1 Corinthians 6:20 (R. Beacon) 69680

Bible Treasury: Volume 20, Glorify God in Your Body (6:20)

NOTHING is more resented by the natural man than to assert that he is the slave of sin; and yet the Christian knows that nothing is more evidently true. For man is born a captive to Satan, who exercises the power of a conqueror. Only by the redemption that is in Christ can he be freed from his captivity. Naturally fallen man is the slave of Satan; to hide this fact is Satan's aim, though within certain limits man is free in choice of sin. As Joshua said to Israel, they might choose between the gods of their ancestors on the other side of the flood and those of the land in which they dwelt (see Josh. 24:15); but they could not choose between the worship of Jehovah or that of false gods. How can that which is inherently vile choose what is really good? The fact is that man is circumscribed by sin; he is like an animal tethered to one spot of ground with no more freedom than the length of his chain. Sinful man's freedom is illusory, and the derision of Satan. The Christian is delivered from the thralldom of Satan, and yields himself to Him Who has bought him with a price, not only the highest but incalculable.

Human words are not found to express its greatness: so if it is called a “price,” we cannot compute it. The Holy Ghost once says “precious blood “; and once we read, “God so loved the world.” If we can measure the love of God as expressed in the word “so,” then we may estimate the price; and, if we can estimate the price, we can measure the “so “; but both are infinite and immeasurable.

The intrinsic worth of what is purchased sometimes determines the price; or, it may be, the desire of the purchaser to possess it at all cost. We do read in the parable of a man who gave up all that he had to buy the field. for the treasure in it. We do know Him, Who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor. The fact that it was all the buyer had is what gives a relative value to man—not to the soul only, but to the body also; though there is an intrinsic worth besides, for the Lord asks, “What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” And He says of the body (John 6), “I will raise it up at the last day.” The fact of resurrection is proof that the body is bought; the out-resurrection proves that salvation includes the body. Hence the word, “Glorify God in your bodies.” Else where were the need of resurrection? And if no resurrection, then is Christ not raised; and if Christ be not raised, we are yet in our sins, and there is no salvation. The body, though formed of the dust of the earth, becomes part of the man, and has its value: especially as will be seen in the believer when glorified.

But how is this value increased by the inestimable price paid! It was a price which God alone knew. The price is infinitely beyond the intrinsic worth of body or soul; yet nothing less was sufficient in His eyes; for the price is not measured by the value of man, but according to the righteousness of God, and the precious blood is the ransom (1 Peter 1:18, 19). Thereby is propitiation and redemption. It is because of this inestimable price that the apostle says, “Wherefore glorify God in your body.” How are we to glorify God? Not merely by words of praise and thanksgiving, which are due and necessarily accompany, but alas! too often inadequately felt by the heart. How sad to sing words which express the deepest devotion without entering into the spirit of the words we sing!

Glorifying God is by the Holy Spirit in the new man subjecting the whole body to Him and keeping oneself unspotted from the world. “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body” (Rom. 6:12). The body is commonly but not exclusively (see 2 Cor. 7:1) the channel of temptation, which yielded to, though it appear ever so small, brings the whole man under the power of sin. It was by means of the body chiefly that Eve fell; the woman saw that the tree was good and pleasant. Our Lord, in enforcing the principle which dealt with the externals of religion before the innate depravity of the heart was laid hare, figuratively takes up the physical members of the body; we are to pluck out the right eye, to cut off the right hand or foot, if they offend (Matt. 5:29, 30; Mark 9:43-48). Again, alluding to sin entering by one member, the Lord tells us the consequence is to bring the whole body under its power; if the eye be single, the whole body is full of light; but if evil, the whole body is full of darkness (see Luke 11:34). James gives as a principle of law, that to offend in one point is to break all. So with the Christian; to admit sin by any one of the members is to bring the whole body under bondage to sin— “he that committeth sin is servant (or slave) of sin” (John 8:34). The Spirit of God in the Epistle to the Colossians takes up the reality of sin in the members which are on the earth; not mere members of the body, but members on the earth. Blessed be God, we shall not have these earthly members in heaven, either in the separate or in the risen state. We were baptized to Christ's death.

But if we are not watchful to glorify God with our bodies, they may be the means of sin. Therefore “mortify,” or put to death,” your members which are upon the earth.” Satan is ever watching for an opportunity to inject sin, and that by means of the “members” which under law were symbolized by the eye, foot, or hand. But now that the true light is come, we perceive sin to be a much deeper thing (see Col. 3); it is the old fallen self, all that is outside Christ our life, which the apostle calls our members on the earth. Nor are we ever told to die to it, but (as having life in Christ) to mortify or put it to death. Not the old man, but the natural body is raised again at the last day.

