

Redeemed, Bought Back

Have you ever been in a pawn shop? What was it like? How did you feel while you were there? Was it a comfortable place to be?

I've been in a few pawn shops in past years. Fortunately, I was there to buy, not to borrow. I had to try several to find what I wanted. It was an educational experience. I suppose there is a pawn shop somewhere where merchandise is displayed in brightly lit cabinets and neatly arranged under shiny glass counters, but that was not my experience. The shops I visited were dimly lit, and obviously did not employ a cleaning service, or perhaps even have any cleaning equipment. I felt a bit uneasy. It wasn't like shopping at a modern shopping mall. I didn't see any happy families. I didn't see any groups of teenagers enjoying some time together. It was a sobering and somewhat depressing environment.

The reason I am thinking of pawn shops tonight is Biblical. Yes, that's what I said. Biblical. I haven't read of pawn shops in the Bible, but the Bible has many mentions of something that reminds me of what takes place in pawn shops.

People who visit pawn shops often are distressed, even desperate. They are people in need, people with urgent needs. They need cash, and they need it now. So, they take something of value, maybe even an engagement or wedding ring, and ask for a cash loan for which they give up the valuable item. They receive only a small amount of the value of the item, after they pay a service fee and interest. They hope to be able to repay the loan and get their possessions back, but they only have a month or two to do it, before the shop can sell their item for whatever it wants. These are desperate people, desperate enough to chance losing something precious because of a need that seems so urgent.

“OK”, you say, but maybe you don't see anything Biblical in any of that. So you wonder, “What's your point?” Well, don't rush me. First I want to risk boring you with more pawn shop stuff.

I looked up some of the regulations governing pawn shops. I'm sure you didn't expect that to be part of my sermon, but it is.

The person who leaves the valuable item at the pawn shop is a debtor, a person who owes money. If that debtor wants to get their item back, they have to fulfill all of the requirements and obligations which have been secured by the collateral. To get their item back, they must redeem it. That means that they can't get their item back until the entire debt has been paid. Sometimes they may find that unexpected service charges have been added, and they can't afford to get back their valued possession, and if they

can't come up with the necessary amount of money soon enough, more charges may be added, or their item may have been sold. If it is sold they will never be able to redeem it.

Now I want to read Genesis 3: 1-11:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

Are you wondering what that has to do with pawn shop transactions? Well, Satan, the serpent, hooked Adam and Eve into a pawn shop trap. Adam and Eve ate the fruit, and Satan got their souls.

Satan suggested that they could become like God. That was what Satan had wanted for himself. Satan found that he couldn't take God's place, but he must have figured that Adam and Eve could be drawn in by that same desire. Adam and Eve became aware of good and evil, that was true, but that did not make them like God. It made them like Satan. It was a curse to know good and evil by doing evil. We are living with that curse

every day. We know evil. Often we know more about evil than we know about good.

Satan had trapped Adam and Eve. God came looking for them. For the first time in their lives, they were afraid of God. They had good reason to fear God. God was about to put them and all of creation under a curse because of what they had done. That was an inescapable result of their discovering evil. They had separated themselves from God. They had done it. Satan had tempted them, but they made their decision themselves. God had given them the ability to exercise their will freely, but they misused that blessing and fell under God's curse. Now Satan had them in his power. They, like Satan, were under God's judgment.

Adam and Eve had belonged to God. God had made man in His own image. (Genesis 1: 26 & 27) We don't read that anything else in all of creation was made in God's image. Man had perhaps been God's most cherished possession. But, they had traded that away. The prince of darkness had stolen them away from God. They were now mortal. They would die. If they died in their sin, they would be lost forever. There now was a time limit on their lives. If that limit expired, if they died, before they could be redeemed, they would be lost forever. But, Adam and Eve could not pay the necessary price. Adam and Eve could not redeem themselves.

If God had intended man to have a perfect and close relationship with Him, how could God have let this happen? God had given man a free will. Man could make decisions, even if they were against God's will. We read from the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples in Matthew 6: 10, "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." God's will is not always done, and Jesus has told us that we are to plead that it will be done. Man had violated God's will. That is something that each of us has done many times.

Would God leave man in this condemned condition? We know that the answer to that is, "No." Already at the time that God pronounced His judgment against Satan, Adam, Eve and His creation, God also gave a veiled promise of salvation. God declared:

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Genesis 3: 15)

This was a promise and prophecy of the coming of Christ to provide redemption.

