

Ransomed!

In Pursuit of Holiness, Part 4

1 Peter 1:18-21

Discussion Guide

Main Idea:

Consideration of Jesus Christ's sacrifice for us will create in us passionate love and service for Him.

Discussion Points:

The first thing to consider about Christ's sacrifice is that His sacrifice liberated us. We have been redeemed by His precious blood from futile life. This has huge implication both for the way we view our life and the way we use it.

- As you examine your life what is it that you truly value? We can say we value certain things but what do your actions and decisions say you value?
- What does our society value as that which should be passed down to those coming behind us? How do your actions and decisions compare or contrast to that?
- As a parent/ grandparent or mentor, in what tangible, definable ways are you passing down your inheritance and redemption in Christ to your children/grandchildren or to those under your guidance?

In Christ's sacrifice He was our perfect substitute. His sacrifice was with His own precious blood, "like that of a lamb without blemish and without spot." This statement is of great significance as it links Christ's death with the clear teaching of both Old Testament and New Testament scripture regarding atonement for sin and the redemption of His people.

- The words atonement and redemption are key words in talking about two different truths regarding Christ's sacrifice. Can you give good, theological sound definitions for these words? Where might you find good definitions for these words? Why should we be careful with how we define these concepts?
- Scripture teaches that our salvation in Christ was planned before the creation of the world. In other words, the death of Christ was planned from before the beginning. While we simply cannot grasp all of the richness of this truth, discuss some of the more obvious implications in our understanding of God and of His purposes.

Discussion Guide cont.

Jesus was revealed in what scripture refers to as the “last days” for us. That is, even though the plan for Him to die was known before the creation of the world He was made visible in these “last days” on our behalf, for our salvation.

- Scripture teaches that the devil himself and all of his demons know exactly who Christ is but that they are destined for wrath. It is not enough to know who Jesus is like the demons do, but instead it is necessary to make Him your savior. Is Christ your savior? How do you know this to be true?
- If you can answer the above question with clarity then this question follows: how are you sharing this good news regarding the salvation of Christ with others?
- Discuss as a group some strategic ways that you could impact others with the gospel both individually and as a group.

Gospel Connection:

No one is rich enough to buy their redemption from sin with earthly means. No one is righteous enough to gain their freedom through good works. In fact, we are dead in trespasses and sin and have no hope of overcoming our death. However, there is one who is rich enough and righteous enough and strong enough: His name is Jesus. By His precious blood our righteous Lamb paid our inestimable debt and conquered our death by His power in rising from the dead. We now have a new name and an eternal inheritance in Him. We have gone from a slave to sin to child of God. Live now in light of the name you have been given.

Practical Implications:

- Think:** We have a tendency to think of our redemption lightly when in fact it is of inestimable value and worth. We must rearrange our thinking to give it this place of value. It also requires practical examination. Where our treasure is there our heart will be also.
- Pray:** Confess your tendency to value earthly means and inheritance as more valuable than redemption in Christ. Ask for a passion and love for those truths pertaining to your redemption in Christ. Consider what your prayers consist of: Your prayers will reflect what you value.
- Do:** Deepen your understanding of what took place in your salvation. You cannot treasure what you do not know. We will broaden/deepen our capacity to value our salvation the better we understand it. Ask a pastor for some good reading material regarding what took place in salvation. Do this reading with someone else and set up some times to discuss what you are learning. This will be of great spiritual benefit to you.

Ransomed!

In Pursuit of Holiness, Part 4

1 Peter 1:18-21

Thank you for your prayers as Marsha and I traveled to the country of Chile. We held a Saturday evening Bible conference for listeners to our Spanish broadcasts. This was the first conference organized by our daughter Candace and her husband Cristian – who live in Santiago. It was especially thrilling to listen last Sunday, online, to Benjamin preach. We were all gathered around the laptop in our hotel room in Vina del Mar, and that was quite a unique experience. Tonight at the Vision Meeting, you're invited to join Benjamin and Caroline as their church planting vision takes shape. I'll share briefly as well some of the plans we're making to establish both a Missions Sending Agency, directed by our Mobilization Office, led by Rob Provost and Steve Stadtmiller – and also the creation of The Shepherds Network – this will be an exciting partnership between Colonial and Shepherds Seminary with the near term goal of planting 20 churches by the year 2020. More on that tonight.

