

## Purchase and Redemption

1 Corinthians 7: 20-24.

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There is nothing that characterises fallen man more than the love of change. In an unfallen state there was not even a desire for it, had it been possible. And the very reverse will characterise the rest of glory, that rest which "remaineth for the people of God." But, in the meantime, one sees man trying to find in change a relief from his misery, to drown all serious thoughts by a continual recourse to some new thing, some fresh effort, some novel experiment. This is so true that certain sages of this world define happiness to be change: could they really condemn themselves more? They thereby show that they have no knowledge of God; for, as God Himself is the Unchanging One, so He brings His people to know even now peace with Him; yea, a state of calm settled blessedness, of repose for the spirit, of rest in His love, His peace, that would be utterly ruined by the suspicion of a change. They thus tell their own sad tale, that they are far from God, that they taste a misery which is not in any wise done with, but only concealed by constant fluctuation, if peradventure they might find - I will not say comfort, but - forgetfulness of their sorrow. Such is the estate of man fallen: nothing more dismal; and men are afraid to face it: else they might look out of all these shifts of wretchedness to the Unchanging One, Who can change all things for us, and Who so does through His own Son to give us a blessedness which does not change.

Nor is it only men of the world that we see thus ensnared: Christians are apt to be affected by the thoughts of the age, of those around them. Among the Christians of the New Testament none show this more than the saints at Corinth. The reason is plain. They still admired the refined world and its opinions; and they were, therefore, more or less drawn into the feelings and ways of the world. This appears not only elsewhere, but in that which gave occasion for the apostolic teaching in this part of the chapter. We can understand it well. The condition of a slave (and he was writing about slaves) in those days was no doubt distressing. Take a heathen master, where there was the grossest moral degradation, with Christian slaves men or women: these could scarcely escape the sight and sound of most defiling communications, they must ever be exposed to that which was irreconcilably opposed to the purity of new life in Christ. One can understand how natural the desire might be, in the heart of a slave, to be delivered from such a state of things; but to set the heart on a deliverance of this kind is the very thing the apostle here rebukes. He would not have it made an object. Prayer was a different thing, if it might please God to present a door of escape; but the general principle, as laid down by him, points in the contrary direction - to abide as they had been called. And this is said expressly to those who were in the condition of bondage. But it is revealed for their comfort, that God has introduced in the Lord Jesus a principle and a power superior to any and all circumstances in ourselves or around us. Now, our faith is meant to bow to this as God's word for us; and, therefore, the cultivation or allowance of desires for shifting our circumstances is clearly opposed to faith. The duty of a Christian is subjection - to God where he is; it is indeed more - confidence in His present interest and affection, in His willingness to direct and to order all for us. May we not detect in ourselves such restlessness that we really treat God as if He paid no heed, nor loved us - at least in our actual circumstances and present relationships on earth? What utter unbelief, and this in believers!

But the apostle takes up these questions of the Corinthians, in order to bring out the mind of God, and to give us divine counsel, while passing through such a scene as this. Therefore he lays down in a few brief words the principle - "Art thou called, being a slave (for such was the "servant" here)? care

not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather." The utmost sobriety prevails. There is no such extreme view as speculative minds have imported into the phrase, that the Christian had better remain a slave, even if he could be free. Such a dream might commend itself perhaps to the student in his comfortable library, but certainly not if he knew practically what slavery meant, especially in heathen times, and for Christians above all. "Let it not be a care to thee:" he must not treat the Lord as if He did not look upon the one He loved, nor enter into his sorrows and condition; let him believe that it was He who ordered all. It is His to arrange, ours to obey; for does it become the soldier in the field of battle to choose for himself what he shall do? Or is it a great matter that *he* should understand why one or another is put in any post of danger? To dispose of each rests with the one who commands.

