

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 3/7/04 Brad Brandt

Series: What *Really* Happened on the Cross?

Message: "Redemption: He Paid a Ransom" Galatians 3:13**

Main Idea: According to Galatians 3:13, a transaction occurred at the cross called **redemption**. Simply put, Jesus paid a ransom. But why, and how, and what difference does it make for us? You're about to find out.

I. We owed a debt.

A. God gave the Law.

1. It shows us what sin is (Rom 7:7).
2. It shows us that sin has a penalty (James 2:10-11).

B. We can't keep the Law (Rom 7:14-24).

1. We are slaves (14).
2. We are prisoners (23).

II. Christ paid our debt.

A. Redemption involves people.

1. Christ is the Redeemer (Job 19:25; Gal 4:4-5).
2. We are the redeemed (Titus 2:14).

B. Redemption involves a payment.

1. According to the Law, the wages of sin is the death of the sinner (Gen 2:17; Ezek 18:20; Rom 6:23).
2. At the cross, Jesus paid the ransom for sinners (Mark 10:45; 1 Tim 2:5-6).

C. Redemption involves a price.

1. He took our place (2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:24).
2. He endured our curse (Gal 3:13).
3. He shed His blood (Eph 1:7; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 1:18-19; Rev 1:5).

D. Redemption involves a purpose.

1. We belong to the One who paid the price (1 Cor 6:19-20).
2. We've been set free to serve Him (Gal 5:1, 13; Rev 5:9).

Make It Personal: There are only two options...

1. You can accept the One who became a curse.
2. You can experience God's curse yourself.

On a hillside outside the city wall of Jerusalem, in the year A.D. 30, Yeshua Meshiach, Jesus the Messiah, was nailed to a cross. He hung there for six hours, from 9 in the morning until 3 in the afternoon. Then He died, a spear in His side the guarantee. Those are the historical facts of the death of the greatest person to ever walk on the planet.

But why did it happen? Someone says, "The Roman soldiers killed Him." Another responds, "Sure, but they were just doing their job. The apathetic political rulers are responsible. Jesus died because of Pilate and Herod." Still another interjects, "No, the jealous Jewish religious leaders, they did it. They caused the killing."

And of course, all three responders are right. The soldiers, the Jewish leaders, Herod and Pilate, they all had a part in His death. But they're not alone. We, too, had a part.

The modern man responds, "Hold on! How can you say that I had a part in Jesus' death? I wasn't even there." Oh really? Are you sure? If you believe that, you don't know what *really* happened on the cross?

Realize this. Satan cannot cancel the facts of history. Jesus' death, burial, and His resurrection on the third

day are historical events. They happened and witnesses attested to each. Satan knows that. Since he can't rewrite history, he does the next best thing. He does all he can to confuse the significance of those events, knowing that a partial or twisted understanding of the cross may inspire a sinner but it won't save him.

Did you realize that Satan doesn't mind if people believe in Jesus? Not the real Jesus, of course, but the fictitious one that he creates. Why, he doesn't even mind if people believe in the crucifixion, as long as their belief is based on an incomplete understanding.

Ask the typical person on the street (or sadly, in many churches) why it happened. Why did Jesus die? You'll hear vague sentiments about His love and His selfless example, but there's a word you won't hear them mention. It's the word *redemption*.

If Satan can't prevent people from hearing about the cross, here's what he does. He lets people hear about and then believe in a *redemption-less-cross*.

Here is an example. Why did Jesus die? "Jesus died for us because we are so worthy and important to God." Satan doesn't mind if you believe that for he understands that "worthy" people don't think they need a redeemer.

Here's another example. "Jesus died to give us an example of how to be selfless. In this evil world, the only way good will ever win out is if good people choose to do what Jesus did at the cross, and love. So believe in Him. Be inspired by His cross. Love as He loved. The world will be a better place if we do." Again, Satan doesn't care if you embrace *that* cross for he knows what so many don't know today. We are not "good" people, not in God's eyes, but sinners; and we need more than an example, we need *redemption*.