Do Christians think now that the frightful list of these members on the earth is truly applied to the heathen then, and is correctly given of what they were and are, but that none can be applied to themselves now? Let us remember that the apostle applies it to those who are said to be risen with Christ, to those who had died to sin, and were crucified to the world; to those who had put off the old man and put on the new. The constituent parts of our old nature are all condemned in the cross; and we are new creatures in Christ Jesus.

Glorifying God is not mere avoidance of the sin which gave occasion to apostolic rebuke and exhortation; it is the obligation of all that name the name of the Lord. If these “members” were only like the thistles that grow on uncultured ground, there would be room for the opinion of some, that by appropriate training and culture the thistles would be removed and good plants take their place. These men forget or deny that the soil is evil, and so evil that a good plant will not take root. Such is the fond expectation of the world, which thinks to educate men to be Christians, and in time to inaugurate the millennium—one of their own making. Their idea of Christianity is the development of what is good in man! But what is developed? Nature is dominated by sin, and the culture of nature as it is is but the culture of sin. Stringent laws may repress crime, but will never cause a thistle to produce figs. How can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit? The scripture says not, Pluck off

the evil fruit, but “put to death” the members, the constituents. How is this to be done? He, who has never realized (by submission to the righteousness of God) his victory in Christ over sin in his members, feels but his weakness and the strength of sin; when he would do good, evil is present, and he cries out, “O wretched man that I am: who shall deliver me from the body of this death”? (Rom. 7) Blessed be God, faith in Him who shed His precious blood, by which we have forgiveness of sins, also gives us dominion over sin, so that it shall not reign over our mortal bodies. For as on the one hand the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus liberated me from the law of sin and death; so on the other hand God, sending His own Son in likeness of sinful flesh and as a sacrifice for sin, that the righteous import of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit, condemned sin in the flesh, and by faith in Him we are free. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” In Him we have redemption from the guilt and power of sin. In Him we have put off the old man and have put on the new. For us sin is already judged.

Why then are we exhorted to mortify the “members” since we have put off the “old man"? This we have as regards our standing before God. But the Christian is viewed in two aspects—his standing and his practical condition. Before God we are “complete in Him” (Col. 2:10), “risen in Him” (Col. 3), “perfected” (Heb. 10); and Christ, Who has finished the work of redemption, now sits in witness thereof at the right hand of God. This is our standing. It is by and in Him that we are perfected forever (εἰς τὸ διηνεκὲς), without a break. Our Redeemer and representative is on the throne of God. Our Forerunner is already within the veil. In Eph. 4:25-32, &c., on the other hand, it is our condition or state that is looked at. It is the same in Col. 3:5-8, “Mortify, &c.” In both it supposes the standing of grace that we had put off the old man and put on the new. But our condition, while yet on the earth, with all these “members,” must be brought into consistency with our standing. So that to glorify God in our body cannot be without mortifying these members, all which are opposed to Him. It is only by faith in Christ in dependence and self-judgment that we are enabled to do this. We have the standing to begin with; and as we wait for Christ and His manifestation when we too shall be manifested with Him in glory, we meanwhile mortify our members which are on earth. These three go together. In Christ we are a new creation: all things are become new; yet we groan in a mortal body, and we long for our absolute change at Christ's coming. We buffet the body, but yet are perfected in Christ. We are made the righteousness of God in Christ Who knew no sin and was made sin for us! What wonders of grace and truth!

Now to glorify God in our body, we must bring it into subjection to Him. Thus Paul felt the need of keeping his body under. Failure there is, and Christ on high is Advocate and Priest for us. But “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin;” it is part (and what a blessed part!) of our standing. And we are in Him. As He is, so are we in this world—the unchanging portion of at His own. Therefore through Him let us present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. What a wondrous salvation we have!

A living sacrifice is in contrast with those slain on Jewish altars. We are to be as those that presented, not an act now and then but, the whole life: so the apostle beseeches us for our practice. And where sin does not reign, where the members are mortified, holiness of obedience, in separation from man's pride or indifference and the world's evil, is acceptable, which the things of the first covenant were not (Heb. 8:8, 13).

The spirit of such a sacrifice did Abraham offer when he preferred the obedience of faith to the promise which he, as it were, surrendered to the keeping of the faithful God. So Job, when he, spite of a body covered with sore boils, yielded himself to God, and confessed himself vile. So Paul, when he rejoiced in his infirmities (not sins), and gloried in the thorn for which he had three times previously prayed that it “might be removed: the grace and strength of Christ were exalted and rested on him.

To glorify God in our body is not so much activity in service as subjection to His will. This may mean to suffer the utter subversion of our plans and the deprivation of all; but in every case it is heart-obedience to God. That we are enabled thus to glorify God unfolds the greatness of our redemption and the price paid. How this teaches us to bear our light momentary affliction, and to weigh everything connected with the body in the light of grace and truth! If the body is carefully adorned with the things of this world, if we indulge the desires of the flesh or the mind, how can we glorify God thus? Let us ever remember that we are bought with a price. “Wherefore glorify God in your body.” R. B.

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