There is no one of the titles of Christ which is more precious to Christian hearts than “Redeemer.”… It gives expression not merely to our sense that we have received salvation from Him, but also to our appreciation of what it cost Him to procure this salvation for us. It is the name specifically of the Christ of the cross. Whenever we pronounce it, the cross is placarded before our eyes and our hearts are filled with loving remembrance not only that Christ has given us salvation, but that he paid a mighty price for it.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Redemption = The act of buying back or rescuing something or someone that was lost, enslaved, or in a state of bondage.

Redeemer = One charged with the duty of restoring the rights of another and avenging his wrongs. This title is peculiarly applied to Christ. He redeems us from all evil by the payment of a ransom.

Luke 1:68

*“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.*

Luke 24:21

*But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place.*

Gal 3:13

*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”—*

Gal 4:5

*in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.*

Titus 2:14

*He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.*

Heb 9:15

*For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant.*

We have been redeemed. Amazingly, we have been redeemed by the very Son of God—the Firstborn of the Father. The Bible calls Jesus “the firstborn over all creation” (Col. 1:15), “the firstborn from the dead” (Rev. 1:5). This does not mean that God the Son is not eternal, as if somehow the Father gave birth to him. What it does mean is that Jesus is God’s Number One Son, the first of all his sons and daughters, and the first to be raised from the dead.

The amazing thing is that in order to redeem us, God offered up his firstborn Son—not to be redeemed but to be the Redeemer. “He … did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all” (Rom. 8:32). Therefore, we have been redeemed at the greatest price. Redemption always requires the payment of a ransom, but in this case we have been redeemed by the blood of God’s very Son: “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 forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Pet. 1:18, 19). When the New Testament speaks of redemption in Christ, it invariably emphasizes the costliness of its price.

One implication of this high-priced redemption is that we no longer belong to ourselves. Now we belong to God. [[2]](#footnote-2)

Christ is not only set forth as a Priest and as a sacrifice, but also as a Redeemer, and his work as a Redemption. Redemption is deliverance from evil by the payment of a ransom. This idea is expressed by the words ἀπολύτρωσις, from λύτρον, and the verbs λυτρόω, ἀγοράζω (to purchase), and ἐξαγοράζω (to buy from, or deliver out of the possession or power of any one by purchase). The price or ransom paid for our redemption is always said to be Christ himself, his blood, his death. As the evils consequent on our apostasy from God are manifold, Christ’s work as a Redeemer is presented in manifold relations in the word of God.

1. Redemption from the Penalty of the Law

The first and most obvious consequence of sin, is subjection to the penalty of the law. The wages of sin is death. Every sin of necessity subjects the sinner to the wrath and curse of God. The first step, therefore, in the salvation of sinners, is their redemption from that curse. Until this is done they are of necessity separated from God. But alienation from Him of necessity involves both misery and subjection to the power of sin. So long as men are under the curse, they are cut off from the only source of holiness and life. Such is the doctrine taught throughout the Bible, and elaborately in Romans, chapters 6 and 7. In effecting the salvation of his people, Christ “redeemed them from the curse of the law,” not by a mere act of sovereignty, or power; not by moral influence restoring them to virtue, but by being “made a curse for them.” No language can be plainer than this. The curse is the penalty of the law. We were subject to that penalty. Christ has redeemed us from that subjection by being made a curse for us. (Galatians 3:13.) That the infinitely exalted and holy Son of God should be “accursed” (ἐπικατάρατος), is so awful an idea, that the Apostle justifies the use of such language by quoting the declaration of Scripture, “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” Suffering, and especially the suffering of death, judicially inflicted on account of sin, is penal. Those who thus suffer bear the curse or penalty of the law. The sufferings of Christ, and especially his death upon the cross, were neither calamities, nor chastisements designed for his own good, nor symbolical or didactic exhibitions, designed to illustrate and enforce truth, and exert a moral influence on others; these are all subordinate and collateral ends. Nor were they the mere natural consequences of his becoming a man and subjecting Himself to the common lot of humanity. They were divine inflictions. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He was smitten of God and afflicted. These sufferings were declared to be on account of sin, not his own, but ours. He bore our sins. The chastisement of our peace was on Him. And they were designed as an expiation, or for the satisfaction of justice. They had, therefore, all the elements of punishment, and consequently it was in a strict and proper sense that He was made a curse for us. All this is included in what the Apostle teaches in this passage (Gal. 3:13), and its immediate context.

