

New City Catechism

Question 1: What is our only hope in life and death?

Answer: *That we are not our own but belong to God.*

Romans 14:7-8

The Bible says, “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price” (1 Cor 6: 19b-20a).

- If we were born as slaves like the children of Israel in Egypt, what would your life be like? Who would be responsible for your well being? Who would you have to trust to provide you with the things you need?
- If the Bible says we were bought, who bought us and for what price?
- What kind of a master is God?

Read the letter written by Bernard Gilpin, pastor of a small church in Houghton, England in 1558 (see next column) then answer the questions below.

- Why did Bernard Gilpin go with Bishop Bonner’s guards instead of fleeing so that they could not find him?
- In what ways do you think God intervened in the events of the story to take care of Bernard? Why do you think God did these things?
- Read Romans 14:7-8. In what ways did Bernard live out this verse?

Please make use of the Commentary, Video, Prayer, and Song as you see fit.

My Dearest Sister Cecily:

As you know, I was recently on my way to a martyr’s death, to be tried for heresy in London before the infamous Bishop Bonner. When I first got word that I was to be tried for “heresy,” it frankly took my breath away. I knew that what Boner termed heresy was in fact the truth given to us by the Lord in his Holy Scripture. Still, it stung to be publicly accused of the very thing I am so dedicated to fighting against...

I took this to my Father in prayer instantly, and he showed me that I might do more to reveal the deceptions of the Catholic Church by publicly dying for the truth he has set out in Scripture, than by proclaiming it from a pulpit for the rest of a long life. And so I quickly came to welcome the idea of being beheaded or burned at the stake for my Lord Jesus.... For this reason, I rejected the pleading of my friends to flee Houghton before Bonner’s guards came for me.

I clung to the Lord’s promise in Romans 8:28, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” This I had preached in our parish time and again. I knew that God had graced me with love for himself and that God had called me according to his purpose.... Thus, I rested in the assurance that whatever happened to me in this crisis would be his working for my good and for the good of others who loved or would love him.

I prayed it when the guards came to the church to arrest me on October 29. I prayed it during the long and difficult days of the journey to London when I was bound in ropes and fed too little. I prayed this when on the ninth day of our journey- not too far outside London- I fell from the wagon and broke my leg. And I prayed it when the guards cursed me after my accident, angry at the delay....

I was still clinging to this glorious promise when two other guards rode into our camp on November 21st to give us the amazing news that Queen Mary had died on November 17th. Most importantly, the new queen, Elizabeth, is sympathetic to reformed thinking and promptly on taking the throne, declared the martyrdom of reformed believers at an end. Shaken and surprised, my guards gently untied my ropes that morning, obviously reverent of what the Lord had done. I pray that they will be the first among those for whose good God performed these mighty acts on that road to London.

So you see, dear sister, my broken leg kept me from arriving in London until Queen Elizabeth ascended the throne. As soon as I am sufficiently healed, I will return to you.

Your joyful brother, Bernard Gilpin