



REDEEMED

Sermon Growth Guide

March 27, 2022

Redeemed - From the Great Lie

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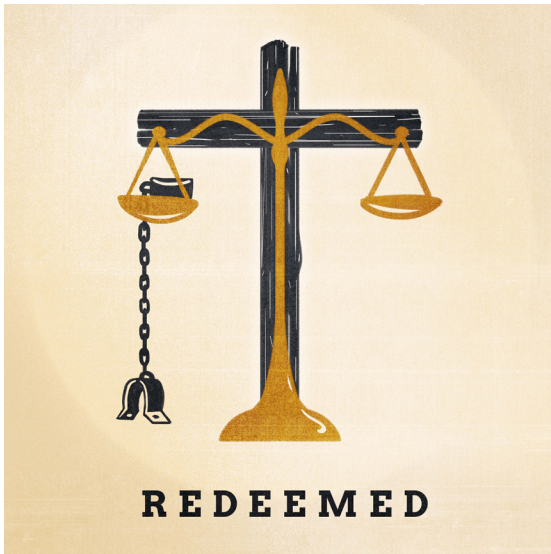
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Redeemed - From the Great Lie

Romans 7:15-25

Key Verse: Romans 7:15 “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.”

Big Idea: Jesus redeems me from the lie that my impulses are a better compass than God’s Word.



Foundations

We arrive now at a most intimate section of writing in all of Romans. Paul cries out, “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do,” (Romans 7:15). Can you relate? Is it easy for you to identify patterns of personal behavior that you know are less than the Kingdom ideal?

Help from the outside, that’s what we need, deliverance. Unlike the modern secularist who builds a temporal and material kingdom presuming there is nothing more, the Christian is one whose eyes have been opened to see the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom that instructs us to first and foremost seek the righteousness of the triune God. We know our deliverance must come from the outside, which is exactly what we have: “Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!” Paul declares in verse 25.

This week we are being transformed, away from the patterns that our flesh is drawn to, toward the deliverance that Jesus gives us to live for Him and His Kingdom, to live for something greater than ourselves.

Pray together, that the Spirit would teach you the danger of agreeing with “the great lie.” Pray that the Spirit of God will teach your heart to trust even more in the Word made flesh, Christ Jesus, who delivers you.

Understanding God’s Word

Together, read Romans 7:15-25.

Practice paraphrasing what Paul is expressing in this passage.

In verse 25, what is it that gives Paul cause for thanksgiving? What exactly is Paul proclaiming to be delivered from?

Applying God’s Word

Our text today concludes by stating that we belong to a law no matter what. If we obey our flesh, our momentary impulses, we walk under the law of sin. Oppositely, if we keep in step with the Spirit, we walk under the law of God.

Pastor Tim implores you this week: stop trying to rescue yourself. Allow Jesus to deliver you. How can you even more trust Jesus with your deliverance, not yourself?

Witnessing God’s Word

The world needs to see the Church walking in Kingdom deliverance. What patterns do you think your neighbors see in your life that are more closely aligned with the patterns of the world? How can you exchange the patterns of the world for Kingdom patterns that reflect the Light and Life of Jesus?

A friend of mine has a son who gets to work The Masters golf tournament this year in Augusta. For anyone who is feeling the warm weather and reaching for their golf clubs, the phrase “great lie” means something else. It means your ball landed in a nice place to hit it from for the next shot. That’s not what we are talking about today, unfortunately. There are a lot of lies out there. When we believe those lies, they can take us under and cause us confusion. We can get stuck in them, even to the point where it feels like we belong to them somehow. The world has wonderful things in it! They are meant to be enjoyed. But when we make them the ultimate things in our lives, we begin to be captured by their enticements and thrills. We believe the great lie. Henri Nouwen put it this way as he wrote to a friend who was living in New York City: “The world is evil only when you become its slave. The world has a lot to offer—just as Egypt did for the children of Jacob—as long as you don’t feel bound to obey it. The great struggle facing you is not to leave the world, to reject your ambitions and aspirations, or to despise money, prestige, or success, but to claim your spiritual truth and to live in the world as someone who doesn’t belong to it.” (Henri Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved*). When you believe the great lie, you become its slave. Jesus has **Redeemed** you **From the Great Lie**.

What is the secret to happiness? How do you find the fulfilled life? This is the pursuit of every philosopher and guru from the beginning of time. For Plato, it was about living the good life with constant attention to virtue. Aristotle added that you must have a community of adequate social constructs to support your pursuit of the good if you are to find happiness and peace. Cicero taught the constant pursuit of the “summam bonum,” the greatest good for you and for all in every case, no matter the cost to

yourself and your comforts. Even in personal sacrifice, your life can have meaning for Cicero and the Stoics. What do we think today? I’m not sure we’re thinking very carefully about it at all. Just do whatever! You do you! That attitude is actually taught by self-help spiritual teachers like Eckhart Tolle. He teaches that the truly free life is the life lived in immediate response to satisfy the needs of your body. Listen to your body and give it what it wants, and don’t listen to anyone around you who finds that offensive. I’m not sure.

David Brooks in *The Road to Character* calls that attitude “Adam One.” The selfish person. A narcissistic, shrewd, crafty animal who turns everything into a game they can try to win for their personal pleasure. “Adam Two” as he names it, is different. These people have a purpose higher than their own self-indulgence. They give themselves away to something larger than themselves. They have meaning, and they have integrity, inner cohesion in their lives. “They are not leading fragmented, scattershot lives. They have achieved inner integration. They are calm, settled, and rooted... Sometimes you don’t even notice these people, because while they seem kind and cheerful, they are also reserved. They possess the self-facing virtues of people who are inclined to be useful but don’t need to prove anything to the world: humility, restraint, reticence, temperance, respect, and soft self-discipline. They radiate a sort of moral joy.” (David Brooks, *The Road to Character*). That sounds nice.

