

HOS 3:1-3-BACKGROUND TO 1 COR 6:19b-20?

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Few Pauline exhortations are more climactic than 1 Cor 6:20, "For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body." The context of this admonition in chaps 5-7 deals primarily with proscriptions against sexual immorality and enjoinders to treat marriage as a sacred institution. So, in 6:12-20, using three metaphors, Paul argues that Christians must be free of sexual vice.

The first metaphor is that of believers as members of the Body of Christ (vv 12-18). Here Paul makes a clear distinction between the propriety of satisfying the body's appetite for food and the licentious gratification of the body's sexual appetite. Furthermore, the notion of a body is developed from merely the corporeal to an expression of the mystical relationship the Corinthian believers had to Christ. Thus, to practice sexual debauchery is to prostitute the very body of Christ--a thought inconceivable to Paul.

With the second metaphor Paul treats the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit (v 19a). Just as defiling the Temple was anathema, so too is defiling the temple of the Spirit.

The third metaphor Paul uses is redemption as a description of a believer's new relationship to God (vv 19b-20). This well-known emblem of what Christ does for the individual when one first believes (Gal 3:13; 4:5; et al.) is now applied to his/her sanctification. The believer is freed from the law and the curse accompanying its disobedience, but s/he is not set free in the sense that ἀγοράζω spoke of releasing slaves for freedom (ἐπ' ἐλευθερία) in antiquity.¹ Instead, the new believer was enslaved to righteousness (ἐδουλώθητε τη δικαιοσύνη,

¹ F. Biihsel, "ἀγοράζω," *TDNT* 1.125.

Rom 6:18). It is at this juncture that a parallel can be drawn, I believe, between Hos 3:1-3 and 1 Cor 6:19b-20.

In chap 3 Hosea tells of his reconciliation with his wayward wife.² This familiar passage recounts the prophet's purchase on the slave market of one who was already his wife. Thus, Hosea stood in an unique relation to Gomer; he was at once both husband and master. As husband he had expected, but lost, the unique position he held as husband (chap 1); however subsequently, as master, he demanded the faithfulness which was his due by virtue of paying his wife's purchase price. In v 3 Hosea commanded Gomer to remain faithful to him because of his absolute authority over her. Again, the reason he could issue such strong terms to Gomer was that since he had purchased her, she was his possession.

Returning to 1 Corinthians 6, we see the thematic parallel with Hos 3:1-3. Broadly, there is in both passages an admonition to sexual fidelity argued upon similar grounds. More specifically, in both texts there is one who is redeemed from slavery to a new and higher servitude. In Hosea 3 the prophet redeemed his wife out of a degrading life to a life bound by sexual decorum. Similarly in 1 Corinthians 6 the audience had been redeemed out of bondage to sin (including licentiousness) to a life in which sexual sin was unconscionable. Just as Hosea was both husband and master, likewise Christ is husband (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:23) and master (Col 4:1). As husband, Christ had expected, but lost, his unique position when the Corinthians were unfaithful to him. As master though, Christ demanded the loyalty requisite for a slave (1 Cor 6:20).

Finally, it must be noted that Paul does not use precisely the same terminology as is found in either the MT or the LXX. 1 Cor 6:20 reads ἡγοράσθητε γὰρ τιμῆς whereas the LXX of Hos 3:2 reads ἐμισθωσάμην ἐμαυτῷ. . . . Furthermore, ἀγοράζω is nowhere used in the LXX to translate כָּרָה, the root of אָרָה ("so I bought her," Hos 3:2). If an allusion (understood in broad thematic terms) does in fact exist, why would Paul refrain from using μισθέω in 1 Cor 6:20 when this word was regularly used in the LXX to render כָּרָה and is also present in the NT (Matt 20:1, 7)? I submit that the reason lies in the multiple nuances of ἀγοράζω. To be sure, this word does connote the idea of purchasing a slave as the preceding example demonstrates.³ However, the following

² I am assuming here that the unnamed woman of chap 3 is the same woman as in chap 1, namely, Gomer. For an alternate perspective cf. Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea* (trans. Gary Stansell; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974) 59.

³ Buchsel, "ἀγοράζω," *TDNT* 1.125.

meaning distinguishes this word from **μισθέω**, for **ἀγοράζω** (and its derivatives) is the usual word for redemption in the NT. Since the argument in 1 Corinthians 6 hinges upon the fact that the Corinthians had been redeemed as well as being bound to righteousness and should therefore cease sinning, only **ἀγοράζω** could function in 1 Cor 6:20.

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