Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Wonder of Our Redemption, Part 1
Scripture: 1 Peter 1:18a
Code: 60-11

First Peter chapter 1 verses 18 through 21; let me read our text. "Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood as of a Lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ; for He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you, who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory so that your faith and hope are in God."

When I was a little boy I remember reading a book. It's one of those childhood books that has a way of sticking in your mind. It was a book about another little boy and this little boy made a boat. He got a fine piece of wood and some tools and he carved out a little boat. And then he carved out a little mast. And then he carved out a little beam and he made a little sail. And he took his little boat, the pride of his craftsmanship and he sailed it on a lake. A strong wind came and blew his little boat out of sight. It was so new the paint had hardly dried on it. He was sad that he had lost his little boat. But a number of days later he was walking through his little village and he stopped to look in a toy shop window and much to his surprise he saw in the window sitting on a pedestal his little boat. He rushed into the store to tell the man who owned the shop that that was his boat. The man didn't believe the little boy and said you're welcome to it, son, but you'll have to pay the full price. You'll have to pay the full price.

He argued again that it was his boat but the man was very demanding and unbending and so he said, "Sir, please don't sell it, I'll go home and I'll look to see if I have enough and I'll be back." And so the little boy went home and scraped together everything he could possibly find out of his bank and all of his pockets and the bottom of his drawers and he came back with exactly enough and he bought his own boat. And the end of the story says that's like God; He made us and He still has to purchase us.

That's what Peter is saying here. The little boy said the boat is twice mine. I made it and I bought it. And that's Peter's message. We are redeemed by the one who made us. One of my favorite words in all of the Bible is the word "redeemed." Do you see it there in verse 18? Marvelous word. In fact I don't think we use it enough. I think at least for every time we say we've been saved we ought also to say we've been redeemed. For every time we call Jesus Savior we ought also to call Him Redeemer.

For every time we speak of salvation we ought also to speak of redemption, for the work of redemption is such a marvelous work.

One of my favorite Puritan writers is a man named Thomas Watson. And Thomas Watson wrote these words, "Great was the work of creation but greater the work of redemption. It cost more to redeem us than to make us. In the one there was but the speaking of the Word, in the other there was the shedding of blood. The creation was but the work of God's fingers, Psalm 8:3. Redemption is the work of His arm, Luke 1:51," end quote.

As great a work as creation is, redemption is a greater work. Our Lord Jesus Himself, says the Scripture, came into the world to give His life a ransom for many. What is a ransom? That's the price of redemption. That's what it costs to redeem someone.

Now redemption is a more specific term than salvation. Salvation is very general and redemption is very specific. Salvation looks at the whole saving work; redemption looks at the price involved, or the means by which salvation is achieved. How were you saved? By being redeemed, the payment of a price; and so redemption focuses on how God bought us back even though He made us. He bought us back to become His own. Redemption shows man in bondage in a hopeless condition from which he must be delivered. And redemption shows how God paid the price to purchase that deliverance. And that's in Peter's heart as he writes and says you are not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold but with precious blood, the blood of Christ. That is the price of redemption.

Now the imagery shadowing redemption in this passage really comes from the Old Testament, from a couple of Old Testament passages. But let's look at the first one in Exodus chapter 12. And here we will see what Peter has in his heart as he writes. Exodus chapter 12, verse 1, and follow as I read a few verses. "Now the Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt." Now we know the setting. Israel is in captivity in Egypt. Moses and Aaron have already come to leadership, which means it will not be long until they will lead the people of God out of Egypt. And so God says to them, "This month shall be the beginning of months for you. It is to be the first month of the year to you. Speak to all the congregation of Israel saying, on the 10th of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household on the 10th of the month of Nisan. Now if the household is too small for a lamb then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them, according to what each man should eat you are to divide the lamb." In other words, you would determine it by how many people were involved, you wanted to have enough of the lamb to feed all the people. If your family was very small it couldn't consume a whole lamb so you would have your neighbor join you and the two of you

together could feast on a lamb and thus you would divide the lamb.

Verse 5, "This lamb, your lamb, shall be an unblemished male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. And you shall keep it until the 14th day of the same month and then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight." I want you to notice that this lamb becomes very precious. They take it into the house, it becomes a pet and then it must be killed. By that time it's very special. May I say it's precious by that time.

