THE REDEMPTIVE HEART OF GOD

KEY TEXT

Psalm 107:2 (NKJV)- Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy....

An Illustration: When A.J Gordon was pastor of a church in Boston, he met a young boy in front of the sanctuary carrying a rusty cage in which several birds fluttered nervously. Gordon inquired, "Son, where did you get those birds?" The boy replied, "I trapped them out in the field." "What are you going to do with them?" "I'm going to play with them, and then I guess I'll just feed them to an old cat we have at home." When Gordon offered to buy them, the lad exclaimed, "Mister, you don't want them, they're just little old wild birds and can't sing very well." Gordon replied, "I'll give you \$2 for the cage and the birds." "Okay, it's a deal, but you're making a bad bargain." The exchange was made and the boy went away whistling, happy with his shiny coins. Gordon walked around to the back of the church property, opened the door of the small wire coop, and let the struggling creatures soar into the blue. The next Sunday he took the empty cage into the pulpit and used it to illustrate his sermon about Christ's coming to seek and to save the lost - paying for them with His own precious blood. "That boy told me the birds were not songsters," said Gordon, "But when I released them and they winged their way heavenward, it seemed to me they were singing, 'Redeemed, redeemed, redeemed!"

You and I have been held captive to sin, but Christ has purchased our pardon and set us at liberty. When a person has this life-changing experience, he will want to sing, "Redeemed, redeemed, redeemed!"

Our Key text is a call to all of us who are the "redeemed of the LORD" to acknowledge and proclaim God's deliverance and goodness. It is a response to experiencing God's mercy and a reminder that God's power and faithfulness are demonstrated through acts of redemption. This verse encourages individuals, who have been rescued from various hardship, to share their stories and testify to the God of Redemption in their lives.

REDEMPTION – is a biblical theme that runs very widely and deeply from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Our God is known as the GOD OF REDEMPTION. He is our GREAT REDEEMER. His heart is always REDEMPTIVE in nature. Therefore, this morning, I would like to share a sermon entitled, 'THE REDEMPTIVE HEART OF GOD'.

In order to help all of us understand and capture the redemptive heart of God, so that we will learn to view life's situations with His redemptive heart and also learn to be coworkers with God in His redemptive process for things in our own lives as well as those around us, I would like to take three weeks to preach on this topic on THE REDEMPTIVE HEART OF GOD.

So, for the Part 1 of my sermon, the outline will be:

- Definition of Redemption
- Redemptive plans of God
- Redemption Stories in the Bible
- Embracing the redemptive heart of God
- The One who paid for our redemption

(I) DEFINITION OF REDEMPTION

In the New Testament, the essential meaning of redeem or redemption is to buy a slave out of slavery through the payment of a ransom; or to release by the payment of a ransom.

In the Old Testament, the idea of redeem or redemption is used in several ways, such as:

- deliverance of persons or property that had been sold for debt.
- deliverance from captivity, destruction or preservation from harm and danger.

 release from an undesirable condition through intervention, e.g. payment of a ransom or substitutionary action, or making a sacrifice



Key aspects of redemption include:

Being bought back

Redemption involves a price being paid to release someone from a state of bondage or sin.

Restoration

It signifies a return to a state of harmony and well-being, often with God or a higher power.

• Deliverance from sin

In a spiritual context, redemption is often associated with the forgiveness of sins and liberationfrom their consequences.

Atonement and sacrifice

The concept of redemption often involves a sacrifice, such as the death of Jesus Christ in Christianity, to atone for sins and offer a path of redemption.

Hope and forgiveness

Redemption offers hope and a chance for renewal, allowing individuals to move forward after past mistakes or challenges.

IN SUMMARY:

WHEN SOMETHING DEVIATES FROM ITS ORGINAL PLAN AND DESIGN, AND IS <u>RECOVERED AND RESTORED</u>, WE CALL IT REDEMPTION.

