

There Is a Cost to Everything

3-Year Bible Reading Plan

By Dr. Jeff Meyers

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Crossroads Ministries

301 S. 8th Street

Opelika, Alabama 36801

Website: www.fbcopelika.com

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers

This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of 2 Samuel 24. As you make your way to 2 Samuel 24, you're going to discover that that is the last chapter in that book of the Bible and today we're gonna have the privilege of looking at the last chapter in David's life, King David's life, and to be honest with you, when you come to this last chapter, there's kind of this holy tension and it's kind of the theme of his life. It's a chapter that begins with great tragedy. Here King David as he has done before, as we often do in our lives, he falls into temptation, but it is a chapter that ends with great triumph and we discover what happens when we get up, what happens when we repent of our sins, what happens when we come clean before God and kind of this motif in David's life of tragedy that allows the Lord to bring triumph out of.

As we come to this last chapter in his life, what we're gonna discover for each and every one of us is that everything has a price. Our price, there's a price for the rebellion in our lives, there's a price to live a righteous life, we're also going to discover that when the Lord interjects and he redeems us, there's also a price that goes along with that. Today in 2 Samuel, beginning in chapter 24, verse 1, we're gonna read just a spattering of verses in this chapter for the sake of time, but it will give us the entirety of the context of the situation that is at hand.

In verse 1 it says,

1 And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah. 2 For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which was with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people. 3 And Joab said unto the king, Now the LORD thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see it: but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing? 4 Notwithstanding the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against the captains of the host. And Joab and the captains of the host went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel.

I want you to fast forward to verse 10. The number has been given. The census has been counted and it says,

10 And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly. 11 For when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, 12 Go and say unto David, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. 13 So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me. 14 And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man. 15 So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men.

We fast forward to verse to verse 22. The king, the one that was there, desires to worship, he desires to repent, he desires to make it right with God. It says,

22 And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him: behold, here be oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments and other instruments of the oxen for wood. 23 All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king. And Araunah said unto the king, The LORD thy God accept thee.

Listen to verse 24,

24 And the king [that's David] said unto Araunah, No; 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. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

What we see here is this tragedy of David numbering the people, the triumph of this worship service in the end, but what we discover particularly in verse 24 is David said that if it cost us nothing, then it may be worth nothing, and today I want to deal with what did it cost for David to rebel? What did it cost for him to become righteous again? And what does it cost the Lord to redeem us and provide this in our lives? But before we get to those details, very quickly there are three aspects of this chapter that I think must be addressed just as far as the context is concerned. You may have struggled with that very first verse, why is it that the Lord moved David to do such and yet then we find out it is sin for James 1:13 says that God does not tempt any man to sin? There's a parallel

passage, the book of 1 Chronicles 21 that says, "And Satan provoked David to number the people."

What we see in chapter 24 of 2 Samuel is much what we discover in the book of Job. You remember the story where Satan comes to the Lord and says, "Your servant Job, he only serves you because you treat him well and you bless him. Allow me into the picture and he will curse you." Remember what the Lord said? "Even if you do as you desire, he will continue to bless me." And the Lord gave Satan parameters. I want you to understand when the Lord allows Satan to provoke David, he's not doing it in the hopes that David will fall. He's doing it in the desire that David will resist the temptation and be like Jesus is in Luke 4 when he comes out of the wilderness, he departs having power given unto him. But what do we discover? Joab comes to David, and allow me to paraphrase, "This isn't a good idea, King." You know what 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, "There is no temptation that comes unto us that which is not common to man, that the Lord will always give an opportunity to flee." In other words, the Lord gave David an opportunity. His own Joab, the one who he trusted the most came and said, "This isn't a good idea." There was the opportunity to resist and he did not.

So the issue that we have really wasn't an obstacle for David's life, though it became one, it was meant to be an opportunity in his life. The second thing I want to call to your attention is there is a numbering of the Israelites, those in the northern and those in the southern kingdom, and the numbers here in this chapter do not necessarily match the ones in 1 Chronicles 21. To rectify that, you just kind of have to read a little peculiarly where it talks about the valiant men or the men with the sword, and we discover really this is a two-layered census: the total number of men that are in the kingdom and out of that total number, how many of them would be actually be able to go into battle or to war.

So there's really not a discrepancy there and last but not least and pertinent to the message, does it strike you odd that the Lord would give him an option for his punishment? And one of the things that we see in Scripture from the very beginning is that we get to choose our sin but we don't get to choose our consequences. We see here in 2 Samuel 24 the same thing we saw in Genesis 3. Allow me to remind you of when Adam and Eve were there and they had taken of the forbidden fruit and they found themselves hiding from the presence of the Lord. When God shows up in the garden, you remember the first thing he says, or shall I say the first thing he asks? "Where are you?" Now I believe completely and I'm sure you do, God knew exactly which bush they were hiding behind. He even knew what fig leaves they had picked to hide behind. What he was asking is, "I need you to share with yourself and me where you are with me."

