

1 Corinthians 7:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

Analysis

Ye are bought with a price—the verb *ēgorasthēte* (ἡγοράσθητε, "you were bought") uses slave-market imagery for Christ's redemption. The *timēs* (τιμῆς, "price") is Christ's blood (1 Peter 1:18-19; Revelation 5:9). Believers are slaves purchased by Christ, transferred from sin's ownership to His. This echoes 6:19-20 where Paul used the same language against sexual immorality.

Therefore, **be not ye the servants of men** (*mē ginesthe douloi anthrōpōn*, μὴ γίνεσθε δοῦλοι ἀνθρώπων, "do not become slaves of men"). This command seems paradoxical after saying slaves should remain slaves (v. 21). Paul means: do not give ultimate allegiance to human masters, opinions, or systems. Christians belong to Christ alone, though they may occupy various earthly positions.

This principle has profound implications: believers must not become enslaved to human traditions, opinions, or authority structures that compete with Christ's Lordship. Even in earthly slavery or service, the Christian's ultimate Master is Christ. This relativizes all human authority and provides freedom from people-pleasing (Galatians 1:10).

Historical Context

Paul's language of being "bought with a price" would resonate powerfully with slaves and freedmen in Corinth who understood manumission through purchase. Christ's redemption definitively transfers ownership, making all believers His exclusive property regardless of earthly social status.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does understanding redemption as "purchase" affect our sense of obligation to Christ?
2. In what ways might Christians today become "slaves of men" despite being freed by Christ?
3. How does belonging exclusively to Christ relativize earthly authority and social expectations?

Interlinear Text

τιμῆς	ἡγοράσθητε·	μὴ	γίνεσθε	δοῦλοι	ἀνθρώπων
with a price	Ye are bought	not	be	the servants	of men
G5092	G59	G3361	G1096	G1401	G444

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 6:20 (Parallel theme): For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Leviticus 25:42 (Parallel theme): For they are my servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as bondmen.

Titus 2:14 (Parallel theme): Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Revelation 5:9 (Parallel theme): And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and

hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

Acts 20:28 (Parallel theme): Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

1 Peter 3:18 (Parallel theme): For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

Galatians 2:4 (Parallel theme): And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: