

The Portico Notes

Session 2

Portico Goals: (1) To gain clarity about what we ourselves believe about aspects of redemption; (2) To gain clarity about what the Bible teaches and emphasizes about aspects of redemption.

Thought Experiment: An experiment carried out only in thought so as to test a question or proposition under imaginary conditions.

GIVEN: MANKIND NEEDS REDEMPTION

Q: *Why* does mankind need redemption?

Kaj: We're fallen & broken and can't redeem ourselves.

Eric: There's something broken. God made us for relationship, we messed it up. God made a way to restore.

Jeff: The primary problem is **death** in all its dimensions.

Dan: We're created to love God, we can't do that without redemption, [I'm] emphasizing our inability to love without God.

Greg: My mind goes to Jeremiah 17, who knows the heart? The human heart is deceitfully wicked

Bekah: [If I had to summarize the problem in one word, I would say] **sin**.

Rod: What then is the relationship between death and sin?

David: The wages of sin is death [Romans 6.23], the day you eat you will die [Genesis 2.17] ... death is result of sin.

William: **Sin is missing the mark**, [going wrong], to be deflected from a goal, we chose a different purpose from what God had for us, we chose death over life.

Rod: What is the mark that we are missing?

Aaron: We're missing the mark of God's will.

Beth: The bull's eye is God's standard.

Rod: Is God's standard arbitrary?

Jeff: God's standard is the expression of His character.

Rod: Good, so coming back to the idea of redemption, redemption means to buy something back. What is it that God is redeeming?

Dan: God intends to bring us [back] into alignment with His character.

Eric: Jesus is the perfect example of what God requires; He is the standard. Deu 30.19-20. God is redeeming creation, His property and His people (the intimate connection with them).

David: Redeeming people means redeeming people (a bride) for the Son. [Redemption also involves] the vindication of God's name.

Kaj: [God is] redeeming people from bondage: from sin, from demonic oppression, from all setbacks that would restrain the full worship God.

Greg: [Like the cry of William Wallace,] Freedom! God wants us to have freedom from sin, bondage, etc. to restore what was at first, untethered relationship with God.

Kaj: Matthew 10, "freely you have received, freely give." God is [using us in] leading others to the place of liberty. As in William Booths vision of the stormy sea, God gives us revelation so we that we can see the perishing [and not remain complacent about them].

William: Right standing with God. God is redeeming us to righteousness, right living.

Bekah: It gets back to the heart; the wages of sin is death, so the point is that eternal life has to do with intimacy with God.

Rod: That's good. It makes me think of the definition of eternal life in John 17.3.

Eric: Sin, in a native American translation, is "bad hearts and broken ways." Let's meet people there, and ask are you ready to try an unbroken way?

Rod: Amen. But why do people *continue* to sin?

Aaron: Why do people sin? All sin comes from distrust in God's goodness (Adam and Eve doubted God's goodness).

Beth: We are all born (because of original sin) with a **fallen nature**. Sin is a product of fallen nature.

Rod: I'm tracking with you, but I heard mention of a "sinful nature." So let's try a thought experiment: Is a wrecked BMW still a BMW?

Kaj: Yes, it's still a BMW.

Rod: Right, it's still a BMW, but it is **vitiating**, to use an old word of theologians. *Vitiated* means severely damaged and made defective. The point is that contrary to the NIV of 1984, the Bible does not speak of a "sin nature"; we still have the human nature that God designed for us. It is not *inherently sinful*, but it is severely damaged and defective [and apart from redemption cannot help but sin].

William: [Regarding our fallen nature,] Genesis 5.3 says that Adam begot a son in his own image.

Rod: Right, and that brings us to the question, “How has fallenness been continually passed down to all generations since Adam?”

Eric: How does fallenness pass down? We might infer that it’s passed down patrilineally, [since Jesus was not fallen and had no Adamic father.]

Rod: Thanks for noting that thought as an inference. We regularly need to make inferences in theology, but we do want to keep them separated in our minds from explicit statements of Scripture. Regarding the idea of fallenness being passed down through our dads, let’s recognize the underlying assumption, namely that fallenness is a thing, like a germ. Is fallenness a [disease passed down with a] germ? Is it some mystical substance that is passed down genetically through fathers?

Kaj: God redeems people, not from a germ.

Aaron: Jesus had the will of the Father. Fallenness has to do with our own will choosing contrary to God.

Rod: I concur with our wrong choices being an aspect of our fallenness, but how is that fallenness passed down?

Greg: All humanity is made in image of God, but all humanity is corrupted. [There is a corporate aspect to this.]

Rod: Yes, but the question remains, how is the corruption transmitted through the generations? Let’s think about the problem of the transmission of fallenness from the perspective of the biblical *solution* to human fallenness. What is the biblical solution?

Beth: Jesus! Faith in His redeeming work.

Kaj: New covenant.

Rod: These are aspects of the solution, but what is the fundamental solution to human fallenness, that is, for the death resulting from sin?

Kaj: You must be born again.

Rod: Right, so let me propose that fallenness does not consist of a thing, but rather the lack of a thing. In other words, fallenness is a *deficiency* [rather than an infectious disease].

Eric: So we’re missing a union with God that we had in the garden.

Rod: Well-articulated! It makes me think of the Shekinah departing from the temple in Ezekiel’s day. Let’s reflect on this possibility over the next month. In next month’s Portico session, let’s talk about what it was that departed from Adam when he sinned, and then what it was that Adam was left with, so far as his nature was concerned.