

The Price of Faithfulness

Luke 14:26-33

(All Scriptures NASB 1995 unless otherwise noted.)

The Price of Faithfulness

"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." (Luke 14:26-27)

("hate" = Greek "miseo", "of relative preference for one thing over another... as to the claims of parents relatively to those of Christ" – W.E. Vine's Dictionary of NT Words)

The Price of Faithfulness

"For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'" (Luke 14:28-30)

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"Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions." (Luke 14:30-33)

The Price of Faithfulness

- 1. Israel and Judah had fallen into *idolatry* and *immorality*.
- a. God had previously promised to punish their sins with captivity (586 B.C.).
"So all these curses shall come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you would not obey the Lord your God by keeping His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you. They shall become a sign and a wonder on you and your descendants forever. Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things; and He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you."
(Deuteronomy 28:45-48)

The Price of Faithfulness

- 1. Israel and Judah had fallen into *idolatry* and *immorality*.
- b. God punished their sins with captivity (586 B.C.).
"The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent word to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place; but they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, until there was no remedy. Therefore He brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or infirm; He gave them all into his hand. All the articles of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king and of his officers, he brought them all to Babylon..."
(2 Chronicles 36:15-18)

The Price of Faithfulness

- 1. Israel and Judah had fallen into *idolatry* and *immorality*.
- b. God punished their sins with destruction (586 B.C.).

"... Then they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem, and burned all its fortified buildings with fire and destroyed all its valuable articles. Those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete."

(2 Chronicles 36:19-21)

The Price of Faithfulness

- 1. Israel and Judah had fallen into *idolatry* and *immorality*.
- c. Remnant was allowed to return in 536 B.C. and the temple was finally restored in 516 B.C.

"And the elders of the Jews were successful in building through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they finished building according to the command of the God of Israel and the decree of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. This temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar; it was the sixth year of the reign of King Darius." **(Ezra 6:14-15)**

The Price of Faithfulness

- 2. Ezra returned to Jerusalem about 60 years later (457 B.C.) to revive the worship and purity of the people.

"This Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given; and the king granted him all he requested because the hand of the Lord his God was upon him. Some of the sons of Israel and some of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers and the temple servants went up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes ..." (Ezra 7:6-7)

The Price of Faithfulness

- 2. Ezra returned to Jerusalem about 60 years later (457 B.C.) to revive the worship and purity of the people.

*"... He came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. For on the first of the first month he began to go up from Babylon; and on the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, because the good hand of his God was upon him. For Ezra had set his heart **to study** the law of the Lord and to **practice** it, and to **teach** His statutes and ordinances in Israel."* **(Ezra 7:8-10)**

The Price of Faithfulness

- a. Led by their rulers, Israel had fallen into sin by marrying pagan women.

"Now when these things had been completed, the princes approached me, saying, 'The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, according to their abominations, those of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians and the Amorites. For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy race has intermingled with the peoples of the lands; indeed, the hands of the princes and the rulers have been foremost in this unfaithfulness.'" (Ezra 9:1-2)

(cf. Deuteronomy 7:1-6)

The Price of Faithfulness

- b. Ezra was dismayed at the people's sin.

"When I heard about this matter, I tore my garment and my robe, and pulled some of the hair from my head and my beard, and sat down appalled. Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel on account of the unfaithfulness of the exiles gathered to me, and I sat appalled until the evening offering." **(Ezra 9:3-4)**

The Price of Faithfulness

- 3. Ezra calls on the people to repent of their sins and turn back to God.

"Now while Ezra was praying and making confession, weeping and prostrating himself before the house of God, a very large assembly, men, women and children, gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept bitterly. Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, said to Ezra, 'We have been unfaithful to our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope for Israel in spite of this. So now let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. Arise! For this matter is your responsibility, but we will be with you; be courageous and act.'" (Ezra 10:1-4)

The Price of Faithfulness

- From Ezra we learn what it means to deny ourselves in order to be right with God.

"And He was saying to them all, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.'"
(Luke 9:23)

I. PUTTING AWAY SIN.

- A. We can never be right with God when sin is present in our lives!

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear." (Isaiah 59:1-2)

"Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord. 'AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,' says the Lord Almighty." (2 Corinthians 6:17-18)

I. PUTTING AWAY SIN.

- 1. Sin is deadly.

"Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness." (1 John 3:4)

"All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death." (1 John 5:17)

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."
(Ephesians 2:1-3)

I. PUTTING AWAY SIN.

- Certain marriages were sinful in Israel.

