

**Text: Ac 20.28**

In our work through Acts 20, I skipped over a phrase in our current section. It fits very well with our communion service, so I thought I would make it the subject of this afternoon's message.

Ac 20.28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd **the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.**

The word "purchased" reminds us of our text from Wednesday night, when we were looking at redemption in 1 Peter.

1 Pt 1.18-19 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,<sup>19</sup> but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ.

However, our word in Acts 20.28 is different from "redeemed" in 1 Pt 1.18.

περιποιέω: to gain possession of someth., *acquire, obtain, gain for oneself*<sup>1</sup>  
to acquire possession of something, with the probable component of considerable effort—'to acquire, to achieve, to win.'<sup>2</sup>

Our text has a certain ambiguity which makes it intriguing and helps us to think about our salvation and our Saviour.

the church of God which He purchased with His own blood

Obviously, the passage refers to the death of the Lord Jesus as the great effort made to acquire the church of God.

However, who is "He" in our text? That isn't clear, although most translations make a choice pointing in a certain direction. The Greek leaves it more ambiguous.

The alternatives point to profound truths about our salvation.

<sup>1</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Johannes E. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2 vols. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996).

## I. The “natural” understanding raises a question

A. The natural way to take this: “He” refers to “God” in “Church of God”

1. So: “church of God which God purchased with his own blood”
2. But: does God have blood?

Your mind may already go to a reasonable solution to this problem, but many copyists found the question troubling.

B. The question produced several textual variants

1. The question involves changing just one letter in the text
  - a. God = θεός
  - b. Lord = κύριος
  - c. But shorthand:  $\overline{\Theta Y}$  and  $\overline{KY}$
2. Major variant: “church of God” or “church of the Lord”

Interestingly,  $\kappa\iota\nu$  follows Sinaiticus and Vaticanus on this reading, not Majority Text

3. Reasoning supporting “church of God”

- a. “Assembly [ἐκκλησία] of the Lord” occurs 7 times in LXX, not in NT
- b. “Church of God” occurs 11 times in Paul’s Epistles (“churches of Christ” once in Rm 16.16)

Possible scribal action: if “Lord” original, possibly influenced by Paul’s epistles, changed it to “God” OR, if “God” original, influenced by OT, changed “God” to “Lord”

- c. Some will argue for “Lord” since it is a more rare phrase in the NT
- d. But, “God” is a harder reading because of the question, “does God have blood?” [if Lord were original, no one would question, “does the Lord have blood?”]
- e. Consequently, “church of God” is overwhelmingly accepted by the translators, incl.  $\kappa\iota\nu$

### C. Significance of our conclusion

1. We still haven't answered the question, "does God have blood?"
2. Even more importantly, what is the text saying about our Lord Jesus?

## II. Salvation by the beloved Son

### A. A solution proposed by some

I sincerely don't want to get too grammatical here! So, you will have to accept some of my statements without all the grammar to back it up.

1. The phrase could be understood as "church of God which He (God) purchased with the blood of His own"
2. This takes an adjective "His own" as a noun

Let's take this as correct for the time being.

### B. This interpretation would emphasize the preciousness of the Son to God

1. Consider the oft repeated phrase, "my beloved Son"

- a. At the baptism, see also Mk 1.11; Lk 3.22

Mt 3.17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

- b. At the Transfiguration, see also Mk 9.7; Lk 20.13

Mt 17.5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!"

- c. The parable of the tenants

Mk 12.6 "He had one more *to send*, a beloved son; he sent him last *of all* to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

- d. Peter, recalling the transfiguration

2 Pt 1.17 For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"—

2. God the Father so loved the Son that he specially designated him as his Beloved: this is who he sent to save the world

Jn 3.16 ¶ “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

### III. Salvation by God the Son

However, ...

- A. However, I have trouble with making the adjective stand in as a noun “with the blood of his own”

1. Most of the translations take it the way the we have it in our version (NAU)

“the church of God which He purchased with His own blood”

2. The translation is good grammar, but still we have to ask the question, “does God have blood?”

- B. Answer: God the Son has blood

1. A. T. Robertson gives this blunt and forceful comment:

“Through the agency of (δια [*dia*]) his own blood. Whose blood? If του θεου [*tou theou*] (Aleph B Vulg.) is correct, as it is, then Jesus is here called ‘God’ who shed his own blood for the flock. It will not do to say that Paul did not call Jesus God, for we have Rom. 9:5; Col. 2:9 and Tit. 2:13 where he does that very thing, besides Col. 1:15–20 and Phil. 2:5–11.”<sup>3</sup>

2. Our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, shed his own blood for the flock
3. Our text is a powerful statement
  - a. Of the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ
  - b. Of His personal commitment to His church: he died for it

<sup>3</sup> Robertson, *Word Pictures*, Ac 20.28.

**Conclusion:**

Both interpretations are correct theologically, only one is correct for this passage:

We are saved by God the Father through his own very beloved Son, who loved us and gave himself for us.

Even more powerfully, to my mind, we are saved by our very own God, Jesus Christ, who shed His own blood for us.

Blessed be the name of the Lord.