Now there can be no doubt of Christ's love or wisdom, Who brings in what is entirely above all questions, what grace alone could conceive, and what grace now confers. Hence it is of all consequence that we should see the present power of the truth of God; for it is now that we walk by faith, now that we need its comfort and strength. Surely we shall have the results of the divine purpose for ever on high; but it is now above all that we need to walk in the faith of His grace, saying, in the hope of the glory, "The slave called in the Lord is the Lord's freedman; likewise the freeman called is the Lord's slave" (verse 22). Here we have a very blessed pointing out of the relationships of the believer, and this, too, in the true moral order for the soul. It is not first, you observe, that we are Christ's servants; we are the Lord's freemen; indeed, one is a little more, "the Lord's freedman" - he that was a slave, but is a slave no longer. The Lord's "freedman" is a word not used elsewhere, that I recollect, in the New Testament.

"Likewise also the freeman that was called is Christ's slave." He is speaking now of the man whose position and circumstances seemed outwardly so much fairer. But he is Christ's slave. Now it is well to point out, as far as the Lord enables me, the force and the connection of this twofold place. For it is not merely that one applies to the slave and the other to the freeman. I shall endeavour to show that both are true of every saint, and to show too, what they are as connected with the mighty work of our Lord Jesus; for it is of the greatest consequence to see every privilege having its root in the grace of God, and all revealed in the word of God, and all centering in the person and work of Christ.

Now there are confessedly difficulties on the subject, and they have been felt so long and widely that one cannot but desire for God's children generally a clearer view of the truth: especially as growth in divine things depends on a fuller perception of Christ and His work by the Holy Spirit's use of the written word. God has always so ordered it that the soul is led into the truth by the Holy Spirit, Who will not act apart from the glory of the Lord Jesus. He may use means if He please; but every attempt to perpetuate truth in the abstract is vain. Apart from Christ it cannot be truly known. There is something exceedingly gracious of God in it, because in this way He keeps up the freshness of the truth for His saints. He does not permit it to become a science, which is in fact what theology is and boasts to be. But where, when, ever did a soul drink of the living water in those dry beds? Let me then point out the difference between what scripture calls being "bought" or purchased, as distinct from redeemed. It is a familiar fact that the words of the Spirit are not really the same, though frequently confounded in our justly prized English Bible. The translators seem never to have suspected that there was any substantial distinction; and the mass of expositors and preachers have followed in their wake.

Take for instance in Rev. 5: 9, "redeemed us to God." Here it is ἀγοράζω the word not for redemption, but for purchase; and compare Rev. 14: 3, 4. It is, "Thou hast bought us to God." In our chapter it is translated aright, as in 1 Cor. 6: 20. The word "bought" does not mean redeem; but so thoroughly had these two thoughts been identified in the minds of Christians generally that even the difference was quite ignored by the two parties who stand most opposed to one another as they have

been for 1400 years. I refer to the old Pelagian struggle in the fifth century (between those who contended for grace in God to meet the sinner's ruin, and those who held up man's ability to please and serve God if he liked), or, when you come down to later times, to what is commonly called the Arminian and Calvinistic controversy. The remarkable fact is that both agree in taking these two words as equivalent; so that there has been no thought of discriminating, but the habitual confusion of the two ideas "purchase" and "redemption." The effect of this has been most disastrous; because it hinders, not only the settlement of the question, but all clear and sound discernment of the truths revealed. It is the confounding of the two that makes the chief difficulty. It does not seem to have occurred to any engaged in the ancient or the modern strife to distinguish between the truths conveyed by these words.

What then is the scriptural connection of purchase? The apostle is here looking at Christians, slaves as well as those who had never been other than free. Of all he says, "Ye were bought with a price." They had become by purchase the property of God; such is the effect of being bought. Right of possession had been acquired by purchase. "Ye were bought with a price:" the effect is to make the one purchased His own. If He buys, those who are bought become His slaves.

But another fact has to be considered. In 2 Peter 2: 1 we find the solemn prediction that, as in the ancient people of God there were false prophets, so there should be false teachers among Christians, and how characterised? "Bringing in heresies (i.e. sects) of perdition, denying the Lord that bought them." Here it would be unwarranted to say "denying the Lord that redeemed them." "Denying the Lord that bought them" is true, denying the Lord that redeemed them is false. "Bought" is universal, being true of all whether they own it or not.

The Lord bought the world and every soul in it: all mankind belongs to Him. It is not merely that He has the earth as the One Who created it; He has also bought it. After sin entered and brought in confusion and every evil work, He bought all here below with a price. So, in the parable of the treasure hid in a field (Matt. 13: 44), the man who found it goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field - not the treasure but the field. Doubtless it is the treasure which gives him joy, but he buys the field, and not the treasure only. Such is our Lord's testimony.

