

Bought at Such a Price

1 Peter 1:17-21

I. Scripture reading: 1 Peter 3

II. Bought at Such a Price: Hopefully by now you've seen the necessity of our living as strangers here in this world in reverent fear. After three weeks of reflecting on the peculiarity of our life in Christ – a life of light, truth and noble submission to the High King – I do hope that you've been changed more and more into the likeness of the strangest stranger of them all: Jesus the Christ. Now we come to consider the great reason for Peter's instruction about living as strangers here: "for you know that it was not with perishable seed such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you by your forefathers, but by the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." Our redemption explains our strangeness.

III. Redemption defined: As we consider our redemption, we must be careful not to venture to quickly into the use of religious vocabulary. When we disconnect the meaning of our "Christianese" words from the actual meaning of the words themselves, we lose sight of the actual meaning of the words we speak to describe our experience in Christ. I'm sure if I asked many of you what our redemption in Christ means, you could give me a very good answer. What we want to understand, though, is what the word "redemption" means in the first place because that will help us appreciate what we have received in Christ. From dictionary.com:

IV. Me, a Slave? "Now hold on a minute!" you might say, "I've never been a slave needing to be bought and freed. I'm an American, and I live in the land of the free and the home of the brave!" Granted. You know political freedom all your life, most likely, and thanks be to God for that! Interestingly, the Jewish leadership had a similar response to Jesus when he suggested that they needed to be set free from slavery [**John 8:31-36**]. As he pointed out to them, sin is a master who has enslaved all of us. Need more convincing? Maybe we're misunderstanding the good Rabbi? Very well then, let's see what Paul, another Jewish rabbi, had to write about this: [**Romans 6:17; Galatians 4:8; Titus 3:3**]. "Me, a slave?" Yes – you and I both!

The good news is that these statements of slavery to sin are in the past tense when we are Christ. That's the beauty of this redemption we're talking about. A price was set on our heads, and the price was death. We were to pay with our mortal bodies and our immortal spirits as well. Who of us wants to pay such a price? Who of us longs to die forever and exist (not live!) in tormented separation from our Father and Creator God? What could we do? What hope did we have? We couldn't acquire enough silver or gold to purchase our freedom from sin and death? Ah, thanks be to God! Christ paid with his own precious blood, not with silver or gold, and it was enough to buy all of mankind forever. We saw the bad news of our slavery in the previous verses, but let's see their context so that we can hear the good news of our freedom and salvation from slavery: [**Romans 6:16-18; Galatians 4:8-9; Titus 3:35**].

VI. The Divine Emancipation Proclamation: Abraham officially issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. This legally declared all American slaves to be free. The Civil War wasn't yet over, so the freedom of those declared free was not yet actual. Officially but not actually free. Hmmmm... that sounds familiar to us, doesn't it? Christ died to set the world free, but so many remain enslaved. The work of freeing the nations remains undone even though the price has been paid. I think of Harriet Tubman, a woman who was born into slavery but broke out of her slavery in 1849. After she became free, she dedicated her life to seeing other slaves find freedom in the North. Over a ten year period, she made 19 trips to the South for the sake of others. Celebrated as a Moses to her people and one of the most well known conductors on the Underground Railroad, she serves as a model for us. Freedom is available to every man, woman and child in this world because our Master Jesus has paid the price. We have found freedom from our old and cruel master, but our new and loving Master has sent us into the land of slavery so that we might lead others into freedom. Until the day when the war for freedom will be won, we work to see people freed as we have been. Amen.