

THE PURCHASE OF THE CHURCH AND WORLD

(Discourse of the Pastor given in St. Louis. Found on pages 44 and 45 of the 1916 Convention Report.)

Christ's Sacrificial Merit Utilized Thus Far Only for the Church.—God's Orderly Arrangement—Progressive Steps in the Divine Plan—Philosophy of the Ransom—Church First Bought—Purchase-Price Not Yet Applied for the World—Why Jesus Prayed Only for the Church—He Will Pray Later for the World—"Ask of Me, and I Will Give Thee the Heathen"—How the Church Glorify God in Their Bodies.

Text: "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your bodies." (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.)

THERE is a very general and natural sentiment amongst men that as individuals we have the right to control ourselves, to have an independence of thought and of will; and this is reasonable and right as respects our relationship to our fellowmen. Every person of character should preserve his independence of mind. Whoever lacks this independence of mind and of will is lacking in a fundamental element of character, and is weak and unstable. But there is One to whom we owe everything, even our very existence. To Him we owe, therefore, our full allegiance. The Bible declares that God's creatures should fully recognize His dominion and control.

Looking back to the case of Father Adam, we see that God created him with a will, with the power of self-control, and gave him also a knowledge of his responsibility to his Creator. But we see that later he was misled by giving heed to another. First of all, Mother Eve was misled by giving heed to the Adversary, Lucifer, who had deflected from loyalty to his Maker. Then she became the temptress to her husband. Thus the Divine Law was violated by the father of our race; and God would no longer recognize the one who was unwilling to render obedience to his Creator and to follow His guidance. As our Lord afterward said: "The Father seeketh such to worship Him as worship Him in spirit and in truth." When Adam ceased to worship God in spirit and in truth, God said to him in substance, "You wish to take your own course go your way, and see where it will lead you."

This has been largely the course of the world ever since. The seeds of sin and disobedience sown by Adam have developed, and the entire race has been more and more alienated from their Creator as the centuries have rolled away. The Apostle Paul, in discussing this matter, says, "God gave them [mankind] over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not proper." (Romans 1:28.) Thus the Scriptures explain the present condition of the world. God has let go of mankind during these six thousand years.

The Purchase of Some From Death

But our text tells us of some who have been brought back from this condition of alienation from God, bought back from death. Father Adam had sold the whole race under sin, as the Apostle explains, under the dominion of Satan. (Romans 7:14.) He sold us out in the gratification of his own desires. He involved not only himself, but his entire posterity. If, then, the race was sold under sin and Satan, to whom would the purchase-price be paid, when mankind is bought back? Would it be paid to the Adversary? We answer, No; the Adversary never had any right to the human race. They belonged to their Creator. It was His Justice which was violated and which demanded the price of man's redemption. The race as a whole are not yet purchased. The price for their deliverance has not yet been applied, even though the purchase-price has been furnished in the death of Christ. Mankind are still a race of slaves, the great Adversary has taken advantage of their ignorance and superstition due to the fall and has brought them into bondage to errors, weaknesses and faults.

It is God's purpose, however, that this slavery shall be only a temporary thing. The time has seemed long to man, but in God's sight these six thousand years are as six days. God has a great Work Week of six thousand-year Days. The seventh Day of this great Week is the Sabbath, also a thousand years in duration. In this Sabbath Day, it is the Divine purpose to lift the curse resting upon mankind. In this Sabbath Day the world shall rest from their own labors and unavailing efforts to effect their own salvation. They shall rest in Christ's finished work on their behalf. This will be the great Judgment Day, the thousand years of Messiah's glorious Reign for the blessing of all of Adam's race. But what about those who are already bought, as our text declares? These who are first bought are the Church of Christ. The price for the salvation of the Church is the same price that is necessary for the sins of all mankind. That price is the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle John declares, "He [Jesus] is the propitiation for our [the Church's] sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:2.) The word propitiation means satisfaction. Divine Justice is satisfied to release the sinners as soon as the Purchase-price is made available.