Just so speaks His apostle as he has already cited. These false teachers deny the Lord that bought them. They refuse to own His title, they treat His blood with contempt or indifference; they gainsay, in short, the sovereign Master, the One to whom they belonged not merely by creation but by purchase. Consequently their guilt was most aggravated. It was wicked to fly in the face of His creation glory; how much more to deny the Lord that bought them!

The same twofold circle of His belongings is taught elsewhere also. Thus, "As thou hast given Him power over all flesh" (John 17: 2) - here it is the Father giving the Son Whom He loved the title over (not merely the chosen nation, or the elect in general but) "all flesh." Then follows the inner circle of blessing, "that He may give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." Thus we have concentric circles in the earth, the universal one of "all flesh," and the special one of all Christians - those that have eternal life in the Son through faith. But Christ was God's gift to the world, not to believers only.

Romans 3: 22 is still more in point, as bringing in what is due, not to His personal glory only, but to His work: "God's righteousness through faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe." For I utterly reject the mutilated text, which reads no more than εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας, though so given in A B C P, etc. It is easy to see how εἰς π. might have been confounded with ἐπὶ π., for even Dean Alford (who does not go so far as some moderns in sacrificing every consideration to the oldest external evidence, and therefore only brackets καὶ ἐπὶ π.) will have it that in the theological

meaning ἐπί has no real difference from εἰς, and adds to this error the further one of referring to ver. 30 and Gal. 1: 1, which in fact prove an intended distinction. But it is to me incredible that an unprincipled scribe should have seen the grave difference which results from the full reading, amply sustained as it is by ancient and widespread testimony; especially as a similar difference reappears in Rom. 5: 18, 19, couched in a somewhat altered form, which shows only the more emphatically how well-founded is the distinction. Even Bengel, who rightly accepted the fuller text, understood its value no more than Theodoret and other fathers, who applied εἰς π. to the Jews, and ἐπὶ π. to the Gentiles. No wonder people revolted from so unsatisfactory an exposition, and were disposed to doubt the text on which it was based.

It would have been wiser to have weighed the words more fully, and sought their true force. For it ought to have been plain enough that by εἰς πάντας the apostle was indicating the direction of God's righteousness to all, Jew or Gentile, without distinction. Had it been man's righteousness, it could only indeed have been under law, and hence for the Jews alone who had the law; but it is God's righteousness by means of faith in Jesus Christ, and hence "toward all" without distinction, yet for that reason it takes effect only "upon all those who believe," but on all such, be they Jew or Gentile. It was preached to all, for all were objects of divine compassion, and Christ died for all; but it took effect only on believers in Him, and on all of them. What can be conceived more luminous than the statement, more grave than the distinction, or more consoling than the truth, for those who bow to the gospel and Him whom it makes known? But the distinction is enfeebled or lost in a weightier witness than Dean Alford or the Greek fathers, even in the authorised version of Rom. 5: 18, where εἰς should be rendered "unto" or "toward," as in Rom. 3: 22. The apostle is distinguishing the universal tendency or bearing of Christ's act with Adam's in chap. 5: 18, from its actual effect in the following verse, which exactly answers to what we have seen in chap. 3: 22. How confirmatory of the difference between purchase and redemption need not be insisted on at greater length.

Take again another case in Hebrews 2. We do find undoubtedly many sons that are brought to glory, and Christ becomes the Captain of salvation to lead them there; but is this all. Did He not "by the grace of God taste death for every man?" Yea, perhaps a little more, "for every thing?" This scripture embraces at least man universally. Is, then, Universalism true? Destructive falsehood; none more dishonouring to God or ruinous to man! It fundamentally undermines both holiness and love, both righteousness and grace; it virtually dissipates on the one hand sin and on the other judgment, mercy, and salvation. If there is an appearance of goodness, it is a cloak for Satan's lie. When it is said, "that He, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man," it is a witness undoubtedly of the rich and wide mercy of God; but does not this very thing immensely aggravate the guilt of those who despise it? Still the two things are plain and distinct - by God's grace the death of Jesus for every one; and His bringing "many sons to glory." The truth is guarded on every side. There is the testimony of love to every creature; there is also the full security of the delivered.

