

REDEMPTION SONG (Inspired by the Bob Marley song)

Week #2 of a 6-Week "Songs of Life" Series

Rev. Richard Maraj

Sunday, April 19, 2026

LYRICS to "Redemption Song"

Old pirates, yes, they rob I
Sold I to the merchant ships
Minutes after they took I
From the bottomless pit
But my hand was made strong
By the hand of the Almighty
We forward in this generation
Triumphantly

Won't you help to sing
These songs of freedom?
'Cause all I ever have
Redemption songs
Redemption songs

Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery
None but ourselves can free our minds
Have no fear for atomic energy
'Cause none of them can stop the time
How long shall they kill our prophets
While we stand aside and look?
Ooh, some say it's just a part of it
We've got to fulfill the Book

Won't you help to sing
These songs of freedom?
'Cause all I ever have
Redemption songs
Redemption songs
Redemption songs

Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery
None but ourselves can free our mind
Woah, have no fear for atomic energy
'Cause none of them-ah can-ah stop-ah the time
How long shall they kill our prophets
While we stand aside and look?
Yes, some say it's just a part of it
We've got to fulfill the Book

Won't you help to sing
These songs of freedom?
'Cause all I ever have
Redemption songs

MESSAGE:

So how many people's minds have ever been so worried that you couldn't shut it off and you even had trouble sleeping? How many people have ever held on to a grudge or resentment or regret for way longer than you should have been? How many people have ever wanted something, a lot in your life, but a part of you either didn't believe it was possible or didn't feel that you were worthy? Last one: How many people have something in your life right now that you would like to change, improve or get better?

Whether it's a relationship; whether it's career, finances and spiritual life, or level of fulfillment, we all want something to get better in our lives. The question we always have is: Where do I start? How do I begin to improve my life?

In Romans 12, Verse 2, Paul says it clearly. He says, "Do not conform to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." What he is saying is: if you want your life to get better, don't work on/focus on the outside influence. You've got to start by renewing your mind; renewing yourself within.

The secret to transformation is the power of our minds. Now, Jesus discovered that the bridge between humanity and God was the mind. And he renewed his mind to the point that he blocked out all sense of the outer Lord and was totally as one and fully aligned with the fullness and the allness of God.

You know, Jesus really crossed the frontier of the mind and discovered a new world within: a world with unlimited possibility of goodness. He knew that, through our minds, that we could do the same, as well - totally unify our minds with the Mind of God and have full access to the riches of the kingdom of God.

How many people here believe in the power of the mind and believe that, if you change your mind, it will change your life? How many people believe that?

So, today we're in Week #2 of six weeks of our "Songs of Life" series. And we love music so much. I'll bet every single one of us has some song that inspired us and got us through a difficult time. We have some songs that have comforted us and brought us to tears; some that have inspired us. We all have music that touches us in some amazing and wonderful way. So, this series is about using that part that touches us, but also to have these wonderful songs inspire us with a spiritual message.

Last week we looked at The Beatles' "HELP!", which taught us the important fact that we all need help. In fact, we were all designed, not to do everything for ourselves, but to be able to lean on each other ... and not just be independent, but be interdependent, and to need one another. It also taught us it's important to ask for help. It's not weakness to ask for help; In fact, it's a strength and it's an important thing for us to do. We need each other.

So, asking for help is important. And then the third thing was the importance of reaching out to help somebody. Sometimes people are afraid to ask and sometimes our reaching out to them can make a huge difference in them opening up to that. So that song is really about the fact that we need each other to help. And it is a form of loving one another and connecting with each other.

So, this morning we're going to look at Bob Marley's song, "Redemption Song." It was released in October of 1980 on the album, "Uprising." Unfortunately, he died about six months after the release of that album. It's a really significant song. You know, this was the last song he ever wrote. And it was at a time where he had already been struggling with cancer for two years. And so, it was a really difficult time where he was facing his own mortality. He was only 36 years old.

And what was amazing about this was: he was the king of reggae. And his very last song was his only song that wasn't reggae. Like, if you've heard it, it's acoustic, with just him on a guitar alone. And I think that was intentional, because I think he really wanted it to be a song that was contemplative; to take people deep within themselves. And to discover strength and hope and empowerment for anyone that's fighting for freedom. Fighting oppression. Fighting anything that holds them back from living as full a life as we desire.