(II) THE REDEMPTIVE PLAN OF GOD

Ephesians 1:9,10 (NKJV)- 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.

These verses teach us that God has planned something, called 'mystery' until now. This is His good pleasure which He planned, that as we progress into the right time, all things will be brought back to Him in heaven and on earth...whatever seems to have been lost will be fully gathered back together in Him.

Ephesians 1:10 (Message Bible)- a long-range plan in which everything would be brought together and summed up in him, everything in deepest heaven, everything on planet earth.

Colossians 1:20 brings out this same truth that God has made a way to reconcile all things to Himself through the redemptive work of the Cross.

Colossians 1:20 (NKJV) - and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His <u>cross</u>.

Colossians 1:20 (MESSAGE BIBLE) - Not only that, but <u>all the</u> broken and dislocated pieces of the universe-- people and things, animals and atoms--get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the Cross.

The main point we wish to emphasize here is that although things seemed to have "gone out of hand"through Lucifer's rebellion and the Fall of Man, God had already planned and has worked a way to see all things redeemed back to Himself. This simply means that we are heading towards that time when devils and those who have rejected Christ's provision of salvation will be separated, and God's original plan will be restored in a New Heaven and a New Earth.

God is a Redeemer. God's heart is redemptive in nature. He desires to see things recovered and restored.

(III) REDEMPTION STORIES IN THE BIBLE

There are several pictures of redemption in Scripture that reveal God's redemptive heart.

Our objective in today's message is to get a glimpse of God's redemptive heart and seek to have this formed in us, as well.

#1 - God's dealings with the people of Israel

God is the Redeemer of His people from many of their predicaments which they fell into, some of which happened due to their own disobedience. He was their Redeemer from slavery in Egypt, from the Babylonian captivity, and from other enemies.

Exodus 15:13 (NKJV)- You in Your mercy have led forth The people whom You have redeemed; You have guided them in Your strength To Your holy habitation.

Psalm 78:35 (NKJV) -Then they remembered that God was their rock, And the Most High God their Redeemer.



The Book of Isaiah has redemption as one of its primary themes and has God referenced as "Redeemer" 13 times.

Isaiah 43:1,2 (NKJV)- 1 But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.

Redemption is used of deliverance from Egypt (Isaiah 51:10; Isaiah 63:9) and from captivity in Babylon (Isaiah 48:20; Isaiah 52:3, Isaiah 52:9; Isaiah 62:12).

#2 - The year of Jubilee

Leviticus 25 describes the "Year of Jubilee", which the Lord instituted among His people. This is a powerful picture of redemption.

Jubilee in Hebrew = the blast of a trumpet

Among the Jews, every fiftieth year, was a time at which time all the slaves were liberated, and all lands reverted to their former owners. This was a time of great rejoicing.

Here are a few selected verses from this chapter.

Leviticus 25:10,13,14 (NKJV) - 10 And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a <u>Jubilee</u> for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family. 13 'In this <u>Year of Jubilee</u>, each of you shall return to his possession. 14 And if you sell anything to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor's hand, you shall not oppress one another.

Leviticus 25:39-41 (NKJV) - 39 'And if one of your brethren who dwells by you becomes poor, and sells himself to you, you shall not compel him to serve as a slave. 40 As a hired servant and a sojourner he shall be with you, and shall serve you until the Year of Jubilee. 41 And then he shall depart from you—he and his children with him—and shall return to his own family. He shall return to the possession of his fathers.

When the Lord Jesus came, He said that He had come to announce "the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:19), which is a reference to the year of jubilee. We are living in "the acceptable year of the Lord", a time of jubilee.

#3 - The kinsman redeemer

The concept and practice of the "kinsman redeemer", which was another thing God instituted among His people in the Old Testament was also a powerful picture of redemption.

Its basic use had to do with the deliverance of persons or property that had been sold for debt, as in Leviticus 25:25: "If one of your brethren becomes poor, and has sold some of his possession, and if his redeeming relative comes to redeem it, then he may redeem what his brother sold". If he prospers, the man himself may "redeem" it (Lev 25:26).