We had the occasion this marvelous trip into the Orient to also visit New Zealand. We had the privilege there of nursing some little lambs and can understand the special beauty and special joy that would come to a family who would nurture a little lamb for even a brief period of time. And then they were to kill it on the 14th day at twilight. Moreover says verse 7, "They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel (or the crossbeam) of the houses in which they eat it. And they shall eat the flesh that same night roasted with fire and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled at all with water but rather roasted with fire, both its head and its legs along with its entrails and you shall not leave any of it over until morning." That's why you had to be sure you had enough people to consume it and that's why families would join together. "You shall burn whatever remains with fire. Now you shall eat it in this manner, follow this, with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand, and you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast, and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments, I am the Lord, and the blood on the doorposts and the lintels shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live and when I see the blood I will pass over you and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. Now this day will be a memorial to you and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the Lord. Throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance."

Now this is the Old Testament picture that shadows Peter's thoughts in the passage we're studying. Let me give you just a fill-in for a moment or two. You remember that one of the patriarchs, Joseph, had been sold into slavery by his brothers. He was sold to a caravan on their way to Egypt. He was taken there. You remember that he was a prisoner there but because of his marvelous, supernatural ability to interpret dreams, he was elevated to become the prime minister of Egypt. There occurred during the time that Joseph was prime minister a severe famine in the land of Israel. As a result of it the family of Jacob (that was Joseph's father), seventy strong came to Egypt to survive. And now in a marvelous twist of God's divine providence, those who sold Joseph into slavery are, in a sense, at his mercy. These people from Israel who came into the land of Egypt were keepers of livestock. And there they were and they took up residence in Egypt and so Pharaoh gave them their own section of

land and the name of it was Goshen. Have you heard that name? Goshen was their land where they could raise their livestock.

Well they began to multiply. And it says in Exodus 1 and verse 7 that the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly and multiplied and waxed exceeding mighty and the land was filled with them. They really began to reproduce. Their status gradually deteriorated during the centuries after they left their homeland. And a new king took place and the Bible says the king who knew not Joseph was jealous of these foreigners. He was afraid of these foreigners whom God had so obviously multiplied and blessed they were a threat to him. So he decided to make them slaves and he took them all and turned them into slaves and put them in forced labor camps in his massive building projects. All this did was make them stronger physically, more resolute, and they continued to multiply their numbers. Finally after about 400 years God said it's time for you to leave and go back to the land which I promised to give. But Pharaoh wouldn't let them go because he wanted the slave labor.

And so God had to move in against Pharaoh and he brought in a series of terrible plagues which you have read about if you've ever read the first few chapters of Exodus. And Pharaoh still wouldn't let them go even though Moses said to them, "Let my people go." Pharaoh refused to do it and finally God said, "Then I will bring a final plague and this one will do the trick." And the plague was the slaughter of every firstborn child in Egypt. So God unleashed the death of the firstborn, the last cataclysmic judgment. And this tragic judgment would create the exodus in which not seventy who came in but two million would now leave after their long bondage. God said I'm going to send a death angel and that death angel is going to come through Egypt and slay the firstborn child in every house, an absolute unthinkable judgment.

But in order for the Hebrews to be spared the work of this assassin angel, God instructed them to take a lamb, a lamb of the first year, unblemished, spotless. Take it in, make it their own for a period of time and then kill it, offer it as a sacrifice to the Lord, put its blood on the doorposts and the lintel, then eat that animal. And when the angel of death came by, seeing the blood on the door, he would pass by.

Now listen, here's the point. The lamb's life would be the price to purchase the life of the firstborn. The lamb would be in place of the firstborn. The lamb was a substitute. This is a substitutionary death, a lamb for a child. The lamb would pay the price that God required and thus redeem the firstborn. Well it would be hard to imagine the busyness and the preparation of those days, wouldn't it? The activity of every family searching high and low to find an unblemished and spotless lamb;

knowing full well how cherished the firstborn in the family was there would be a certain amount of frantic anxiety to determine that they had a lamb that God would accept. And then making sure that they did everything right and took that blood. And I'm sure if I were living at that time there would be blood from one end of that door to the other, just in case it was a little dim and the death angel might not see too well.

