

**HIGHER GROUND:
FREE AT LAST
Ephesians 1:7-8a**

The words of Martin Luther King, Jr. in the civil rights movement August 28, 1963 have served as a catalyst for many movements. The freeing of 52 American hostages who had been held for one year by the Ayatollah Khomeini on January 20, 1981 buoyed the spirits of a restless and hopeful nation. Around the world, despots, tyrants, and lunatics take people hostage and subject them to inhumane treatment to accomplish their purposes. Young men and women are being taken daily and pressed into servitude as slaves in a degrading and destructive sex trade.

We know about hostages, political prisoners, and slaves. What we fail to understand is the powerful correlation between our fallen human nature and slavery/bondage.

I. THE VALUE OF REDEMPTION

A. Paul lived with a keen awareness of the value of his redemption. ⁷ *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace* ⁸ *which He lavished on us.* Repeatedly, he referenced the cost paid to reclaim our lives from the bondage of sin.

1. ²⁰ *For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.* 1 Corinthians 6:20 (NASB95)
2. ¹⁸ *Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,* ¹⁹ *but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.* 1 Peter 1:18–19 (NASB95)
3. Israel, God's elect people, was described as a redeemed people. God led them from Egyptian slavery and Babylonian captivity to continue his purposes in them.

- B. Paul was clear that the redemption of the believer was accomplished through the blood of Jesus Christ. Christ's role as redeemer is rooted in the Exodus account of the God's deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery. There was no deliverance apart from the blood of the lamb being smeared over the doorposts of the Israelites' homes. They had been obedient and they had offered the prescribed price/offering. The Old Testament sacrificial system was a constant reminder that the forgiveness of sin required a price to be paid. ²² *And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.* Hebrews 9:22 (NASB95) Jesus Christ's death on the cross of Calvary is the final and ultimate sacrifice for the sins of mankind.
- C. Our salvation is not cheap. We cannot reduce it to a walk down the aisle or a membership transaction. Our salvation is rooted in the fact that Jesus Christ took our place on Calvary to accomplish our redemption.

II. THE FREEDOM IN FORGIVENESS

- A. Paul expanded on the idea of redemption by using the language of forgiveness. ⁷ *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace* ⁸ *which He lavished on us.* Ephesians 1:7-8 (NASB95) Forgiveness carries with it the idea of release or being let go. In Leviticus 16, God gave the instruction for the sacrifice of two goats on the Day of Atonement. One of the animals was offered as a blood sacrifice. The other was a physical reminder of the sins of the people being taken away (released or sent away into the wilderness as the scapegoat). The need for release points out the binding nature of sin.
- B. To be a slave is to be under someone or something else's control. To be a slave to sin is to be under its

control. Sin is the destructive exercise of self-will against God's will. It cries out, "I will get what I want no matter what it costs me." It rationalizes and justifies sin because it satisfies a selfish desire.

1. It's no one else's business.
 2. I'm not hurting anyone else.
 3. I deserve to be happy.
 4. There are a lot worse people than me in this world/church.
- C. Forgiveness through the sacrifice of Christ cancels our debt of sin and puts us in right relationship with God. We are freed from the bondage of sin and to life in Christ. We are liberated from the destructive choices motivated by selfish interests to the abundant life in Jesus Christ. We are able to see beyond our own belly buttons and become aware of the people and opportunities around us. From selfish consumption to self-giving love, we are transformed into a new creation.

III. THE LAVISHNESS OF GRACE

- A. Paul answered the question, "How could this be?" ⁷ *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace* ⁸ *which He lavished on us.* Ephesians 1:7-8 (NASB95) Our redemption/forgiveness is in direct relation to the grace of God. God chose to lavish his grace on us.
- B. Our redemption/forgiveness is an expression of the character of God. His grace is his character. He has been willing to pour out his grace on us so that we might experience his love and forgiveness.