

"YE ARE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE"

"Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body." – 1 Corinthians 6:19,20.

WHAT different sentiments these inspired expressions of the great Apostle awaken in different hearts! To the heart of the fallen natural man these statements are very objectionable; but to the heart fully in harmony with God and His glorious Plan they are precious words, full of comfort and joy. The proud, unregenerate heart convinces itself that it did not need to be bought; that it needed no redemption; that it has no very serious ailment of sin. It may be ready to admit – and indeed could surely not dispute – that it is imperfect; that tried in the balances of justice, it would be found wanting. But to itself these lacks are very slight and insignificant, and deserve but trivial punishment; and it expects to bear that punishment, and believes that it does bear it to the full in the troubles and trials of life.

The natural heart believes in a great First Cause of some kind, which it calls God, or sometimes merely the principle of Good. It believes in certain laws of nature, which it holds are unalterable and irrevocable. That there is such a thing as forgiveness for sin, it denies. It is therefore wholly out of harmony with the Gospel proposition of a Sin-offering, "a Ransom for all," an opportunity for reconciliation to God through the merits of a Redeemer. It denies any need for reconciliation. This class of unbelievers are in many respects the most hopeless; for they have a sort of worldly-wise philosophy which so fills their minds that it hinders them from seeing the force and beauty of the true philosophy of the Bible. They are usually blind to the simplest logic that could touch this subject, as presented in the Scriptural declarations, "The wages of sin is death," and, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." – Romans 6:23; Ezekiel 18:4,20.

While these cannot and do not claim perfection, it seems never to have occurred to them that all imperfection is unrighteousness, sin; that the judgment of a perfect, righteous God would properly and naturally be that what He cannot approve must be destroyed; and that only that which His righteousness approves, only that which is perfect, will receive His blessing and be granted perpetuation of life. Not until this view is grasped are any prepared for the Message of the Gospel – the Message that God is operating in Christ for the reconciliation of the world to Himself. Only as the natural man comes to see that "the wages of sin is *death*" is he able to see that "the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Only then can he realize that "he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" eternal. Not until then will he realize that "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." – Romans 6:23; 1 John 5:12; John 3:36; 1 Corinthians 15:21,22.

"THE MEEK WILL HE TEACH HIS WAY"

But our inspired text gives offense in another respect to the natural man, or to the man who has fallen from grace; it hurts his pride. It implies that he is being treated as a mere slave, or chattel, to be bought or sold. What could be more galling to the proud, unregenerate heart than such a thought? Nevertheless, the thought that we are purchased, and hence are by right the bond-slaves of Him who purchased us, is everywhere held forth in the Scriptures; and the meek, the humble-minded, alone are able to receive it and appreciate it.

These hear the Apostle's statement that all were "sold under sin" (Romans 7:14), and they realize the truthfulness of the declaration. They find abundant evidence in themselves and in the entire human family that all mankind are "slaves to sin"; they find the "law of sin in their members" and in all others. They find the

power of sin so strong that it cannot be fully broken by any; that, although it may be fought against, nevertheless it holds over the whole race of man a mastery that the enslaved ones cannot fully overcome, even with their most earnest efforts. They thus see in the Apostle's words (Romans 5:12-21) representing Sin as a great task master ruling the world, a very grim, but very truthful picture of the facts.

Such inquire of the Word of God, How comes it that God, who is Himself the embodiment of all that is good, pure and lovely, all that is perfect, has brought into existence human offspring under such bondage to sin through imperfection? They ask, Does not the Bible declare of God, "All His work is perfect"? (Deuteronomy 32:4.) Why, then, this universal imperfection, this general subjection of mankind to the power of sin? The true answer can come from one source only – the Word of God; and that gives the only satisfactory answer, the only one that meets all the requirements of the conditions as they are known to man.

The Word declares that God's work was perfect in the creation of man in His own image in the beginning; but that the creature, being endowed with free moral agency, rebelled against the law of his Creator, and thus by self-will, self-gratification, brought himself under the **[R5859 : page 68]** penalty previously threatened if he proved disobedient to his Creator's just command. The sentence was, "Dying, thou shalt die." This deliberate act of disobedience on the part of our first parent, Adam, not only brought himself under this death-penalty, but his posterity all shared in his subjection to death, and in the slavery to sin consequent upon his alienation from God and his failing powers as he more and more passed under the power of death.

So then the fact that Adam sold himself and his posterity yet in his loins to Sin, for a momentary gratification of self, meant not only his own enslavement, but also that of all his progeny who should

afterward be born. These are the facts of the case. All of Adam's children can say with the Psalmist of old, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, in sin did my mother conceive me."

DOCTRINE OF TOTAL DEPRAVITY UNSCRIPTURAL

Here we come to the thought which was evidently in the minds of some of the early reformers when they propagated the doctrine of Total Depravity, which is held by many at the present time – at least theoretically – but from which we must dissent. We hold with the Scriptures that as a result of Adamic transgression there is a general depravity which extends to every member of the human family, so that "there is none righteous, no not one." (Psalm 14:3; Romans 3:10.) But we deny that this depravity is total depravity; we deny that any individual of the human race is totally, hopelessly, in every particular, depraved, without anything that is good or commendable. The only sample of total depravity of which we have any knowledge is Satan himself, the father of lies and of every wicked work.