I'm not sure how much blood was in a lamb but I'm sure that all that there was was poured all over the front of those houses. And I like to think that when that father took hyssop and dipped it in that bowl of lamb's blood and made those marks, he painted up one side and painted up the other side and painted across the top and was making a picture of the cross. And the blood became that which was shed for the redemption of the firstborn.

As evening came, those families would wait, certainly anxiously. They would be gathered around the table, their sandals were on, their staffs were in their hand, those which they used to herd their animals as they traveled. Their clothes girded up, they were ready to move and they ate quickly, ready to leave in the great exodus. And the judgment came and all throughout Egypt there was terrible death and crying and it says in Exodus 12:33 the Egyptians were urgent upon the people that they might send them out of the land in a hurry, for they said we shall all be dead. That did it. Get out.

And so this became the symbol of their deliverance by death. This became the symbol of substitutionary redemption. And God then decreed that this Passover experience be memorialized in a special Passover that was held every year to remind Israel of the great deliverance through the blood of the lamb and to point to the true Lamb who was to come. And so from this time on always on the 14th of Nisan, the Jews celebrate the Passover and they remember the lamb who redeemed the firstborn by his death; the great illustration of redemption that pointed to the ultimate Lamb who would redeem through His death.

Surely this is in Peter's mind as he writes, "We were not redeemed by corruptible things such as silver and gold but by the blood of Christ, the Lamb unblemished and without spot." By the way, the Jews still celebrate Passover, as you know, and they still celebrate it as the greatest act of God's delivering, redeeming power in Jewish history. It has been memorialized. It is still going on. In Exodus 15, when Moses and the sons of Israel sing their song of praise to the Lord, in verse 13 they sing, "In Thy loving kindness Thou hast led the people whom Thou hast redeemed." So as they look back at Egypt they see the exodus as based on redemption. They were redeemed. They were purchased and the price was the death of a substitute, in that case a lamb.

In Psalm 78, and I can't show you all the scriptures, but in Psalm 78 verse 35 it says, "And they remembered that God was their Rock" and I love this "and the Most High God was their Redeemer." You see, from the exodus on they saw God as the one who bought them out of slavery, who redeemed them by the blood of a lamb.

But listen, as great as that redemption was it can't be compared to the redemption of which Peter writes. So let's go back to 1 Peter. Here is the great redemption. This one infinitely surpasses the other. And that, by the way, is why we no longer celebrate the Passover, nor should we celebrate the Passover, for there is a greater memorial which commemorates not the deliverance out of Egypt but the deliverance that Christ wrought on the cross. So instead of Passover we have Communion. And instead of once a year we do it much more frequently.

Peter then in verse 18 writes of our redemption. Why does he do that? Why is it here? Well let me help you remember. After his opening words as he began this epistle, he launched immediately into a discussion of salvation. It didn't take him long. He starts at the end of verse 1 with, "Who are chosen," and then moves right in to the foreknowledge of God, the sanctifying work of the Spirit, the sprinkling of the blood of Christ which was part of the covenant of salvation. He moves right into a description of salvation that goes right on down through verse 12. So he begins this epistle talking about the greatness of our salvation.

Then starting in verse 13 he speaks of our response to that great salvation. So you have indicatives, or statements of fact, in the first twelve verses, and you have imperatives, or commands, starting at verse 13. Because you have received this great salvation, here is how you are to respond. And as I told you last time, he focuses on three dimensions of response: How we respond to God, how we respond to others, and how we respond within ourselves. How we respond to God occupies the section we're looking at down through verse 21. How we respond to others, verse 22 to 25. And how we respond to ourselves, chapter 2 verses 1 to 3. The proper response to God's great salvation.

