

# The Purchase of Blood

Acts 20:17-38

Things that are rare, things that are precious, things that are extremely necessary often have a large price tag attached to them. We often hear that “the best things in life are free.” They may be free to you, but that does not make them cheap. Precious human relationships, that we might call free, are actually the product of much sacrifice and effort. If you grew up in a loving family and have many precious memories, that means that people, before you, made commitments to values and to other people. They worked faithfully to support their families, their businesses, and their communities, etc. All of that provided the foundation for the life that you have enjoyed and are yet enjoying. This kind of perspective also applies to the very fabric of our nation’s founding and its many wars that have been fought. Literal blood, sweat, and tears have provided the legacy of our nation and society.

You were never sent a bill for it, but it cost a lot of people a lot of things to create and maintain this country. As you get older, you acquire more responsibilities to the nation in which you have lived and prospered. You work, vote, and pay taxes. Some give larger sacrifices, through serving in the arena of the government, or perhaps by serving in the military. As the old saying goes, “***Freedom is not free.***”

Another point to ponder is that Liberty is a value, not an attitude. Some may desire that no one bother them or interfere with their lives. But a value must be understood and carefully protected and maintained. People with different values may attempt to remove and replace our liberty with what they call equality, security, safety, or prosperity, etc. If we don’t pay attention, we will give up, that which cost so much, without even noticing until it’s too late. It could be compared to demolishing your house, one brick at a time. At first, it doesn’t seem to make a difference, but then one day a certain brick is removed that causes a whole wall to collapse. A statue, to the right of the main entrance of the National Archives building in Washington D.C., bears the inscription, “***Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.***” It’s a difficult thing to do, but is it worth it?

People are forgetting what happened in history. Others are adding confusion and their own agendas to the narrative of history. For all of the faults in our nation – past, present, and future: we need to learn, appreciate, and help others to learn about what makes our nation precious and unique in this world. That’s what Memorial Day (and a few other national holidays) was designed to do – to make us remember, to make us think. And the consequences of not doing this, is losing liberty, which would not be regained without another terrible price being paid.

We now turn to our text and apply this thinking to the privileges and responsibilities of being a part of God's Kingdom and family. In Acts 20:17-38 Paul is on a one-way journey. He knows that he will not be coming back. He stops long enough to have a rendezvous with the elders of the Ephesian church, not just to say goodbye, but to give them perspective and a challenge to go forward faithfully. He reviews the past. He warns them about the future. He challenges them to remember, that which cost so much should be cherished, protected, and maintained. Acts 20:28 is a key statement.

*"Therefore, take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd (to feed and care for) the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." (NKJV)*

We need to value the work of the gospel and the blessings, privileges, and responsibilities that go along with our relationship in the local church.

### **Here are things that the Ephesian elders needed to remember, to know, and to do:**

- **Remember the sacrificial labors of others who brought the gospel to you. (Acts 20:17-19)**

The gospel did not drift your way by chance. The dedicated, sacrificial, conscientious efforts of others brought it to you. The price of blood, sweat and tears was paid so that you could know Christ and make Him known to others.

See II Timothy 2:8-10; II Corinthians 4:1-12; 6:1-10; Galatians 4:19.

- **Remember the depth of instruction that was necessary to establish your faith. (Acts 20:20-21)**

Getting people to understand the gospel and to follow Christ requires many repeated efforts. Consistent care is needed to patiently and thoroughly establish the gospel in people's minds and hearts.

See Romans 16:25-27; II Timothy 3:10 – 4:5.

- **Know that the work of the gospel must go forward. (Acts 20:22-25)**

Paul knew that he needed to follow the Lord into more challenges and hardships in order to continue the growth and development of Christ's kingdom. The great commission is an on-going commitment. God's Spirit is moving us into a spiritual war zone.

See Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 14:19-23; II Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:10-20; II Timothy 2:3-4.

- **Know that the whole counsel of God must go to the whole world. (Acts 20:26-27)**

Gospel ministry is deadly serious work. God has made us accountable. We owe a debt to tell the truth to our fellowmen. See John 18:36-37 cp 20:21; Romans 1:14-16 cp. Ezekiel 33:2-9.

- **Protect and feed the flock of God. Know that we were purchased with a precious price: blood that God supplied himself. (Acts 20:28)**

Paul was not just concerned with us eventually going to heaven. Christ's blood was sacrificed, and God's Spirit was given to establish us in a working relationship with a local church. We have a relationship with all believers, in general. But God has designed a structured way that we should fellowship with believers in our area – to grow in grace and in knowledge, and to serve God through the Great Commission. See I Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 1:3-12; 2:4-6,11-22; 3:21; 4:1-7,11-16; Colossians 3:15; I Timothy 3:14-16; II Timothy 2:1-2; I Peter 1:15 – 2:10.

- **Know that spiritual/doctrinal corruption and attacks will be a continual problem. (Acts 20:29-30)**

Satan will launch counterattacks in this spiritual war. Human nature will be vulnerable to temptation, deception, and division. Constant vigilance will be the price for exercising our liberty in Christ. See Galatians 1:6-9; 3:1; 5:1; 6:12-13; Jude 1:3-4; I John 2:18,19,26; I Timothy 4:1-6,12-16; II Timothy 2:22-26; 3:1 – 4:18; I Peter 5:8-10

- **Remember the amount of care and protection that was provided for you and do the same for others – Knowing that God's grace is sufficient for you. (Acts 20:31-32)**

Since this world is such a hostile environment, an atmosphere of nurturing is necessary. Our carefulness for others must be fortified by the grace of God and the Word of God. Think about the sacrifice that was made to get the gospel to Paul - previously known as Saul (Acts 6:8 – 8:4; 9:1-6 cp. I Timothy 1:12-16). See Romans 1:9-16; 15:1-7,18; Ephesians 3:14-21; I Corinthians 1:18 – 2:16; II Corinthians 6:1-10; 12:7-10; Philippians 2:14-30; 4:10-23; I Peter 1:22-25; 4:7-14; Hebrews 10:19-25.

- **Know that ministry is not a lucrative career. God's leaders must be willing to work, serve and give to others. (Acts 20:33-35)**

Popularity, power and wealth are alluring temptations, causing some to imagine that they want to be in the ministry. But it is better to look at Christ's example. Also think of parents, who sacrifice to help their children establish their lives. See Matthew 23:1-12; Mark 10:35-45; II Corinthians 12:14-15; Philippians 2:1-17; I Thessalonians 2:1-12; I Peter 5:1-7.