

Imputation and Redemption

Romans 3:23—24

Our last lesson focused on defining two very important terms used in Romans concerning our salvation. Righteousness is attributed to God, and believers are said to be righteous in God's eyes. This comes about because of justification. When God justifies us, we are declared righteous. This happens at the point of our salvation, and is irreversible. Once we are declared righteous (even though we are sinners), we will never be declared unrighteous. This is because once we have been justified by God, He will never decide to pronounce us guilty. When God justifies us, He is able to do so completely, not only for past sins, but also for all sins committed in the future. This is why Romans 8:1 states that there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. We who are in Christ will not see condemnation because our sins have been paid completely by Jesus Christ when He took our sin upon Himself (2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24), making it possible for us to be justified and declared righteous. The permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit confirms that we have been declared righteous (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13—14; 4:30).

Imputation (Romans 4:6)

It is critical to understand what imputation means in order to understand how righteousness and justification work in terms of our salvation. Paul uses this word six times in Romans 4 as he describes what God has done for us. The concept of imputation is found in Romans 3:22 from the word *upon*.

The dictionary defines *impute* as attributing or ascribing something to someone. In our case, God ascribes righteousness to all who believe on Him for their salvation. It is actually an accounting term that means to credit to one's account. It could be said that God does not look at me, He looks at His books, and according to His recordkeeping, He sees that I am righteous. This is a good thing since my status with God does not depend upon what I do or fail to do. Again, righteousness has been credited to the believer's account. Since we are unable to be righteous, and we have fallen short of God's glory, God took care of our inability and credited His righteousness to our account, to all who believe by faith.

Redemption (verse 24)

According to Romans 3:22—24, those who believe in Jesus Christ for salvation are justified, meaning they have been counted as being righteous. This was accomplished through redemption by Jesus Christ. The word redemption means to buy back. When you sell something at a pawn shop, there is a specified redemption time period in which you can go back, pay the redemption price and retrieve what you originally sold. Biblically, we become the "thing" that is bought back by Christ.

In Romans 3:24, the Greek word for redemption has the idea of paying a ransom to release a slave from bondage. We have been set free from what was binding us. According to Romans 6:6, 16—19, we were once slaves to sin, but now that we are saved, we have become slaves to righteousness. From Galatians 4:7—11 we can expand on this idea of slavery by seeing how we are now released from the bondage of the Law and are now sons and heirs. Unbelievers find it impossible to be free from sin, because they are condemned by the Law. They are not able to not sin because it is their innate nature. Freedom from sin is realized only after accepting the purchased made by God through Jesus' redemptive sacrifice, freeing us from the constraints of our sin nature. Before believing, the payment given to every sinner is death (death is what we "earn" by sinning). In contrast, upon believing, Christ's payment for our redemption from sin results in life. Since we are incapable of making this payment ourselves, it needed to be done by someone not constrained by sin. Jesus Christ was the only Person able to bridge the gap between man and God, and make the acceptable payment for our sins.

There are some set rules in place in order for redemption to happen. We can spot these rules as we read through the book of Ruth, with Boaz as a type of Jesus Christ, who is portrayed as a Kinsman-Redeemer. The first qualification is that the redeemer needed to be related. Boaz was related to Ruth, however, there was a closer kinsman who had the first right of refusal (Ruth 2:1; 3:12).

The second stipulation is that the redeemer must be able to pay the price. Boaz was wealthy and quite capable of paying the redemption price. The nearer relative was not willing to pay the price to redeem the land and pay Ruth's support (Ruth 4:6).

The third condition to be an acceptable redeemer was he must be willing. This seems obvious, and we can see this playing out between Boaz and Ruth's closer kinsman. Boaz was willing and sought to become the kinsman.

Finally, the redeemer himself must be free. Boaz was not in need of being redeemed. He was completely qualified to redeem Ruth, and the land of her family, once the closest relative released

We can connect these qualifications to Christ, since Boaz was a type of Christ. First, Christ became related to mankind by coming to earth as a human being. It would not be possible to redeem man if He did not become one of us. Second, He was the only person able to pay the price of our redemption. Those who want to pay the price for their own redemption will be attempting to do so for eternity in the Lake of Fire. Third, Jesus Christ was willing to humble Himself, and become human, so that He would later die for our sins. This plan was set out before creation, and all persons of the Godhead agreed upon this plan. Finally, Christ was the only person who was not a slave to sin, and therefore, again, was the only qualified person to make the redemption of mankind a reality.

The Bible speaks of redemption in three different tenses, past, present and future. When we were saved, God redeemed us (past tense) and we were therefore declared righteous. Galatians 3:13 says we have been redeemed from the curse of the Law.

We also stand in a state of being redeemed (present tense), according to Colossians 1:14, which states that we have redemption. It is something that happened to us in the past, and we still possess it. There is also a future sense of redemption that we will fully realize when we see Him face to face. According to Romans 8:23 we are waiting for that day of redemption, and according to Ephesians 4:30, we are sealed until the day of our redemption. We have been redeemed, we are now redeemed and we will fully realize our redemption when we are in heaven.

How amazing to think of all the things God needed to do to make it possible for us to come back in fellowship with Him. The more these terms are studied, the greater understanding we have of what God did for us. We should also see the great gulf between God and man. God is infinitely greater than any human can even imagine. We are absolutely nothing when we are held up to God's supreme glory.

In spite of this, there are many who think they are able to work hand-in-hand with Jesus Christ in obtaining their redemption. People who believe this are obviously not convinced that they are powerless to obtaining their own salvation. By thinking this, they cheapen Jesus Christ's action of bringing salvation to the world. It denigrates His work on the cross, but elevates mankind's position. This is, unfortunately, very appealing to mankind and is why we see that even leaders in solid churches are tempted to preach, teach and sing songs that appeal to the itching ears of their congregation. This is a good way to increase your attendance, but a bad way to equip people to properly serve the Lord.

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