

Bought with a price:

During the years when slavery was legal in the United States, a gentleman happened upon a slave-bidding in a crowded street. As he watched from the edge of the crowd, he saw one slave after another led to a platform, their arms and legs shackled with ropes as if they were animals. Displayed before the jeering crowd, they were auctioned off, one by one. The gentleman studied the group of slaves waiting nearby. He paused when he saw a young girl standing at the back. Her eyes were filled with fear. She looked so frightened. As the auctioneer opened the bidding for the girl, the gentleman shouted out a bid that was twice the amount of any other selling price offered that day. There was silence for an instance, and then the gavel fell as, "Sold to the gentleman" was heard. The rope, which bound her, was handed to the man. The young girl stared at the ground. Suddenly she looked up and spat in his face.

Silently, he reached for a handkerchief and wiped the spittle from his face. He smiled gently at the young girl and said, "Follow me". She followed him reluctantly. When a slave was set free, legal documents were necessary. The gentleman paid the purchase price and signed the documents. When the transaction was complete, he turned to the young girl and presented the documents to her. Startled, she looked at him with uncertainty. Her narrowed eyes asked, what are you doing? The gentlemen responded to her questioning look. He said, "Here, take these papers. I bought you to make you free. As long as you have these papers in your possession, no man can ever make you a slave again.

The girl looked into his face. What was happening? Slowly, she said, "You bought me, to make me free? You bought me, to make me free?" She fell to her knees and wept at the gentleman's feet. Through her tears of joy and gratitude, she said, "You bought me, to make me free. I'll serve you forever!"-- You and I were once bound in slavery to sin. But the Lord Jesus paid the price, to make us free, when He shed His Blood at Calvary. How often have we spat in our Master's face - He who paid His all, for our freedom? (*Anonymous; quoted by Fr. Botelho*).

We Become His Son

There is a story that comes out of the Bedouin culture. "Bedouin" is the Aramaic name for "desert dwellers." These people live much as the characters of the Old Testament did. During a heated argument, according to this story, a young Bedouin struck and killed a friend of his. Knowing the ancient, inflexible customs of his people, the young man fled, running across the desert under the cover of darkness, seeking safety.

He went to the black tent of the tribal chief in order to seek his protection. The old chief took the young Arab in. The chief assured him that he would be safe until the matter could be settled legally.

The next day, the young man's pursuers arrived, demanding the murderer be turned over to them. They would see that justice would prevail in their own way. "But I have given my word," protested the chief. "But you don't know whom he killed!" they countered. "I have given my word," the chief repeated.

"He killed your son!" one of them blurted out. The chief was deeply and visibly shaken with his news. He stood speechless with his head bowed for a long time. The accused and the accusers as well as curious onlookers waited breathlessly.

What would happen to the young man? Finally the old man raised his head. "Then he shall become my son," he informed them, "and everything I have will one day be his." The young man certainly didn't deserve such generosity. And that, of course, is the point.

Love in its purest form is beyond comprehension. No one can merit it. It is freely given. It is agape, the love of God. Look to the cross. At the cross we encounter love in its purest form. (by King Duncan from *Collected Sermons*, www.Sermons.com)