"For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy race has intermingled with the peoples of the lands; indeed, the hands of the princes and the rulers have been foremost in this unfaithfulness." (Ezra 9:2)

"... shall we again break Your commandments and intermarry with the peoples who commit these abominations? Would You not be angry with us to the point of destruction, until there is no remnant nor any who escape?" (Ezra 9:14)

"Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, 'You have been unfaithful and have married foreign wives adding to the guilt of Israel.'" (Ezra 10:10)

I. PUTTING AWAY SIN.

- B. Christians must put away every kind of sin.

"But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil."
(1 Thessalonians 5:21-22)

- 1. The old self must be put aside, new self put on.
"... that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth." (Ephesians 4:22-24)

I. PUTTING AWAY SIN.

- B. Christians must put away every kind of sin.
 - a. Fleshly lusts must be put to death.

"Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices ..."
(Colossians 3:5-9)

I. PUTTING AWAY SIN.

- 2. Israelites had to put away their foreign wives.
"So now let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law." **(Ezra 10:3)**
- 3. Like ancient Israel, to be faithful to God, one must put away a spouse in a sinful marriage.
"And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."
(Matthew 19:9 ESV)
"But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife."
(1 Corinthians 7:10-11)

II. WHAT IT TAKES TO PUT AWAY SIN

- A. The sacrifice of precious things.
 - 1. Wives and children **(Ezra 10:3, 10-11, 44)**
 - a. The sinful nature of these marriages did not mean there was any less pain associated with repenting of them.
 - b. This keeps many from ending sinful marriages.
 - 2. Jesus is our example of sacrifice.

"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."
(Philippians 2:5-8)

II. WHAT IT TAKES TO PUT AWAY SIN

- 3. A price will be paid to be a disciple of Christ.
 - a. You must love Jesus more than your family.
*"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own **father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters**, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple."*
(Luke 14:26)
- "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. He who loves **father** or **mother** more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves **son** or **daughter** more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it."* **(Matthew 10:34-39)**

II. WHAT IT TAKES TO PUT AWAY SIN

- 3. A price will be paid to be a disciple of Christ.
 - b. You must love Jesus more than your life.
*"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, **yes, and even his own life**, he cannot be My disciple."* **(Luke 14:26)**
 - c. You must count the cost and pay the price!
(cf. Luke 14:28-33)

"So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions." **(Luke 14:33)**
"Then He said to them, 'Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.'"
(Luke 12:15)

II. WHAT IT TAKES TO PUT AWAY SIN

- 4. Some refuse to sacrifice for salvation.
"As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, 'Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' And Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments, 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" And he said to Him, 'Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up.' Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, 'One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.' But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property." **(Mark 10:17-22)**

II. WHAT IT TAKES TO PUT AWAY SIN

- 4. Some refuse to sacrifice for salvation.
- a. Some in Israel refused to pay the price.

"Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahzeiah the son of Tikvah opposed this, with Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite supporting them."
(Ezra 10:15)

- b. What about us?
 - A job?
 - Friends and family?
 - Acceptance?

II. WHAT IT TAKES TO PUT AWAY SIN

- B. Self-Denial is Proof of Devotion to God.

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."
(Galatians 2:20)

"But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ ..."
(Philippians 3:7-8)

II. WHAT IT TAKES TO PUT AWAY SIN

- B. Self-Denial is Proof of Devotion to God.
- - Self-denial shows that we love Christ the most.

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds.'" (Matthew 16:24-27)

II. WHAT IT TAKES TO PUT AWAY SIN

- B. Self-Denial is Proof of Devotion to God.
- Self-denial is a choice to walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh.

*"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that **you may not do the things that you please.**"*
(Galatians 5:16-17)

CONCLUSION

- 1. Israel could still obtain mercy and forgiveness through repentance; and most did.
"Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, 'You have been unfaithful and have married foreign wives adding to the guilt of Israel. Now therefore, make confession to the Lord God of your fathers and do His will; and separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives.' Then all the assembly replied with a loud voice, 'That's right! As you have said, so it is our duty to do.'" (Ezra 10:10-12)

CONCLUSION

- 2. Christians can repent and do the deeds they did at first by putting Christ first and putting away every sin.

"Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place – unless you repent." (Revelation 2:5)

CONCLUSION

- 3. We must offer ourselves as a living sacrifice that God accepts, not conformed, but transformed.

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."
(Romans 12:1-2)

God's Plan of Salvation

HEAR THE WORD

"Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls." **(James 1:21)**

BELIEVE IN JESUS

"And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." **(Hebrews 11:6)**

God's Plan of Salvation

REPENT OF SINS

"Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord ..." (Acts 3:19)

CONFESS HIS NAME

"Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven." **(Matthew 10:32)**

God's Plan of Salvation

BE BAPTIZED FOR FORGIVENESS

"Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" (Acts 2:38)

REMAIN FAITHFUL AND OBEDIENT

"And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation ..." (Hebrews 5:9)