A poor man may sell himself to a fellow Israelite (Lev 25:39) or to an alien living in Israel (Lev 25:47). The responsibility "to redeem" belonged to the nearest relative—brother, uncle, uncle's son, or a blood relative from his family (Lev 25:25,48,49).

The person (kinsman) who "redeemed" the one in financial difficulties was known as a kinsman-redeemer. The kinsman-redeemer was responsible for preserving the integrity, life, property, and family name of his close relative or for executing justice upon his murderer.

The Book of Ruth is a beautiful account of the kinsman-redeemer.

The setting for the Book of Ruth begins in the heathen country of Moab, a region northeast of the Dead Sea, but then moves

to Bethlehem. This true account takes place during the dismal days of failure and rebellion of the Israelites, called the period of the Judges. A famine forces Elimelech and his wife, Naomi, from their Israelite home to the country of Moab. Elimelech dies and Naomi is left with her two sons, who soon marry two Moabite girls, Orpah and Ruth. Later both of the sons die, and Naomi is left alone with Orpah and Ruth in a strange land. Orpah returns to her parents, but Ruth determines to stay with Naomi as they journey to Bethlehem. This story of love and devotion tells of Ruth's eventual marriage to a wealthy man named Boaz, by whom she bears a son, Obed, who becomes the grandfather of David and the ancestor of Jesus.

Naomi points out to Ruth that Boaz is a potential kinsmanredeemer.

Ruth 2:20 (MESSAGE BIBLE) -20 Naomi said to her daughter-inlaw, "Why, GOD bless that man! GOD hasn't quite walked out on us after all! He still loves us, in bad times as well as good!" Naomi went on, "That man, Ruth, is one of our circle of covenant redeemers, a close relative of ours!"



Boaz steps in to fulfill his role of kinsman-redeemer.

Ruth 4:5 -Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy it from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance."



Boaz asked the close relative, the first in line of kinsman-redeemers if he would be willing to carrying out this responsibility. According to the Levitical law, it was the duty of the kinsman-redeemer to marry her and raise up seed to his brother, that is, his kinsman. And he could not exercise his right of redeeming the land, unless he was willing at the same time to fulfill his obligations to the deceased by marrying the widow. This he was unwilling to do.

To someone (i.e. Ruth) who was an outsider, a woman of Moab who was not a Jew, who seemed to have lost everything (no husband, no children) and who had nothing (she left her own land and people to go with her mother-in-law), the kinsman-redeemer steps in and restores honor, dignity, family, position, and everything she could desire. Because of the work of the kinsman-redeemer, Ruth is brought into the lineage of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 1, Luke 3).

#4 - The prodigal son story

Luke 15:11-24 -the story of the prodigal son is a story we are all familiar with.



While we do not see all elements of Redemption in this story (i.e. the payment of a ransom) we see the heart of the father longing for the son to return. We see that no matter what wrong was done, the father's heart was set of seeing the son redeemed. And this is exactly what happens when the son

returns. The father extends forgiveness, restores the son and celebrates his return.

#5 -The great plan of redemption

The greatest of all is of course God's plan of redemption for mankind. In spite of all our sin, God who is our Creator, who sits as our Judge, would Himself become our Redeemer and

Saviour.



We who became His enemies, He reconciles us back to Himself, fully restores us and makes us holy and blameless in His sight - all by His own doing!

Colossians 1:20-22 - 20 and by Him to <u>reconcile all things to Himself</u>, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. 21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you <u>holy</u>, and <u>blameless</u>, and <u>above reproach in His sight</u>—

His love knows no bounds.

Romans 8:38-39 - 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

He saves to the uttermost.