There too redemption comes in as distinct from purchase. Redemption is a matter of distinct application and delivering power to the persons or things concerned. It is never merely a testimony of grace, or manifestation of the character of God and His goodness, reaching out to the whole scene He has created. Redemption is the intervention of God (and ultimately for the body) that breaks the bond of the enemy, and delivers the one that was captive. It may be by blood for the soul, but finally by power for the body. Thus it is always treated in scripture. Hence you find, "Let the redeemed of Jehovah say so, whom He hath redeemed" etc. (Ps. 107: 2). Whom does the Spirit mean? All mankind? Not so, but Israel only.

Doubtless, when we come to the characteristic truth of the New Testament, redemption has

another sphere; and where is this found? Unquestionably it is believers, Jew or Gentile, the church of God. Hence, whether you take up the Ephesians or any part of the later scriptures, where redemption is treated of as a present thing, this is the language: "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" or offences (Eph. 1: 7). It is not, therefore, merely a manifestation of grace which may be despised and ineffectual; it is an unfailing work, a delivering operation, a blessing that is actually conferred and possessed: "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." It is not merely that we have been purchased through the price paid, which may or may not be owned by our souls. That is, there may be persons bought that are unrenewed, and they may turn out rebels against His rights Who bought them (denying, as it is said, the Master that bought them). It is not so with redemption; here it is an actual, known, and enjoyed blessing, if you speak of the soul. It is true, however, that it is not confined to the soul. In the same chapter of the same Epistle to the Ephesians we read of the redemption of the purchased possession. Here it looks at the inheritance, when the body also shall be changed in the day of redemption. Compare Eph. 4: 30. As believers in the Lord Jesus now, through His precious blood we have our sins as completely gone as in the day of judgment. It is a mistake to suppose that only then will be the decision of the great question. He that believes on God's Son is not judged; but he that believes not is already judged, because he has not believed on the name of the Only-begotten Son of God. "And this is the judgment, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, for their works were evil." The object of that day will be to manifest all, and to execute judgment on the unbelieving. It is now or never that in Christ we have life and forgiveness. "By Him," as it is said, "all that believe are justified from all things," not merely shall be. If you speak of life, it is just the same thing: "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life." It is a present thing. So redemption, the forgiveness of sins, is an actual state of possessed deliverance through faith in Christ and His work.

Thus then we have, with the absolute certainty of God's word, the answer to that which, however simple and certain in itself, has proved a difficulty so general among men. Purchase is universal, but does not necessarily secure that all who come under it now will submit to Him Who bought them. Redemption is not of the same extent as purchase, being not universal but partial. It is effectual and complete, as far as the soul is concerned, even now for those who believe. Consequently it is not at all true that, because purchase is universal, redemption should be. On the contrary, scripture shows that redemption is predicated only of a sphere which is limited, whereas purchase is an unlimited one. The creature itself also shall be set free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth together and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but even we ourselves having the first-fruits of the Spirit groan in ourselves, awaiting adoption, [to wit,] the redemption of our body. God will reconcile all things, never all persons, but all things heavenly and earthly. Meanwhile believers are reconciled. "You hath He reconciled;" while the gospel was proclaimed, and so it is now, in the whole creation under heaven. Here again the testimony is unlimited, for all is purchased; but then those only have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, who believe in the Lord Jesus.

This, then, as a matter of truth, is as sure as it is plain; but next we come to its consequences, for every truth has its answer in practice, and speaks to the affections. How, then, does this truth find its reflection in our hearts? and what answer does it look for in our practical path day by day? "The slave called in the Lord is the Lord's freedman" (ver. 22). What is it that sets the captive free? What is it that brings us into liberty? Is it purchase? So far from this is it that purchase, instead of giving me my liberty, rather makes me a bondman. I am His to serve, now and evermore, Who bought me with a price - His own blood. But people do not serve Christ when it is merely a question of being thus bought. There is another blessing necessary to make the claim of purchase felt, even redemption. For

the adverse power of Satan has possession of me in my natural state, and he avails himself of my self-will and love of the world. This must be broken; but how can it be? It is by redemption, when the believer, finding life in Christ, is won to God. How blessed, then, to have redemption in Him through His blood! Unless I am thus brought to God through Him Who suffered once for sins, Just for unjust, what is there to set me free? A slave of sin - what is to liberate me? There is nothing in the nature of purchase to set one free; there may be, and is, a powerful motive in it when the spell of Satan is broken, and forgiveness is known in the incomparable grace of God, but not before or otherwise.

