

REDEMPTION WAY

Ephesians 1:6b-10 [6] (to the praise of his glorious grace, with which) he has blessed us in the Beloved [7] In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, [8] which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight [9] making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he outlined in Christ. [10] as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (ESV)

For many people, that the state has declared as “non-essential”, they have a lot of extra time on their hands. Deprived of all the usual activities and associations, the common suggestion is to take the time for a period of self-improvement. Consequently, there is a plethora of books, articles, and schemes that attempt to fulfill that longing. Despite many variations and sometimes complex formulas, the result is to tell people they are all right after all and that what identity, worth, and meaning they find in life they must find in and for themselves. But every human effort at self-improvement or self-satisfaction--no matter what its religious covering may be--is subject to the law of diminishing returns. Genuine and lasting satisfaction is never achieved, and increased achievement only brings increased desire. More importantly, the guilt and fear that cause the dissatisfaction are suppressed but not alleviated. The longer such superficial games are played, the deeper become the depression, anxiety, and feelings of guilt. Because God and His Word are not considered in most such attempts, the only true source for finding ultimate truth is eliminated, and people inevitably are led back to themselves for the answers.

The only way a person can achieve a true sense of self-worth, meaning, and significance is to have a right relationship with one's Creator. A person without Christ has no standing before God, no ultimate purpose or meaning in the world. A Christian, however, is a child of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. If one has no comprehension of those blessings he or she needs to understand the position they already have in their Savior. To give such Christians the right understanding of their position and possessions is the foundational thrust of Paul's Ephesian letter. It starts with a comprehension of the wonderful work of Redemption by God on behalf of those who He draws unto Himself.

Redemption is one of the central themes of Scripture and the book of Ephesians, but it carries much more than the idea simply of exchanging one thing for another of equal value. In Ephesians 1:6b-10, the Apostle Paul shows the Road to Redemption by showing five elements of the redemption God offers through His Son, Jesus Christ. In this we see: 1) The Redeemer (Ephesians 1:6b), 2) The Redeemed (Ephesians 1:7a), 3) The Redemption Price (Ephesians 1:7b), 4) The Results (Ephesians 1:7c-9a), and 5) The Reason (Ephesians 1:9b-10).

The Road to Redemption that God offers through His Son, involves:

1) The Redeemer (Ephesians 1:6b)

Ephesians 1:6b [6] (to the praise of his glorious grace, with which) he has blessed us in the Beloved. (ESV)

From the beginning of Jesus' ministry, the Father declared Him to be "My beloved Son" (Matt. 3:17). When we believe in Him, "He delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col. 1:13). Because we are now, as Paul continues in the second half of verse 6 "in the Beloved", we, too, are "beloved of God" (Rom. 1:7). To be Beloved represents one who is in the state of being loved by God. Jesus Christ is our Redeemer from sin, who Himself paid the price for our release from sin and death. Because we now belong to Christ, by faith made one with Him and placed in His Body, we are now acceptable to God. The perfect participle reaches into the past and extends into the present and the future. Christ is "the One Beloved" because of his mediatorial obedience to God (Lenski, R. C. H. (1937). The interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and the Philippians (p. 363). Columbus, O.: Lutheran Book Concern.).

Please turn to John 14

Only Jesus Christ has the inherent right to all the goodness of God. But because we are identified with Him by faith, that goodness is now also our goodness. Because our Savior and Lord is the Beloved of the Father and possesses all the goodness of the Father, we are also the beloved of the Father and possess all His goodness. The expression 'in the Beloved' continues the notion that all of God's blessings come to us 'in Christ' (Vv. 3, 4; cf. 5). 'Beloved' marks out Christ as the

supreme object of the Father's love (O'Brien, P. T. (1999). *The letter to the Ephesians* (p. 104). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.)

Jesus said:

John 14:15-24 [15]"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. [16]And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, [17]even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. [18]"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. [19] Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. [20] On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. [21] Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." [22] Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" [23] Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. [24] Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. (ESV)

The Father now loves us as He loves Christ and wants us to have everything that Christ has. That is why Paul said back in Ephesians 1:3 He "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ". Every Christian is God's beloved child because the Lord Jesus Christ has become our Redeemer.