Take your Bibles and turn to 1 Peter. And while you're turning, let me tell you about two different men in the early 1900's; it'll take me a few minutes, but I think it'll set the stage for our text this morning.

In the early 1900's, Al Capone ran the largest crime syndicate in Chicago. He controlled everything from alcohol to prostitution to cocaine. Eventually he would serve 11 years in prison – not for the more than 30 murders he arranged – which they couldn't pin on him – but for tax evasion.

After serving 11 years in prison, he was released in poor health – suffering primarily from dementia brought on by advanced syphilis and he soon died at the age of 48.

The lesser known story of Capone's reign of terror was a lawyer who worked for him. His name was Edgar and he was nicknamed by the mob, "Fast Eddie". His skill at legal maneuvering not only helped Capone set up and manage illegal business enterprises, but he kept Al Capone out of jail.

Even though Edgar and his family became unbelievably wealthy – in fact their personal estate actually took up an entire block of Chicago real-

estate; even though he was wealthy beyond words – he wasn't able to do one thing that would come to matter most to him – to pass on to his son, a good name.

I have read conflicting reports on what exactly caused Edgar to shock the world in 1931, but one thing is clear – he not only cleared his name and association from Al Capone – and he cleared the path for his family name, and his son.

With his help offered to authorities, Edgar provided the information that brought justice to Al Capone. And when Edgar testified against him, he knew that the cost would be great.

Sure enough, a few years later while Al Capone was in prison, Edgar was ambushed and killed by the Mob.

Fast-forward the tape some 10 years later, World War II was focusing on the South Pacific and one particular navy fighter pilot was Butch O'Hare.

On one particular mission, his entire squadron was sent on a mission but once airborne, Butch realized that his plane had been overlooked by the tank crew and he didn't have enough fuel to fly the mission and make it back to the air craft carrier. His flight leader told him to return immediately and as he dropped out of formation and flew back, he encountered a most shocking sight. It was a squadron of heavy, enemy bombers flying toward his fleet.

Since the other American fighter pilots were gone, the fleet was all but defenseless. There wasn't any time to do but one thing – engage them in battle.

He literally dove into the formation of Japanese bombers and his wing-mounted guns blazed away. As Butch wove in and out, firing at as many planes as possible, he broke their formation and frustrated their attack. Even after his ammunition was spent, he continued diving at the bombers, trying to clip a wing or tail until finally, exasperated, the squadron turned and flew away.

When Butch landed on board, the film from his wing-mounted camera told the heroic tale and in a matter of days, Butch became the first flying ace of World War II and he also became the first naval

aviator to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor.

A year later, his plane was shot down during a night-time mission and was never found. He was 29 years of age.

His hometown wasn't about to allow the memory of their favorite son to fade – and they renamed the Orchard Depot Airport, the O'Hare International Airport – in honor of him.

What do Fast Eddie and Butch O'Hare have to do with each other?

Fast Eddie was Edgar O'Hare – and his son, Edward "Butch" O'Hare was his son; a son who had been given a clean name and a chance to serve his country with honor.

The next time you fly into Chicago's O'Hare airport, you find a replica of his fighter plane and the details of his story.

Butch O'Hare didn't serve with bravery so he could earn his father's good name, but because his father had given it to him – at great cost.

Now I don't want to draw too tightly an analogy between Fast Eddie and the Lord – even though you already know that's where I'm going with this.