Hence, therefore, in dealing with the different classes addressed, the apostle distinctly lays down the truth, "The slave called in the Lord [even if he abide a slave] is the Lord's freedman." As a Christian, he need not therefore be troubled about his condition of bondage; no change of life, no intervention of others, could give him such a freedom as he has already. He was a slave, but, called in the Lord, he is His freedman; he belongs to the One Who has set him free. Being called in the Lord, grace gives him freedom forever; is it not for a little while, as in the institutes of law or relations of flesh. Consequently he is entitled to take comfort without an anxious thought. What could the world give him? what could money do for him? Either might procure an emancipation; but from either does it not perish with the using? Neither in any way makes him the Lord's freedman; but redemption does. Thus the Christian slave was divinely consoled and cheered. Can we fail to see that the scripture abounds in such filling of the heart with comfort from above?

So in the Epistle to Titus we have a similar thing. "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation unto all men, hath appeared," is an outburst of thankfulness in view especially of slaves visited by the saving grace of God, which went out to all, "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people." It is not merely purchase here, but redemption. There was the delivering power. It is not therefore merely a price paid, which might as yet have no answer in those purchased. They had redemption in Christ through His blood. Redemption is a state entered, and not merely a title of Christ asserted. He has bought the world: the heathens, the Jews, are all purchased; whatever their actual feeling or conduct, they are bought, one as truly as another. He has right thereby to every soul. But redemption is our state and not His claim only. No man is redeemed unless there be an effect produced - present deliverance from the enemy and the forgiveness of sins, though it goes beyond. So those that were redeemed of old were not left under Pharaoh; they were brought across the Red Sea, God taking His place with them. In Egypt the blood of the lamb secured Israel, so that judgment did not fall on them; but they were redeemed also, and brought completely out of the house of bondage. Redemption supposes known deliverance, though in the wilderness. Evidently, then, the difference is marked.

But we have to see how the apostle turns to the other side. "Likewise the freeman called is Christ's slave." He now changes the phrase; he does not say he is the Lord's bondman, but "Christ's." He might be freeborn, or a master of slaves; but be he what he may, if a Christian, he is Christ's bondman. He is bound for ever to Him who shed His blood for him. It is the purchase that is urged now to make the freeman feel that he is Christ's bondman. It is an appeal to his sense of grace, and not merely of authority.

In what, then, consists the difference between purchase to the believer and the unbeliever? It lies in this, that faith acknowledges the purchase, while unbelief despises it and all responsibility founded on it. The believer owns it, and is bound to glorify God in his body, as no longer his own. So we find Israel acknowledging both in the song of Moses, "Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which

Thou hast redeemed . . . the people pass over which Thou hast purchased" (Ex. 15: 13-16). Men may abuse the purchase to their destruction.

But the great truth is plain. The believer is redeemed by the mighty arm of the Lord; he is no longer the slave of Satan, though he was; he is forgiven his offences, and does not stop there, but he passes into liberty; he is on the other side of the Red Sea, and he can now sing for the first time. Israel's song was only when they were clean out of the land of bondage; and so with the believer now. Redemption is the great thought, from Ex. 14: and onward, but the same song owns that then they were bought; and the soul should reflect upon both: "A slave once, I am become the Lord's freedman, for I am redeemed. But I am purchased also, and so became Christ's bondman." Such is the double truth for the Christian, as the apostle puts it. So it was in the type. Jehovah had interfered as a man of war. It was a fight between Himself and the enemy. Israel never struck a blow, but none the less enjoyed the victory. So with the Christian now. He is the Lord's freedman. He was the slave of sin and Satan, but the Lord has delivered him from all that kept him in bondage; but of what is he reminded — he who had known only human liberty? He is bought with a price, and Christ's servant; he is glad to acknowledge such bonds of love. For "Christ" is the name that speaks of grace, as "the Lord" at once recalls supreme authority. The believer acknowledges himself bondman, not merely as his duty to the Lord, but as that in which his heart is concerned; it is his boast, his joy, his glory, to be Christ's slave; and this is the more strikingly said of him who never knew other than freedom in the world. Both in truth were the Lord's freedmen, and both Christ's bondmen; but it comes out with the greater emphasis when the distinction is put as the apostle puts it here.