Hebrews 7:25 - Therefore He is also able to save to the <u>uttermost</u> those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

God's heart is always set on.....

recovering what is lost
regaining what is wasted
restoring what is ruined
releasing what is bound
rebuilding what is destroyed
beautifying what is marred
healing what is wounded
renewing what is worn down
reviving what is dying
resurrecting what is dead.

(IV) EMBRACING THE REDEMPTIVE HEART OF GOD

God's heart is redemptive in nature. God never guits on what He starts. He loves and saves to the uttermost no matter what the cost. We are called to be like Him, and hence our approach to life situations and to the problems we face must be redemptive as well.



When we view people, situations of life, we need to view them with God's redemptive heart.

If a friend or someone known to you has messed up their lives and there is nothing left to look forward to - look at them with God's redemptive heart. There is hope.

If a son or daughter has gone astray - look at him or her with God's redemptive heart. God can bring them back.

If your marriage or home is falling apart - look at it with God's redemptive heart. God can turn your mourning into dancing.

If your own life or finances or job situation or something else, has gone from good to bad to worse - have faith in God's redemptive heart for you. God brings people out of the miry pit and sets them on solid ground.

If a dream you've been carrying seems to be cruelly crushed right before your eyes - God is still your Redeemer. He gives life to what is dead.

(V) OUR GREATER KINSMAN-REDEEMER

Like those birds caught in the wilderness of sin, we are all trapped in the cage and we were all meant to be fed to the devil in hell. There is no song of hope in us. Our destiny is meant for hell and Satan – the enemy of our soul.

Jesus came not only as our Savior but as our kinsmen, our Elder Brother. He paid the debts we owed God the Father because of our sins. AD 33 was the acceptable year, the year of Jubilee, where He came to buy us back from Satan, the owner of our souls. Yes, the ownership of our soul was lost to Satan the day Adam and Eve sinned. Someone needed to buy us back, else our souls would be doomed eternally. And Jesus, our greater Kinsman, our greater Elder Brother, came and paid with His own life and blood to buy us back from Satan so that we live no more belonging to Satan but to God the Father and living out this redeemed life to serve others.

Why many of us as the redeemed ones, are unable to announce or proclaim our redemption? Why can't we fulfill

the command of Psalm 107:2 – Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy? Why do we fail to look at our hardship and difficult people with trust in the redemptive heart of God?

Root Cause # 1 - It is because we minimize and fail to see the cost Jesus has paid to buy us backand therefore, we takeHis redemption very lightly. May God forgive us. And may God today open our eyes and heart to see how God never quits on what He starts from the Garden of Eden – His redemptive plan through Jesus. God loves and saves to the uttermost no matter what the cost, even the cost of His only begotten son.

I read a very touching devo a few weeks ago:

"If you are God's child, you are a gallery of His glorious grace. The walls of your heart have been festooned with the gorgeous artwork of redemption: wisdom for the foolishness of sin; power for the weakness of sin and deliverance for the guilt of sin and deliverance from the bondage of sin. Grace means that beautiful things are being done for you and happening within you. Yet, for many believers, the artwork is there, but the lights are out in the gallery of your heart. You as believers simply don't see or fully understand the stunning beauty of what they have been given in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. And because they don't see or understand that grace, they neither celebrate it nor live in the light of its majesty. So, they give way to foolishness when they have been personally connected to the One who is wisdom. They

hide in guilt when they have been fully forgiven. They surrender to addiction when they have been given freeing grace. Their hearts have been decorated with the artwork of grace, but the lights are out in the gallery. How sad! What about you? Are the lights on and has that radically changed the way you live?"