2. Redemption from the Law

Nearly allied to this mode of representation are those passages in which Christ is said to have delivered us from the law. Redemption from bondage to the law includes not only deliverance from its penalty, but also from the obligation to satisfy its demands. This is the fundamental idea of Paul’s doctrine of justification. The law demands, and from the nature of God, must demand perfect obedience. It says, Do this and live; and, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” No man since the fall is able to fulfil these demands, yet He must fulfil them or perish. The only possible method, according to the Scriptures, by which men can be saved, is that they should be delivered from this obligation of perfect obedience. This, the Apostle teaches, has been effected by Christ. He was “made under the law to redeem them that were under the law.” (Gal. 4:4, 5.) Therefore, in Romans 6:14, he says to believers, “Ye are not under the law, but under grace.” And this redemption from the law in Romans 7:4, is said to be “by the body of Christ.” Hence we are justified not by our own obedience, but “by the obedience” of Christ. (Rom. 5:18, 19.) Redemption in this case is not mere deliverance, but a true redemption, i.e., a deliverance effected by satisfying all the just claims which are against us. The Apostle says, in Galatians 4:5, that we are thus redeemed from the law, in order “that we might receive the adoption of sons”; that is, be introduced into the state and relation of sons to God. Subjection to the law, in our case, was a state of bondage. Those under the law are, therefore, called slaves, δουλοί. From this state of bondage they are redeemed, and introduced into the liberty of the sons of God. This redemption includes freedom from a slavish spirit, which is supplanted by a spirit of adoption, filling the heart with reverence, love, and confidence in God as our reconciled Father.

3. Redemption from the Power of Sin

As deliverance from the curse of the law secures restoration to the favour of God, and as the love of God is the life of the soul, and restores us to his image, therefore in redeeming us from the curse of the law, Christ redeems us also from the power of sin. “Whosoever committeth sin,” saith our Lord, “is the servant (the slave) of sin.” This is a bondage from which no man can deliver himself. To effect this deliverance was the great object of the mission of Christ. He gave Himself that He might purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. He died, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God. He loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might present it unto Himself a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. This deliverance from sin is a true redemption. A deliverance effected by a ransom, or satisfaction to justice, was the necessary condition of restoration to the favour of God; and restoration to his favour was the necessary condition of holiness. Therefore, it is said, Galatians 1:3, Christ “gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us (ἐξέληται) from this present evil world.” Titus 2:14, “Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity.” 1 Peter 1:18, 19, “Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” Deliverance by sacrifice was deliverance by ransom. Therefore, here as elsewhere, the two modes of statement are combined. Thus our Lord in Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45, says, “The Son of Man came … to give his life a ransom for many (ἀντὶ, not merely ὑπὲρ, πολλῶν).” The idea of substitution cannot be more definitely expressed. In these passages our deliverance is said to be effected by a ransom. In Matthew 26:28, our Lord says that his blood was “shed for many for the remission of sins.” Here his death is presented in the light of a sacrifice. The two modes of deliverance are therefore identical. A ransom was a satisfaction to justice, and a sacrifice is a satisfaction to justice.

4. Redemption from the Power of Satan

The Scriptures teach that Christ redeems us from the power of Satan. Satan is said to be the prince and god of this world. His kingdom is the kingdom of darkness, in which all men, since Adam, are born, and in which they remain, until translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. They are his subjects “taken captive by him at his will.” (2 Tim. 2:26.) The first promise was that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head. Christ came to destroy the works of the devil; to cast him down from his place of usurped power, to deliver those who are subject to his dominion. (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 2:15.) The fact of this redemption of his people from the power of Satan, and the mode of its accomplishment, are clearly stated in Hebrews 2:15. The eternal Son of God, who in the first chapter of that epistle, is proved to be God, the object of the worship of angels, the creator of heaven and earth, eternal and immutable, in verse 14 of the second chapter, is said to have become man, in order “that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” It is here taught, (1.) That men are in a state of bondage through fear of the wrath of God on account of sin. (2.) That in this state they are in subjection to Satan who has the power of death over them; i.e., the ability and opportunity of inflicting on them the sufferings due to them as sinners. (3.) That from this state of bondage and of subjection to the power of Satan, they are delivered by the death of Christ. His death, by satisfying the justice of God, frees them from the penalty of the law; and freedom from the curse of the law involves freedom from the power of Satan to inflict its penalty. “The strength of sin is the law.” (1 Cor. 15:56.) What satisfies the law deprives sin of the power to subject us to the wrath of God. And thus redemption from the law, is redemption from the curse, and consequently redemption from the power of Satan. This Scriptural representation took such hold of the imagination of many of the early fathers, that they dwelt upon it, almost to the exclusion of other and more important aspects of the work of Christ. They dallied with it and wrought it out into many fanciful theories. These theories have passed away; the Scriptural truth which underlay them, remains. Christ is our Redeemer from the power of Satan, as well as from the curse of the law, and from the dominion of sin. And if a Redeemer, the deliverance which He effected was by means of a ransom. Hence He is often said to have purchased his people. They are his because He bought them. “Know ye not that … ye are not your own?” says the Apostle, “For ye are bought with a price.” (1 Cor. 6:20.) God, in Acts 20:28, is said to have purchased the Church “with his own blood.” “Ye were redeemed (delivered by purchase) … with the precious blood of Christ.” (1 Pet. 1:18, 19.) “Thou art worthy … for thou has purchased us (ἠγόρασας) for God by thy blood.” (Rev. 5:9.)