I'm frightened, beloved. What frightens me is that people can "accept Jesus" and "believe that He died on the cross for us," but have in mind one of these faulty or partial notions. If so, they have believed in a different Jesus and deficient gospel and are *still condemned in their sins*. But to make matters worse, they don't know it. They've had an "experience with Jesus," and they think they're okay.

The Bible teaches that people perish for lack of knowledge. That's especially true when a person doesn't know the true significance of the cross.

The question of the hour is, *what really happened on the cross?* The answer can be summed up in five words. We looked at the first one last time, from 2 Corinthians 5:21. On the cross, a *substitution* occurred—Jesus traded places with sinners. This morning we turn our attention to a second related yet distinct word. According to Galatians 3:13, a transaction occurred at the cross called *redemption*. Simply put, Jesus paid a ransom. But why, and how, and what difference does it make for us? You're about to find out.

Ponder our text: "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.'"

In Galatians 3:13 we discover two truths that are at the heart of redemption.

I. Truth #1: We owed a debt.

To use the language of Galatians 3:13, we were under *the curse of the law*. What does that mean? We need some background.

Galatians is one of the earliest New Testament letters. Paul wrote it to rescue the churches in Galatia from one of Satan's most deadly weapons, teachers inside the church who preach a different gospel. A group known as the Judaizers were saying, "So you believe in Jesus? That's fine, but it's not enough. To be a real Christian, you need to keep the Law, too. Faith isn't enough. The ceremonial laws are still binding."

It was nothing short of an assault on the sufficiency of Christ and His atonement. Is what Jesus did on the cross sufficient to save a sinner, or does a sinner need something else besides the cross? The thrust of the book of Galatians addresses that issue, showing that salvation is through Christ, not human merit; by grace, not law; and by faith, not works.

In chapter 3 Paul exposed the heart of the Judaizer fallacy. It had to do with their view of the law God gave Moses at Mount Sinai. He challenged the Galatians with a question in verse 2, "I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?" In verses 6-9, he then demonstrated that even the patriarch Abraham was made right with God, not by law keeping, but by faith.

Then Paul lowered the boom in verse 10, "All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.'" Under a curse? What kind of curse and why? The answers have to do with two biblical facts about the law.

A. God gave the Law. Yes, the law came from God and consequently, it is good. No, it's not good as a prerequisite for salvation, but God never gave it for that reason. Why did God give it? Simply put, the law fulfills two God-given purposes.

1. *It shows us what sin is (Rom 7:7).* Paul's commentary in Romans 7 explains, verse 7, "What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed *I would not have known what sin was except through the law.* For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, 'Do not covet.'"

What does the law do? It's God's measuring stick. It shows us what sin is.

2. *It shows us that sin has a penalty (James 2:10-11).* Which sin? *Every* sin. James makes this clear in James 2:10-11, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder.' If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker."

If God hadn't revealed the law we wouldn't have known these two things, but He did and now we do. We know what sin is—we see it in black and white terms. And we know that sin has a penalty—if a person violates just one stipulation from God's law, that makes him a *law-breaker*, and he's guilty and liable for punishment.

So God gave the law. That's fact #1. But our problem is, fact #2...

B. We can't keep the Law (Rom 7:14-24). Now I know that lots of people think they'll make it to heaven because of their good deeds. They don't see themselves as *law-breakers*, but as *law-keepers*.

But let's be honest with ourselves. There is no perfect law-keeper. When you look at the law you see a constant reminder that you're *not* what you *should be*. That's the *curse of the law*. Paul described it in Romans 7:14-24:

"We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that *the law is good*. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. *For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.* For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. *For in my inner being I delight in God's law;* but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and *making me a prisoner of*

the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

That was Paul's condition, my friend, Paul the man who zealously tried to keep God's law from birth. It's our condition, too. We can't keep it. The standard is too high. Indeed, because of our inability to keep God's law, two words describe the natural man.

1. *We are slaves (14)*. Slaves to sin. Sin is our master. And...
2. *We are prisoners (23)*. Prisoners of the law of sin at work in our members. We know that in God's sight we aren't what we should be, we are what we shouldn't be, and we are powerless to change. We are under the *curse of the law*.

That, beloved, is what makes redemption necessary—truth #1, we owed a debt. Here is what makes redemption a reality.

