

2nd Samuel 24:18-25

The Cost of Serving Christ

This last chapter of 2nd Samuel shows us that even the best of men are vulnerable to sin. Even though they be seasoned saints – as David was by this time – they are nonetheless vulnerable to sin. In this instance David’s pride overcame him. This is what led to the numbering of the children of Israel. David is manifesting the same kind of spirit that was manifested by King Nebuchadnezzar when he said in Dan. 4:30 *Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?*

David and Nebuchadnezzar share something in common – they were both overcome by pride and they were both dealt with on account of their pride. In Nebuchadnezzar’s case he was reduced to a beast. In David’s case – the nation was reduced in number. David’s case presents to us the solemn reminder that our sin bears consequences toward others. This is something every leader – whether he be a leader in the church or a leader in his home – must keep in mind. Sin bears far reaching consequences that go beyond the sinner himself.

In the end David’s intercession prevailed. He manifests a Christ-like spirit and even foreshadows Christ’s intercession and atonement when he says v. 17 *Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father’s house.*

Christ, of course, did not sin and never did anything wickedly – but He did pray And saw His prayer answered when He made atonement for our sins. And His prayer could be interpreted in the very words of David – *Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me.* And His Father’s hand did turn against Him when He stood condemned in our place.

The thing I want you to see about David from this passage, however, is the lesson he teaches us by his example and his words in v. 24. Araunah had offered to give David all that he needed to make his sacrifice to the Lord. He would have given him the threshingfloor and the oxen and the instruments of the oxen for wood. But David wouldn’t have it. Instead he says in v. 24 *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.*

The Lesson I would have you see from this text is that:

There is a Price to Pay for Serving Christ

I. The Nature of the Price – {v. 24,25}.

From these verses we can describe the nature of the price as sacrificial. It’s fitting for us to sacrifice for the Lord since the essence of His service to us was to sacrifice Himself. Had David simply received the threshingfloor and the oxen and the wood it wouldn’t have cost him anything. He would have simply gone through the motions of offering sacrifice.

This kind of thing would become a problem for the Israelites over the course of their history. They would faithfully adhere to the prescribed form of worship. They would have their feasts. They would offer their various animal sacrifices. But in fact they would not really be making a sacrifice at all.

And so the Lord would eventually say to them through the prophet Amos – *I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts* (Amos 5:21,22).

What had happened to the Israelites? The thing that had happened was that their religion was reduced to mere externals. They practiced their religion when it was convenient. They did just enough to get by – so to speak.

We discover in the book of Malachi that they were using sick and lame animals for their sacrifices – animals that were good for nothing else so they might as well be used for burnt offerings. They were offering, in other words that which cost them nothing.

I'm afraid the same mindset is prevalent in our day. Ministers want to know not how can they serve? – but rather – what's in it for them? How much does it pay? What are the perks? What is the potential for advancement? Or those who attend church want to be sure that the church won't expect too much of them. *Is tithing a requirement? Do I have to come Sunday morning and Sunday night and Wednesday?*

And what is it that will keep folks from endeavoring to give out the gospel and bring others to church? The thing that will keep them from service is this – it may cost them something. It may cost them time. It will cost them effort. It may cost them reproach. It will cost them comfort. It's so much easier to sit back on the couch – especially following a day of work.

How short sighted we become in our complacency. As Peter says in his 2nd epistle – *he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins* (2Pet. 1:9). Therein lies the key – remembering Christ. When we remember the sacrifice He made for us and we contemplate what we've been delivered from and what we may look forward to – then we'll agree that no sacrifice is too great and no amount of sacrifices are too many to make for our Savior who sacrificed so much for us. This is why Paul grounds his appeal in the mercies of God when he says in that familiar text – *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

The nature of the price we must pay, then, is sacrificial. Would you think for a moment on:

II. The Forms the Price Takes –

We don't offer burnt offerings – Christ fulfilled everything the burnt offering represented. There are other forms of sacrifice that we can and should make, however:

We offer to God the sacrifice of thanksgiving. *I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD* (Ps. 116:17). When we come to prayer meeting, therefore, we're able to serve the Lord in a way that costs us something. I know many people that come to the prayer meeting are fatigued following a long day of labor.

I know that there are many other things that could be done and that need to be done around the house or with the kids. I would remind you, therefore, that this service to the Lord is worth the cost – because Christ is worthy to receive our praise and thanksgiving. And because we need to see the Lord move in our day.

I once heard a preacher say that revival comes at the price of the tears and fervent prayers of the people of God. I know that revival comes through the sovereign good pleasure of God – but it comes as well as the result of the people of God earnestly seeking Him for it – willing to pay the price of their fervent prayers and intense self examination in which we confess and forsake our own sins.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise (Ps. 51:17). So we pay the price of serving God with our prayers. We pay the price by opening our hearts to the Spirit of God – beseeching Him to search our hearts and know our ways and bring to our minds the things that must be put away in order for the joy of the Lord to be our portion and in order for the kingdom of Christ to advance.

We offer this sacrifice as well by doing good to each other and communicating to one another. So in Heb. 13:16 we read *But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

Such sacrifices call for our time and effort. We must take the time to take each other to heart. We must take the time, when it's easier to be settled on our lees, to minister to each other. We must take the time to endeavor to communicate the gospel to the lost. When we reason that we don't have time – then we're really saying that we're not willing to pay the price.

Let me serve the Lord when it's convenient. Let me serve the Lord when such service is not so intrusive upon my comfort zone. David was certainly far from a perfect saint. When you begin to recall his faults and shortcomings it will move you to pray and hope that you never fall the way he did. On the other hand David is called a man after God's own heart. He knew the glorious truth of justification by faith.

This is why he says in Ps. 32:1,2 – *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity.* We know that we are indeed blessed because our sins are not imputed to us. We know that we're blessed because Christ's righteousness has been imputed to us. Like David, we should also know that such blessedness obligates us to serve the Lord. May we be willing then to spend our time, our efforts, our money, our all in order to show our gratitude to the One who sacrificed so greatly for us.