5. Final Redemption from all Evil

Christ redeems us not only from the curse of the law, from the law itself as a covenant of works, from the power of sin, and from the dominion of Satan, but also from all evil. This evil is the consequence of the curse of the law, and being redeemed from that we are delivered from all evil. Hence the word redemption is often used for the sum of all the benefits of Christ’s work, or for the consummation of the great scheme of salvation. Thus our Lord says, Luke 21:28, that when the Son of Man shall appear in his glory, then his disciples may be sure that their “redemption draweth nigh.” They are sealed unto the day of redemption. (Eph. 1:14.) Christ has “obtained eternal redemption.” (Heb. 9:12.) Believers are represented as waiting for their redemption. (Rom. 8:23.)

It is therefore the plain doctrine of Scripture that, as before said, Christ saves us neither by the mere exercise of power, nor by his doctrine, nor by his example, nor by the moral influence which He exerted, nor by any subjective influence on his people, whether natural or mystical, but as a satisfaction to divine justice, as an expiation for sin and as a ransom from the curse and authority of the law, thus reconciling us to God, by making it consistent with his perfections to exercise mercy toward sinners, and then renewing them after his own image, and finally exalting them to all the dignity, excellence, and blessedness of the sons of God.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Redemption helps complete our understanding of the exodus. It also helps us appreciate our own salvation, because this doctrine has many connections to the person and work of Christ. The Scripture says, “in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Eph. 1:7; cf. Col. 1:13, 14). As he reflected on this great truth, B. B. Warfield (1851–1921) concluded:

The earliest Christians were Jewish. They were aware that Jehovah God had created the world and that he ruled it in power and love. It was of supreme importance that the God of Israel, the maker of heaven and earth, was also the Redeemer. The primary focus of the New Testament is that God has redeemed men in Christ. The redeeming work of God was the point of departure. New Testament thought moves from redemption back to creation.

Jesus’ teaching reinforces the view that his Father is the Creator and sustainer of the world. God is concerned for the flowers of the field and the birds of the air (Matt 6:28; 10:29–31). Paul accepts the Old Testament teaching that Creator and created are the two orders of existence. Men have erred in worshiping “the creature rather than the Creator” (Rom. 1:25). What God has created is basically good. It is men who have corrupted things (1 Tim. 4:3–4). James acknowledges that God is the originator of all things, especially the good that men receive (1:17–18). Peter encourages Christ’s followers to commit themselves and their sufferings to God, who is “a faithful creator” (1 Peter 4:19).

The first chapter of the Gospel of John unites in its message the notion that God the Creator is also the Redeemer. John begins with the very words of Genesis. The parallel is intentional. The God of creation mentioned in Genesis 1 is further identified as he who was with the Word who became flesh. God’s self-revelation is complete. The God who by the Word made all things (John 1:3) and gave the law to Moses (John 1:17) has fully revealed himself to men in Christ, the incarnate Word (v. 14).