The Lord didn't have a criminal past or a stained family name to clean up. The Lord didn't need to do some good things in order to make up for a lot of bad things . . . but He did make a sacrifice in order to give you and me the opportunity to serve Him with honor and holy passion.

In fact, the more we consider and reflect on and contemplate what Jesus Christ sacrificed in order to give us our clean name, the more we'll be passionate in our love and service for Him.

And that's exactly the point, the Apostle Peter is about to make. In fact, what Peter is about to do here is give us four ways of looking at Jesus – four compelling ways which will bring us to a great sense of gratitude for His sacrifice but also a greater sense of holy desire to love Him and walk with Him and thank Him for His costly gift.

Before we get to the first way we ought to look at Jesus, Peter tells his original readers notice in *chapter 1 and verse 18*, the first word – **knowing**, or it could be rendered, "*For you know*".

This was normal Greek formula used to introduce a well-known fact.ⁱ

If Peter were writing today, he could put it this way – Now I know you already know all this, but I want to remind you of it for your benefit and encouragement.

A Puritan by the name of Robert Leighton wrote a commentary in the late 1600's on I Peter; and he added this paraphrase on Peter's opening word here – he paraphrases it this way, "You know this already, but I want you to know it better, more deeply and more personally. Turn it over frequently in your mind, and study it and meditate on it more. It is . . . so deep that you will never fathom it; it is so useful that you will always benefit from it."ⁱⁱ

And what exactly are these deep and beneficial truths? Four different ways to look at our Lord; and the first way that Peter describes our Lord is – first of all – as:

1. Our Liberator

Let's back up to *verse 17*, which we studied at length in our last discussion – let's read it again and get a running start; ***If (since) you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work/service, conduct yourselves in fear during your stay on earth.***

Now let's pick up where we left off – *verse 18*. ***Knowing (you know this already, but let's remember it together) knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold . . .*** In other words, the One you're reverencing with holy fear or holy awe, in light of the coming Bema seat of Christ where we will be rewarded for serving him – and by the way, He'll reward us with things far greater than Congressional Medals of Honor – but in the meantime, Peter reminds us all – remember that you were **redeemed**.

The verb **redeem** here was used in Peter's day for the ransoming of prisoners of war – or the price paid to free slaves.ⁱⁱⁱ

But Peter makes it clear that we were not redeemed with **perishable things like silver or gold**. That won't do. All the money in the world will not be sufficient to purchase one person out of spiritual bondage and slavery to sin and death.

Gold and silver is as worthless as scrap metal compared to the price of an eternal human soul.^{iv} It's going to take something far more valuable than gold and silver to break off the chains, and open the prison door, and redeem the sinner out of darkness into a marvelous light.^v

Now we tend to think of gold and silver as imperishable – I mean, we pass down gold and silver from one generation to another – but Peter isn't evaluating your redemption against 60-70-80 years

of market value. He's evaluating your redemption in light of eternity.^{vi}

And in light of eternity, gold and silver are incidental. Gold will be so common that God will pave the streets with it in Heaven.

And the implication here is . . . so don't live for something – and dream about something – and pursue something that one day in Heaven you're going to walk on.

Now, if we turn Peter's words into a positive statement – you could read him to mean that the believer has been redeemed, not by perishable things, but the believer has also been redeemed from futile efforts.

Notice, the last part of *verse 18, from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers.*

The word *futile* refers to worthless attitudes or commitments or goals. Peter says here, you inherited all those empty, vain attempts – as if to imply – none of it will ever bring about redemption, or forgiveness.

Paul describes the unbeliever in Romans 1 as *knowing about God but not giving Him glory or giving Him thanks, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened (Romans 1:21).*

Paul encouraged the believers living in Ephesus to *no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking (Ephesians 4:17).*

In other words, the unbelieving human race spends its energy and passion chasing after empty, meaningless goals that will have no significance when measured against their eternity destiny.

