

# Life and Teaching of Paul

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## The Poetic Metaphor

The poetic metaphor is one of the most common figures of speech used in the Hebrew Scriptures; especially, in the Wisdom Literature and in the writings of the Major and Minor Prophets. As stated in the previous lesson, there are distinctive pieces of metaphorical imagery used by Paul in his interpretation and presentation of God's deliverance of man. In the study of biblical literature, literary scholars classify these figures as, "poetic metaphors." The metaphor is as essential to the poet as quill and ink; it is the primary tool of his trade. It is not simply a term used for comparison with another term; rather, it is the use of one conceptual figure to create a mental image of that figure as applied to another figure; thus creating a "word picture" or visualization of the concept desired to be transferred.

The characteristics of a metaphorical figure provides a way to see another metaphorical figure. There are domains of thought that serve as a way of grouping specific metaphors (called by linguists Conceptual Domains). In the OT there are many such metaphoric domains; to mention only a few, there are: **family metaphors** (father, mother, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, etc). There are **occupation metaphors** (farmers, shepherds, fishermen, merchants, rulers, tax-collectors, scribes, etc); there are **clothing metaphors** (garments, tunics, robes, head-covering, sandals, etc). There are **food metaphors** (bread, leaven, lambs, figs, water, wine, a cup, a table as a reference to a meal, etc). There are **place metaphors**

(house, temple, synagogue, mountain, garden, wilderness, etc). There are **animal metaphors** (the fox, lion, bullock, ox, donkey, jackal, birds, fish, and the lamb, etc). There are **anthropological metaphors** (man, woman, Adam, Eve, child, maiden, flesh, spirit, mind, the face, eyes, hands, feet, grey hair, a beard, etc). There are **purification metaphors** (sanctification, holiness, cleansing, washing, baptizing, propitiation, ransom, atonement, forgiveness, etc). Then there's the **sacrificial metaphor** (an offering, death, to kill, blood, the temple, altar, appeasement, atonement, and the cross or crucifixion of Jesus). The list could be continued extensively with metaphysical, literary, moral, and emotional metaphorical domains. For our purposes we will, in individual lessons, develop the metaphorical figures Paul uses in his interpretation of what has occurred in the salvation of mankind.

## **The Redemption Metaphor**

There are in Paul's development of what occurs in conversion at least four distinct poetic metaphors used to interpret the meaning of the death and resurrection of Christ as a saving event. There's the *redemption metaphor*, borrowed from the slave market, wherein salvation is portrayed as one being freed from enslavement to the satanic powers of sin and death. There is also the *conquest metaphor*, in which Christ is seen as having destroyed the power of sin and the satanic forces that reign over the human race through sin. Then there is the *justification metaphor*, borrowed from the courts of law, in which the concept of new creation is presented as the means by which man receives the forgiveness of his sin and is declared "not guilty." Paul also uses a *sacrificial metaphor* taken from Judaism's Temple system; here the self-sacrificial offering of Christ is portrayed as the ultimate sacrifice to deliver man from the consequences of his self-destructive choices. All are images drawn from the life experiences of the people of the first century Mediterranean world. The first of these is the "Redemption Metaphor."

## **Paul's Metaphor of Redemption**

Here Paul draws from the slave market, with the imagery of the redemption of that which has been enslaved. The enslavement with which we are concerned is enslavement to a power or force rather than a person. The power here is the power of sin, which for Paul is not a singular transgression of the will of God but a ruling power or metaphysical force (Romans 5:20-21).

The enslavement of man is self imposed through submission to the power sin, which results in death, the consequence of sin. The words for sin in both Hebrew (*hattat*) and Greek (*hamarti'a*) have intrinsic within them the root idea of "missing the mark," failing to fulfill a responsibility or accomplish an undertaking. Life consists of choices and all choices have consequences. Wrong choices result in adverse consequences, when the choices concern the will of man as set over against the will of God; the choice take lead to the enslavement of the one making the choice. Belief in and obedience to the will of God is a choice, just as disbelief and disobedience is a choice. Essentially, sin is to fail to do the will of God, to fulfill the purpose for which man was created.

In the theology of Paul, sin is a malevolent power that reigns over man. In Romans 5:20b-21, Paul writes, "where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as **sin reigned in death**, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Sin is a moral malignancy with death as its end result. Paul characterizes sin as having myriad functions through which it accomplishes its end:

(1) It is rooted in disbelief as relates to the will of God. It perverts one's moral character resulting in a moral malignancy of the human soul (cf. Romans 1:18-32). (2) It is a ruling or reigning power which can enslave those who embrace it (cf. Romans 5:20-21; 6:5-7; 7:14; 12-20; Eph 2:2; 6:12; and Col 2:13). (3) Enslavement to sin results in self-destruction and human death through the obsessive pursuit of self-will and defiance of the will of God (cf. Genesis 2:16-17; 3:19; Romans 5:12; 6:11, 23; and 1 Cor 15:20-22).

