

REDEEMED, HOW I LOVE TO PROCLAIM IT!

It was Fanny Jane Crosby who wrote, "Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it! Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; Redeemed through His infinite mercy, His child and forever I am." She was in 1823 to humble parents in Southeast, New York, and at the age of six weeks she became the victim of a medical malpractice that left her blind for the rest of her life. However, this physical loss did not seem to discourage her from being of the most well-known and prolific hymn writers of all time. Songs such as "Blessed Assurance," "All the Way My Savior Leads Me," and "Rescue the Perishing" came first from her lips, and she was also known for her devout prayer life and her memorization of large passages of scripture.

Mrs. Crosby could have chosen to be bitter about her inability to see the material world around her, but instead she decided to rejoice in the blessings found in Christ Jesus (cf. Ephesians 1:3). She learned to "...walk by faith, not by sight..." (II Corinthians 5:7). She could say as did Paul, "*Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities*" (II Corinthians 12:10). For Christ had said, "...*my strength is made perfect in weakness* (vs. 9). Are we able to glory in our weaknesses, knowing that Christ has seen fit to give His life for our sakes? Paul said he could endure the pains of life "...*for Christ's sake...*" (vs. 10).

Both Mrs. Crosby and the Apostle Paul came to the same realization when they learned that the blood of Jesus had redeemed them. Whereas Mrs. Crosby wrote, "I sing, for I cannot be silent," Paul wrote by inspiration, "*For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel*" (I Corinthians 9:16)! It is the natural reaction for a mortal to rejoice when he or she has learned his or her value in Christ, for otherwise "*we are of all men most miserable*" (I Corinthians 15:19). Those Christians who understand the concept of redemption are the most evangelistic because "*the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead...*" (II Corinthians 5:14).

Christians love to proclaim our redemption because we are so happy! The Psalmist wrote, "*my lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed*" (Psalms 71:23). There are some who choose not to sing during our worship services. Could it be that they do not fully understand and appreciate their redemption in Christ Jesus? Happiness is a natural response to redemption. After the Ethiopian eunuch had been baptized by Philip, "*he went on his way rejoicing*" (Acts 8:39). "*Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away*" (Isaiah 51:11).

Christians love to proclaim our redemption because we want others to be redeemed. The Psalmist prayed for Israel, "*redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles*" (Psalms 25:22). Those who are purchased by the blood of the Lamb, have then souls redeemed "*from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight*" (72:14). "*With the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plentous redemption*" (130:7). How do we comfort our friends and family members when they are hurting? Are we able to remind them about the promises of God? God is "*the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God*" (II Corinthians 1:3,4). Is there anything more comforting than to know that our immortal Creator loved us enough to redeem our souls with the precious blood of His Son (cf. John 3:16)?

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

THE UNSEARCHABLE GREATNESS OF GOD

Text: _____

I. The _____ of God’s Greatness

Notes:

II. The _____ of God’s Greatness

Notes:

III. The _____ of God’s Greatness

Notes:

THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE FULL

Text: _____

I. _____ in the _____

Notes:

II. _____ of _____

Notes:

III. Be _____ of _____

Notes:

Christians love to proclaim our redemption because we are indebted to God. We may say as the Psalmist said, *“into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth”* (Psalms 31:5). No amount of money could buy back our salvation (cf. Isaiah 52:3). As Jeremiah put it in Lamentations 3:58, *“...thou hast redeemed my life.”* How can we ever repay our Lord for redeeming us from the curse of the law, *“being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree...”* (Galatians 3:13). Paul considered himself *“crucified with Christ,”* and said, *“For me to live is Christ...”* (Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:21). Christ laid down His life for us, and at least we should be willing to deny ourselves (cf. John 15:13; Luke 9:23).

We should enjoy telling others about our redemption. *“Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy...”* (Psalms 107:2). Are you gladly proclaiming the redemption you enjoy in Christ, or are you striving to keep it a secret? If a crown of life is worth dying for, it is worth telling others about (cf. Revelation 2:10).

-Ashley Kizer

WHERE DID GOD GO?

