

The Paradoxical Price of Being a Christian

King David's world was caving in on him. He and God had a good working relation. David gave honor and glory to God for the victories and every good thing that came his way. But then one day there was a lapse of his faith. A sudden fear took hold of the king! David would often sing with inspiration of a faith that would carry all of us through these times. He said, *"What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee"* (Psalm 56:3). Solomon, with the same fierce determination later said, *"Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh"* (Proverbs 3:25). David gave the order to count the warriors of Israel before the next battle. Joab immediately perceived that this was David's fear, not resolve and trust, "doing the talking" and begged the king not to allow the head-count of their troops trump their dependence on God. David did not listen to this advice and went ahead with his plan and the results were catastrophic! The defeat of David's lack of trust was a far greater defeat than one received at the hands of an enemy. The price? Seventy thousand men. God, in His mercy, stopped the onslaught. David desired of Araunah the use of his threshing floor to erect an altar to give God thanks and worship. Araunah was offering his floor to David free gratis. David would not accept. Here are his words: *"And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing..."* (II Samuel 24:24).

Sometimes in personal work, people of a competitive spirit are amazed that salvation is free and will sometimes insist to me that surely there is something they can do to pay or "help God" in this great matter of salvation. I, as well as any experienced soul winner, will be quick to give plenty of verses to show that salvation does not cost them anything (Ephesians 2:8,9; Titus 3:5; II Timothy 1:8,9). On the other hand, the freeness of salvation is not to encourage the person to think, "Since it is all God, I don't need to do anything." Doing something to earn salvation cannot be done; doing something in appreciation for salvation is acceptable and further more, to be expected. *"Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works"* (James 2:18).

We need to have the attitude of David when he said, *"...I will surely buy it of thee at a price; neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing..."* The Lord Jesus had this principle in mind when He said, *"...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it"* (Matthew 16:24, 25). Therefore, I am not asking you what does it cost to become a Christian; that cost God His only begotten Son. It costs us nothing - God everything. But what I am asking is, what does it cost to live the Christian life? It will cost you:

1. Fun

Well, now isn't this a nice reminder on Super-Bowl Sunday? Everybody wants to have fun; how dare this pastor take the risk of alienating prospects for Christ and His service with this potentially down-sided message. Hear the words of Jesus, *"...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself..."* That doesn't sound fun, does it? If the wrong crowd says, miss church, get drunk, be promiscuous, our choice is already made, provided you want to make the right choice. It should be said of us what God said about Moses, *"Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season"* (Hebrews 11:25). What else will it cost you?

2. Fortune

An influential young man came to Jesus and inquired of the Lord *"...Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"* (Mark 10:17). Later in the answer Jesus said to this man who was obviously attached to his riches, *"Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me"* (Mark 10:21). Pretty strong words for a man who lives comfortably according to the world's standard of living! I don't think any of us is ready for the next item on our list of what it costs to be a Christian; it may cost you:

3. Family

Jesus said, *"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple"* (Luke 14:26,27). Wow! What a message; no one can even be a close "second" to Jesus. We are talking about total commitment in love and loyalty to Jesus Christ! You may now ask, is there anything else? Yes, it will cost you:

4. Fame

In other words, just in case you left room for yourself, God is requiring even that. He wants you; all there is of you! This reminds us again of the words of Jesus, Who said, *"...let him deny himself..."* (Matthew 16:24). Paul said, *"Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth"* (I Corinthians 10:24). Then again he said, *"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others"* (Philippians 2:4). Be on the lookout for others and don't worry about making yourself famous.

Now here is the paradoxical blessing that you are in store for when you "pay the price" for following Jesus. Here's what you get:

1. Fun

Going back to Moses who forsook the pleasures of sin, we see the finished work, *"Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt..."* (Hebrews 11:26). The promise of Christ is, *"These things have I spoken to you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full"* (John 15:11). Isn't this a wonderful truth: when you are willing to deprive yourself of the fun of this world, God replaces it with a *"...joy unspeakable and full of glory"* (I Peter 1:8). Anything else? Yes, most definitely you will receive:

2. Fortune

Look at this awesome promise: *"And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting"* (Luke 18:29, 30). You don't have to wait until you get to Heaven to enjoy the benefits of forsaking all and following Jesus. Any friend or amount of fortune that you lose for the Gospel's sake, God will grant you a dividend now as well as in the life to come!

3. Family

As in Luke 18, we have the promise of God giving us parents, wife, and children, we also have the promise of an actual blessing that accompanies the marriage of a righteous man: *"Whoso findeth a wife findth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD"* (Proverbs 18:22). And finally you find:

4. Fame

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 16:25). Jesus said, *"...a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth"* (Luke 12:15). And when we understand this and are willing to have nothing for His sake, here's what the Lord Jesus promises in Matthew 6:33, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."*

In summation, what do you lose for following Jesus? Everything! What do you gain? Everything. It may sound contradictory, but according to the Word of God we find no contradiction, a paradox full of the blessing of the Lord. *"The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it"* (Proverbs 10:22).

- Pastor Pope -

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