Poetry: A poet has expressed the magnificent reality of redemption in the words:

"Near, so very near to God, Nearer I could not be; For in the person of His Son, I'm just as near as He. Dear, so very dear to God, Dearer I could not be; For in the person of His Son, I'm just as dear as He".

The Road to Redemption that God offers through His Son, involves:

2) The Redeemed (Ephesians 1:7a)

Ephesians 1:7a [7] In him we have redemption (through his blood,

the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace)
(ESV)

Understanding the nature of the human condition is essential for redemption. For one to continue in sin, one must believe that sin is not that bad. We expect it in our politicians, we see it in our TV characters, and even those closest to us attempt to deceive. Sin deceives one into believing that it is always someone else that is a real sinner and we are good people. Because men and women apart from Christ are 'dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1), divine forgiveness is essential to the restoration of a relationship with the Father (O'Brien, P. T. (1999). The letter to the Ephesians (p. 107). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.).

Paul specifies that "in him", that is, Christ who he has already mentioned has taken this action on behalf of His people, we now "have redemption". Paul's use of the present tense ("we have") indicates a present and continuous reality that the Ephesian believers already possessed. Redemption is a present reality--not past tense, "you were redeemed at one time but have to keep being redeemed"; not future tense, "someday you'll be redeemed." (Yet redemption was part of a past plan before the foundation of the world, past action at the cross and also a future promise referring to believers' future inheritance and hope—cf. Eph.1:14 and 4:30.) (Barton, B. B., & Comfort, P. W. (1996). Ephesians (p. 17). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.)

Please turn to Romans 5

Until a person realizes their need for redemption, such a person sees no need for a Redeemer. Until some recognize that they are hopelessly enslaved to sin, they will not seek release from it. It is of course because people are like that that they need redemption. Good people would not need a Redeemer This is what enabled Charles Wesley to write: "Long my imprisoned spirit lay, Fast bound in sin and nature's night; Thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth and followed thee". So long as we know that the death of the Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished that for us, we will continue to love him and serve him as our "dear Redeemer." (Boice, J. M. (1988). Ephesians: an expository commentary (p. 24). Grand

Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library.)

In talking about the universal human condition that all are born into, the Apostle Paul explains how all are naturally dead in trespasses and sin:

Romans 5:12-17 [12]Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned-- [13]for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. [14] Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. [15] But the gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. [16] And the gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the gift following many trespasses brought justification. [17] For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. (ESV)

Adam brought sin and death into the world, but those who have believed in Christ are full of hope, for Christ has reversed the consequences of Adam's sin and has given his own life and righteousness to secure their eternal glory (Crossway Bibles. (2008). The ESV Study Bible (p. 2166). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.).

For those who repent of their sin, and put their faith: "In him", in Christ, they have redemption. Believers are in Christ through faith and because of His perfect work of redemption and through His power, they are eternally secure in Him. These blessings are all "in Christ" as being not only their source but their sphere (cf. Col 1:14). They are enjoyed by the believer in the present. The tense is continuous—"we have and are still having." (Wood, A. S. (1981). Ephesians. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon* (Vol. 11, pp. 24-25). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.)

Hymn: As Fanny Crosby described it: "Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it, Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; Redeemed thro' his infinite mercy, His child, and forever I am" (Fanny J. Crosby. Hymns

of Grace and Glory (Belfast: Ambassador Productions, 2002), no. 423.)

The Road to Redemption that God offers through His Son, involves:

3) *The Redemption Price (Ephesians 1:7b)*

Ephesians 1:7b [7] (In him we have redemption) through his blood, (the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace), (ESV)

The price of redemption is Christ's blood. It cost the blood of the Son of God to buy His people back from the slave market of sin (cf. Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22). Do you realize that this Christ who has thus shed his blood for you is himself your God? So the Scriptures teach: "The blood of God outpoured upon the tree! So reads the Book. O mind, receive the thought, Nor helpless murmur thou hast vainly sought Thought-room within thee for such mystery.... Draw near and listen to this sweetest sweet--Thy God, O mingling, shed his blood for thee!" (Boice, J. M. (1988). Ephesians: an expositional commentary (p. 26). Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library.)