Such a malevolent and malignant power is too great for a man

to escape once he has enslaved himself to it. Paul sees Jesus as the one who came from God to deliver man from this enslavement. The terminology Paul uses to present this concept is "redemption" (*lutrosis*), the idea within this term is, "to loose someone or something bound." Paul also uses terminology associated with this word as a part of the thought-world of the term; e.g. ransom, rescue, to set free, save or deliver.

## Redemption in the Hebrew and Greek LXX Scriptures

There are two Hebrew terms translated as "redeem," or "ransom" in the OT, *ga'al* and *padah*. Both are translated in the LXX (Septuagint) by the same Greek word used for "redeem" in the NT. The term *ga'al* is translated "redeem" in over 50 occurrences (found in Exodus 6:6; 15:13; 21:8; Lev 25:25-49; Ruth 4:4-6; Psalms 25:22; 44:26), and is translated "redeemer" in 18 occurrences (Job 19:25; Psalms 19:14; 78:35; Isaiah 41:14; 43:14; 44:6, 24; 47:7; 49:26). The term *padah* is translated in over 60 occurrences as, "redeem" or "redemption," (found in Deut 7:8; 9:6; 13:5; 15:15; 21:8; 24:18).

Both *ga'al* and *padah* are translated by the Greek verb *lutro'o* (I loose) and the noun *lu'trosis* (loosed or freed). In certain texts *ga'al* and *padah* may be understood as, "to purchase, ransom, or redeem something for a price." This may be seen in the priestly codes of Exodus and Leviticus governing the redemption of a kinsman in debt (cf. Exodus 21:8; Leviticus 25:25-26). The essential meaning of these words, however, is that of the rescue or deliverance of someone or something.

## Redemption in the New Testament

This understanding of redemption in the Hebrew Scriptures is carried over into the NT. The Greek terms *lutro'o* and *lu'trosis* (found throughout the LXX in translation of these Hebrew terms), are the terms found in the Greek NT for redemption. The verb *lutro'o* is found in Luke 24:21; Titus 2:14; and 1 Peter 1:18), in all occurrences

the meaning has to do with deliverance or rescue from some threat, danger, or form of enslavement.

The noun *lu'trosis* (freed, redeemed, rescued, or delivered), is found in Mark 10:45, where Jesus says that the Son of Man has come "to give his life as a *lu'tron* (ransom/redemption) for many," or "to give his life as a redemption or deliverance for many." A similar idea is expressed by Paul in 1 Tim 2:5-6,

*For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6: who gave himself as a ransom (apolu'trosis - a means of redemption) for all, the testimony to which was borne at the proper time, concerning which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth, I speak the truth and do not lie (1 Tim 2:3-7).*

*Apolu'trosis* is the noun *lu'trosis* with the prepositional prefix *apo* (from) meaning, "to loose from" or "to set free from." It is a word found frequently in Paul's letters to communicate the idea of "redemption," (Romans 3:24; 8:23; 1 Cor 1:30; Eph 1:7, 14; 4:30; Col 1:14; see also Hebrews 9:15 and 11:35). In all occurrences it is deliverance from the enslaving power of sin that is under consideration.

The term "redeemer," (*lu'trotes*), used of God in the OT (Psalms 19:14; 78:35), also comes from the Greek *lu'trosis* and is synonymous with the term "savior," (*yashah* in the OT, *soter* in the LXX and NT). *Soter* (savior) is used of both God and Jesus in the NT. *Lu'trotes* (redeemer) and *soter'* (savior) both have the same meaning in Greek; but *soter'* was the more common term for a deliverer or savior in the Greek-speaking culture of the first century Mediterranean world. *Soter* is most used by Paul (in thirteen of its twenty-four occurrences) in the NT. The concept of deliverance appears more in Paul's theology than the concept of "being freed," which is more in harmony with how he portrays the role of Christ as a redeemer. Paul does appear to prefer the title *soter* (savior) over the term *lu'trotes* (redeemer).