II. Truth #2: Christ paid our debt.

Galatians 3:13 again, "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.'"

Just what is *redemption*? If we'll look carefully we can make four discoveries about redemption from this verse.

A. Redemption involves people. "Christ redeemed us," Paul declares. Redemption, then, is an activity involving two parties.

1. *Christ is the Redeemer (Job 19:25; Gal 4:4-5)*. "Christ redeemed us."

Centuries before the cross Job went through one of the worst trials known to man. He lost his ten children to a storm, he lost his business and life savings to theft, he lost the support of his wife, and even lost his health. But he never cursed God. What sustained him? While covered with boils and sitting in ashes Job declared this conviction in Job 19:25, "*I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.*"

Job looked ahead to the coming Redeemer. We look back.

Paul identifies the Redeemer in Galatians 4:4-5, "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, *to redeem* those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons." Notice who the Redeemer is. He's the Son of God who entered this world as a son born to a woman. He entered at just the right time. He was born under the law, that is, as One who subjected Himself to being a law-keeper. And He did it perfectly! Christ is the Redeemer. Redemption involves a second party...

2. *We are the redeemed (Titus 2:14)*. "Christ redeemed *us*." Bible scholars debate who the "us" refers to in this verse. Is Paul referring to Jewish believers? Based on the mention of Gentiles in verse 14, I take the "us" to refer to *all* believers, Jew and Gentile alike. Verse 14—"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."

So redemption involves people, first the Redeemer, then the redeemed.

B. Redemption involves a payment. "Christ *redeemed us*." It's marketplace terminology. To "redeem" (Greek *exagorazo*) means "to buy back," specifically, "to buy out of slavery by paying a price."

Remember, because we are sinners we are slaves and prisoners. What kind of payment can redeem one who is a slave and prisoner to sin? Psalm 49:7-9 declares, "No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him— the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough— that he should live on forever and not see decay."

No mere mortal can redeem another human being. The cost is too high.

1. *According to the Law, the wages of sin is the death of the sinner (Gen 2:17;*

Ezek 18:20; Rom 6:23). God set the wages back in the garden when He told Adam, "You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it *you will surely die* (Genesis 2:17)." But, of course, Adam ate. And Adam died.

Ezekiel 18:20 states, "The soul who sins is the one who will die." Romans 6:23 announces, "For the wages of sin is death." God says that where there is sin there must be death. And the debt must be paid.

That was our predicament, beloved. The human race was under the curse of divine law. We had failed to keep God's revealed standard and were faced with the inevitable consequence. The wages of sin is the *death of the sinner*.

That's what makes the cross so astounding.

2. *At the cross, Jesus paid the ransom for sinners (Mark 10:45; 1 Tim 2:5-6).* Let this sink in. The cross didn't catch Jesus by surprise. In the final say He didn't die merely because of the wicked choices of the Jewish leaders, Pilate, and the soldiers. It was the divine plan that He die. The Son of God came to earth to make a payment.

Before the fact Jesus made repeated predictions, like this one in Mark 10:33-34, "'We are going up to Jerusalem,' he said, 'and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.'"

"You mean He *wanted* to die?" Yes. It's why He left heaven. Mark 10:45—"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.*"

That's why He came, to make a payment. The law-keeper chose to die in the place of law-breakers. No one caught Him off guard and no one forced His hand. The Scriptures emphasize this over and over. The Redeemer *gave Himself*:

--Galatians 1:4 "Who *gave himself for our sins* to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father."

--Galatians 2:20 "...I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and *gave himself for me.*"

--1 Timothy 2:5-6 "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, *who gave himself as a ransom for all men....*"

We're talking about Christianity 101, the doctrine of *substitutionary atonement*. At the cross the Redeemer died in the place of and to make a payment for sinners. Sadly, this doctrine is either glossed over or omitted altogether from pulpit after pulpit.