Please turn to Hebrews 9

Shedding of blood is a metonym for death, which is the penalty and the price of sin. Christ's death, by the shedding of His blood, was the substitute for our death. That which we deserved and could not save ourselves from, the beloved Savior, though He did not deserve it, took upon Himself. He made payment for what otherwise would have condemned us to death and hell. This refers to Jesus' vicarious, substitutionary, sacrificial death. He died in our place for our sin (cf. Gen. 3:15; Isa. 53; Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Eph. 2:13; Col. 1:20; Heb. 9:22) (Utey, R. J. (1997). Paul Bound, the Gospel Unbound: Letters from Prison (Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon, then later, Philippians) (Vol. Volume 8, p. 76). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.).

Speaking of Christ atoning work:

Hebrews 9:12-14 [12] he entered once for all into the holy places, not

using the blood of goats and calves but using his blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. [13]For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, [14]how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. (ESV)

Christ has bought us back from the tyranny of sin—literally “ransomed” us. At a terrible price: his life. He has set us free from those enemies that once owned us—fear, prejudice, lust, anger, legalism, greed—and made us his own. Imagine you are a slave and you belong to a horrible master who has no regard for your health, your feelings, or your life in general. One day a benevolent stranger buys you at a staggering price and sets you free—completely free. How would you respond? Would you show appreciation for your liberator? sing his praises to anyone who would listen? Would you ever willingly go back to your degrading bondage? Your life should reflect gratitude for what Christ has done. Don't return to your former bondage. Claim your freedom in Christ! (Barton, B. B., & Comfort, P. W. (1996). Ephesians (p. 17). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.)

Illustration: In a city on the shore of a great lake lived a small boy who loved the water and sailing. So deep was his fascination that he, with the help of his father, spent months making a beautiful model boat, which he began to sail at the water's edge. One day a sudden gust of wind caught the tiny boat and carried it far out into the lake and out of sight. Distraught, the boy returned home inconsolable. Day after day he would walk the shores in search of his treasure, but always in vain. Then one day as he was walking through town he saw his beautiful boat — in a store window! He approached the proprietor and announced his ownership, only to be told that it was not his, for the owner had paid a local fisherman good money for the boat. If the boy wanted the boat, he would have to pay the price. And so, the lad set himself to work doing anything and everything until finally, he returned to the store with the money. At last, holding his precious boat in his arms, he said with great joy, “You are twice mine now — because I made you, and because I bought you.” Just so! Redemption is the payment of a price or ransom. The price was Christ's blood, and the object was our souls. All humanity was in the slave market of sin and thus powerless to affect self-deliverance, but Christ has purchased his Church with an infinite price (Hughes, R. K. (1990). Ephesians: the mystery of the body of Christ (p. 32). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.)

The Road to Redemption that God offers through His Son, involves:

4) The Redemptive Results (Ephesians 1:7c-9a)

Ephesians 1:7c-9a [7] In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, [8] which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight [9] making known to us the mystery of his will, (according to his purpose, which he outlined in Christ) (ESV)

Redemption involves every conceivable good thing, "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (v. 3). But here Paul focuses on two especially important aspects. One is negative, the forgiveness of our trespasses, and the other in verse 8, is positive wisdom and insight. The word "forgive" literally means "to send away." Sin is a terrible burden that is sent away when a sinner turns to Christ. Christ carried the burden on the cross (1 Peter 2:24). It is pictured by the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement, taken into the wilderness (Lev. 16:20-22). (Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament (p. 539). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.)

Please turn to Leviticus 16

The primary result of redemption for the believer is forgiveness, one of the central salvation truths of both the Old and New Testaments. Forgiveness (aphesis) is losing someone from what binds them. It stems from a verb meaning to send away (John 20:23). Used as a legal term it meant to repay or cancel a debtor to grant a pardon. When God deals with our sin, it is dispatched into the wilderness like the scapegoat (Lev 16:20-22). (Wood, A. S. (1981). Ephesians. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon (Vol. 11, p. 25). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.)

