

A BODY OF DOCTRINAL DIVINITY

BY JOHN GILL

Book 6—Of the Blessings of Grace, and the Doctrines of It

Chapter 1—OF REDEMPTION BY CHRIST

Having, in the preceding book, gone through the twofold state of Christ, his humiliation and exaltation; and considered each of the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, sustained and exercised by him therein; I shall now proceed to consider the blessings of grace, which come by him, through the exercise of them; and especially his priestly office; for he is “come an High Priest of good things to come” (Heb. 9:11), which were future, under the former dispensation, were promised, prophesied of, and prefigured in it; but not accomplished; for “the law” had only a shadow of these good things to come, (Heb. 10:1), but now they are come, and are actually obtained, through Christ's coming in the flesh; and through what he has done and suffered in it; as redemption, satisfaction, and reconciliation for sin, remission of sin, justification, adoption, &c. and as redemption stands in the first place; and is a principal and most important blessing and doctrine of grace, I shall begin with that. And,

1. First, I shall settle the meaning of the word; and show what it supposes, includes, and is designed by it. Our English word Redemption, is from the Latin tongue, and signifies, buying again; and several words in the Greek language, of the New Testament, are used in the affair of our Redemption, which signify the obtaining of something by paying a proper price for it; sometimes the simple verb αγοράζω, to “buy,” is used: so the redeemed are said to be “bought unto God” by the blood of Christ; and to be “bought” from the earth; and to be “bought” from among men; and to be “bought” with a price; that is, with the price of Christ's blood, (Rev. 5:9; 14:3, 4; 1 Cor. 6:20), hence the church of God is said to be purchased with it, (Acts 20:28). Sometimes the compound word εξαγοράζω, is used; which signifies, to buy again, or out of the hands of another; as the redeemed are bought out of the hands of justice; as in (Gal. 3:13; 4:5). In other places λυτροω, is used, or others derived from it; which signifies, the deliverance of a slave, or captive, from his thralldom, by paying a ransom price for him: so the saints are said to be redeemed, not with silver or gold, the usual price paid for a ransom; but with a far greater one, the blood and life of Christ, which he came into this world to give, as a ransom price for many; and even himself, which is αντιλυτρον, an answerable, adequate, and full price for them (1 Pet. 1:18; Matt. 20:28; 1 Tim. 2:6). There are various typical redemptions, and that are of a civil nature, which may serve to illustrate our spiritual and eternal redemption by Christ. As,

1a. The deliverances of the people of Israel out of their captivities, Egyptian and Babylonian; the latter I shall not much insist upon; since, though the Jews were exiles in Babylon, they did not appear to be in much slavery and thralldom; but built houses, planted gardens, and had many privileges; insomuch that some of them, when they might have had their liberty, chose rather to continue where they were; and though their deliverance is sometimes called a redemption, yet sparingly, and in an improper sense (Jer. 15:21), for they were redeemed without money; and Cyrus, their deliverer, neither gave nor took a price for them; and is never called a redeemer; (see Isa. 14:13; 52:3). But the deliverance of the people of Israel out of Egypt, was a very special and remarkable type of redemption by Christ, out of a worse state of bondage than that of Egypt. The Israelites were made to serve with rigor, and their lives were made bitter with hard bondage, in brick and mortar, and service in the field; and they cried to God, by reason of their bondage, it was so intolerable; and it was aggravated by the taskmasters set over them; who, by the order

of Pharaoh, obliged them to provide themselves with straw, and yet bring in the full tale of brick as before: which fitly expresses the state and condition that men are in; who, through sin, are weak and unable to fulfill the law; yet is it as regardless of want of strength, as the Egyptian taskmasters were of want of straw: it requires sinless and perfect obedience to it; and curses and condemnns such as continue not in all things to do it. The deliverance of the people of Israel, is called a redemption; God promised to rid them out of their bondage, and to “redeem” them with a stretched out arm; and when they were delivered, he is said to have led forth the people he had “redeemed:” and the bringing them out of the house of bondage, or redeeming them out of the house of bondmen, is used as an argument to engage them to regard the commandments of God (Ex. 6:6; 15:13; 20:9; Deut. 7:8). And which redemption by Christ, from sin, the law, and death, lay the redeemed under a still greater obligation to do; Moses, who was the instrument God raised up, and whom he called and sent to redeem Israel, is said to be a “deliverer,” or as it should be rendered, a “redeemer” (Acts 7:35), in which he was a type of Christ, whom God raised up, called, and sent to be a Redeemer of his spiritual Israel: and there was, in some sense, a price paid for the redemption of literal Israel; since they are expressly said to be a purchased people, bought by the Lord (Ex. 15:16; Deut. 32:6), and their deliverance was owing to blood, the blood of the Passover lamb, sprinkled on their door posts; typical of the blood of Christ, the price of our redemption. Besides, as it has been observed by some, the redemption of the people of Israel, being the Lord's people, was by virtue of their future redemption by Christ; whose sufferings and death were for the “redemption of transgressions,” or of transgressors, who were “under the first testament;” and that the temporal deliverance of none but the Lord's people, is called a redemption, not that of his and their enemies.

