

## Romans 3 v24 The Cost of our Salvation

### Introduction

In some of the songs we sing in Church we refer to Jesus as our ‘redeemer’ and this obviously links directly with the description of one aspect of His death for us *through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus* (Romans 3:24b). for example, Charles Wesley wrote: ‘O for a thousands tongues to sing my great **Redeemer**’s praise... (CMP496)’ and ‘All praise to our **redeeming** Lord (C.M.P.19); ‘All hail, **Redeemer** hail For Thou hast died for me...’ (Matthew Bridges, Crown Him with many crowns -C.M.P.109; ‘All glory laud and honour to Thee **Redeemer** King’ (Theophilus of Orleans, C.M.P.9); or Keith Green’s classic, ‘There is a **redeemer**, Jesus God’s own Son...’ (C.M.P.673); these are just a few examples from the songs we sing, many more could be cited. The well-known American Presbyterian theologian of the Nineteenth century from Princeton Theological Seminary, Benjamin Warfield, in his chapel sermon ‘Redeemer and Redemption’ made the point to his students by quoting twenty eight examples in succession from the college hymnbook and followed it up with a further twenty five examples of ‘**ransom**’ and ‘**ransomed**’ which have virtually the same meaning in the Bible to ‘redeem’ and ‘redeemed’ (B.B. Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ*, pp. 325-348). Why did he take this unusual step in that sermon? He wished to emphasise how precious to us as followers of Jesus is this description of what the Lord Jesus did for us in dying in our place. Almost all the theological terms used in the Bible were used in everyday conversation by the general public. The language of ‘redemption’ came from the marketplace and commercial transactions, in contrast to the language of ‘justification which was a familiar term in the Roman law courts. It was a very familiar term to businessmen and women of that day so quickly they could grasp what the apostle was meaning by his use of this expression to describe the death of Jesus as an act of *redemption*. In secular Greek culture the standard meaning referred ‘to a process involving release by payment of a ransom price’ (L.L. Morris, *Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, pp.12-13). A ransom could be exceedingly costly as many families have found out in Iraq and Syria where kidnapping for ransom is a standard approach to fundraising for many of the brutal gangsters and terrorists that have proliferated in those countries in recent years. What must always be borne in mind is the assumption of the costliness of an act of redemption in New Testament times. It is never something that a person could pay for out of their ‘small change’; it made a serious dent in their bank balance or might require a major loan from family or friends. In the most serious cases of all it could involve the loss of life to save someone, as was the essence of the film *Saving Private Ryan* where other military personnel gave their lives to rescue this ordinary man. It is important to consider the biblical truth conveyed by this statement of Paul when he wrote: *through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus* (Romans 3:24b) we are saved.

### 1. The Old Testament understanding of redemption

This term was very familiar to Jewish people from the Old Testament.

(a)**Individual redemption** (i)**Property** In Israel God’s intention for the nation had been that each person should be able to retain a place to stay and sufficient land to grow the food needed to survive. However, through a variety of reasons a person might lose their land or house. Sometimes they would be in a position to redeem it themselves; on other occasions a close relative would be offered the chance to purchase the possession to keep it in the family. Leviticus 25:25-28:<sup>25</sup> ‘‘If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells some of their property, their nearest relative is to come and redeem what they have sold. <sup>26</sup>If, however, there is no one to redeem it for them but later on they prosper and acquire sufficient means to redeem it themselves, <sup>27</sup>they are to determine the value for the years since they sold it and refund the balance to the one to