Root Cause # 2 - We fail to trust in the redemptive heart because basically we forgot where we all have come from. We all came from spiritual poverty, spiritual bankruptcy, spiritual doom, spiritual dirt and mess. Adam and Eve cursed us all with a bad start. And because of that, everything in our life and in this world have deviated from its original plan and design. But thanks to the death of our Kinsman redeemer, who used his life and blood as a ransom to buy us back from our slave-master, Satan, we have now our Jesus as our redeemer to recover and restore us back to our original design. Because of this, we can sing and declare about the redemption of God in our life. Whether you believe it or not, the minute you accepted Jesus as your Lord, your identity has become CHILD OF THE LIVING GOD, THE REDEEMED ONE. Redemption of God is stamped all over your life meaning, not only God delivers you from your sins but every hardship, every mess, every deviation you may have committed along life's journey, every disappointment, every pain, every trial, every estrangement, every suffering becomes REDEMPTIVE (recoverable and restorable) because of Christ the Redeemer living inside you. All things work together for good to those who love Him and to those who are called according to His

purpose. If Christ can turn our sins into salvation, surely, He can turn any darkness into light for us – that is REDEMPTION. It is possible because of His BLOOD. His ransom is enough for that transformation.

My testimony

As a Christian for more than 40 years, I have experienced God as the Great I am in many of my life's journey. "I am your Provider" in times of my financial need; "I am your Shepherd" in times of my need for guidance; "I am your Healer" in times of my sickness; "I am your victory" in times of my spiritual warfare; "I am your Friend" in times of my loneliness. Aside from that great redemptive act of God in saving me in 1981, I have never witnessed the God of redemption in such a profound way as after serving God for more than 39 years now. I share this sermon to you because from the start of this year, Pastor Toh Nee and I keep witnessing the great redemptive acts of God in our life.

When we were back in Singapore this year for two month from end of January to end of March, a lady – the best friend of my host who put us up in her condo, prophesied to both of us – "You will see the redemption of God in many relationships that you have lost in this year." While prophesying to us, she stopped and said, "Oh! My hair is standing as I am speaking to you."

True to that prophecy, I witnessed one of the greatest redemptive works of God in accordance to this definition

which I gave you at the beginning of this sermon —When something deviates from its original plan and design, and is recovered and restored, we call it redemption.

Joy (my eldest daughter) and Ben have been married for almost 13 years now but sadly, I wasn't close to Ben at all. It is very hard to bond with him because of our distance and calling. There was always awkwardness in his presence. Being an introvert, it was even harder for us to communicate with him. Then there is Jan (my second daughter) and Daryl. Daryl is an introvert too and I can't joke or chat with him as I would with an extrovert. For me, I accepted all these rifts as part of the price I had to pay because of both of us being away from them. You could say, I experienced the J curve of letting all these chummy relationships with my sons-in law die. Then there is this distance between my firstborn granddaughter and us. Though we intentionally tried to foster familial bond by meeting my daughters and sons-in-laws overseas, we couldn't bridge the gap. In September 2022, we went back for the birth of Elise and stayed just for another 2 weeks after her birth.









In May 2023, our whole family met in Thailand for a reunion. Elise was around 9 months old then. When I ran to the hotel porch to welcome her arrival, she turned her face away. Joy asked me to forcefully snatch Elise from her, which I did and Elise yelled. The family of Joy stayed with us in the same suite and every morning, at around 6 am (Elise's wake up time), I would hear her crawl and make baby noises. I would go out to see her but immediately she would crawl away from me and run to her dad's arm to hide. So, the whole bonding time in Thailand with Elise was a failure.



In September 2023, Joy and family gave me a surprise turn out at my 60th birthday at Diversion 21 Hotel, Iloilo City. But Elise was still very aloof from me, refusing to let me carry her.



Then in Dec 2023, we met up as a family in Taiwan. By then Elise could walk already. Again, Elise refused to allow any of us to carry her.