How One Man Purchases a Race

The penalty upon Adam because of his sin was death; and as by heredity all his posterity have been born blemished and imperfect, they have shared his penalty. God could have placed our first parents under a different penalty. He could have imposed the penalty of one year's banishment from the Garden of Eden. But He wished to give a lesson that would be important not only to the whole world of mankind, but also to the angels of Heaven. There is never to be any more sin than God is permitting in this world now. When it is over, there will be no more sin thenceforth in the entire Universe. Hence God placed upon man the extreme penalty of His Law. Adam could never rid himself of that penalty unless he were redeemed. It would mean his eternal destruction, as well as that of his race, which fell in him. Jesus came to earth a perfect man, with an unborn race

in His loins. This human life He gave as an exact equivalent for Adam and the race yet unborn in his loins at the time of his sin.

But because of an important feature of His great Plan, God purposed that a certain part of Adam's race should be purchased in advance of the remainder. Our text does not speak of the world's purchase, but only that of the Church; for only the purchase of the Church is yet accomplished. This is the Father's arrangement. We are told by the inspired Apostle that when Jesus ascended up on High, "He appeared in the presence of God for us"—The Church.—Hebrews 9:24.

It was Jehovah's purpose to have a prepared company to be associated with His Son in His great work for the restoration of the world. This class is called the Bride of Christ, the members of His Body. As they were sinners, under the same death penalty as the remainder of the world, it was necessary that the merit of Christ's sacrificial death be first utilized for them. Instead of being justified actually, as will the world during the Age to come, these have perfect righteousness imputed to them instantaneously, when they accept Christ's sacrificial work on their behalf and consecrate themselves wholly to God. Thus they are enabled to become joint-sacrificers with their Lord and Head that they may be sharers in His future Reign.

When Christ Will Pray for the World

Jesus has not yet appeared before the Mercy Seat in Heaven for the world. The Bible declares of the world's present condition, "The whole world lieth in the Evil One." (1 John 5:19. R.V.) If they had been purchased, they would not be lying in the Wicked One. In our Lord's last prayer with His disciples before His crucifixion he said, "I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me." (John 17:9.) The very next day after He offered this prayer He died for all the world—"He tasted death for every man." (Hebrews 2:9.) But He knew that the merit of His death would first affect those whom the Father would give Him out of the world. Hence He prayed in harmony with the Father's arrangement. To have prayed differently would have been to pray out of order.

When the Church is glorified with her Lord, then will come the time for Christ to pray for the world. The Bible so declares. The Psalmist David (Psalm 2:7-9), looking forward to that time, quotes the Father as saying to the Lord Jesus, "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron: Thou shalt dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel." The Father will turn over all the nations of the earth to the Lord Jesus, as soon as the Church shall have been fully delivered, and the merit of Christ, which had been accounted to them, shall, by their sacrificial death, be freed for application for all the world.

Then the Church, seated with Christ in His Throne (Revelations 3:21), will with Him form the Kingdom. Jesus shall reign "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." In due time—and that due time is near—all the kingdoms and governments of earth are to be brought down to the dust, and the peoples made ready for the rule of the

Heavenly Government for which God's people have so long been praying: "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done, on earth as it is done in Heaven."

"Ye Are Not Your Own"

Coming back to our text we who have been purchased in advance by our Lord Jesus realize that we do not belong to ourselves. We are bought with a price and we are not our own. What does this mean to us? It is like this: Suppose that we had been drowning, or had been about to be burned to death, and suppose some one had rushed up and rescued us at the imminent risk of his own life. We would feel that we could not do enough for the one who has saved us. So the Apostle here seems to be expressing the same thought. The One who bought us not only risked His own life, but sacrificed it on our behalf, that we might be rescued from eternal death. How much more, then, should we gratefully appreciate His work of love for us! He left the glory which He had with the Father that by the grace of God He might taste death for every man; and the merit of His death has now been made available for us who have become His disciples. How our hearts should go out to Him in thankfulness! We say to ourselves, "What can I do to show my appreciation for what my Savior has done for me?"