He included in this words from an actual speech in 1937 by Jamaican politician/activist Marcus Garvey and what he quoted was this:

***Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery
None but ourselves can free our minds***

Emancipate yourself from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds.

This song is considered one of his greatest songs ever. And it begins with the narrator being persecuted and oppressed for years. And then, through some heavenly help, he overcomes it and moves forward triumphantly. This song really invites everyone to sing their song of freedom. To not stay stuck; to not feel trapped; to not keep believing limited ideas about ourselves, but to liberate ourselves by liberating our mind.

I love the line when he says:

Won't you help me sing these songs of freedom?

And he's saying, "Hey, let's unite. And let's free ourselves from whatever our struggle might be -- whatever our oppression might be in our own minds -- and free ourselves to live the full life that we are here to live. That we all have our own uprisings, and that we are all here to sing our song of freedom.

Notice here he didn't say that someone else will free your mind, or someone else could do it for you. He said none but ourselves can free our minds. We are the only ones with the power and the responsibility to free ourselves from the mental slavery that we sometimes experience in life. There's no one else to do it.

Sometimes we think that's a burden, but it isn't. It's an incredible gift. And it is so empowering to know that we are the ones that have the power to shape and change our lives. That power is within us. It is not outside of ourselves, although we do a pretty good job at giving our power away. The truth is that power is within us and always available and accessible to us.

"I have the power and responsibility for my life."

Together: [with congregants] *"I have the power and responsibility for my life."* Take a deep breath.

"I have the power and responsibility for my mind."

Together: [with congregants] *"I have the power and responsibility for my mind."* Deep breath.

"I have the power and responsibility for my freedom."

Together: [with congregants] *"I have the power and responsibility for my freedom."*

"I have the power and responsibility for my transformation."

Together: [with congregants] *"I have the power and responsibility for my transformation."* One more deep breath.

So, this morning, we're going to look at the four things that we can learn to free our minds that are in the song, "Redemption Song."

And the first thing to do is: **TO BE AWARE OF OUR MENTAL SLAVERY.** Be aware of the things, the beliefs that we utilize that sometimes oppress us and trap us and limit us.

How many people here have ever allowed the opinions of other people control us and influence how we live our lives and live our decisions? I mean, there are all kinds of things -- circumstances and education (or lack thereof), the economy, weather, or jealousy or hate. We can go on and on and on of the things that we allow to influence and control how we live our lives; how we see ourselves; and how we see the world. Thinking things like, *"I'm not enough."* And, *"That's just not possible."* *"That will never happen."* Things like, *"My life won't get any better than this."*

You know, probably one of the greatest mental slavery statements is by Henry David Thoreau, who said his famous line, *"The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation."* What he is saying is that many of us believe that we are powerless; that we don't have it in us; that life is not going to get any better than this. *"It ain't good now, and it is not going to get any better."*

You know, mental slavery is about living in fear and holding ourselves back from even trying and reaching out and taking any risks. It's about defining ourselves by what happens to us -- thinking we're a failure or thinking that we're a victim. There are all sorts of ways that we limit ourselves by believing certain beliefs about ourselves and the world.

And the most important thing, according to Eckhart Tolle -- if we want to change and transform our lives -- the number one thing is we need to be aware of what needs to be changed. That we need to look at our lives and see: What are the things that aren't healthy? What are not positive? What are the things that are not working? What are the things that are actually harming and limiting myself? That, if we want to change now, first we've got to be aware of what is going on.

You know, Unity co-founder Charles Fillmore said, "Error thoughts must be brought into the light of truth to be dissolved." So what are the negative things that you're holding on to? What are the limiting beliefs? What are the false truths that you have accepted about yourself that stop you and held you back from living the life that you want?

You know, I've got a book that I haven't read yet, but I really love the title. And the title is this ... I already got my money's worth just on the title. It says, "Don't Believe Everything You Think." Because sometimes we think a lot of nonsense. Sometimes we think things that are just unreasonable, unhealthy, and unnatural. And only by shining the light on it and looking at it can we make a new and better choice.

