruence with God and His purposes for us.

Debt

Matthew 6:9-12

9 Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread, 12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Mediator

Job 33:23-26

23 If there be for him an angel, a mediator, one of the thousand, to declare to man what is right for him,

24 and he is merciful to him, and says, ‘Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom;

25 let his flesh become fresh with youth; let him return to the days of his youthful vigor’;

26 then man [1] prays to God, and he accepts him; he sees his face with a shout of joy, and he restores to man his righteousness.

Hebrews 9:15

15 Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. [1]

Hebrews 12:18-24

A Kingdom That Cannot Be Shaken

18 For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest 19 and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. 20 For they could not endure the order that was given, “If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.” 21 Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.” 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, 23 and to the assembly [2] of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

- a person who mediates, esp. between parties at variance.
- One that mediates, especially one that reconciles differences between disputants.

Redeemer

Isaiah 43:14

14 Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:

“For your sake I send to Babylon and bring them all down as fugitives, even the Chaldeans, in the ships in which they rejoice.

Jeremiah 50:34

34 Their Redeemer is strong; the Lord of hosts is his name. He will surely plead their cause, that he may give rest to the earth, but unrest to the inhabitants of Babylon.

Ransom

Psalms 49:7-15

7 Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life,

8 for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice,

9 that he should live on forever and never see the pit.

10 For he sees that even the wise die;

the fool and the stupid alike must perish and leave their wealth to others.

11 Their graves are their homes forever, [1] their dwelling places to all generations, though they called lands by their own names.

12 Man in his pomp will not remain; he is like the beasts that perish.

13 This is the path of those who have foolish confidence;

yet after them people approve of their boasts. [2] Selah

14 Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol;

death shall be their shepherd, and the upright shall rule over them in the morning.

Their form shall be consumed in Sheol, with no place to dwell.

15 But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me. Selah

1 Peter 1:17-19

17 And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, 18 knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

- a person who redeems. Jesus Christ.
- a teacher and prophet born in Bethlehem and active in Nazareth; his life and sermons form the basis for Christianity (circa 4 BC - AD 29)
- someone who redeems or buys back (promissory notes or merchandise or commercial paper etc.)

Ransom

1 Corinthians 6:20

You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

1 Corinthians 7:20-23

20 Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. 21 Were you a slave [3] when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) 22 For he who was called in the Lord as a slave is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a slave of Christ. 23 You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.