1b. The ransom of the people of Israel, when numbered, was typical of the ransom by Christ; which was made by paying half a shekel, called the atonement money for their souls, and which was paid alike for a rich man, as a poor man; whereby they were preserved from any plague among them (Ex. 30:12-16). None but Israelites were ransomed; and none are ransomed by Christ, but the spiritual Israel of God, whom he has chosen, Christ has redeemed, and who shall be saved with an everlasting salvation; even the whole Israel of God, Jews and Gentiles: they were a numbered people for whom the ransom was paid; and so are they that are redeemed and ransomed by Christ; whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life; who have passed under the hands of him that telleth them, and have been told into the hands of Christ; and are particularly and distinctly known by him, even by name; the sheep for whom he has laid down his life; and are a special and peculiar people. The half shekel was paid alike for rich and poor, for one neither more nor less. Christ's people, though some may be redeemed from more and greater sins than others; yet they are all redeemed from all their sins, and with the same price, the price of his blood; and which is, as the half shekel was, an atonement for their souls; by which peace and reconciliation, and full satisfaction are made for sin, so that no plague shall come nigh them; they are delivered from going down to the pit of destruction; and are saved from the second death; (see Job 33:24).

1c. The buying again of an Israelite, waxen poor, and sold to another, by any near akin to him; is a lively representation of the purchase and redemption of the Lord's poor people (Lev. 25:47-49) who, in a state of nature, are poor, and wretched, and miserable; even so as to be like beggars on the dunghill; when such was the grace of Christ, who, though rich, for their sakes became poor, that they, through his poverty might be made rich; and to such a degree, as to be raised from the dunghill and sit among princes, and inherit the throne of glory. Though some may not sell themselves to work wickedness, as Ahab did, yet all are sold under sin; for if this was the case of the apostle Paul, though regenerate, much more must it be the case of an unregenerate man; who, through sin, is brought into subjection to it, a servant of it, and a slave to it; as the poor Israelite, sold to a stranger, was a bondman to him: and such an one cannot redeem himself, being without strength, unable to fulfil the law, and to make atonement for sin; nor can any of his friends, though ever so rich, redeem him, or give to God a ransom for him; such may redeem a poor relation, or friend from a prison, by paying his pecuniary debts for him; but cannot redeem his soul from hell and destruction; may give a ransom price to man for one in slavery and bondage; but cannot give to God a ransom to deliver from wrath to come: only Christ, the near Kinsman of his people, can do this,

and has done it; he that is their “Gaol,” their near “Kinsman,” partaker of the same flesh and blood with them, is their Redeemer, who has given himself a ransom for them.

1d. The delivery of a debtor from prison, by paying his debts for him, is an emblem of deliverance and redemption by Christ: a man that is in debt, is liable to be arrested, and cast into prison, as is often the case; where he must lie till the debt is discharged, by himself or another: sins are debts; and a sinner owes more than ten thousand talents, and has nothing to pay; he cannot answer to the justice of God for one debt of a thousand; nor can he, by paying a debt of obedience he owes to God, pay off one debt of sin, or obligation to punishment; and so is liable to a prison, and is in one; is concluded under sin, under the guilt of it, which exposes him to punishment; and he is held with the cords and fetters of it; which he cannot loose himself from; and he is shut up under the law, in which he is held, until delivered and released by Christ; who, as he has engaged to pay the debts of his people, has paid them, cleared the whole score, and blotted out the hand writing that was against them; in consequence of which is proclaimed, in the gospel, liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; and in the effectual calling Christ says “to the prisoners,” “Go forth,” opening the prison doors for them; and to them that sit in darkness, in the gloomy cells of the prison, “show yourselves;” all which is done in virtue of the redemption price paid by Christ for his people.