Now what did we say last time was to be our response? First of all, hope, verse 13, we are to fix our hope completely on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Christ, that's a proper response to God's gift of salvation. We are to hope in God. Secondly, holiness, verse 15, "Be holy yourselves in all your behavior." And thirdly, honor, verse 17, "You are to conduct yourselves in fear" or respect or awe of God "during the time of your stay on earth." So God has given us a great salvation and what are we to do in response? We are to hope in God, fix our hope on the grace that He will bring at the revelation of Christ. We are to focus on being holy and we are to conduct our lives in reverence,

honor, fear of God. And so that's what we were discussing in verse 17 last time, conduct yourselves in fear. That means in reverence, in awe, or in honor. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, says Proverbs 9:10. We are to have a healthy regard for God's holy hatred of sin. We are to have a healthy regard for God's right to chasten sin. There is to be a healthy fear in us that honors God as a holy God. And we are to maintain that, he says in verse 17, during the time of your stay on earth, during your *paroikia*, your temporary sojourn. It's used, by the way, of Israel in Egypt in Acts 13:17 and that indicates to me too that this is probably in his mind. Just as Israel had a temporary sojourn in Egypt, you will have a temporary sojourn in the earth. And since you know God is an impartial judge who judges according to man's work, you better live in fear all the time of your sojourn in this world.

You say, "Will He take away my salvation?" No, but He might chasten you and He might disqualify you for service. That's why if you sin Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:27, you run the risk of being disqualified. Not lost, but disqualified from spiritual usefulness. So we are called to fear. We are called to awe. We are called to honor and reverence God's holy person. We are called to emulate His holiness, being holy as He is holy. And we are called to hope in His glorious revelation when we shall receive the ultimate grace of salvation.

Then in verse 18 Peter closes this section on our response to God by reminding us again as if we haven't had enough in the first twelve verses, of the greatness of our salvation. And this should be motivation for hope and holiness and honor. It's as if he says, "Now let me say it once more, you are to live in hope and holiness and honor because of the greatness of salvation." And in order to help us see another way into its greatness, he speaks of our being redeemed, knowing that you were not, and here's the word, redeemed by perishable things, and he launches into a discussion of redemption.

Now this term "redemption" simply means to set free by paying a ransom. The verb is *lutro*, the noun is *lutron*, which means a ransom, a price. It's a technical term for money paid to buy a prisoner of war back or to buy the freedom of a slave. And what he is saying is you must respond to God in a proper way in these three dimensions that have been mentioned — hope, holiness, and honor — because of the price God has paid for your redemption. That's the issue here.

Now, I'm not going to hurry through this because it is so rich. But I want you to face four questions, okay? Four questions that he answers here and they will give us the theology of redemption, marvelous truth. What were we redeemed from? Question number one. What were we redeemed with? Question number two. Who were we redeemed by? Question number three. And what were we redeemed for? Question number four.

What were we redeemed from? What were we redeemed with? Who were we redeemed by? And what were we redeemed for? Let's answer the first question at least, okay?

Question number one, what were we redeemed from? What's the obvious answer? From what? Sin, good. Scripture certainly supports that men are in bondage to sin, that men and women are slaves to iniquity. I don't want to belabor the point because I know you understand it but I want to be true to an explanation of the passage, so let me give you some refreshing reminders of this.

In Romans chapter 6 we are reminded that we live under the bondage of sin but that in our salvation, verse 6 of Romans 6, the body of sin is done away. The body of sin is done away. Verse 17 says you were slaves of sin. Verse 18 says, "And having been freed from sin you became slaves of righteousness." Verse 20, "When you were slaves of sin," it's mentioned again. Verse 22: "You have now been freed from sin." Now that's enough statements to know that our bondage was to sin. We were bound in sin, bound in sin.

Secondly, looking at it in a little different way. In Galatians 3:13 it says, "Christ redeemed us, not from sin, but from the curse of the law." What does that mean? The consequence of sin. The law said the soul that sinneth it shall what? Die. The law said the wages of sin is death, eternal death. So we were redeemed from sin and from the consequence of sin, which is the curse of death, eternal death, eternal death.

In Ephesians chapter 1 will you notice verse 7? Speaking of Christ it says, He is called the beloved in verse 6, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses." And again we are reminded that our redemption is from trespasses, from sin. In Colossians chapter 1 and verse 14 it says, "In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin." Again our redemption is connected with sin. And then in that tremendous text of Titus chapter 2 and verse 14 it says, "He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed." That's another way of defining sin, from every lawless deed. We have been delivered from sin. In Titus 3:3 by the way it says we were enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice or evil, envy, hateful, hating one another. So we have been redeemed from sin.