Even in the Revelation, as we have remarked, the thought as here is purchase rather than redemption. In Rev. 5: 9 it is the worth of the buyer, and consequently the value of the price paid that is celebrated, not the liberated state of the redeemed. Hence in the text ἡμῶς is not found — an omission as hard to account for, unless it be the truth, in A., 44, Aeth., as it is easy to understand its insertion in all the other witnesses. The Lamb is worthy, because he was slain and purchased to God by His blood out of every tribe and tongue, etc., and made them to our God a kingdom and priests; and they shall reign over the earth. Such is the new song of the elders; whereas ἀπολύτρωσις is redemption, rather than the costly act which bought us. In Rev. 14: 3, 4, though the connection of course differs, the 144,000 with the Lamb on Mount Zion were bought from the earth and from men. From these they were purchased, so that they did not belong to either; but it is not the act or state of deliverance they were in. Ἐξαγ. may go a little farther, yet it is not properly "redeem," but buying up or retrieving, as in Gal. 3: 13, Gal. 4: 5; Eph. 5: 16; and Col. 4: 5. It is not the state of deliverance we enjoy, though this be the result for the believer, but that Christ bought out from under the law those once under it to make them His own; or ourselves exhorted to make the fitting time or opportunity our own. Cf. Dan. 2: 8 for the two latter references.

Thus we see our place with reference to these two truths. Beyond doubt the Lord has, in His infinite goodness, interfered for us in our utter guilt and ruin. On the one hand, He has dealt with Satan, who had us enslaved, and brought us clean out of that bitter bondage; on the other hand, we are bought with a price, and have not a single right that is not swallowed up in that purchase by Christ's blood, not only what we have, but ourselves also. "Ye were bought with a price." The Corinthians were dull to see and own what it is to be thus bought. Therefore the Spirit takes up the truth again and again. In 1 Cor. 6 they were reminded that their body was the temple of the Holy Ghost, which was in them, which they had of God; but, moreover, that they were not their own, for they were bought with a price: therefore were they to glorify God in their body; they belonged to Christ the Lord. Thus there is not only a divine power that deigns to dwell and work in answer to Christ in the body: to take our own way, or do our

own will, is denying God's title to us as His positive possession through Christ's blood. We are His for all the way, and not merely for the end in glory. We are His to please and glorify Him now in this world, yea, in these bodies of humiliation which the Holy Spirit deigns to make God's temple.

Here the exhortation takes a rather different direction, though grounded on the same truth. "Ye were bought with a price: be not ye slaves of men." There it was urged against pleasing ourselves, especially against corrupt licence and impure passions. Here it is a guard against pandering to others, it might be for ease or honour, or to avoid pain or reproach: a great snare to the Corinthians, not to slaves only, but as much, or more, to the free. Hence the force of this word which embraces both. The Lord's freedman should not become a slave of men; neither should Christ's slave. There is not such a thought as enfeebling the Christian slave in serving his earthly master: grace would rather strengthen him to serve with twofold zeal and honour, for he was now the Lord's freedman. How base again for one who, after the flesh free but now bound to Christ as His slave by the deepest and most durable of ties, should become man's slave by compromising his Master, Who had bought him with His blood!