## The Meaning of Redemption in Paul's Letters

A major area of debate among Pauline scholars concerns the implications of the "redeem" terminology as found in the letters of Paul. The presupposition of some (e.g. Anselm of Canterbury) is that Paul, by his use of the terms *lutro'o*, *lu'trosis*, *lu'tron*, and *apolu'trosis* is suggesting that a ransom price of blood was paid to redeem mankind. According to Anselm (12<sup>th</sup> century Latin theologian) there was a "sin-debt" that had to be paid in order for man to be freed from punishment for his sins. A major problem with this view is answering the question: "To whom was this ransom price paid, to God, to Satan, or to no one?"

This whole line of thought reveals presuppositions that has lead to a misinterpretation of the death of Christ and a erroneous concept of God as a moral being, even while calling him "the Supreme Being." The presupposition that there is a "sin-debt," that must be "paid" to God in order for his honor to be placated or appeased is nothing more than a presupposition. This portrait of God reduces him to a cosmic despot who must have blood before he is willing to forgive his children for their transgression of his laws. A basic rule of hermeneutics is that any interpretation of Scripture that undermines the moral character of God is a questionable interpretation of Scripture. Anselm's doctrine of atonement does just that.

The essential idea implied by those Pauline texts addressing this concept is that the redemption under consideration is not deliverance from eternal separation from God, but from enslavement to the power of sin. Jesus accomplished this through his resurrection from death. The redemptive effects of Jesus' death cannot be separated from his resurrection. It would seem that the medieval scholar Anselm and his present-day advocates have some critical flaws in their concept of Paul's doctrine of redemption.

### *God's Redemption of Israel*

Israel's deliverance from the bondage of Egypt is called

"redemption" (Exodus 15:13; Deut 7:8; 9:26). What was the ransom price paid for their redemption? Who paid it? To whom was it paid? The answer is that no ransom price was paid by anyone to anyone. This is to carry the redemption language or metaphor too far; or to interpret it in a sense never intended by the biblical writer. It is probably more accurate to understand the "ransom/redeem" language of the OT Scriptures as meaning simply that someone or something is set free or loosed from someone or something, which is the common understanding of *lu'trosis* in the Greek language of the first century.

To suggest that God redeemed Israel as one redeems a piece of property by paying a debt held against it is to read far more into the terminology than is there. The presuppositions with which one approaches the interpretation of this concept must be valid and/or believable. The presupposition that God is a being who must be satisfied by an offering of blood before he is willing to forgive an offence against him is completely unacceptable. So also is the argument that God's dignity was offended by man's sin and his dignity had to be appeased or placated before God would allow the offender back into his good graces (Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo?* Book 1:11-21 and II:4-20). To use the title of the book by J. B. Phillips, "*Your God Is Too Small!*" The very idea that a Supreme Being would require blood before he would receive his children into his presence is one of the reasons so many people cannot accept the God of Christianity a God of love or moral conscience.

God did not redeem or ransom Israel by purchasing them, or paying a ransom price to their owners, which in the context of the exodus would have been the Egyptians. God simply showed himself to be God and demanded the release of the Israelites from Pharaoh. The paying of a ransom price is clearly not the point of the language that refers to Israel's redemption and God as Israel's redeemer. Two books of recent publication on this issue have created a good bit of rethinking on the part of those whose tradition advances the penal substitution doctrine of atonement that insists on the necessity of a blood payment or the victim sacrifice of Jesus in the satisfaction of God's wrath in their atonement theology. See: Steve Chalke and

Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus*, Zondervan, 2003, who issues a challenge to his brethren on the matter; followed by the London Symposium response to Chalke and Mann titled, *The Atonement Debate*, edited by Derek Tidball, David Hillborn & Justin Thacker, Zondervan, 2008. A must read on this issue is *Christus Victor* by Gustaf Aluen, which gives the three most common views of the last two centuries. It is a curiosity that those contributors advancing penal substitutionary atonement consistently ignore the resurrection as essential to death and resurrection theme of Paul in effecting man's redemption. In spite of what Paul says in 1 Cor 15:17, they see the cross as the event effecting salvation for man.

What was true of this redemption terminology of the OT is also true of the same terminology found in the NT. It is deliverance from enslavement (Exodus 2:23; 13:3) not a "sin-debt" that is meant by the language. Nothing more need be read into the language unless suggested by the context or the text itself. In the thinking of Paul, sin was an enslaving power and it is that power from which man is redeemed or set free from by conversion to Christ (Romans 5:20-21; 6:17-22; 8:15, 21; Gal 4:3, 8-9; see also 2 Peter 2:19).