You see, what we discover is that God had already had the punishment laid out and he said, "Okay, David, which one of these three?" But I want you to hear David's heart. This is how the tragedy turns into triumph. He says, "I'll put it into your hands, God, whatever it is you desire." Now we can agree that all three of these are not pleasant: seven years of famine, 90 days of war, or three days of pestilence. And he says, "Alright, God, I'm the one who has sinned. I'm the one who fell into the trap. I will put it into your hands."

We discover that there is a price for everything. Let's talk about the price for David's rebellion. What did it cost him? What did it cost the people? We just read it: 70,000 men. Now we see that visibly, we see the tangible there, but there's an intangible to this. 70,000 men lose their lives. Let's talk monetary systems here, let's talk about that which is tangible, let's talk currency here. That would be about 5% of Israel's male population at the time. You say, "Well, why is that significant?" Because there would have been 70,000 widows and at least 70,000 children, probably more than that, that now would not have sustenance, they would not have an income, they would not have a means and the rest of Israel would now have to come alongside and assist. The army would have been depleted by 5% but their economy would have been stretched another 5.

Can I bring this into the 21st century? For those of us who live here in America, today in our culture those who are on complete subsistence of the rest of us, those who for whatever reason, whatever it may be, they need our help for clothing and for shelter and for food is about 5% of our population. Yet everybody, it doesn't matter what side of the aisle you claim to desire to sit upon, says that our system that we assist others is overly stretched, it's taxed, we can't do any more, we don't know how we're gonna keep doing what we're doing. Can you imagine if overnight it were to double? Imagine if overnight all of those who gladly receive our assistance were to double. Do you see the price that David's sin cost Israel? It didn't just cost him, it didn't just cost the army, it cost everybody there.

You know, there's an intangible to the cost of our sin. It's easy to put dollar figures on it and we'll do so in just a moment, what about those 70,000 women who are now without a husband? What about those 70,000 plus children who will never grow up with a father in the home? You see, it's the intangibles of sin that actually cost more than the dollar figures, if you want to put on it. It's the intangibility of the loneliness, the emotional response, the upsetting, the anxiety, the depression that would have run rampant through Israel. You see, any time we step out of God's plan for our lives, it always costs us something. It cost David and it cost every other person in the land.

So let's make it personal for a moment, and by the way, I'm about to personally probably upset each and every one of you that's listening to me today, and that's okay, because I'm going to touch on areas either A, of your life, B, of your family's life, or C, of people you care about's life, but can I remind you about this chapter? David did not get upset with the prophet. He got upset with himself.

Let's talk about the price of sin very briefly and we could go through the famous 7 deadly sins and such, but let's just talk about greed and envy, when we desire something that is not ours or we decide to hurt something that is somebody else's. Let's just use in broad terms, let's talk about, shall we say, the jail system, the incarceration process we have in America today. It costs about 50 billion dollars to operate in our culture today, yet it's not the dollars that are the most dramatic cost, are they? It's much like in David's world, it's those children without fathers as most of the cases, and some of them, yes, even without mothers. It's the cost not just of the financial strain but it's the emotional strain of having broken homes because, and I think we can all agree with this, the overwhelming majority

of time that somebody finds themselves incarcerated is because they, according to Scripture, have done something that God said was not a good idea. And yet it cost not just those who are incarcerated, it costs all of us.

How about the sin of lust? By the way, I'm gonna go beyond what we naturally think of when we use that word because lust means a desire, a passion for, it means to crave something – listen – that promises to make you feel better or to respond better. We have industries in our culture today that promises that but we know what the real cost is. It doesn't matter if it's the gambling industry, the alcohol industry, the drug industry, it doesn't matter what it is or the trafficking industry. When you begin to take all of those issues, you begin to take all those items that people pursue for the promise that it will give to the flesh, it costs our culture upwards – listen to this – of a quarter trillion dollars. By the way, that's 250 billion with a "b" dollars for the vices, the lust of our life, that which we crave and want and we think will give us pleasure. But I think you and I know it's really the intangibility of those vices that really cost. It's the child who grows up in a home with an angry or non-present parent. It's the paycheck that was wasted on substance rather than given for food and clothing. It's the person who was done wrong in a multitude of areas and as we say today so often, was given and sold to others that grows up their entire life with a lack of trust for anybody who they have a personal relationship with. You see, the sin that we participate in always has a cost. We can put some dollar figures on it like we can David's, but ultimately it's that non-visible that is the most deadly.

I'm gonna go where very few if any Baptists have ever gone. Allow me to remind you, I've been a Baptist nine months longer than I'm alive so don't get upset with me, I'm talking to myself. Y'all ready for this one? I know after I go there, some of you are gonna go, "I can't believe he went there." Let's talk about the obesity problem, gluttony. That's a Baptist issue, isn't it? Hey, I love a good buffet but do you know a buffet does not mean a personal challenge? Did you know that the obesity epidemic in America costs roughly 500 billion dollars a year? You know what we love to do? We love to talk about the drugs and we love to talk about the alcohol, but don't talk about my buffet. Do you know if you talk about the medical costs associated with the loss of work, it exceeds over one trillion dollars? Did you know that the number 1 reason that people call in sick to work in America is for an upset stomach? Do you know why? Because they're upset about what they did last night, they're upset about what they ate last night, they're upset about what somebody in their family did last night that caused harm to their family. Folks, there's a price for our sin. It promises us a few moments of pleasure but I'm telling you, I've been to that buffet, I've buffeted my body and the next morning it hurts. You see, I thought I'd just pick on the one that I struggle with. You see, don't get mad at the prophet, don't get mad at Gad.. Do you know what David did? David never spoke an ill word against Gad. Do you know what he said? He said, "You're absolutely right. My sin is costing me."