1e. The ransoming of persons out of slavery, by paying a ransom price for them, serves to give an idea of the redemption of the Lord's people by Christ. They are in a state of slavery, out of which they cannot deliver themselves; Christ is the ransomer of them out of the hands of such that are stronger than they; his life and blood are the ransom price he has paid for them; and they are called, the ransomed of the Lord; their deliverance from present bondage, and future ruin and destruction, is in consequence of a ransom found and given; “Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom” (Job 33:24; Zech. 9:11). In which there is an allusion to a custom in the eastern countries, to put their slaves in an evening into a pit, where they are close shut up till the morning, and then taken out, to be put to their slavish employments; but not delivered, unless a sufficient ransom is given for them; and such is the blood of the covenant. Now all these views of redemption plainly point out to us the following things with respect to the redemption of the Lord's people.

1e1. That they are previous to their redemption, and which that supposes, in a state of captivity and bondage; they are sinners in Adam, and by actual transgressions; and so come into the hands of vindictive justice, offended by sin; and which will not clear the guilty without satisfaction given to it; which is made by paying a price: redemption by Christ is nothing more nor less than buying his people out of the hands of justice, in which they are held for sin; and that is with the price of his blood; which is therefore paid into the hands of justice for them: hence they are said to be redeemed, or bought unto God by his blood (Rev. 5:9). Being sinners, and offenders of the justice of God, that holds under sin; under the guilt of it, which binds over to punishment, unless delivered from it; it holds them under the sentence of the law, transgressed by them; which not only accuses of and charges with sin, but pronounces guilty, and condemns and curses: it holds them in subjection to death, even eternal death; which is the wages and just demerit of sin: the law threatened with it in case of sin; sin being committed, the sentence of death passed upon all men; all having sinned, judgment, or the judicial sentence, came upon all men to condemnation in a legal way; and sin reigned unto death in a tyrannical manner; or, in other words, man became not only deserving of wrath, but obnoxious to it; the wrath of God was revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men; and indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, come upon every soul of man, as upon the children of disobedience, unless delivered from it, through the redemption that is by Christ. In such an enthralled state are men to sin, to the justice of God, to death, and wrath to come.

1e2. That redemption by Christ is a deliverance from all this. It is a redemption from sin; from all iniquities whatever, original and actual (Ps. 130:8; Titus 2:14), from avenging justice, on account of sin; from the guilt of sin; for there is no condemnation by it to them that are interested in redemption by Christ; "Who shall condemn? it is Christ that died!" and by dying, has redeemed his people from sin, and secured them from condemnation (Rom. 8:1, 33) and in virtue of this they are delivered from the dominion of sin; for though this is done in the effectual calling, by the power of divine grace, it is in virtue of redemption by Christ, by whom sin is crucified, and the body of it destroyed; so that it shall not reign in them, or have dominion over them: one branch of redemption lies in being delivered from a vain conversation; and, ere long, the redeemed shall be delivered from the very being of sin; when their redemption, as to the application of it, will be complete; as it will be in the resurrection; when the soul will not only be among the spirits of just men made perfect; but the body will be clear of sin, mortality, and death; which is called redemption that draws near, the redemption of the body waited for, and the day of redemption (Luke 21:28; Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14; 4:30). Redemption is a deliverance from the law, from the bondage of it, and from the curse and condemnation by it; so that there shall be no more curse; and from eternal death and wrath to come: life is forfeited into the hands of justice by sin; which life is redeemed from destruction by Christ, giving his life a ransom for it; he, by redeeming his people, has delivered them from wrath to come; being justified through the redemption that is in Christ, by his blood, they are, and shall be saved, from everlasting wrath, ruin, and destruction.

1e3. That redemption by Christ is such a deliverance, as that it is setting persons quite free and at entire liberty; such who are dead to sin by Christ are freed from it, from the damning power of it, and from its dominion and tyranny; and though, not as yet, from the being of it; yet, ere long, they will be; when, with the rest of the members of the church, they will be presented glorious, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; and such are free from the law; though not from obedience to it, yet from the bondage of it; they are delivered from it, and are no longer held in it, as in a prison; but are directed and exhorted to stand fast in the liberty from it, with which Christ has made them free; and this will have its full completion on all accounts, when the saints shall be delivered from every degree of bondage into the glorious liberty of the children of God.