### *Delivered from the Power of Sin*

One of Paul's most important teachings was that those "in Christ" have been delivered from the power of sin having enslaved all those "in Adam" (Rom 5:12). This redemption applies as well to the curse of sin, which is human death (Hebrews 2:14). This redemption was accomplished by Christ in his conquest over death's power to hold him (cf. Acts 2:22-36; Rom 1:1-4; 5:12; 1 Cor 15:20-23, 45-57; Gal 4:1-5; Rev 1:13-18).

In this we are not saying that the redemption of humankind had no cost. The incarnation of God in the person of Jesus of Nazareth was something done at a price. Phil 2:5-11 reveals something of the cost involved. The NT is replete with language indicating that a sacrifice was made in God reaching down to man in his lost or ruined condition. He gave something of himself, something of who he was as the Creator was sacrificed for the

deliverance of man from the enslavement that he had brought upon himself. This is what Paul reveals in Phil 2:5-11, as well as the writer of the Hebrews epistle (5:7-9).

In 1 Cor 6:10 and 7:23, Paul uses the figure of man being "bought with a price." In his speech to the elders at Ephesus (Act 20:28), he referred to the Lord's church having been purchased with "his own blood;" i.e., Christ's death and resurrection was necessary to bring it into existence as a corporate body of all those "in Christ." There was something sacrificial involved in the deliverance of humanity from the enslaving power of sin.

Here also is an example of Paul's use of poetic figures of speech as the metaphor; or more specifically, a figure of speech called synecdoche (i.e. the part of something stands for the whole of it). Here the figure "blood" is used for "the death" of Christ as a whole, rather than thinking that God was paid a bowl of Jesus' blood for the redemption of the human race.

The word "blood" is used for the violent death of Jesus by crucifixion, and is to be understood as a figure called a metaphoric synecdoche, as "hand" is used for a sailor in "all hands on deck;" or the law is used for law enforcement agents in "you cant run from the law," or "call the law," or the word "court" is used for the judicial system.

God "purchased the church," through "the event of the cross," which is a metaphorical figure for the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, through whom God entered into our existence and experienced what the first man of creation had done to himself and his human offspring, bringing upon the whole race of Adam the consequences of his disbelief of his Creator's words (Gen 2:15-17; 3:1-7, 21-24; Rom 5:12-14).

## Conclusion

What we see in this visitation of God and the role played by Jesus in the "the second Adam" story is a redemption drama with

divine reversal as the major theme or motif running throughout. In order to redeem man God in the person of Jesus experienced the worst of human experiences and experienced at the hands of his fellowman, the worst in human behavior. But, through his experience of human existence, including human death, he brought about the creation of a new human existence over which the satanic realm lost its claims on man and its power to hold him in human death.

Sin and death can only exercise its power in the life of man "in Adam." All those in Adam are yet under the curse of death; those in Christ are redeemed or loosed from the power of death. When those in Christ experience human death, the adamic body returns to the earth from whence it came, but the spirit returns to God who gave it and redeemed it (Rom 5:21).

The powers of darkness were rendered powerless by means of Christ's conquest over the rule of darkness (Hebrews 2:14). The resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth says to us that there is no experience of our existence so great that God cannot reverse it, not even human death. But this drama of divine reversal was played out at the cost of God's sacrifice of himself in the incarnation and all that that implies. Christ entered into human existence as a "man" (*anthropos*), and as a mortal beings experienced human death, but through his resurrection into new existence and ushered in a new existence of man wherein he is united with God in some wondrous way. Following his resurrection Jesus could yet possessed the characteristics of a man; he was, however, in a new form of existence Paul calls "a participation in God's glory" as those in Christ will share with him in death and resurrection (Rom 5:2; 8:17; 9:4, 23; 1 Cor 15:43, 2 Cor 3:11, 18; 4:17; Col 1:27; 3:4; 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 2:14; 1 Tim 3:16).

So, the issue here is not whether a price was paid in the redemption of man; rather, the issue is what was the price paid, and how is Paul and the other NT writers' language of "redemption" to be understood? Was the price "blood" from a victim sacrifice after the order of the sin offering of the Temple cultus, or a human sacrifice whose blood was given as a ransom for the satisfaction of an angry

God whose honor of the dignity had been affronted? Or, was the price paid what it cost God to experience incarnation wherein he became one with our humanity - entering into human existence a submitted himself to all the demanded of human existence "in Adam?"

It was through God becoming "one of us" that he was able to confront the satanic powers within his own arena, the realm of sin and death. So, the issue is not whether a price was paid, but what that price was, how we understand the language used to define it, and how our interpretation of it portrays God in all his holiness and moral goodness as a Supreme Being uncompromised by an ancient theological surmisings drawn from the influences of primitive paganism.

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