whom they sold it; they can then go back to their own property.<sup>28</sup> But if they do not acquire the means to repay, what was sold will remain in the possession of the buyer until the Year of Jubilee. It will be returned in the Jubilee, and they can then go back to their property. This was an absolute rule in rural society, but not within a walled city where access to available properties and food supplies was potentially greater (Leviticus 25:29-34). A good example of this principle is found in Jeremiah 32:6-12: *Jeremiah said, 'The word of the Lord came to me: <sup>7</sup>Hanamel son of Shallum your uncle is going to come to you and say, "Buy my field at Anathoth, because as nearest relative it is your right and duty to buy it."<sup>8</sup> Then, just as the Lord had said, my cousin Hanamel came to me in the courtyard of the guard and said, "Buy my field at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. Since it is your right to redeem it and possess it, buy it for yourself."<sup>9</sup> I knew that this was the word of the Lord; <sup>9</sup> so I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel and weighed out for him seventeen shekels of silver. <sup>10</sup> I signed and sealed the deed, had it witnessed, and weighed out the silver on the scales. <sup>11</sup> I took the deed of purchase – the sealed copy containing the terms and conditions, as well as the unsealed copy – <sup>12</sup> and I gave this deed to Baruch son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, in the presence of my cousin Hanamel and of the witnesses who had signed the deed and of all the Jews sitting in the courtyard of the guard.* This was an extraordinary transaction. The country was under occupation. Jeremiah in a besieged city was in the equivalent of an open prison. The land in question he would probably never visit nor gain any benefit from. So why did he buy it? Quite simply because of his message of a *hope and a future* (Jeremiah 29:11) for the nation in the land at a future point in time; It was a declaration that God has a future for His people in the land He had given to them through Abraham. The principle of redemption remained valid. (ii) Animals The principle is set out in Numbers 18:14-16: <sup>14</sup> *'Everything in Israel that is devoted to the Lord is yours. <sup>15</sup> The first offspring of every womb, both human and animal, that is offered to the Lord is yours. But you must redeem every firstborn son and every firstborn male of unclean animals. <sup>16</sup> When they are a month old, you must redeem them at the redemption price set at five shekels of silver, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs.* What was God teaching the Israelites here? Life is precious and valuable. The fact that you had to pay to 'redeem' the first born males (representing the later offspring as well) was a clear reminder that you didn't have automatic ownership of an animal or a baby in the womb –it belongs to God but entrusted to us for responsible care. The principle of the need for redemption of a life was at the heart of Israelite society. (iii) People There were a range of circumstances during which a person needed to be redeemed or ransomed. For example, when a national population census was carried out; Exodus 30:11-12: *Then the Lord said to Moses, <sup>12</sup> 'When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each one must pay the Lord a ransom for his life at the time he is counted.* The exodus from Egypt was central to the identity of the Israelite nation. After God's gracious protection on the firstborn in the houses covered by lamb's blood on the doorposts (Exodus 12:13), when the Passover feast was instituted in Egypt, the principle of the redemption of the firstborn son born in a family as well as the first born of the livestock was instituted (Exodus 13:12-13; Leviticus 3:13, 40-51). The principle of redemption also applied to an owner's duty of care to his neighbours with respect to controlling the animals he owned. For example, if a person owned a bull that had behaved in a dangerous fashion and did not take steps to minimise the risk to other people then should injury or death result from an attack by the bull then they would be personally liable to compensate the victim of the assault. In the case of a bull killing a person, the following penalty applied to that animal's owner. Exodus 21:29-32 states: <sup>29</sup> *If, however, the bull has had the habit of goring and the owner has been warned but has not kept it penned up and it kills a man or woman, the bull is to be stoned and its owner also is to be put to death. <sup>30</sup> However, if payment is demanded, **the owner may redeem his life by the payment of whatever is demanded.** <sup>31</sup> This law also applies if the bull gores a son or a daughter. <sup>32</sup> If the bull gores a male or female slave, the owner must pay thirty shekels of silver to the master of the slave, and the bull is to be stoned to death.* The sum in question might have been up to the equivalent of a mortgage on a house purchase today. Redemption was costly and anything but a trivial matter. It was, therefore, not difficult for a woman or man familiar with

the Old Testament to understand what Jesus did in dying for us. He not only freed us from the power of sin, but also redeemed us from death itself, the punishment for sin. This principle was explained so clearly and powerfully in Ezekiel 18 (Ezekiel 18:4: *The soul who sins is the one who will die.*). A final example here related to the extreme situation where an Israelite in extreme circumstances sold himself into slavery to pay off his debts. Leviticus 25:47-55 explains in detail how that person can be redeemed and how important it is that the option for redemption is always available in such circumstances. <sup>47</sup> “If a foreigner residing among you becomes rich and any of your fellow Israelites become poor and sell themselves to the foreigner or to a member of the foreigner’s clan, <sup>48</sup> they retain the right of redemption after they have sold themselves. One of their relatives may redeem them: <sup>49</sup> an uncle or a cousin or any blood-relative in their clan may redeem them. Or if they prosper, they may redeem themselves. <sup>50</sup> They and their buyer are to count the time from the year they sold themselves up to the Year of Jubilee. The price for their release is to be based on the rate paid to a hired worker for that number of years. <sup>51</sup> If many years remain, they must pay for their redemption a larger share of the price paid for them. <sup>52</sup> If only a few years remain until the Year of Jubilee, they are to compute that and pay for their redemption accordingly. <sup>53</sup> They are to be treated as workers hired from year to year; you must see to it that those to whom they owe service do not rule over them ruthlessly. <sup>54</sup> “Even if someone is not redeemed in any of these ways, they and their children are to be released in the Year of Jubilee, <sup>55</sup> **for the Israelites belong to Me as servants. They are My servants, whom I brought out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.** The reason is clearly given in Leviticus 25:55 –we belong to God. No human being has absolute rights or control over the life of another.