Take a look around where you’re sitting and find five things that have blue in them. (Go ahead and do it). With a “blue” mindset, you’ll find that blue jumps out at you: a blue book on the table, a blue pillow on the couch, blue in the painting on the wall, and so on...In like fashion, you’ve probably noticed that after buy a new car, you promptly see that make of car everywhere. That’s because people find what they are looking for.

At time in our lives, God seems strangely absent, but the problem is not that God has disappeared. We simply lack a “God” mindset. When we develop our sensitivity, we soon begin to see His work everywhere.

STRENGTH IN UNION

One of Aesop’s fables tells of four oxen who were such great friends that they always kept together when feeding. A lion watched them for many days with longing eyes, but never being able to find one apart from the rest, was afraid to attack them. Whenever he came near they turned their tails to one another so that whichever way he approached them he was met by horns. At length he succeeded in awakening jealousy among them, which grew into a mutual aversion, and they strayed a considerable distance from each other. The lion fell upon them singly and killed them all.

The moral is, “United we stand, divided we fall.”

THE BOOK OF DIVINE FELLOWSHIP

There can be no greater fellowship enjoyed than fellowship with God and His children. And in fact, it is that very topic that John declares is the purpose with which he writes his first general epistle: *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ”* (I John 1:3). About this grand association Taylor expounded: *“This beautiful fellowship reaches **up** with a claim on Deity; it reaches **out** with a claim upon all the faithful children of God.”* While the relationships we may enjoy with friends, co-workers, and even family will one day pass away with this frail earth, the relationship we enjoy with God and His children will last forever. There is no greater position in which we could be than in their fellowship. The lingering question, though, might be, *“How can I enjoy that type of fellowship?”* In answer to that question we turn to John.

Unlike most of the other epistles of the New Testament, John does not directly identify those whom he is addressing in the first few verses. It is likely, though, given certain aspects of the text that John was writing to Christians in general, whomsoever would read. For instance, in I John 2:1, John addresses his readers as his *“little children”* and identifies himself with them by saying *“we have an advocate with the Father...”* Elsewhere he addressed them as little children again (2:18,28;3:7,18;4:4;5:21), but also as beloved (3:2,21;4:1,7,11). All of these point to the same conclusion that he was writing to Christians, and it is very important to keep that context in mind when considering the meaning of certain key verses in the book. Also, considering his warning against idolatry (5:21), it is likely that there were strong influences touching the church at the time, and thus in need of reminders concerning the great faith they shared.

First, John reminds them of how they could remain certain of their fellowship with God. There is one thing that can separate us from our loving God and that is sin: *“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth”* (I John 1:6). But living in a world of sin to which sometimes we yield, how can we remain certain that we are continually in fellowship with God? John goes on in the next several verses to explain how we can be cleansed from the blemish of sin and maintain our association with the Lord. He says in I John 1:9 that, *“if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* Then he goes on to explain how that is possible because *“if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins”* (I John 2:1-2). Thus, even though we live in an uncertain world, we can be certain of our fellowship with God because of the sacrifice of our loving Savior.

Second, John warns them of opponents and dangers to their fellowship with God. Since even the lifetime of Christ there have been those who were *“antichrist”* desperately trying to upset the allegiance of Christians, and it was no different in John’s day or in ours. Who is *“antichrist”*? John identifies them by saying, *“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son”* (I John 2:22). There is no single individual to which we can turn and say they are **the** antichrist of whom John spoke because **all** who deny Christ are antichrist. And then John identifies the means by which we can overcome the powerful influence of those antichrists. *“Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father”* (I John 2:24). Thus, remember the truth and abide in the truth and we shall abide in Christ.

Then, third, John reminds them of the love reciprocated in this divine fellowship. God’s love toward man is quite evident from the symbol of that love. *“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us”* (I John 3:16). And this great love enjoyed in fellowship with God is something that should obviously be reciprocated from us to God, but is something also that should be shown to each who is likewise in fellowship with God. *“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God”* (I John 4:7). This is not an optional matter, to say that we can love God but not the brethren. For John went on to say *“he that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love”* (I John 4:8). We cannot be connected to God and yet not be loving toward all, for that contradicts God’s very nature. We must love for we are loved.

Our fellowship with God is the single most important relationship we can have, and thus one that must be maintained no matter the cost. What might be the cost, though? Love, believe, and obey; and thereby enjoy this divine fellowship.

-Andy Brewer