Paul is wrestling with this very thing in our passage today. He is wrestling with himself. Wrestling with his own identity. Who am I? What is this fight I’m in? What we find is this: we can’t find the road to character without the help of Jesus. The Great Lie is that we can find satisfaction and happiness and fulfillment by pursuing our



own desires to their ends, by giving ourselves everything we want. That's the lie we hear, isn't it? Get this. Buy this. Take this. Do this. You will be happy! Nah. I'm not sure. If I feed my flesh everything it wants, am I really going to be happy? When we believe the Great Lie, we are captured by it. We become its slaves. We must be ransomed out of that. We must be Redeemed.

"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do" (Romans 7:15). Welcome to one of the most intimate and self-disclosing passages in all of the New Testament! It is something, isn't it? It sounds like nonsense at times. What is he talking about? This may read awkwardly, but have you ever struggled to understand your own actions? Have you ever sensed that you are not your ideal self? Have you ever felt that the "potential you" is not fully manifested in the "current you"? Then I suspect you have a few journal entries that sound just like this. I know what is good. Why can't I do it? I know what is bad. Why do I keep doing it? Paul is very aware that God has revealed good and evil in the law, in the Scriptures. He knows that. "And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good" (Romans 7:16). I know what good is. I know what right is. I agree that the law is good. But there seems to be another force at work.

What is that force? Sin. "As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out" (Romans 7:17–18). Sin is at work in me. How does sin get so powerful as to pull me off course like this? I thought sin was just a mistake I made, a bad choice. Does it really have this much power? Here's the thing about sin... What is sin? We've all done it.

Remember? "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). We've all done it. Can it really be such a big deal? What is it? Sin is our missing of the mark of holiness. Sin is our choosing the selfish path over what we know is right. It is our breaking of God's law. It is our rebellion against God's rule. It is an event, but it is also an inclination. We have within us a pattern and habit and inclination to sin. That's what is inside us. And we live in a world hellbent on running from God. That's what is outside us—every wave and every impulse drives us toward sin and away from holiness. That's sin. And it separates us from God. But when we give into it, it becomes even more. It becomes a force that binds us.

I know this sermon is pretty "quote-y" but hang with me for one more. Theologian Fleming Rutledge in her incredible book, *The Crucifixion*, says, "To be in sin, biblically speaking, means something very much more consequential than wrongdoing; it means being catastrophically separated from the eternal love of God. It means to be on the other side of an impassible barrier of exclusion from God's heavenly banquet. It means to be helplessly trapped inside one's own worst self, miserably aware of the chasm between the way we are and the way God intends us to be. It means the continuation of the reign of greed, cruelty, rapacity, and violence throughout the world. In view of God's nature, it is impossible that this state of affairs would be allowed to continue forever." Sin isn't just a list of our errors or mistakes. It's bigger than that. It is a force running rampant across the landscape and in our own lives. That's exactly what Paul is wrestling with here.

"For I do not do the good I want to do, but 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: Although 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 me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me" (Romans 7:19–23). That stinks, doesn't it? And can't you relate? I just can't break the pattern into freedom. I just can't stop the habit that keeps dragging me back. I just can't live that pure, noble, peace-filled, moral-joy-radiating, character-integrity life I want so bad! I'm grabbed and pulled back and twisted and stuck.

I know we want to pretend there is no such thing as sin. It's very uncool to talk about sin. It is very out. Even among Christians. But we know it's there. And no, it isn't some medieval psychological construct sent from the past to torture us and make us feel bad about ourselves. It is a diagnosis. And I know you can feel it. There is something wrong in the world and it needs to be fixed. There is something wrong in me and it needs to be fixed. I can tell this isn't life as life was meant to be! The Great Lie tells me to just keep running at my burning desires. Just get a little more of what your flesh needs. "You're almost there," it says. There was an article in a psychological journal some years ago about addiction and the title of the article was *It's Hard to Get Enough of What Almost Works*. You're almost there. Just take some more. Just drink some more. Just eat some more. Just buy some more. Just party some more. You're almost there! So says the Great Lie. Spoken by the Great Liar. Along with your flesh and its habits and tendencies that pull you from God, along with the currents and patterns of the world in which we live that push you from God, you have an enemy in the spiritual world. The devil. Constantly he whispers in your ear, "Just a little more. Just a little further.

The satisfaction is just around the next bend." Don't believe the lie.

I know there is something wrong. You know there is something wrong. So we mount up. Double the effort. I mount up with my David Brooks character books. I double down on my Cicero and Plato and Aristotle and Tolle. I join the Oprah book club! Send it all. I'll read it; I promise. I'll do it. I'll solve it. I'll conquer that addiction, stop that self-destructive behavior and finally establish my inner coherence and personal integrity. You watch! You watch. Paul was not so sure, though. Even as he wrote his note to this group of self-assured, world-conquering Romans. He was not so sure. "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin" (Romans 7:24–25).

I'm a slave. I made myself a slave. Wretched man that I am! Thanks be to God, who delivers me. Thanks be to God who rescues me. Thanks be to God who ransoms me, who saves me—who redeems me. "Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!" "There is a redeemer; Jesus, God's own Son; Precious Lamb of God, Messiah; Holy One. Jesus my redeemer; Name above all names; Precious Lamb of God, Messiah; Oh, for sinners slain. Thank you, oh my Father; For giving us Your Son; And leaving Your Spirit; 'Til the work on Earth is done." (Keith Green). Don't believe the Great Lie. Don't try to rescue yourself. Reach out to God. Stretch out your hands to your Savior and be Redeemed.