That's nothing new for the cross has always offended the natural mind. Over a century ago Charles Spurgeon had this to say in a sermon on Galatians 3:13, "The whole pith and marrow of the religion of

Christianity lies in the doctrine of 'substitution,' and I hesitate not to affirm my conviction that a very large proportion of Christians are not Christians at all, for they do not understand the fundamental doctrine of the Christian creed; and alas! there are preachers who do not preach, or even believe this cardinal truth. They speak of the blood of Jesus in an indistinct kind of way, and descant upon the death of Christ in a hazy style of poetry, but they do not strike this nail on the head, and lay it down that the way of salvation is by Christ's becoming a substitute for guilty man."

Allow me to strike the nail on the head. Christ died for sinners! This is the gospel. Two thousands years ago The Redeemer made a once and for all ransom payment. The debt for sinners was paid in full. You can be set free today!

Perhaps a simple children's story will help:

Tom carried his new boat to the edge of the river. He carefully placed it in the water and slowly let out the string. How smoothly the boat sailed! Tom sat in the warm sunshine, admiring the little boat that he had built. Suddenly a strong current caught the boat. Tom tried to pull it back to shore, but the string broke. The little boat raced downstream.

Tom ran along the sandy shore as fast as he could. But his little boat soon slipped out of sight. All afternoon he searched for the boat. Finally, when it was too dark to look any longer, Tom sadly went home.

A few days later, on the way home from school, Tom spotted a boat just like his in a store window. When he got closer, he could see -- sure enough -- it was his!

Tom hurried to the store manager: "Sir, that's my boat in your window! I made it!"

"Sorry, son, but someone else brought it in this morning. If you want it, you'll have to buy it for one dollar."

Tom ran home and counted all his money. Exactly one dollar! When he reached the store, he rushed to the counter. "Here's the money for my boat." As he left the store, Tom hugged his boat and said, "Now you're twice mine. First, I made you and now I bought you."

That's what Jesus did. First He made us. Then He bought us. Redemption involves a payment.

C. Redemption involves a price. In the Middle Ages there was a widespread heresy that asserted that God actually paid a ransom to the devil to free His people. But God didn't owe the devil a penny. No, God made this payment to satisfy His own righteous demands as revealed in His law.

According to God's Word, what was the price? Paul says, "Christ redeemed us...*by becoming a curse for us.*" What does that mean? The redemption price included three things.

1. *He took our place* (2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:24). As stated in last week's text, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21)." Peter put it thus in 1 Peter 2:24, "*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree*, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed."

So in order to redeem us, at the cross Christ took our place. But His substitutionary payment involved an even more specific price.

2. *He endured our curse* (Gal 3:13). He redeemed us from the curse of the law, our text states, *by* (here's the means by which He did it) *becoming a curse for us.* "Being made a curse for us," is how the KJV renders it.

The physical agony at the cross was unthinkable, as Mel Gibson's movie demonstrates. But there was a

more horrid suffering than the thorn crown and the nails. It was the curse He bore. He became *a curse* for us.

To be cursed by men is bad. To bear the curse of God is horror beyond comprehension.

What does this mean? Paul gives us a clue at the end of verse 13, quoting Deuteronomy 21:23, "For it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.'" The cited Deuteronomy passage gives guidelines for what to do with the body of a criminal after his execution. The law said not "to leave his body on the tree overnight." The reason? "Cursed is everyone who is hung [impaled, here crucified] on a tree."

That's what happened to Jesus. He died a criminal's death and took the place of the accursed.

But it went further. He *became* a curse. How so? On the cross the Christ took upon Himself the sins of His people, and in so doing He subjected Himself to the consequence of those sins. He experienced the wrath of God. He felt the fury of divine punishment. He suffered spiritual alienation. He drank the cup of God's judgment. He faced the fire of hell. In short, He became what we are in order to experience what we deserve. That was the price He paid. He endured our *curse*.

But there's something else involved in this redemption price, something very specific.

3. *He shed His blood* (Eph 1:7; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 1:18-19; Rev 1:5). Listen to the Scriptures:

--Ephesians 1:7 "In him we have *redemption through his blood*, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace."

--Acts 20:28 [instructions given to the Ephesian elders] "Be shepherds of the church of God, which he *bought with his own blood*."

--1 Peter 1:18-19 "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."

That's the price of redemption, beloved. In order to buy our freedom, in order to cancel our curse, in order to set us free, this was the price He paid. He shed *His blood*.

