

# *Thirty Pieces of Silver*

by

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*Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him. Matthew 26:14-16 (ESV)*

Too often we hear words on a frequent basis, and therefore phrases, thoughts, and stories eventually become so familiar to us that we forget their significance. We know the meaning of them, we think, but we tend to not realize that there could be something more below the surface of the meaning we understand. Such is the case with the term, "*Thirty Pieces of Silver*" for me. I bet those of you reading this devotional saw the heading, and knew immediately that I would be referencing the scripture in Matthew about Judas betraying Jesus for *thirty pieces of silver*. Am I right? I also bet most of you do not connect that there is a significance to this particular number that is deeper than the obvious, and it relates to you and me. The reason I make this statement is because I have been a believer in Christ for over sixty years. Therefore, I could have told you when I was a child that *thirty pieces of silver* was the amount paid to Judas for the betrayal of Christ. However, since childhood I have never looked beyond this basic information, and that is why I would guess that most of the readers would be the same as me. So, I'm going to give you some new information that I uncovered a few days ago, and hopefully it will impact you as it does me, which will be to create a deeper realization of what Jesus did for you and me ... and as well a deeper appreciation for His volitional sacrifice on our behalf. But also, to see our *sacred responsibility* a little better.

It started with a thought, "*I wonder what thirty pieces of silver would have purchased back then? What would be its equivalent now?*" So I did a little research. As far as the exchange rate in dollars for a piece of silver, this comparison would not be a good scale to use, for there is a different economy now. But I did find out that back then this amount of silver was worth about ninety days of wages, and we can connect with that amount based on our own ninety-day income. So, whatever your monthly wage is today, times three, would be the amount paid to Judas (or you and me) for betraying Christ. You can do the math. But more appreciably than the math and the dollar amount you come up with, is the significance of the symbolic value placed on the use of *thirty pieces of silver*. This is the new information I spoke of, and this is what I found out: **In the days that Judas betrayed Jesus, *thirty pieces of silver* was also the going rate for buying a slave.** When I found this information out, the term that had become so familiar to me and had lost its significance came alive to me in a new way. As a result, I began to see the extreme sacrifice in honor and privilege the King of Kings made to redeem me, and it impacted me. Not only did He die for me, but He also voluntarily laid down His crown, and became a slave in exchange for my freedom. Think about it: Jesus who is God, and who created all things became a slave to set free those of us who have been a slave to sin and its consequence. He took on this role on as slave for us. He became our substitution. Let's apply this thought to our redemption.

It would be similar to you being put on an ancient auction block where slaves are bought and sold. You then stand before the crowd to see what price would be paid to purchase you, for you are already a slave to the world and its value system. You were born a slave, and you are now dealing with the consequence of being a slave. The bidding starts. Before long you see an evil taskmaster looking at you, and getting his moneybag out to purchase your life and soul to join him is an eternal condition of bondage to him and his own future outcome. As the bids move closer to the going rate of *thirty pieces of silver*, it slows down and he thinks he has you as his possession. People know the market for a good slave, and you are only average, but the evil man discriminates against no one. He wants all the slaves he can purchase with his bountiful world currency, especially if it is only *thirty pieces of silver*. Right before the last bid which is his bid, a man in the crowd steps up to the auctioneer and makes an announcement. He says that He will purchase your freedom with the price of His own freedom. He then steps in, takes your chains away, and takes them on Himself. He then looks you directly in your eyes and says, *“I have taken your stripes and your chains on Myself so that you do not have to be bound the evil man who wants you. With my last act of freedom before I become a slave of substitution for you, I now deliver to you that which you could never purchase for yourself. I give you your freedom. Now go and live a life that reflects a man who has been redeemed.”*

I’m reminded of the great movie *Les Miserables*, and the profound words of Bishop Myriel when he purchased Jean Valjean’s freedom with silver candlesticks. Victor Hugo, the writer of *Les Mis* was actually, indirectly presenting the Gospel with his work, even though his audience, and eventually Hollywood never saw it coming. Look at the words from Bishop Myriel to Jean Valjean, and relate it to the freedom that was purchased for you:

*“And remember this, brother, for there is some higher plan, and this silver I have bestowed upon you must aid you to become an honest man. I have used these silver candlesticks to purchase your soul for God.”*

With Jean Valjean, those silver candlesticks purchased a slave of crime, and set him free from his life of crime. The man who purchased him then charged him with the responsibility to live a life worthy of his redemption, which Valjean would eventually do. Concerning you and me, the *thirty pieces of silver* paid for Christ’s betrayal and His substitutionary enslavement for you and me, purchased men who were slaves of sin, and set us free from the consequences of sin. In the same manner with Jean Valjean, we have been charged with the *sacred responsibility* to live a life worthy of our redemption. Look what the Apostle Paul says about it:

*“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.”*  
*Galatians 5:1*

Men, a great value has been determined and paid for your lives, and it is not just ninety days of labor, or even the cost to purchase a slave. No, our true value is how Father God valued us by purchasing our souls and freedom with the price of His own Son. Jesus is the Treasure of the Universe, and this is how God has valued you. This is the amount paid for your redemption. So, if you ever become discouraged and start to hear the Accuser trying to convince you that you are worthless, remind him that he lost his bid for you, and you now have a Master who purchased your freedom and has set you free. But better than reminding the Accuser of this, for he knows it quite well this fact about you, remind yourself . . . and live a life worthy of your redemption. You have been set free, now allow Jesus to use you to set other captives free. Then you will begin to see, and feel, your own value.