

## **Some Words About...**

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### ***Exagorazo (I snatch)***

The Greek word agora referred to a common institution in the Graeco-Roman world. It is usually translated as “market place,” but it was a lot more than that. It was a civic center in the broadest sense of the word.

In both Matthew 11:16 and Luke 7:32 Jesus refers to children sitting in the agora and taunting one another. Then Mark tells us that people laid their sick before Jesus in the agora (6:56). In one of his parables, Jesus speaks of a landowner who found unemployed laborers standing idle in the agora and hired them (Matthew 20:3). And Jesus speaks of the Pharisees as liking to be greeted in the agora (Matthew 23:6-7; Mark 12:38; Luke 11:43). But when the Pharisees return from the agora they do not eat until they have done a ritual washing of hands (Mark 7:4). After all, there were shrines of pagan gods there and food being sold that had, perhaps, been offered to those idols.

But in Acts we read that Paul and Silas were dragged before the magistrate in the agora and sentenced to prison (16:19ff.).

Later Paul debated in the agora with those who happened to be there (17:17). So the agora was not just a market place as we generally use the term. (The Latin translation was forum.) All in all, it was a thoroughly worldly place.

With that in mind, we turn to the verb agorazo, which is generally translated simply as “buy,” that being the major activity in the agora.

But the verb exagorazo did not simply refer to buying from the agora. That was the meaning of agorazo. Exagorazo was more emphatic than that. As used in the New Testament, it indicates a separation from the whole system of marketing, the whole idea that everything could be bought for a price. I prefer to translate it as “snatched,” though “rescued” will do if you prefer.

#### **New Testament**

In Galatians 3:13 Paul says that Christ has “snatched us from the curse of the Law.” The whole worldly approach of having to pay a price for everything you get becomes a curse when applied to our relationship with God. The Law demands that you pay a price for breaking even the least commandment. That is its curse. But Christ has paid the price for us and has snatched us from its demands.

Paul reiterates this point in 4:5, saying that we were slaves to the conditioning of the environment, but that God sent Christ “to snatch those who were [slaves] under the Law that they might be adopted as sons.” The contrast between slaves and sons is crucial here. Slaves could be bought and sold; sons could not.

In Ephesians 5:3-20 Paul speaks of the difference between being wise and being foolish. He tells his readers to “snatch the opportune moment because the days are evil” (v. 16). He then describes how to snatch the opportune moment (5:17-6:20).

He reverses the order in Colossians, describing in 3:12-4:4 how to snatch the opportune moment; then he tells them to “snatch the opportune moment”(4:5).

#### **Today**

There is a sense of urgency in exagorazo. It isn't just the thought that Christ's return is imminent, though that thought was no doubt present in Paul's mind all the time, but it is more than that. For us to delay accepting Christ and living the Christian life is to act at odds with the whole God relationship. God has snatched us from the curse of the law, and we are to snatch the golden opportunity of salvation. It isn't the sort of thing that invites delay. Putting it off until tomorrow, saying "not just yet" isn't an option. Drowning people grab the life rope the moment it is within reach. Procrastination is out of synch with the God-in-Christ relationship.

God's love for us is as immediate and urgent as it was for people in Paul's day. Christianity is not something you put off until next Sunday.

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