What motivated Him? In a word, *love*. "To him *who loves us* and has freed us from our sins *by his blood*," John writes in Revelation 1:5.

Here's another story to help us appreciate the wonder of redeeming love. 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!"

That brings us to the fourth discovery. In addition to people, a payment, a price...

D. Redemption involves a purpose. Verse 14 explains, "He redeemed us *in order that* [here's a purpose statement] the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus." Here's the purpose. We who were once under God's *curse* are now entitled to experience God's *blessing!*

What does this life of blessing look like? Christ didn't pay the ransom price so we could do our own thing—that's what got us in trouble in the first place. No, if we have been redeemed, two things follow.

1. *We belong to the One who paid the price (1 Cor 6:19-20).* "You are not your own," Paul states in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. Why not? "You were bought at a price [i.e. redeemed]. Therefore [here's the result of redemption] honor God with your body."

If you are a Christian you are under new ownership. The One who took your sins now takes the controls of your life. He bought you so you would honor Him. To put it more specifically, if we've been redeemed...

2. *We've been set free to serve Him (Gal 5:1, 13; Rev 5:9).* Galatians 5:1—"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free..." Redeemed people are free people. They're free to do something they couldn't do while under the curse of the law. They're free to serve God. Galatians 5:13—"You, my brothers, were *called to be free*. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, *serve one another* in love."

There is a purpose in redemption, brothers and sisters. It's a God-focused purpose. It's no wonder that the theme of the heavenly song in Revelation 5:9 reflects this purpose, "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and *with your blood you purchased men for God* from every tribe and language and people and nation." How did He purchase us? *With His blood*. Why? *For God*.

John Newton, once a slave trader that God redeemed by His grace, penned this:

*In evil long I took delight,
Unawed by shame or fear,
Till a new object struck my sight,
And stopp'd my wild career:
I saw One hanging on a Tree
In agonies and blood,
Who fix'd His languid eyes on me.
As near His Cross I stood.*

*Sure never till my latest breath,
Can I forget that look:
It seem'd to charge me with His death,
Though not a word He spoke:
My conscience felt and own'd the guilt,
And plunged me in despair:
I saw my sins His Blood had spilt,
And help'd to nail Him there.*

*Alas! I knew not what I did!
But now my tears are vain:
Where shall my trembling soul be hid?
For I the Lord have slain!*

*A second look He gave, which said,
"I freely all forgive;
This blood is for thy ransom paid;
I die that thou may'st live."*

*Thus, while His death my sin displays
In all its blackest hue,
Such is the mystery of grace,
It seals my pardon too.
With pleasing grief, and mournful joy,
My spirit now is fill'd,
That I should such a life destroy,
Yet live by Him I kill'd!*

What really happened on the cross? We owed a debt, but Christ paid our debt. That's what happened. That's *redemption*. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us."

You ask, "What difference should this make in my life?" Let's hear Spurgeon again:

"Sinners—you must either be cursed of God, or else you must accept Christ, as bearing the curse instead of you. I do beseech you, as you love your souls, if you have any sanity left, accept this blessed and divinely-appointed way of salvation. This is the truth which the apostles preached, and suffered and died to maintain; it is this for which the Reformers struggled; it is this for which the martyrs burned at Smithfield; it is the grand basis doctrine of the Reformation, and the very truth of God.

"Down with your crosses and rituals, down with your pretensions to good works, and your crouchings at the feet of priests to ask absolution from them! Away with your accursed and idolatrous dependence upon yourself; Christ has finished salvation-work, altogether finished it. Hold not up your rags in competition with His fair white linen; Christ has born the curse; bring not your pitiful penances, and your tears all full of filth to mingle with the precious fountain flowing with His blood. Lay down what is your own, and come and take what is Christ's. Put away now everything that you have thought of being or doing, by way of winning acceptance with God; humble yourselves, and take Jesus Christ to be the Alpha and Omega, the first and last, the beginning and end of your salvation."

Make It Personal: There are only two options...

1. *You can accept the One who became a curse.* If you do, God will accept you. But if you refuse Christ, then option 2 is yours.
2. *You can experience God's curse yourself.* There is no other option.