It was only toward the end of the trip, while we were waiting at the town of Chiayi, so that Jan and Daryl could take a hiking trip in Alishan, that the ice began to thaw. Elise was stuck in this turkey rice restaurant which she hated and I offered to carry her out, which she readily allowed. Then while walking out, she saw a black puppy tied to a motorbike. I didn't see it but she saw it first and she exclaimed, "log log log". It was then I understood she meant "dog". I turned back while the rest walked on and true enough there was poodle black puppy tied to a motor bike outside a shop house. But we couldn't stay long and so I carried her to another café which Joy wanted to go. We got turned away because this café wasn't kid friendly. No kids were allowed in this café. So, Joy and Ben had to search for another. And finally, we found one. While waiting for their orders, Elise got restless and I carried her back to that puppy's place. There we squat down and played with that puppy. From then on, the ice thawed and each time she came down from the hotel elevator and saw both of us sitting at the lobby, she would scream and run to us. This surprised Joy very much. But alas this bonding only lasted 2 days and it was time to fly back to our various destinations. The bonding was short-lived. Soon Elise forgot about us.

I had a dream about all these scenarios of Elise rejecting me and choosing instead her paternal grandparents over us. It was an awful feeling when I woke up. I did tell the Lord, that I accepted this as the cost of being a Levite, a full-time servant of God, a missionary to Iloilo City. Deuteronomy 33:8-10 "Give to Levi your Thummim, and your Urim to your godly one, whom you tested at Massah, with whom you quarreled at the waters of Meribah, who said of his father and mother, 'I regard them not'; he disowned his brothers and ignored his children. For they observed your word and kept your covenant. They shall teach Jacob your rules and Israel your law; they shall put incense before you and whole burnt offerings on your altar."

This is not about actual hatred or disregard for our loved ones but rather it is a hyperbolic expression highlighting the Levites' strong loyalty to God above their own family, which is interpreted as a sign of dedication to their priestly role.

And I was willing to die to my rights of intimacy with my granddaughter and sons-in law for the sake of my priestly ministry.

But then this year, the God of redemption stepped in. All the deviation from the original plan for a close knitted relationship with my sons-in law and grandkid — God recovered and restored. Ben sat down on the bench of the hawker center in Singapore and chatted with me, sharing about his dilemma of choosing a primary school for Elise. Daryl even lent us his brand new one-month old car during our last trip back in Singapore.

Elise began warming up to me and she hugged me and said, "I love you a lot." Whatever I cooked in Singapore, she loved it,

considering she is a toddler who hates to eat. Her maid had problem feeding her but when I fed her, she finished the whole bowl. She always insisted that I sat next to her to feed her. And when I picked her up in her school, she would brighten up and run towards me. Whatever old school games I taught her, she remembered and would get her dad and maid to play with her and when they sang wrongly, she got frustrated because it wasn't the same as the ones I taught her. I remember this incident when we were having lunch at Vivo City. Again, she insisted I sat next to her. Then she took my hand and used her face to stroke my hand.

The bonding was so close – a 180 degree turn from all those rejections in the many overseas family trip that I was struck by the redemptive power of God in this strained relationship.

When we parted with her in Chiangmai before we flew back to Iloilo last march, I was very sad, not knowing when she arrived at Changi airport, she asked for both of us. And since then, she kept asking Joy, "Where is Grammy? Where is Granddy?" Then she video called me and shouted, "Grammy! I go to Iloilo to see you. I want to go Bor-cay again." And when we were about to end the video call, she refused and she cried and for the first time, when I saw her cry, I also cried and I said to God, "God! This price is so hard to pay. Please give me your grace to endure till April next year."

A prophecy came true – the redemptive act of God coming in to bridge a relationship that has deviated from the original

plan for a family – close knittedness. And this year I saw God redeeming the years separated by the calling of God and I saw Him recovering and restoring what was lost in manifold dimension.....more than I ever imagined. From estranged grandparents to favorite grandparents. Glory be to God!

THE GOD OF REDEMPTION WITH A REDEMPTIVE HEART TO RECOVER AND RESTORE ANYTHING THAT DEVIATES FROM ITS ORIGINAL PLAN.

TRUST THE REDEMPTIVE HEART OF GOD.

EMBRACE HIS REDEMPTIVE HEART FOR ANY DEVIATED SITUATIONS OF YOUR LIFE

End

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