It is not an easy thing to observe ourselves. It's not an easy thing to look at ourselves and say, *"Wow; that's not a very good way to think,"* or, *"That's not a very good way to talk about oneself or anybody else."* But it's the only way to heal and transform those things.

So here are the two things you have to do to become aware. First of all, just pay attention to yourself, of the things you say. I notice that sometimes I say something negative and not so good things about myself. And pay attention to that. It's an important thing.

The second one is to ask a very close friend that you trust and like to observe you and then tell you what things you might be saying that are not positive for yourself or a perspective that is not healthy for the world. Hopefully it won't be three pages long! But they will do it. And it's an important thing! You've got to be willing to be vulnerable to be transformed and to turn these dark areas into light

The second thing we learn from this is: **TO CHANGE THE STORY THAT WE'RE TELLING OURSELVES.** So often, it's not the things that happen to us in life, but it is the story that we make up and carry on beyond it. You know, saying things like, *"I always mess up."* *"I'm such a hot mess."* *"You can't trust anyone these days."* *"You know, this will never work out."* We have all kinds of things that we say.

And the fact is: they're not facts. They're just stories that we make up. So instead of saying, *"I always mess up,"* we could have easily said, *"I made a mistake, but I will learn and do better next time."* So, we can transform these things, but we often stay stuck in the negative story and keep repeating it.

Mental slavery is a product of repetition. And we keep saying these things over and over again, they become our beliefs, and we live our lives out of those things. What's a really good thing to know -- and a great truth is -- that we are the author of the narratives that we spin, of the stories that we tell. So, we can say, *"Someone lied to me, but I know a lot of people in life are trustworthy. And I know I have great and healthy relationships."*

When you look at Jesus, he said some things that were trying to help people challenge their assumptions. He was saying things like, *"according to your belief, it is done unto you."* And what he was trying to say is: if we change our beliefs, then we can change our lives. So, changing our inner story is what is needed for us to change our lives and to have that follow through.

Okay; so, tell me about these people: Walt Disney, Sam Walton, Henry Ford, Mr. Hershey, Mr. Hines. What did they all have in common? Okay, they had two things. I'll tell you. The first one: they went bankrupt multiple times. Each one of them, multiple times. The second thing is: they only told positive stories. They never spoke about failure. They would spin it to say: *"You know what? That wasn't a failure. That was just a stepping stone. That's going to lead me to somewhere greater. I'm going to grow and come back smarter and wiser. I'm going to succeed and be brave at what I do."*

And so, the question for us to ask is: What story do you need to change? What is the story you can tell yourself about yourself or your life that needs to be improved and transformed? You are the narrator of the stories of your life. It doesn't matter what happens to you. It is a matter of what you transform and

And so even if it's like, *"I'm always late,"* telling yourself, you know -- that turning it around and saying, *"You know, I will start being on time and soon I will be on time every time."* It is just a great skill and ability that we have that we don't always pay attention to. And it's an important one to turn around and transform the negativity in our lives to the positives.

The third thing that we learn is: **PRACTICE THE FREEDOM OF FORGIVENESS.** Nothing binds or blocks our hearts and creates dense energy in us than holding on to resentment and bitterness and blame. When we hold on to anger or bitterness and blame, it is like drinking poison and hoping the other person suffers from it. And that's just not the truth.

Jesus said something very powerful. He said, *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."* And what that is saying is not just forgive, but be aware that, when you don't forgive, you're hurting yourself. And when you don't forgive, you're actually blocking energy to bring peace between you and that person, as well.

You know, forgiveness is about making a choice. That whoever it is, it's like saying, *"I choose peace instead of pain. I choose freedom instead of bondage. I choose happiness instead of bitterness."*

You know, a woman carried resentment towards her husband for decades. And when she was finally ready to forgive him, she realized she was really forgiving herself. That it was really removing the change of anger and bitterness and upset and sadness in her own life towards herself.

In Psalm 51, it's got a beautiful line that says, *"Create in me a clean heart, O Lord."* And that's what forgiveness is. It's creating a clean heart. It gives us a sense of peace. It gives us a sense of freedom. A clean heart is the same as a heart of love or a heart of light or a heart of peace or joy.