One other verse comes to mind. I think it's verse 15 of...yes, Hebrews 9. It says there, "And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant." And again we have

the idea that we are redeemed from sin. Okay? That's the general thought. Now let's go back to our passage and let me show you some specifics. And the news is all bad, first of all, as we look at what we were redeemed from. Okay? Four elements characterize unredeemed sinners. If this is what you were redeemed from this is what you used to be characterized by, okay? So did I. Four words I want you to draw your attention to.

The first one appears in verse 14 and we reach back a little bit to pick this one up but it helps us understand the sinfulness of sin and its character. In verse 14 it says, "Do not be conformed, now that you are obedient children, to the former lusts." Okay. The first characteristic of sin is lust, lust. This is an element of the sinfulness of unredeemed sinners. They are basically controlled by lust. Now what is lust? *Epithumia*, strong desire, strong desire in the heart for what is evil, that's the basic idea. It has to do with a compelling driving passion for what is evil. And so the character of unredeemed sinners is that they are driven by strong desires.

The character of those desires is further defined in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, where it says in verse 5 that we are not to behave in lustful passion like the pagans who do not know God. And again he says that this lust is a passion and it is a godless passion. So unredeemed sinners are driven by unrestrained desire for what is evil.

Now I want to dig into this a little bit because I think it's very, very fascinating. Do you remember Genesis 6:5? Do you remember that verse? Genesis 6:5, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only (What?) evil continually." Now let me get that verse down for you, write it down somewhere because it really characterizes unredeemed sinners. God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and here is a definition of that wickedness. Every imagination of the thought of his heart was only evil continually. That is a graphic, to-the-point description of the driving impulse of lust. What is it? It's every imagination of the thought of his heart.

Now let me help you see what that means, okay? The heart is the mind. The heart is the mind, basically, where you think. So we understand what it means when it says the thoughts of his heart. But what does he mean "every imagination of the thoughts of the heart?" He adds another dimension here, something, somehow distinct from thought, something, if you will, that energizes thought, something that compels thought. Could it be lust? It can be. Lust is certainly associated with the imagination. Basically the same idea comes through in James 1. Listen to these words. "Each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own (What?) lust. Then when lust has conceived it gives birth to sin." Same idea; there's something else in you beside thought: It's lust. And it works in

your imagination. I love that word. We don't use that word much. Many of the old writers in Christian literature used the word imagination, it's a tremendous word. In many of the new translations they don't use the word imagination, but they do in the King James and I think it keeps the perspective clear. Let me just give you an illustration of how it's used and I can do that by looking at nothing beyond the book of Jeremiah alone.

I was studying this and just digging into it, listen to this, for example, Jeremiah 3:17, "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord," and this is looking ahead to the glories of the future, "and all the nations shall be gathered unto it to the name of the Lord to Jerusalem" now listen, "neither shall they walk anymore after the imagination of their evil heart." Chapter 7, down about verse 24, yes, "They hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels" follow "and in the imagination of their evil heart." Chapter 9 verse 14, talking again of disobedient people, "They have walked after the imagination of their own heart." Then he brings up Balaam as well. There's another one in chapter 11, I believe, verse 8, "Yet they obeyed not nor inclined their ear, but walked everyone in the imagination of their evil heart." Over in chapter 13 and verse 10, "This evil people which refused to hear My words which walk in the imagination of their heart." Chapter 16 verse 12, "And you have done worse than your fathers for behold you walk everyone after the imagination of his evil heart." Chapter 18, I think it's the same, verse 12, it says, "We will everyone do the imagination of his evil heart." And then at least one more I can give you, chapter 23, verse 17, yes, "You shall have peace, they say unto everyone that walks after the imagination of his own heart, no evil shall come upon you."

In looking at the Authorized Version and going through just that one book, you can see that the concept of the imagination was very much a part of the thinking. Now let me tell you how sin works. Sin works in your imagination. And in the imagination of a person is where he or she builds the fantasies. That's where you develop the fantasies that are the impulses to behavior. For example, I am tempted, let's say, to do something wrong. The temptation comes to me. If I don't deal with it immediately it enters into my thoughts. I think of it as a temptation. I think of doing it. "Oh I could do that. That might feel good." And then if I continue to think about it, it goes from that thought into my what? My imagination, and pretty soon I am building the scenario of forbidden pleasure and I'm feeding that thought. It's now in my imagination and I have created the fantasy that, listen to me, will move my emotions which will activate my will which will create the action. That is why so many of the ancient writers said you have to control the imagination. The problem with unredeemed humanity is it can't. Sin works in the imagination. And, of course, the imagination is totally dominated by sin, totally. What else could it be dominated by?