Jesus Christ said, *What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? (Matthew 16:26)*

Life matters on earth only when your eternal life is settled in Christ.

Don't pursue the inheritance of an empty life without Christ. By the way, before we leave this verse, what is it that you – Mom and Dad, Grandpa and Grandma – are passing down to your children and grandchildren? What are they inheriting from you?

Gold and silver? Nothing wrong with that – you can put me in your will too. But is that all?

What are you passing down to the next generation? Have you told them – and lived out for them – and made it your priority to communicate to them – the gospel?

- Do they know Jesus Christ matters to you?

- Do you they really know the Bible matters to you?
- Have they picked up on the fact that God's approval matters more than man's approval?

Unfortunately, many parents inside the evangelical church seem to be more interested in raising their standard of living than in raising children, as we say here at Colonial's Children's Ministries – to know God, think biblically and live wisely.

So what matters most? Good grades and a good college and a good job and a good career and a good car and a good house and good health and a good savings account.

Those are good things – but without Jesus Christ – they are a futile inheritance – empty and temporary . . . as one man wrote – you are merely teaching your children to follow you in climbing a ladder that's leaning against the wrong wall.

I read this past week of a London newspaper offering a prize for the best definition of money. They prize-winning definition was this – “Money is the universal passport for everywhere except Heaven, and the universal provider for everything except happiness.”^{vii}

Have you been liberated from that futile way of living? Do you know Jesus Christ as your Liberator?

Now Peter goes on to show us Jesus Christ, not only as our Liberator, but as:

2. Our Substitute

Verse 18 again; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers (now notice) 19. But with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ

We were ransomed – you could translate it; and the payment price wasn't gold or silver – it was blood.

Why blood? Because from the very beginning, God recorded through Moses these words, *The life of the creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life (Leviticus 17:11).*

The entire sacrificial system which began just outside the Garden of Eden after the Fall of Adam and Eve – at the beginning of human history, and

human redemption – was the bloodshed of an innocent animal, for the atoning of guilt and sin.

Notice how Peter writes here that Jesus was like that ***unblemished and spotless lamb***.

In other words, the ultimate and final sacrifice for sin was the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And His ***precious*** – that is, costly – ***blood*** was shed for our atonement.

Peter is drawing from two Old Testament passages here. From ***Exodus 12*** and the freedom from slavery as the Israelites were instructed to kill a lamb and take some of its blood and paint it on their doorposts. And those who did were ransomed - rescued – passed over by the death angel who came that night to judge the land, slaying the first-born sons of the Egyptians

Peter also draws from ***Isaiah 53*** and the Messianic prophecy of a suffering Servant, who goes to His death like a silent lamb and whose sufferings bring salvation.

Imagine then the stunning significance of John the Baptizing Old Testament prophet who sees Jesus approaching and cries out, ***“Behold – Look – the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”*** (***John 1:29***)

And Peter adds – He was truly ***unblemished and spotless***. In other words, he was perfect inside and out; which qualified Him as our full and final sacrifice.

Jesus Christ is our perfect Substitute – dying in our place – paying the penalty of our crimes – which we could never do – because we are not unblemished, we are not spotless. But He was!

Jesus died a death we could not die – In order to pay a debt we could not pay.^{viii}

He shed his own precious blood. By the way, let me tie two verses together, for the next time someone comes to your doorstep and wants to introduce you to God in a way that denies the co-equal deity of Jesus Christ, God the Son with God the Father.

Write into the margin of your Bibles the text ***Acts 20:28***. Then either turn to ***Acts 20*** and look at ***verse 28*** or just listen to this moment when Paul is saying farewell to the elder team that shepherded the church in Ephesus. Paul says to them, ***Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.***

To talk about the blood of Christ is to talk about the blood of God.

It was God the Son who took on physicality and blood so that He could die physically and shed blood – but He, equally and eternally Divine, is worthy of being called – God.

The shedding of the blood of Jesus was the shedding of the blood of God, the Son.