When we look out over the everlasting future and think of the blessings of eternity, we realize that the way for us to attain these great blessings was opened to us through Jesus' death. So we gladly bring our little offering and give ourselves wholly to Him who died for us. We recognize that we are very small and imperfect; and that He is so great, so mighty—wonderful in perfection and glory. We cannot do what we would because of our weakness and blemishes, but we can show Him our loyalty. And we pray: "Lord, grant to us the opportunity to prove to Thee how much we love Thee, how glad we are to be given a small part in the carrying forward of God's great Plan."

We feel that we have not half enough to give. We are such bundles of imperfections that we really feel ashamed to offer ourselves to the Lord. But we have been bidden to come in the name and merit of Jesus. We can imagine the Father saying to us, "I know that you are very imperfect, but I only desire to see your attitude of heart and mind, your earnest endeavor to do My will."

When I was in India a number of years ago some natives came to the hut where I was lodged and asked for me. The brother who spoke their language came in and told me. Then he said, "Will you go out and see these people?" So I went out to the door and found a father, a mother, and their three children. They could not speak a word of English, but they had brought me some humble gifts. One had a little piece of fruit, another had an egg, and another something else. I did not like to take these things from them; for I knew that many of these people did not have enough to eat. But they had brought the best they had. Therefore I felt that I must not refuse their loving offerings lest I offend or grieve them; so I received the gifts.

I have often thought since then of how this illustrated our gifts to the Lord. Our dear Heavenly Father does not need our little egg or bit of prickly fruit, any more than I

needed what these poor people brought, but He encourages us to come to Him with our gifts. He is entirely able to get along without us; we cannot enrich Him; but for our good He is willing to receive our small offerings, and it is a great privilege that we are invited to thus come. Most gladly and thankfully we accept His gracious invitation to give Him our little all. He is preparing us for our great exaltation with Christ. All whom he chooses must be saintly in character. None but saints will be in that glorified company who will compose the Bride of the Lamb. We must each demonstrate our entire faithfulness unto death.

Faithful Over a Few Things

We read in the Bible the parable of the Nobleman who went into a far country, to receive a Kingdom and to come again. (Luke 19:21-27.) Jesus is that Nobleman. The far country is Heaven. After His resurrection from the dead He ascended to Heaven to be invested with royal authority to be Ruler of the earth. In the parable, the Nobleman, when leading His servants, called them to Himself and gave them money, to every one according to his ability, instructing them that they should invest these talents for Him, and should render their account upon His return. So the Master gives to each of His followers opportunities of service commensurate with our abilities for service. As our abilities differ, He gives to some greater opportunities than to others. He makes us the stewards of these His goods, and expects us to use them diligently, and wisely to His glory.

The parable represents that upon the Nobleman's return, He reckoned with His servants. To each of those who had faithfully used what was given him, He said, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." He did not say, "Thou hast done great things," but, "Thou hast been faithful over a few things." He knew that they could not do very much, but they had shown their loyalty, their faithfulness; and that is what the Lord desires to see. He expects us only to do with our might what our hands find to do for Him.

Wisdom and Carefulness Necessary

If we have an opportunity to present the Message of salvation to a hungry soul, we are to be very careful not to tell him more than he is able to grasp, lest we do him harm rather than good. We are to remember the Master's words to His disciples before they had been begotten of the Holy Spirit. He said, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." (John 16:12.) So with those who are feeling after the Truth. They cannot bear all the Truth at once, just as babes cannot assimilate strong meat. What would be nourishment for an adult would choke an infant. Let us be wise as serpents and harmless as doves, showing forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Christians are obligated by their vows to the Lord to consider carefully what they

wear, where they go, what they do, what they eat and drink, and even what they think. The world, noting this care, are likely to feel that the Christian's life is a life of slavery. But they do not understand the matter at all. We delight to do God's will, it gives us great Pleasure to know what the Lord would have us wear, and how He would have us conduct ourselves. We love to be thus under our loving Father's supervision and to have His smile of approval.