In Luke 1:51 Mary gives that great Magnificat as she magnifies the Lord and she says of the Lord, "He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts." Sin starts out as a thought. It is fed in the imagination. And when the imagination concocts the fantasy scenario, lust is excited and it moves the emotion and emotion activates the will and conduct is a result. Listen carefully, in dealing with sin imagination then becomes more fundamental in thinking in some ways. And I don't want to split hairs here but I want you to understand it. Imagination becomes more fundamental than thinking and it is what energizes the thought into fantasy that activates the emotion which moves the will. So it is in the imagination that our flesh comes to consciousness in the form of mental pictures of pleasure, mental pictures of certain experiences we believe will make us happy, or certain experiences we believe will fulfill us.

And by the way, the flesh controls the imagination in the unredeemed. And it can control yours too as a Christian. And the flesh-controlled imagination produces distortions and lies about everything, lies about oneself, lies about the world, lies about relationships, lies about God, lies about the nature of things, lies about pleasure, lies about fulfillment, lies about joy. And those lies and distortions in the flesh-controlled imagination lead directly to gross sin, depression, hardness of heart, bitterness, all kinds of sinful behavior, and greater and greater misery. And the imagination is where lust conceives.

Let me give you an illustration. This is true for us as Christians so let me move into that realm for a moment. You're a Christian, right? Let's say you're a Christian young person and you're out alone with someone that you care very much about of the opposite sex, you're very attracted to that person. And you are in a situation where you are tempted. This thought will be in your mind. This sin will feel good if I do it. That's a thought. I want to do that, it will feel good. If you're a Christian this thought will also be in your mind, this sin will displease God. Will you not have both thoughts? Of course you will, both thoughts. So the issue is not thoughts. Your behavior is not controlled simply in that area of thought. It is controlled in the imagination. You see, both of those are facts in your mind at that time. If I do this it will feel good. If I do this it will displease God. Both of those are thoughts so thought alone isn't going to control what you do. Something is going to energize one of those thoughts. And what we would hope is that all of a sudden the thought "this will displease God" will be energized and your imagination will begin to say, This would bring dishonor to the Lord who loved me and bought me and gave Himself for me, this would grieve the Holy Spirit, this would hinder my testimony, this would strike a fist, as it were, in the face of God, this would rebel against the one I love and who died for me and the one that I live for and love deeply." We would hope that that would be the energizing imagination. On the other hand, you might just create the fantasy of what would feel good.

So, we could, I guess, reduce it to the point where we could say when this sin will feel good if I do it, my flesh wants that thought. And the thought that says if I do it, it will displease God, my spirit wants

that thought. So I face the conflict. Which will control me? Whichever one does will move my emotions. Whichever one moves my emotions strongly will activate my will and determine my behavior.

You say, "Well which one will be the one?" Whichever one controls your imagination. Now you can't split it anymore than that, we're getting pretty technical right here. Whichever thought is made most instantly vivid to you will control you. Whichever thought pulls you most dramatically, whatever your imagination energizes, and if you're dominated by the Spirit what's going to happen? Your imagination is going to be dominated by the Spirit too and you're going to build a case in your mind for what pleases God. And if you're functioning in the flesh your flesh is going to catapult your imagination into that thought and spin the fantasy of what feels good. You've got to take care of your imagination.

That's why we live in a dangerous world, my dear friend. You sit in front of televisions and movies and all of that kind of trash long enough and you won't even be in control of your imagination. You will have played out vividly before your very eyes so many compromising scenes that you don't even need an imagination. You feed that illicit, fantasy world and you will have a problem.

I've had people actually say to me, "I have a terrible problem with immorality."

And I've said to them on a number of occasions, "Do you read pornography?"

"Well, yeah."