(b) **Collective or national redemption** This is clearly a less prominent theme in the Old Testament but the all pervasive nature of individual redemption in that society ensured that it was clearly understood in this way as well. There are two examples of collective or national redemption. The most obvious one was the exodus from slavery in Egypt. God told Moses these words to pass on to the Israelites, in Exodus 6:6: ‘*Therefore, say to the Israelites: “I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.*’ This vocabulary was repeated in Deuteronomy 7:7-8 when Moses recounted God’s goodness to the nation. It was also used in Deuteronomy 15:15 when God was stressing what we might call ‘the human rights’ of all people to be treated fairly and with dignity. *Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you. That is why I give you this command today.* It was a familiar concept to King David as this extract from one of his prayers reveals in II Samuel 7:22-23: <sup>22</sup> ‘*How great You are, Sovereign Lord! There is no one like You, and there is no God but You, as we have heard with our own ears.*’ <sup>23</sup> *And who is like Your people Israel – the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for Himself, and to make a name for Himself, and to perform great and awesome wonders by driving out nations and their gods from before Your people, whom You redeemed from Egypt?* The other example of similar national significance is the restoration of the nation after exile in Babylon (Iraq). Isaiah 43:1-4 is a very familiar passage to us and at its heart is the language of redemption. *But now, this is what the Lord says – He who created you, Jacob, He who formed you, Israel: ‘Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.’<sup>2</sup> When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.<sup>3</sup> For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead.<sup>4</sup> Since you are precious and honoured in my sight, and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life.* This was familiar language for individual redemption, but just as clearly expressed here with respect to the nation of Israel. It was also an inspiration for their praises. For example, Isaiah 48:20: *Leave Babylon, flee from the Babylonians! Announce this with shouts of joy and proclaim it. Send it out to the ends of the earth; say, ‘The Lord has redeemed His servant Jacob.’* Or Isaiah 51:11: *The ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness*

*and joy will overtake them and sorrow and sighing will flee away.* Two songs in Mission Praise (CMP 685 Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return & CMP 249 How lovely on the mountains see v3 ‘Waste places of Jerusalem break forth with joy, we are redeemed, redeemed...’) are based on this passage of Scripture. In similar vein in his magnificent message of hope in Jeremiah 31 the prophet declares to the exiles in Babylon: ‘*He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over His flock like a shepherd.*’<sup>11</sup> **For the Lord will ransom Jacob and redeem them from the hand of those stronger than they.**<sup>12</sup> *They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion; they will rejoice in the bounty of the Lord* (Jeremiah 31:10b-12a). A people familiar with this history of God’s saving purposes for Israel would have no difficulty in grasping what Paul meant when he referred to our salvation being procured *through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus* (Romans 3:24b).

## **2. An Old Testament illustration of redemption** (Ruth 4:1-12)

*Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat down there just as the guardian-redeemer he had mentioned came along. Boaz said, ‘Come over here, my friend, and sit down.’ So he went over and sat down.*<sup>2</sup> *Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, ‘Sit here,’ and they did so.*<sup>3</sup> *Then he said to the guardian-redeemer, ‘Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our relative Elimelek.*<sup>4</sup> *I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line.’ ‘I will redeem it,’ he said.*<sup>5</sup> *Then Boaz said, ‘On the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the dead man’s widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property.’*<sup>6</sup> *At this, the guardian-redeemer said, ‘Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it.’*<sup>7</sup> *(Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalising transactions in Israel.)*<sup>8</sup> *So the guardian-redeemer said to Boaz, ‘Buy it yourself.’ And he removed his sandal.*<sup>9</sup> *Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, ‘Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelek, Kilion and Mahlon.*<sup>10</sup> *I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon’s widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from his home town. Today you are witnesses!’*<sup>11</sup> *Then the elders and all the people at the gate said, ‘We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the family of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem.*<sup>12</sup> *Through the offspring the Lord gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah’* (Ruth 4:1-12). The principle of a kinsman (guardian) –redeemer illustrated in what Boaz did for Ruth and for the family of his close relative Elimelek. To carry out this role: first, a person had to be a close relative not a stranger. Second, they had to be willing to undertake the role; no-one was compelled to serve in this capacity. Third, the potential redeemer had to pay the ransom price and thus required sufficient means to cover this cost. A relative closer than Boaz was willing to serve as a redeemer but did not have the means to do so –only Boaz was both willing and able to serve in this way. In a much greater way the Lord Jesus Christ was the only one who was both willing and able to redeem His people from their sins by the shedding of His precious blood on the cross (I Peter 1:18-19).