To talk about Jesus is to talk about our God.

And by the way, this sacrifice was not only accomplished by God the Son, but God the Spirit and God the Father were all involved in the plan.

Notice how Peter slips in that phrase at the beginning of ***verse 20***. ***For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world.***

In other words, just as God chose the redeemed from eternity past – ***chapter 1 and verse 2*** – the elect were ***chosen according to the foreknowledge of God*** – so also here in ***verse 20***, the death of Christ on the cross was according to the foreknowledge of God; it was part of the plan of our Triune God from eternity past.

In other words, the crucifixion wasn't an afterthought. It wasn't plan B. It wasn't a last-minute fix.^{ix}

Oh my, look at what Adam and Eve just did – now what are we going to do? No . . . the sacrifice of Jesus was part of God's plan from eternity past.

Which means, the crucifixion wasn't just foreseen by the Triune God, it was arranged.^x

Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, and at the creation of the New Testament church, reminded his vast audience that although wicked men and the nation of Israel had rejected Christ and had nailed Him to a cross, but – Peter says – ***He was delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23).***

Let's go a little deeper . . . this also means that even though we think of everything beginning with creation - we think of God ***first*** as Creator, and then because of the Fall of man, we think of Him ***next*** as Redeemer.^{xi}

Oh no . . . before you were born; in fact, before the worlds were ever created, Jesus Christ had already decided to die for you. Becoming your Substitute on a cross wasn't Plan B . . . it was Plan A. His death was not an accident . . . it was an appointment.^{xii}

People ask me, “Stephen, why did God create Satan when He knew the trouble he'd make and the evil he would do?” Let me ask a broader, more

sweeping question in response – “Why did God create you . . . and me . . . knowing the sin we’d do and the trouble we’d make – and in order to redeem us from our sin, His Son would die.

That’s the greater question. Listen, Jesus didn’t have to die for Satan and all the fallen demons; He didn’t have to die for them. But He did have to die – for you and me. And He planned it, in eternity past.

John MacArthur adds in his commentary on this text the words of Thomas Watson, another great Puritan pastor and author; Watson wrote, Great was the work of creation, but greater the work of redemption; it cost more to redeem us than to [create] us; in the one there was but the speaking of a Word, in the other, the shedding of blood.^{xiii}

Jesus is shown here as our Liberator; as our Substitute and now thirdly, as:

3. Our Savior

Notice the latter part of verse 20. but [He] has appeared in these last times for the sake of you, 21. who through Him are believers in God.

He has appeared in these last times – that participle can be rendered – *to become visible*. It indicates that moment in history when God the Son appeared on earth in the form of a baby.^{xiv}

And he appeared in these last times – this is a reference to that period of time marked by His first coming and ending with His second coming.

We’re about to celebrate as a church family, this Christmas season, the beginning of the last times – the beginning of the last era in human history.

- Paul calls this period in human history ***the last days (2 Timothy 3:1)***
- The writer to the Hebrews refers to it – ***in these last days – Hebrews 1:2;***
- John the Apostle calls it ***the last hour in 1 John 2:18.***

Imagine, in the planning and providence of God – you happen to be living in the final days of human history . . . the last days . . . the last hour.

And if John the Apostle thought it was the last hour – nearly 2,000 years ago – imagine how many minutes must be left?!

But notice the personalization of the gospel of Christ – Peter writes, He didn’t just appear for no reason at all – notice – ***[this is] for the sake of you. For you!***

And keep in mind that it isn’t enough to believe that Jesus died on a cross – that Jesus is the Son of

God. The Devil believes that too! He was there and he saw it happen. But he could never say, “Jesus died for me.”

The question is, Is Jesus your liberator? Is He your substitute? Is He your Savior?

In one of my recent appointments with people going through our GreenHouse new members class, was a couple – and the woman related to me that moment when she was born again – that moment when she understood what she had heard all her life.