Israel's greatest holy day was Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. On that day, the high priest selected two unblemished sacrificial goats

Leviticus 16:7-10 [7] Then he shall take the two goats and set them before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting. [8] And Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the

other lot for Azazel. [9]And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD and use it as a sin offering, [10]but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel. (ESV)

One goat was killed, and his blood was sprinkled on the altar as a sacrifice. The high priest placed his hands on the head of the other goat, symbolically laying the sins of the people on the animal. The goat was then taken out deep into the wilderness, so far that it could never find its way back. In symbol, the sins of the people went with the goat, never to return to them again. But that enactment, beautiful and meaningful as it was, did not remove the people's sins, as they well knew. It was but a picture of what only God Himself in Christ could do. Through the shedding of His blood, Jesus Christ took the sins of His people upon His head, as it were, and carried them an infinite distance away from where they could never return. That is the extent of the forgiveness of our trespasses.

If people have problems forgiving other's trespasses, they have forgotten how God has forgiven them. If they cannot forgive themselves, then it is a lack of faith to believe what God has already done.

Forgiveness in Jesus Christ is undeserved, but it is free and it is complete. Those who have Him have freedom from sin, now and throughout eternity. In Christ, our sins—past, present, and future—“are forgiven... for His name's sake” (1 John 2:12; cf. Eph. 4:32; Col. 2:13). They were forgiven countless ages before we committed them and will remain forgiven forever. In Ephesians 1:7 the reference is not to sin (*hamartia*) as in Colossians 1:14, but to sins (*paraptōma*) or deviations from the right path. The first term denotes a sinful condition; the second, sinful acts. Forgiveness deals with both. (Wood, A. S. (1981). *Ephesians*. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon* (Vol. 11, p. 25). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.)

The forgiveness of our trespasses is expressed as affected by an act of God with continuing consequences. The Scriptures nowhere treat the ransoming and the forgiveness/remission as one act; *ἡ ἀπολύτρωσις* and *ἡ ἄφεσις* are two acts. The one took place on Calvary when Christ's blood paid the ransom price for (His people); the second takes place whenever a sinner repents and God in that instant sends away their sin and guilt. The forgiveness/remission rests on the ransoming

(Lenski, R. C. H. (1937). *The interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and the Philippians* (pp. 365-366). Columbus, O.: Lutheran Book Concern.)

This is why we are called to continue to forgive others their trespasses, for God continues to forgive us. If it was three strikes and your out, then we would all be in eternal bondage to sin.

*The vastness and comprehensiveness of our forgiveness are seen in Paul's statement that it is according to the riches of His grace. God's grace—like His love, holiness, power, and all His other attributes—is boundless. It is far beyond our ability to comprehend or describe, yet we know it is according to the riches of that infinite grace that He provides forgiveness. He doesn't just give us wonderful things. That would be out of His wonderful grace: just some of what He has. The greatness of His giving to us is according to the riches of His grace. The degree, scope, and extent of His giving are in proportion to what He has. God's grace is an expression of His munificence. God's redemption, forgiveness, and grace to us are infinite, eternal, unchanging, and far beyond our understanding. (Barton, B. B., & Comfort, P. W. (1996). *Ephesians* (pp. 19-20). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.)*

*His forgiveness not only is given according to the riches of His grace but verse 8 says how it is lavished upon us. We need never worry that our sin will outstrip God's gracious forgiveness. "Where sin increased," Paul assures us, "grace abounded all the more" (Rom. 5:20). Our heavenly Father does not simply give us subsistence forgiveness that will barely cover our sins if we are careful not to overdo it. We cannot sin beyond God's grace, because as wicked and extensive as our sins might be or become, they will never approach the greatness of His grace. For those who truly repent and mourn over their sin, His forgiveness is infinite, and He lavishes it without measure upon those who trust in His Son. We therefore not only can enjoy future glory with God but present fellowship with Him as well. God wants to give grace to people, and when He gives, He gives abundantly and extravagantly. Paul's language expressed joy—the riches are bountiful or infinite and are meant for us, His people. (Barton, B. B., & Comfort, P. W. (1996). *Ephesians* (p. 20). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.)*

The second result of redemption for the believer is being given

wisdom and insight. The two terms, wisdom (*Sophia*) and insight/understanding (*phronēsis*), though not consistently distinguished in Scripture, generally refer to the knowledge of something, followed by the ability to apply that knowledge or wisdom to a right course of action. God has provided the knowledge and ability to know and to do his will (Patzia, A. G. (2011). *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon* (pp. 154-155). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.).