If you want to put all the numbers together, if you want to use the average household income in America, because of the vices and the sins of our culture that you may or may not personally participate in, it costs us on average of about 15-18% of our annual incomes. Now you may be thinking, "I don't spend anything on that stuff." But your

neighbor might spend 40%. Do you realize that means that the average American spends more money on sin than we give to God? There is always a price for sin. 70,000 men in Israel, I think you and I today could name the casualties in our own lives.

But there's a price for righteousness. Go to verse 24. I love this verse because the king comes to David and says, "Man, I'm so honored that you have joined us. I've got the oxen ready, I've got the threshing floor ready. You can now worship the Lord, you can have a right relationship with him." And David makes this incredible statement, he says, "But that which cost me nothing." Dietrich Bonhoeffer who was a martyr during the war years ago called it cheap grace. That which cost us nothing. If we are going to live for the Lord, I promise you it's going to cost you something. Oftentimes it will cost you financially, sometimes it will cost you the privilege or the opportunity to go up the proverbial corporate ladder, but more often than not it will cost you relationships that you hold dearly in your life. I cannot tell you how many people I've had conversations with both publicly and privately have said, "If you understand, if I take a stand for what God said, that family member may never speak to me again. It'll never make Christmas the same again. It'll never make Thanksgiving the same again, birthday parties the same again." I have a very difficult but honest question to ask you: should we care more about what God thinks or about what our relatives think? Jesus said in Matthew 10, "I have not come to bring peace but I've come to bring a sword. I will divide this family member from that family member, this person from that person."

You see, if you and I celebrate and live our "Christian faith" and it doesn't cost us anything, we may have to ask us what we're celebrating and what we're living. David said, "No, no, no, there's always a price to be paid. I cannot do that which cost me nothing." I know stories untold of individuals who were terminated from their jobs because they wouldn't cook the books. I know people who had dear friends never speak to them again because they said, "I love you but I cannot endorse you," according to what the Bible says. You see, there's a price for our sin but there's a price for our righteousness and the funny thing is the sin that we want to spend so much money on is fleeting, but the righteousness that costs as well is everlasting.

You know, finally, how does the tragedy of David's life become triumph? How does the tragedy of our sin become triumph? Because redemption, redemption by simple definition means an exchange of goods, it means one item in exchange for another item, and what we see here in David's life is he took the oxen on the threshing floor and he exchanged their blood for his right relationship with him. That's why in Galatians 3 it says the law, the Old Testament, is a picture for us, it's a school-master, it's teaching us about what is to come. What did Jesus Christ do on our behalf? He exchanged, he traded, he redeemed his blood for our sin so that we could be declared righteous in him. By the way, that's in 2 Corinthians 5:20-21.

So let's talk about it for a moment. What did it cost Jesus? Let's put financial terms on it. How would you like to go from the throne room of God to the dirt of the Middle East? How would you like to go from the angels singing your praises, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty," 24/7, to men walking by you in the crossroads of life saying, "Isn't

that the son of the carpenter?" How would you like to go from a place of unending joy to that of unending sorrow? How about the opportunity for success and worldly favor? You do know that the devil came to him and offered him the kingdoms of the world if he would bow down and he said, "Get behind me, Satan." Rather than a crown of gold and jewels, he wore a crown of thorns upon his head.

Speaking of relationships, the Bible records that tens of thousands of people desired to hear him preach, to watch the miracles at the tip of his fingertips. In fact, even at what we know as Palm Sunday, ten thousand plus said, "Here he comes, the Son of David. Here is our Messiah." A few days later when the crown of thorns was upon his head, when the religious leaders and even the non-religious were mocking him, you got it, five people were at the base of that cross and only one of the disciples, all the rest had fled.

So the next time we say, "Man, I don't know if the price for righteousness, I don't know if I can pay that price," you do realize Jesus paid a greater price for your redemption than you'll ever pay to live a holy life. Jesus offered and gave his blood so that we can be saved, we can be forgiven, and here in this story what is David's final act? His final act is the offering of blood for his sinful behavior and actions. It's a picture to us of the redemption of Jesus Christ in our life.

You see, there's always a price to be paid and today each and every one of us have a choice, the sin in our life whether it was named specifically or not, you know what you struggle with, I know what I struggle with, the price for that according to the Bible, the wages or the price of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. The price is going to be paid, the question is are you going to let Jesus pay it or are you gonna try to pay it yourself?