So, my question is: Who do you need to forgive in your life? And I would say it always comes down to forgiving ourselves for holding on to the resentment or the pain that we have held for so long. Forgiveness is a gift of freeing ourselves.

And so, the last one is: **TO FEED OUR MINDS THE TRUTH THAT SETS US FREE.** So, if we don't consciously guard our mental house ... I've got to tell you, my mom was a real fan of telling me that. She said, "*Richard, guard your mental house. Be careful of what you allow into your mind.*" She was really a real stickler in that.

And the fact is: if you don't pay attention to what you're letting your mind in -- all the kind of stuff that you see on social media and some of the negativity that we're inundated with every single day -- can literally begin to chip away at our level of positivity; to chip away at our positive and happy mindset.

You will know the truth and the truth will set you free. And it's about opening our hearts and our minds to a higher level of spiritual connection and awareness. You know, we are taught that thoughts held in mind reproduce after their kind. So, it's important for us to work on our mind; work on our thoughts on a daily and regular basis.

And some of the things are prayer and meditation, affirmations and spiritual study. You know, Jesus went apart a while, and it wasn't just to escape life. It was to actually center in and renew his mind; to reconnect and retune and keep building his consciousness; keep raising his vibration to being one in the Mind of God.

So, let's just simply talk about meditation a bit and affirmations. Here's what H. Emilie Cady says in the book, "Lessons in Truth." She says, "*Every man must take time daily for quiet and meditation. In daily meditation lies the secret of power. No one can grow in either spiritual knowledge or power without it. Practice the presence of God just as you would practice music. No one would ever dream of becoming a master in music except by spending time daily alone with music. Daily meditation alone with God focuses the divine presence within and brings it into our consciousness.*"

Daily prayer and meditation. And then the other one is the importance of affirmation. How many people do affirmation? They condition your consciousness. So just repeat after me:

"I am peaceful, positive, and prosperous."

Together: [with congregants] *"I am peaceful, positive, and prosperous."*

"I am wonderful, wise, worthy, and well-dressed."

[With congregants:] *"I am wonderful, wise, worthy, and well-dressed."*

"Good things come to me like mushrooms overnight."

[With congregants:] *"Good things come to me like mushrooms overnight."*

"I am in the flow of life and live each day with ease and grace."

[With congregants:] *"I am in the flow of life and live each day with ease and grace."*

"Each and every day in each and every way my life is getting better and better and better."

Together: *"Each and every day in each and every way my life is getting better and better and better."*

A Minneapolis couple decided to go to Florida to get out of the ice and the cold. They planned on staying at the same hotel that they stayed at 20 years ago on their honeymoon. Because of their hectic schedules, it was difficult for them to fly out together. So, the husband left on Thursday from Minnesota to Florida, and the wife was going to fly in from Minnesota to Florida on the Friday.

The husband checked into the hotel, and there was a computer in the room. So, he decided to send an email to his wife. However, he accidentally left out one of the letters in her email address and sent the email without realizing he'd made the error and didn't know to whom.

Meanwhile, somewhere in Houston, a widow who had just returned home from her husband's funeral -- he was a Baptist minister, was called to the glory of the Lord following a heart attack. The widow decided to check her email, expecting condolences messages from her family and friends. But after reading the first email, she screamed and fainted. The widow's son rushed into the room, found his mother on the floor, saw the computer screen was on, and he read it:

"To my loving wife. Subject: I just arrived today. I know you're surprised to hear from me. They have computers here now, and you're allowed to send emails to your loved ones. Since I just arrived, I thought I would send you an email. Everything has been prepared for your arrival tomorrow. Looking forward to seeing you then. Hope your journey was as uneventful as mine.

P.S. It sure is hot down here." Alright

Bob Marley has another song that I love -- well, many songs that I love. But the one I'm thinking about is one called "Exodus." And the line in it that I love -- it says:

Open your eyes and look within.

Are you satisfied with the life that you live in?

And a good question for all of us. Open your eyes and look again. Are you satisfied with the life that you live in? And I think the answer is in this song. Emancipate yourself from mental slavery. None but ourselves can free our lives. And the way to do it is to be aware of the things that limit and hold you back that you're a slave to. You know, change the story from the negative to the positive. Find freedom through forgiveness and feed your mind with the truth that sets us free.

That's the message.

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