

Faith Pulpit

Is Redemption an Opinion?

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3).

Not long ago a missionary told how in a market near the cathedral a boy was hawking religious doodads. The boy was shouting, “Cheap crosses! Cheap crosses!” We may be able to match him. Professing Christians of our own day have found ways to minimize the doctrine of redemption.

Redemption is not quite the central doctrine of the Bible; to make it so has historically permitted earnest men to ignore the literal kingdom of Christ. But having said that, we may take it that redemption lies very near the center of Scripture. It bears out the inspiration and authority of the Bible. It teaches something of God’s ways, ways that glorify Himself and leave us nothing of which to boast. It faces human depravity in all its ugliness and provides the only remedy sufficient for that depravity. It harmonizes with justification by faith alone—”Nothing in my hand I bring. Simply to Thy cross I cling.” Furthermore, it vindicates Christ, admitting His death to be a real payment for sins and thereby breaking us down to solemn and profound gratitude. The doctrine of redemption explains the communion service, which enables us to show forth the Lord’s death till He comes.

Jesus died for us. If this doctrine is to us anything less than conviction, we have not understood it. If it is indeed a conviction, it will mark much that we do.

1. The Doctrine of Redemption Will Govern Our Ministries.

If we stand in awe of a crucified Redeemer, the message will come through in our preaching. In fact, it will come through in season and out of season. In 1 Corinthians, a book mainly about church problems, Paul makes a dozen specific references to our blood-bought salvation, in addition to many allusions to it.

Our own proclamations will continually refer to what we regard as important. If we value redemption, our hearers will get the idea that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness, that the path to the holy of holies leads first to the brazen altar. If we love things, we will often refer to our things; if we love the message of redemption, we will often refer to the price that bought us. Spurgeon somewhere remarked that every rope in the British navy had a red thread in it, to show that it belonged to the Crown; he drew the parallel that all our preaching should have running through it the red strand of the blood of Christ.

The doctrine of redemption will also bear on the manner of our ministry. If our sins were such that only the death of the cross could pay for them, something of this will show in the manner that we carry ourselves. If the hands we love bear the scars of the nails, can we ever be quite the same again? Joy, yes, but not flippancy. Praise and gratitude, yes, but not entertainment or carnal display. The very way that we conduct our worship services will convey how much we understand and value the redemption that Jesus bought for us.

The late George W. Truett in a hunting accident shot and killed a close friend. Truett was reputed never to have laughed again to the end of his life. Will not something of this solemnity rest upon the truly redeemed?

I fear that even among saints we are offering much helpful material on peace, happiness, and warm family life, while at the same time we are offering cheap crosses.

2. The Doctrine of Redemption Will Determine Our Yokes.

If other professing Christians ignore the redemption which is to us a conviction, how can we make common cause with them? At this point we are faced with something more than a mere exclusivism. That doctrinal impasse explains our historic inability to work with liberals. From the Unitarians of 1805 to the Liberationists of the present, Liberals have denied that they needed the shed blood. Only the Barthians came even close.

Similarly the doctrine of redemption cuts us off from the sacramentalists. They may profess a sort of divine grace, mediated through external means; but to find among them a clear exponent of Hebrews 10:1–18 is almost as hard as finding the grave of Moses.

Again, many in Christendom are talking renewal and worship, whether pietistic, charismatic, or electronic. Their numbers are impressive. Now I will admit that my acquaintance with these positions is limited, but I find among them surprisingly little insistence on redemption as having to come before worship. What then about the new birth—do they not advocate that? While that term has excellent biblical credentials, it has become strangely inoffensive. No longer does John 3:3–7 clearly link with 3:14–18. The sacramentalist had the new birth at his baptism, and I fear that many others identify the

new birth with any major life decision.

By minimizing the redemptive program it is possible tragically to distort the whole message of Christianity and to replace it with a cheerful religious humanism. Some may justify that in the name of love, but such love serves only to condone a bloodless gospel and give the idea that redemption is but a noble preference. We can but grieve over such a religion; to make common cause with it would be a de facto denial of the cross.

And without the shedding of blood is no remission (Heb. 9:22).

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world (Gal. 6:14).

But do people even want the old message of redemption through the shed blood of Christ? Will they put up with preaching that lays bare human depravity? We trust that we are agreed: if they will not hear these things, nothing else can save them. It places awesome responsibility on us. We dare not offer them cheap crosses.

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Dr. Robert Delnay (Th.D., Grace Theological Seminary) was a distinguished theologian, educator, and author whose ministry spanned over seven decades. A graduate of Wheaton College, Dallas Theological Seminary, and Grace Theological Seminary, Dr. Delnay served in numerous leadership and teaching roles, including at Faith Baptist Bible College, where he was a beloved professor known for his commitment to expository preaching and biblical scholarship.

A prolific author, he wrote several books and articles, leaving a lasting legacy of theological insight and pastoral wisdom. Dr. Delnay's deep love for God's Word and his dedication to training the next generation of Christian leaders impacted countless students and ministries worldwide. He went home to be with Christ in 2023.