"What do you expect? You have stuffed your imagination with fantasies." Do you see why it's so important to do what the Bible says? You've got to protect your imagination, my friend, don't expose it to that trash. Joshua 1:8, "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth," listen to this "you shall meditate on it" what? "day and night." Psalm 19, do you know it? "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be" what? That's talking about your imagination. You meditate in your imagination. You feed the imagination a steady diet of sin and you're going to have a hard time controlling it. You feed the imagination a steady diet of biblical truth and it will control your behavior.

So, beloved, we were redeemed from the state of being controlled by lust and evil imagination. I mean, look at the world. Is it any wonder they act the way they act? Is it any wonder? You want to

know why we've got so much garbage in this nation, why we've got so much sick sin everywhere? You want to know why we've got so much debauchery in this nation? Because everybody's imagination is filled to the hilt with it; there's no way to restrain it. Every imaginable fantasy is not even a fantasy anymore, you can look at it and it's a reality, polluted minds beyond description, evil imaginations. If it was true in Genesis 6:5, it's certainly true today. From what were we redeemed? We were redeemed from an evil imagination. Isn't that a wonderful truth? And we certainly ought to protect our imagination. We certainly oughtn't to be in a situation where we just continue to feed it filth and then wonder why we fall all over the place trying to live the Christian life.

Listen to 1 Chronicles, I'll close with this, 1 Chronicles 29, I didn't get very far, did I? First Chronicles 29:10, "Wherefore David blessed the Lord before all the congregation." He's dedicating the temple here and his son Solomon. And David said, "Blessed be thou Lord God of Israel, our Father forever and ever." Then 1 Chronicles 29:11 says, "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine, Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all, both riches and honor come of Thee and Thou reignest over all and in Thine hand is power and might and in Thine hand it is to make great and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee and praise Thy glorious name. But who am I and what is my people that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort, for all things come of Thee and of Thine own have we given Thee, for we are strangers before Thee and sojourners as were all our fathers. Our days on the earth are as a shadow and there is none abiding. O Lord, our God, all this store that we have prepared to build Thee a house for Thine holy name cometh of Thine hand and is all Thine own."

Now listen, "I know also, my God, that Thou tryest the heart and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of my heart, I have willingly offered all these things and now I have seen with joy Thy people which are present here to offer willingly unto Thee. O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Thy people and prepare their heart unto Thee and give unto Solomon, my son, a perfect heart, to keep Thy commandments, Thy testimonies, and Thy statutes and to do all these things."

You notice that little phrase in verse 18, "Keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Thy people." David prays, "O God, keep their imagination focused on You, on Your truth, on Your greatness, on Your power, on Your glory, on Your victory, on Your majesty, on Your exalted headship, on Your sovereignty as the source of riches and honor, on Your power and might, on Your ability to make great and to give strength. Praise Your glorious name." What's he saying? He's saying, "O God, may the imagination of the heart of my people be on You."

How do you do that? Feed that imagination, feed that part of you by meditating day and night on the Word of God and don't wonder why you are battling, losing to sin if you expose your imagination to things sinful. It's inevitable. It's inevitable.

Not enough just to have the thought because when you're tempted you're going to have as a Christian both thoughts, the good one and the bad one. But what compels you and what energizes one or the other is what's feeding your imagination. And if your imagination is filled with the fantasies of sin, it will activate lust. If it is filled with meditation on the Word of God it will activate virtue.

Beloved, when you were redeemed you were redeemed from lust. And that's why Paul says don't walk in it anymore. There's no need to, no need. You were taken out of that. That's his whole message in Ephesians 4, Colossians 3. You were taken out of that. Don't walk in it anymore. The key, guard your imagination. So we were redeemed from lust that conceives in the imagination. Well, we'll have to pick it up from there next time and see what else we were redeemed from. Let's bow in prayer.

It's so good to be together tonight, Lord, and to have the refreshing time to study Your precious Word. What a joy. Thank You. Thank You for giving us insight again. Help us, Lord, to just be so grateful for the Lamb of God, sweet Lamb of God by whose blood we were redeemed from sin, even from a lifetime of sinful lust. Thank You for buying us back from the bondage of lust, that we might yield ourselves as servants of righteousness. That's our prayer for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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