Later, in the New Testament of the Bible, we read that God wants everyone to be saved. In his first letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul wrote:

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, **who wants all people to be saved** and to come to a knowledge of

the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people. (I Timothy 2: 1-6)
And Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3: 9:

The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. Instead He is **patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish**, but everyone to come to repentance.

God will save, and accept into His fellowship, anyone – anyone, but not everyone. God offers salvation to everyone, but not everyone accepts the offer. Everyone has a free will, the ability to say, “Yes” or to say, “No”. Sadly, many say, “No”.

We have the words of Jesus to Nicodemus, words I quote just about every time I am here. Jesus stated the way of salvation, but also the way of condemnation. Jesus said:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”
John 3: 16-18

And, later in his gospel, John recorded more of Jesus words on being saved:

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
John 14: 6

Matthew recorded Jesus “Sermon on the Mount” in his gospel, where we read:

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.
Matthew 7: 13-14

Zechariah, the father of John the baptizer, prophesied about Jesus as the redeemer of His people when John was given his name, at his circumcision.

His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because He has come to His people and redeemed them.
Luke 1: 67-68

The Old Testament of the Bible contains many statements on redeeming and being redeemed. God used this term often in reference to His chosen people, Israel. These words apply to His chosen and saved people today.

The Israelites had been slaves to the Egyptians, and to others who had taken them captive. Israel would go after false gods, but then return to Jehovah, the one true God. God, in His faithfulness to His promises, would redeem them from their captivity. God redeemed Israel, over, and over, and over again. Moses reminded the Israelites: Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there.
Deuteronomy 24: 18a

Israel being held in slavery to Egypt is a picture of God's people being slaves to Satan, until they are redeemed by God.

Today we realize that all of mankind was taken captive by Satan through Adam's sin, and through each man's personal sin. We all need to be redeemed, bought out of slavery to sin and Satan.

Through the prophet Isaiah, God tells us:

“This is what the LORD says—Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God. ...

“I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you.” Isaiah 44: 6 & 22

The book of Job records Job's testimony, his conviction that his body will be resurrected from the dead, by his living Redeemer.

“Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” Job 19: 23-27

At funerals I will sometimes hear words that are spoken to comfort the mourning, but they cut me like a knife. One will say, “He was a good man. I know he's in a better place.” How tragic!

The psalmist, thousands of years ago, wrote this truth:

No one can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for them—the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough—so that they should live on forever and not see decay. ... But God will redeem me from the realm of the dead; He will surely take me to Himself.
Psalm 49: 7-9 & 15

No one can redeem the life of another, and no one can redeem their own life. Being a “good person” won't do it. Being a “good person” suggests that we are saved by our “good” works, by the “works of the law”. The Bible tells us in many places that God does not accept our works as payment for our sin.

Paul wrote about this in his letters:

... know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified. Galatians 2: 16-17

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2: 8-10

Again and again Scripture tells us that salvation is by Christ alone. Paul wrote about this in his letters to the early churches, and in his letter to Titus, his “true son” in their common faith.

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 pole.” 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.

Galatians 3: 13-14

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good. Titus 2: 11-14

And Peter wrote:

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, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

I Peter 1: 18-19

We can only be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, Christ Jesus. But, there are many today, as there always have been, who deny that fact and preach against it. Jesus spoke of this, and the Apostle Peter wrote of it.

Speaking of the time near the end, Jesus told His disciples:

At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.

Matthew 24: 10-11

And earlier, Jesus had taught:

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”
Matthew 7: 15

Peter wrote of false prophets and their destruction in his second letter:

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.
2 Peter 2: 1-3

In the writings of the Apostle Paul we have the true gospel presented repeatedly.

But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through Him!
Romans 5: 8-9

But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of His Spirit who lives in you.

Romans 8: 10-11

He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Romans 8: 32-34

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.
Colossians 3: 1-3

The book of Revelation tells us some of what is taking place above, heavenly things. In Revelation 7: 9-17 we read:

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: “Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!”

Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?”

I answered, “Sir, you know.”

And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.”

‘Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst.

The sun will not beat down on them,’ nor any scorching heat.

For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; ‘he will lead them to springs of living water.’

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Revelation 7: 9-17

This is what awaits all those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb!

God will redeem you. He has paid your debt.

He paid the price with the blood of His Son.

You can be set free from Satan.

Accept the salvation God offers.

Be Redeemed!

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