She said a man was preaching and he had everyone turn to ***John 3:16***, was a couple – and the woman related to me that moment when she was born again – that moment when she understood what she had heard all her life. She said this man encouraged everyone to turn to ***John 3:16***. And he said, “It’s one thing to believe that God sent His Son to die for the world – but what I want you to do is write your name in the margin of that verse. Which Peter would appreciate I believe.

It isn’t to be understood simply as ***For God so loved the world*** – but that God so loved Susan . . . or Cindy or John.

I would say it this way: For God so loved Stephen that He gave His only begotten Son, that if Stephen believes in/personally trusts in Him, Stephen will not perish, but he will have everlasting life.

This is the amazing, personal offer of the gospel to lost sinners, which must be personalized in the heart of faith toward the God of grace.

Paul would write his own testimony this way in ***Galatians 2:20 – “and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.”***

Now notice further, ***Who through Him are believers in God.***

This is the personal and yet very exclusive claim of Christianity. Who ***through Him*** – not through anyone else, but through Him – they become ***believers in God.***

You say, “I don’t like that . . . I’m going to get into heaven by my own way . . . my own plan . . . my own efforts . . . my own will!”

C.S. Lewis wrote in the mid-1900’s, “There are two kinds of people; those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, ‘All right, then, have it your way.’”

You must have a liberator . . . a substitute . . . a Savior.

And you must also have, fourth and finally, the Lord who is pictured by Peter as:

4. Our Victor

21b. Who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Christ's resurrection is the exclamation point of redemption. He has succeeded . . . He has won!

Paul writes that we in Christ are overwhelmingly conquerors! And He was received back *into glory*, Peter writes. Imagine that homecoming!

And so – as a result of Christ being victorious and the work of redemption being completed – Peter writes, notice the end of *verse 21, your faith and hope* – notice, *your faith and hope* are in your best efforts. No. *Your faith and hope* are in how strong you feel in your faith and your hope. Oh no. *Your faith and hope are in God.*

Your faith is not in your faith – your hope is not in your how well you're doing. Were you with me in these preceding verses?

- There isn't any way you can buy your way out of slavery – you're stuck.
- There isn't anything you can offer from your own futile efforts to redeem yourself – you're too poor. And even if you're wealthy by human standards, when compared to eternity, all you have in your bank account at the moment is a bunch of asphalt – pavement for the streets of Heaven.
- There isn't any way you can offer to redeem yourself.
- There isn't anything you can say or do that will clear your name and un-stain your family record – your crimes are too great . . . your sins are too many.

Unless someone takes your place . . . unless someone takes your crimes . . . and pays for them . . . and then rises in victory to His glory, and promises – Oh and by the way, *I am going to prepare a place for you (John 14:2).*

Your Liberator; your Substitute, your Savior, your Victor came to clean up your name . . . and give you the opportunity to live a life for His glory . . . and when this last age is over, He will open for you the gates of Heaven.

How? You have by faith and personal trust, been redeemed by the precious blood – the bloody death – of Christ.

I close with this: Ravi Zacharias recounted the events of November 26, 2008, when a gang of terrorists stormed the Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai, India. After the carnage had left 200 people dead, a reporter interviewed a guest who had been at the hotel for dinner that night.

The guest described how he and his friends were eating dinner when they heard gunshots. Someone grabbed him and pulled him under the table. The assassins came striding through the restaurant, shooting at will, until everyone (or so they thought) had been killed.

Miraculously, this man survived. When the interviewer asked the guest how he lived when everyone else at his table had been killed, he replied, "I suppose because I was covered in someone else's blood, and they thought I was dead."

Ravi went on to write, this is the perfect metaphor of God's gift through Jesus Christ to each one of us. Because he paid the penalty for our sin—because we are covered in the blood of his sacrifice—we may have eternal life.^{xv}

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 12/04/2016 by Stephen Davey.

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