

Session #2:

PRE-SESSION Comments, Highlights, and Discussion Fuel from Chapter 2 Reading:

- Page 26) The author talks about humankind being in bondage, both as individuals and as communities. Which type of bondage is more problematic (or are they on par)?
- Pages 27-28) Does a worry about sin automatically imply an understanding of sin personified by Satan?
- Page 29's Big Grey Box is a nice succinct statement about Liberation Theology
- Page 29) deVega gives a nice & complementary view of individual vs. community liberation when he contrasts John 3:16 and Luke 4:16-30. Which of those two passages is more compelling to you?
- Page 32) The author's grey box inspired me, both individually and collectively. How about you?
- Page 33) Is deVega's advertised "weakness" really inherent to Liberation Theology? ...or is it more related to the Ransom understanding that the author fuses with the Liberation understanding?
- Page 35-40) It's interesting to me that each of deVega's chapters makes classic hymns so conspicuous. Makes me think I'd love to worship with his congregation...
- **Ken's *expanded* version of author's Page 41 summary:**
 - A) *What part of God's character is emphasized in chapter 2?*
 - B) *What is God's atoning purpose emphasized in chapter 2?*
 1. individual or corporate (or both)?
 2. Heaven-bound or here-and-now (or both)?
 - C) *What understanding of "sin" is focal in chapter 2?*
 - D) *What remedy for (C) above brings about (B) above in chapter 2?*
 1. *Is the remedy emphasized in the Good Friday to Easter narrative?*
 2. *Is the remedy emphasized in the pre-Easter earthly ministry of Jesus?*
 3. *Is the remedy emphasized in both?*
 - E) *What chapter 2 insights help your Christian understanding and practice?*
 - F) *What chapter 2 issues trouble you?*
 - G) *What chapter 2 insights help equip you to have a discussion about Christian basics with a neighbor?*

Session Goals:

1. to better understand the Ransom and Liberation Theories of Atonement
2. to discuss this theory's insights, issues, and applications to Christian practice

Prayer of Invocation – volunteer?

Any **Overall Impressions** from Chapter 2 you'd like to share at the outset?

Video: *view together*

Video discussion:

- My question spurred by video: How does “Christian Freedom” sound to a middle-class old white guy like me? How does it sound to other persons in the U.S.? How does it sound to persons in other countries?
- Sin: Do you think of it in terms of chains? Prison? captivity? imposed by Satan? ...in some other way? Does captivity to sin force us to picture Satan as the captor and enemy? (deVega talks about the danger of being overly dualistic)
- *Yet another connection to current PUMC worship: deVega references passing through water (Red Sea Exodus) to freedom; this connects nicely with Jim Poplin's sermon about water on Feb 21!*
- My question: Could a focus on Freedom potentially lead to selfish focus on ourselves? How does Biblical Freedom differ from the caricature of selfish American freedom?
- The author mentions freedom from Death. That used to be something I mostly ignored. Now family situations, along with a 40-yr long friend who's just been diagnosed with a scary type of cancer, make freedom from Death much more compelling to me. How about you?
- Have you ever felt enslaved, spiritually or otherwise? [*optional discussion here; I do NOT want to put anyone on the spot.*]
- The author's ending connects with Lillian's invocation of Francis Schaeffer: “*How Should We Then Live?!?*”

Discussion Prompts for chapter 2:

0. Background Scriptures to read: [*anyone feeling prophetic who'd read the first two?*]
 - John 8:32 & 36) “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. <cut rabbinical dialog> Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”
 - Luke 4:18-19 & 21)
 - Jesus reads Isaiah 49) “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set a liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” [from exile to freedom and full shalom]
 - Verse 21) “...Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”
 - Acts 16:25-34) Paul and Silas are freed from prison in an earthquake. Then their jailer is freed from sin! ...and the jailer's family

From what does God, through Jesus, free us?

1. Page 26) The author talks about humankind being in bondage, both as individuals and as communities. Which type of bondage is more problematic (or are they on par)?
 - Examples of individual bondage:
 - Examples of community oppression:

2. If I understand correctly, there are two traditional theories of Atonement, “Liberation” and “Ransom” which are being fused by deVega in this chapter. This seems an illuminating approach: combining “freedom” with “freedom from what/whom?”. It also tends to defuse the stereotype of Liberation Theology being solely a justification for Christian socialism. (...which I'm neither criticizing nor endorsing here)
3. Pages 27-28) Do you tend to think of sin as a “force” or as a diabolical person (Satan)?
4. Page 29's Big Grey Box is a nice succinct statement about Liberation Theology
5. Page 32) The author's grey box inspired me, both individually and collectively. How about you?
6. Page 33) Is deVega's advertised “weakness” really inherent to Liberation Theology? ...or is it more related to the Ransom understanding that the author fuses with the Liberation understanding?
7. Page 35-40) It's interesting to me that each of deVega's chapters makes classic hymns so conspicuous. Makes me think I'd love to worship with his congregation...
8. from Schmiechen's book:
 - Schmiechen suggests 4 branches of Liberation Theology: classic (e.g. Jurgen Moltmann), black (e.g. James Cone), Latin American (e.g. Gustavo Gutierrez), feminist
 - According to Schmiechen, Moltmann says that if God cannot suffer, God cannot love. [Lent nugget?!]
 - Schmiechen quotes Moltmann: “The gospel is more than the reconciliation of God and the believer but a promise for all humanity and the creation.”
 - Schmiechen's summary of Liberation Theology on page 125: “By his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus Christ inaugurates a new age and a new community of freedom, marked by inclusivity and equality, peace, and joy. The church as the Body of Christ is therefore the sign of this new age, and in its life and work it witnesses to the salvation of Christ until the final fulfillment, when all destructive powers will be overcome.”
 - Schmiechen says (p. 127) that Irenaeus (cited by deVega too) sees liberating atonement as restoring humanity to the image of God. [This one's for you, Pastor Kathleene!]
9. Ken's *expanded* version of author's Page 41 **SUMMARY**:
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