All this and more is clenched in the following verses of our chapter. "But this I say, brethren, the time is short; it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use the world as not abusing it." As the verses before deliver the believer from the spirit of change, so these sweep away every thought of a settling down in the world that now is. Not a word brings in formally the return of our Lord Jesus Christ; but it is all really and profoundly based on that great and most influential truth, as a living constant expectation. What does the entire course of the world depend on? It takes for granted ages to come for man and man's progress here below; it thus denies virtually, and often openly, the Lord's coming as a real hope, or even truth. Do you think that that which fills man with vainglory, or kindles his enthusiasm, or nerves him to labour and endurance — that all or any of these things would be found if he believed the Lord was coming? Clearly not. All the aspirations of the world, all that men here pant after as objects, and push forward as ways and means, are founded on an uninterrupted future. They confidently look for amelioration and advance. Just as infidel but credulous geologists, naturalists, etc., imagine an indefinite past here below, so they generally build all their hopes of the progressive and triumphant future, not on God's word, or Christ's coming and reign, but on an assumed infinite series of improved methods and inventions, till they reach a perfection of their own for the human race on earth.

But the coming again of the Lord at any moment cuts up by the root all such unbelieving and presumptuous speculations of men. Hence their angry opposition to that truth. Hence the guilt and shame of the church's failure to walk in that light. Not believing it herself, she says in her heart, My Lord delayeth His coming, eats and drinks with the drunken, and beats most those who have been most faithful in serving Him. The consequence is, she does not confess this grave but also bright testimony of divine truth, as He meant it, before the world; for people must walk and worship in the truth they utter (if even, alas! they do utter it, for many deny it), in order to have power with others. Everything good flows really from faith working by love, the springs of which are in God. When souls show that the heart is filled with Christ, when the ways are according to the truth they confess, then even enemies feel that for them it is a living reality. We know what the blessed hope was to the apostles and the church of that day: what has it been since?

Here, in the apostle's exhortation to all, we see its influence so mighty that, without a word of direct reference, it shows the time straitened. Not that it does not reveal a period of true and holy blessedness for the earth afterwards; but there will be a total change, compared with which the greatest of revolutions is as nothing; for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, not the earth only but also

heaven, and the world-kingdom of the Lord and His Christ shall come, not to speak of the still brighter portion of the glorified saints in the Father's house. Thus the scriptural expectation effectually blots out from heart and mind a long future for man's enjoyment as he is. "It remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use the world as not abusing\* it; for the fashion of this world passeth away" (vers. 29-31). It is not, of course, that Christ ignores relationship, sorrow, joy, business, or position; but He brings in an energy of the Spirit for each, which, while deepening sensibility, and respecting everything which God established in nature and on earth, raises superior to all and attaches to Christ in heaven about to come again. The apostle thus would have the saint true to Christ on the one hand, and on the other to form a just estimate of the world as already condemned, and only awaiting the Lord's coming to have the sentence executed. For not more surely has He been lifted up from the earth and does He draw all to Him, than the judgment of the world is now, though its prince has yet to be actually expelled. The apostle would have us in faith to see the present form passing away.

\* The word is καταχρῶμενοι, "using to the full," or "outright," as the "Five Clergymen," Dean Alford, and Mr. T. S. Green translate. "Abusing" would be παραχρῶμενοι, where it does not mean "slighting" - a word common enough in Greek moralists and historians, but never used in the New Testament. Even a heathen might exhort against "abusing" the world, but the apostle would have us to use it not for ourselves but for Christ's glory, just as he forbore to use his own title to support in the gospel.

This brings in a most sanctifying element for the heart. What a guard for the affections even in the closest ties of life! What a check to otherwise unrestrained grief! And, supposing there is an occasion of joy, what solemnity in the hope that the Lord is at hand! Ought the buyers to forget Him? or they that use this world to use it as their own? This is what I would press with all simplicity, the way in which the truth sets us free, holily free, even here on earth, in which we are now to be entirely the Lord's and only for the Lord, waiting for that bright moment when He will make good His every word. Surely now is the time for faith to confess Him fully; now is the time to exhort one another, and so much the more as we see the day approaching.

May grace then give us to rejoice in this that, as He has set us free, so we may enjoy our liberty for His glory and not for ourselves; and as we are bought with a price, so we may refuse to become slaves to men, and gladly acknowledge Christ's purchase, redeemed from the enemy and bought for God from self and all else.

May God thus endear Christ and the truth to our hearts, proving how it all abides from the beginning and is needed to the end, to direct and strengthen us in what we do or suffer, in the least things of this life as well as in the greatest that belong to the life to come. Amen.