God not only forgives us—taking away the sin that corrupts and distorts our lives—-but also gives us all the necessary equipment to understand Him and to walk through the world day by day in a way that reflects His will and is pleasing to Him. He generously gives us the resources to understand His Word, to know how to obey it, and the spiritual resources to fulfill it.

God intended that we should understand his saving purposes. He, therefore, lavished his grace upon us 'in all wisdom and insight' by, as verse 9 begins, making known to us the mystery of his will, the content of which is the summing up of all things in Christ (v. 10b). ... God's saving purposes, planned from eternity, had as their final goal the uniting of all things in heaven and earth in Christ... 'Making known to us the mystery of his will'. Mystery as used in Scripture (Gk. *mysterion*) refers to the revelation of something that was previously hidden or known only vaguely but now is more fully made known (cf. Col. 1:26-27). The mystery of God's will, now revealed in Christ, is "to unite all things in him" (Eph. 1:10; cf. 3:3-11) (Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (p. 2263). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.).

Hymn: All of these redemptive results occur because of Christ's work. He buys us from sin to set us free. This is what enabled Charles Wesley to write: "Long my imprisoned spirit lay; Fast bound in sin and nature's night; Thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth and followed thee". (Charles Wesley as cited in Boice, J. M. (1988). *Ephesians: an expositional commentary* (p. 24). Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library.)

Finally, the Road to Redemption that God offers through His Son, involves:

5) The Redemptive Reason (Ephesians 1:9-10)

Ephesians 1:9b-10 [9] (making known to us the mystery of his will), according to his purpose, which he outlined in Christ [10] as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (ESV)

*God redeems His people so that He might gather them to Himself. That is His purpose, which He outlined in Christ. His redemption is finally described in verse 10 as a plan for the fullness of time. God had a timetable established for redemption before the foundation of the world. At the time of His choosing, the fullness of time, He sets each phase in motion. This phrase emphasizes that God is in control of history (as does predictive prophecy). At just the right moment, God sent Christ, and, at just the right moment, He will come again (Uteley, R. J. (1997). *Paul Bound, the Gospel Unbound: Letters from Prison (Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon, then later, Philippians)* (Vol. Volume 8, p. 77). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International).*

*He redeems and gathers together His redeemed with the purpose to unite all things in Him. In the fullness of time, God's two creations, his whole universe, and his whole church will be unified under the cosmic Christ who is the supreme head of both (Stott, J. R. W. (1979). *God's new society: the message of Ephesians* (p. 44). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.)*

Please turn to Romans 8

The redeemed that are presently alive and those who have gone on to be with Him are the ones described here as in heaven and on earth. At present, the universe is anything but unified. It is corrupted, divided, and splintered. All creation awaits redemption:

Romans 8:18-25 [18] For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. [19] For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. [20] For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope [21] that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. [22] For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. [23] And not only the creation, but

we, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. [24] For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? [25] But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. (ESV)

When every trace of evil has been disposed of, God will establish an incomparable unity in Himself of all things that remain. That is the inevitable goal of the universe.

Apart from the wisdom and insight God provides His children, a hopeless conclusion is inescapable. History is written and directed by its Creator, who will see it through to the fulfillment of His ultimate purpose- to unite/summing up all things in Christ. He designed His great plan in the ages past; He now sovereignty works it out according to His divine will; and in the fullness of the time, He will complete and perfect it in His Son, in whom it will forever operate in righteous harmony and glorious newness along with all things in heaven and things on earth. Christ is the one in whom God chooses to sum up the cosmos, the one in whom he restores harmony to the universe. He is the focal point, not simply the means, the instrument, or the functionary through whom all this occurs