But general depravity is bad enough; and being so general, no man should have any difficulty in finding, to some extent at least, the portion of it which he has himself inherited and cultivated, as well as discerning it in his fellows. Some are more depraved than others; some have the original likeness of God less blurred and defaced in their nature and character. In harmony with the Scriptural statements that we were "shapen in iniquity," that the heart of man is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," every discerning person whose eyes have been opened to recognize depravity can note the evidence of it everywhere, even in young children. Self-will, passionate obstinacy and ill-temper are often to be noted in infants but a few weeks old. And very patient should be the parent, as well as very attentive and thorough in the correction of the child, when he remembers that the very traits which need correction have come down to the child from himself. Thus the Christian parent should be not only the most thorough in the matter

of training up his child in the way that it should go, but also the most kind, loving and patient in giving this correction and training.

FALLEN HUMANITY'S ONLY HELP IN GOD

We have then before our minds the fact and the general prevalence of sin and know whence it comes. Thus we see the force of the Apostle's words when he personifies sin as a tyrant-master, and represents mankind as Sin's slaves, to whom he pays his wages – death. We have seen that God is not blamable for man's enslavement to Sin. While only the extreme wages of sin are mentioned in the pronouncement of the death-penalty, yet before the full payment of the wages of sin, we receive, incidentally, many of the aches and pains and difficulties, mental, moral and physical, which the great taskmaster, Sin, imposes. And as a groaning creation travailing together in pain under this hard master and suffering from his cruel lashes, all long for deliverance; and some of us have cried out to God for help – for salvation from sin and death to righteousness and life; and our prayers have been heard.

God wishes us to learn very thoroughly the lesson of the "exceeding sinfulness of sin," of its gall and bitterness, and of the hopelessness of any deliverance except that which He provides. Personal experience has proved to us that we are powerless to deliver ourselves from this slavery; that in order to overcome the Wicked One and his arts and wiles, which take firm hold upon us because of the weaknesses of our flesh through the fall, we need a power that we do not by nature possess. Finding that we are powerless to help ourselves, we at first naturally look to one another for aid, and indeed might get some aid from others. But we soon learn how little real assistance can be given or received from natural sources. And when we have learned the lesson which the Scriptures teach, that all are born slaves to sin, then we see the utter helplessness of our condition as a race.

All who come to realize the true situation, and to feel the bondage and need for deliverance, may thus see that the only hope is in God. If they reflect that it was God Himself who pronounced the sentence of death, and that He could not annul His own sentence nor transgress His own laws, let them reflect also that as He has infinitely superior power to ours, He has also superior wisdom; and that He may know how to accomplish that which to us would seem an impossibility. And this is the case. He has provided the way, which all mankind will see in Jehovah's own good time, now very near. The price has been furnished for man's full deliverance; and although thus far this price has been made applicable to only the few, yet its application for all is soon to be made.

DIVINE PARADOX – LIBERTY THROUGH BONDAGE

A realization of personal responsibility to the Redeemer who purchased them, and to the Heavenly Father who provided the arrangement for salvation from Sin and Death, lies at the foundation of all true consecration to God through Christ. As soon as the grateful, believing, ransomed one hears of the blessing which is offered him, he properly inquires, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Then he learns that the new Master does not wish any but voluntary servants; and that, having provided for his release from the bondage of sin, He will nevertheless permit him to go back again if he chooses to his former service of Sin, and to continue to receive its wages of death. He learns the terms upon which he may be received. He learns that to be a servant of the new Master, Christ, is a very great privilege. He learns the blessedness of the Divine paradox, that to be a bond-slave to Christ is liberty in the truest and most real sense; that he becomes at once Christ's bond-servant and His "free man." (1 Corinthians 7:22.) So all along through this Gospel Age there have been some who have gladly owned themselves the bond-slaves of the Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

These precious souls rejoice to acknowledge and to avail themselves of God's gracious and loving arrangement through His Only Begotten Son – the Ransom given on Calvary. They are glad to recognize that they are "bought with a price," and are "not their own." And as they learn of their unspeakable privilege of joining with our Lord Jesus in His sacrifice, of following in His footsteps even unto death, they accept His terms with rejoicing [R5859 : page 69] and thankfulness. These leave the world and all to follow Jesus, and if they abide faithful unto death, they shall share with their Lord in all His glorious spiritual inheritance. But we have now come down to the end of the present Order, and severe and subtle are the temptations and testings which must be undergone to prove our entire loyalty to the Lord and to the Covenant which we have made with Him.

"Jesus, loving Savior, only Thou dost know
All that may befall us as we onward go;
So we humbly pray Thee, take us by the hand,
Lead us ever upward to the Better Land."

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