## **3. New Testament teaching on redemption**

In the New Testament the emphasis is on our moral plight from which we need to be rescued. In this context, Jesus’ words from Mark 10:45 are foundational: *For even the Son of Man did*

*not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.*’ This substitutionary death in the place of sinners was the only way humanity could be redeemed. Paul echoes Jesus’ words in I Timothy 2:5-6 when he refers to Jesus in this way: <sup>5</sup>*For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,* <sup>6</sup>*who gave Himself as a ransom for all people.* In 54-53AD the Roman General Crassus intended to visit Jerusalem with a view to looting the Temple of its treasures; A priest named Eleazar, the guardian of the valuable property too a decision to give him a large bar of gold worth ten thousand shekels ‘**as a ransom instead of all**’ the treasures kept in Jerusalem, according to the account of Jewish historian Josephus (Josephus, *Antiquities*, xiv, p.107). What are the New Testament emphases when the term ‘redemption’ is being used or understood?

(a) **The necessity of redemption** In contrast to people in the Old Testament era who were redeemed from debt, captivity, slavery, exile or facing possible execution, we have been redeemed through Jesus from our transgressions or sins against God. For example Ephesians 1:7-8a: <sup>7</sup>*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace* <sup>8</sup>*that He lavished on us* (also Colossians 1:14). In Galatians 3:13-13 the apostle Paul reminded his readers that: *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’* <sup>14</sup>*He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.* Peter, in I Peter 1:18-19, declared that we have been redeemed by Jesus from a futile way of living. *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors,* <sup>19</sup>*but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.* Yet this act of redemption was pointing forward to the ultimate redemption both of God’s people (see Luke 2:38 where the prophetess Anna spoke about the significance of the birth of Jesus *to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.*) and of the whole of creation (Romans 8:18-23: *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.* <sup>19</sup>*For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.* <sup>20</sup>*For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope* <sup>21</sup>*that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.* <sup>22</sup>*We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.* <sup>23</sup>*Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.* One day the whole of the created order will be as God intended it to be when its (and our) redemption will be completed. In the meantime the gift of the Holy Spirit, Paul reminds us in Ephesians 1:14: *is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession – to the praise of His glory.*

(b) **The price of redemption** The New Testament never presses the imagery to the point of indicating to whom the ransom was paid, instead the focus is on the fact that Christ was the substitute for sinners who paid the ransom and obtained our redemption. The cost to Him began with being born as a baby in Bethlehem (Galatians 4:4-5: *But when the time had fully come God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,* <sup>5</sup>*to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship...* The one who brought the universe into being became helpless requiring assistance with the basic tasks of life. Yet supremely His sacrifice was in death shedding His precious blood for our salvation (I Peter 1:18-19). Hebrews 9:12 informs us: *He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood, so obtaining eternal redemption.* Jesus in His sacrifice was both the priest able to mediate between God and humanity, but also the sacrificial offering that was the means of atonement. Redemption speaks of a gift received freely by grace when we trust the Lord, but obtained at huge cost to the Lord of Glory.

(c) **The position of the Redeemer in relation to the redeemed** However, in the ongoing life and work of the Christian Church – what difference does this truth make to our service as Christians? (i) **A call to personal holiness** (I Corinthians 6:19-20: *Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? **You are not your own;** <sup>20</sup>**you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies.*** This is a huge challenge to take care of our physical, mental and emotional health; so that we do not feed our minds, our emotions or our bodies with unwholesome things. it covers the range of how we go about our daily work, our social activities and our spiritual input in terms of daily devotions of prayer and Bible reading, together with times for worship with fellow believers. It covers our attitude to sex and sexuality which is so counter-cultural in the modern Western world that is obsessed with appearance and sensuality and thinking about what I want – therefore I should have it...! (ii) **A call to sacrificial service** (Acts 20:28) It should serve as a motivation in our self-discipline and an encouragement to follow in our master's footsteps in obedience to our heavenly Father's will for our lives. Paul in Acts 20:28 urged the elders of the Church at Ephesus to be diligent in their duties for this reason. *Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, **which He bought with His own blood.*** It is a reminder as to how we speak to one another, care for one another and work together in His service when we remember how much Jesus has invested in that person's life; how much He loves them, therefore, we ought to reflect His gracious love towards fellow believers.(iii)**It is a pointer to heaven** The focus of the praises of God's people there is on the work of redemption Jesus accomplished for us. revelation 5:9: ***You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because You were slain, and with Your blood You purchased for God people from every tribe and language and people and nation.*** Worthy is the Lamb... many of our praise songs include such lines to praise Him for His death on the cross for us.

Thank you for the cross Lord  
thank you for the price you paid  
bearing all my sin and shame  
in love you came,  
and gave amazing grace!  
Thank you for this love Lord  
thank you for the nail-pierced hands  
washed me in your cleansing flow,  
now all i know,  
your forgiveness and embrace!!  
Worthy is the Lamb!  
seated on the throne  
(we) crown you now with many crowns  
you reign victorious!  
High and lifted up  
Jesus son of God  
the treasure of heaven crucified  
worthy is the lamb  
worthy is the lamb... Amen [CMP1109]