In Christ God has acted for man’s redemption (Rom. 3:24; Col. 1:14, 20; 1 Peter 1:18–19). God sent Christ to the world (John 3:16; Luke 4:18). Since Christ effects our redemption, and Christ comes from God, no other conclusion can be drawn than that the God who redeems us in Christ is he who created the world.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Redeemer, Redemption

An important aspect of the cross-work of Christ; points to the enslaving power of sin and the payment of a price (the blood) to effect release; a redeemer is one who provides such release; the concept of redemption is elaborated especially by several biblical terms; redemption is also used as a cover term for all the aspects of the saving work of Christ; Rom. 3:24; Ex. 6:6; Isa. 59:20; Gen. 3:15; S. ch. 16, The Doctrine of Salvation.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Redemption not only looks back to Calvary, but forward to the freedom in which the redeemed stand. ‘You were bought with a price,’ Paul can say, ‘so glorify God in your body’ (1 Cor. 6:20). Precisely because they have been redeemed at such a cost believers must be God’s men. They must show in their lives that they are no longer caught up in the bondage from which they have been released and are exhorted to ‘stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free’ (Gal. 5:1, AV)[[6]](#footnote-6)

3:13. The positive side of Paul’s argument emphasized that there is hope for all who have broken the Law and are therefore under its curse. That hope is not in man but in Christ who redeemed us from the curse of the Law. But how did Christ redeem (exēgorasen, lit., “buy out of slavery”; cf. 4:5; see chart “New Testament Words for Redemption” at Mark 10:45) man? The answer is by becoming a curse for us. This is a strong declaration of substitutionary redemption whereby Christ took the penalty of all guilty lawbreakers on Himself. Thus the “curse of the Law” was transferred from sinners to Christ, the sinless One (cf. 1 Peter 3:18), and He delivered people from it. The confirming quotation from Deuteronomy 21:23 refers to the fact that in Old Testament times criminals were executed (normally by stoning) and then displayed on a stake or post to show God’s divine rejection. When Christ was crucified, it was evidence He had come under the curse of God. The manner of His death was a great obstacle to faith for Jews until they realized the curse He bore was for them (cf. Isa. 53).

3:14. Two purposes for Christ’s redemptive work are given, each introduced by the Greek conjunction hina, “in order that” (cf. 4:5): (1) Gentiles might receive the blessing given to Abraham; as already stated (3:8) this is a reference not to personal or national blessings but to the promised blessing of justification apart from works of the Law, available to all who believe; (2) all who thus believe might receive the promise of the Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit, who was promised (cf. v. 2). Again the apostle emphasized that salvation and sanctification come by faith, not by works.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Trusting in the all-sufficient redeeming work of Christ is where we begin a life of faith. From there, the brilliance of this glorious reality is reflected and displayed in every area of our lives. Or at least it ought to.[[8]](#footnote-8)

God’s redeeming of his people hearkens back to the Exodus, in which he set Israel free from bondage (e.g., Ex 6:6; 15:13; Deut 7:8; 9:26; 13:5; 15:15; 21:8; 24:18). Isaiah promises a second exodus where God will intervene and bring to a conclusion his saving and liberating work (Is 11:15–16; 40:3–11; 42:16; 43:2, 5–7, 16–19; 49:6–11; 51:10). Paul understands the redemption and freedom accomplished by Jesus Christ as a fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecies of a second exodus, for though there was an inaugurated fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecies in the return from Babylon, the promises were not fulfilled in their entirety. It is fitting, therefore, to describe the redemption in Christ as freedom from exile since the promises in Isaiah were not completely fulfilled in his day.[[9]](#footnote-9)

1. Ryken, P. G., & Hughes, R. K. (2005). Exodus: saved for God’s glory (pp. 368–370). Crossway Books. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ryken, P. G., & Hughes, R. K. (2005). Exodus: saved for God’s glory (p. 376). Crossway Books. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Hodge, C. (1997). Systematic theology (Vol. 2, pp. 516–520). Logos Research Systems, Inc. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Hendricks, W. L. (1969). The Theology of the New Testament. In C. J. Allen (Ed.), Matthew–Mark (p. 34). Broadman Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Karleen, P. S. (1987). The handbook to Bible study: with a guide to the Scofield study system (p. 354). Oxford University Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Morris, L. L. (1996). Redeemer, Redemption. In D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, & D. J. Wiseman (Eds.), New Bible dictionary (3rd ed., pp. 1003–1004). InterVarsity Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Campbell, D. K. (1985). Galatians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, p. 598). Victor Books. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. (2004). Tabletalk Magazine, August 2004: A Defining Era: The History of the Church in the Fourth Century, 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Schreiner, T. R. (2006). Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology (p. 230). IVP Academic. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)