

What Does Your Religion Cost You?

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2 Sam. 24:24

2 Sam. 24:24, “*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. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.*”

We sometimes think of our religion as a source of comfort, or as a power which enables us to face the responsibilities and ordeals of life.

We think of it in terms of dividends or the inducements to live the Christian life.

I know of some people who have gone around checking the cars in church parking lots to see which churches have the most blessed members, and then they attend those churches to have those blessings added to them.

We are not so apt to think of it in terms of what it costs us, but we should..

That is our subject now What does your religion cost you?

The scene of our text was the threshing floor of Araunah, king of the Jebusites.

David had grieved God by numbering the people of Israel, and three things were proposed as punishment upon David: seven years of famine; three months invasion by David’s enemies; or three days of pestilence.

David was offered his choice of any one of these three, but he was resolved to fall into the hands of God for mercy.

2 Sam. 24:14, “*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.*”

So the Lord sent the pestilence.

2 Sam. 24:15, “*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.*”

In order to bring an end to this terrible curse, David was sent to raise an altar upon which oxen were to be offered as burnt offerings unto God.

When Araunah understood the mission of David, he generously offered him not only the ground upon which to build the altar, but also the oxen for the sacrifices and the other things that might be needed in the service.

But David was resolved to pay the full price.

“Not so, Araunah ...”

Araunah was very willing to give, but David was determined to buy; thus not taking a cheap way to serve God.

Service to God, if it is to count anything, if it is to possess any value, is a very costly affair.

Those things worth possessing are never won easily.

We seem to appreciate things more when we work the hardest to achieve it.

Education is costly.

Students who have worked to earn their own money for their education have appreciated it more than those whose education was paid for by their parents.

The financial cost of education is great, but not the greatest. Think of the demand made of the student in hours of study, classroom work, and student activity.

To be a mere dabbler in school or college is to throw away one's chance to prepare himself for life's challenges.

Marriage is costly.

Success here comes only when the husband and wife are willing to pay the cost of which such success demands.

It is not a goal to be realized in a few weeks or months of adjustment, but as long as this partnership lasts, it is a constant challenge to the unselfishness of both the husband and the wife.

It costs something to become a proficient athlete.

Where natural ability is necessary, it still takes hours and hours of training to be a really good athlete in any sport. Those skaters who make it to the Winter Olympics had to spend 8 to 10 hours every day on the ice since a young child. Of course, that decision costs them a normal childhood life with other children.

What I have illustrated in terms of education, marriage, and athletics is also true of our religion.

The mere dabbler in religion is more of a disgrace to the Christian profession than in anything else. Personal sacrifice has always been an expressed command of God.

Self-denial is a demand which Christ makes of his disciples.

- Luke 9:23, “*And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*”
- Mark 10:21, “*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.*”
- Rom. 12:1, “*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.*”

Jesus is “the way” and “strait is the gate and narrow is the way.”

- John 14:6, “*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*”
- Matt. 7:14, “*Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*”

Few people are willing to make the sacrifices. They want to go along with the world. The same is true in our worship.

We have too much tolerance in religion today. This has caused our religion to seem too cheap to us.

What does your religion cost you?

In actual money?

If you have given as the Bible teaches, your religion has not been without cost.

- 1 Cor. 16:2, “*Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.*”
- 2 Cor. 9:7, “*Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*”

How young Cyrus Hamlin settled it.

When Cyrus Hamlin was ten years old, his mother gave him 7 cents to celebrate a great holiday. The money was for gingerbread and buns. They went to church first, then afterward the boy went to the store to get these items. In church when the collection plate was being passed, he thought within his mind, "Shall I put in 1 cent, or 2?" He decided on 2. Then his conscience said: "What, 5 cents for your stomach, and 2 cents for the Lord?" So he thought, "4 for gingerbread, and 4 for the Lord." When the plate arrived, he dumped in all 7 cents, and had no more bother about it. Later, his mother asked him about it, and he explained to her of what went through his mind. She had tears in her eyes, and gave 7 cents to him again so he could have a holiday dinner.

The poor widow serves as an inspiring example in sacrificial giving.

Mark 12:41-43, *"And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury."*

God blesses those who serve Him. There is a blessing in giving.

- Acts 20:33-35, *"I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."*
- Matt. 6:33, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."*

In time?

When there is some deed you should perform in the function as a Christian, is your attitude, "I don't have time."?

"I have this and this to do. I just don't have time for my brother."

We all have been given the same amount of time. Isn't it a question of priorities? Which is more important, doing God's service, or doing that of our own self interests?

We have only once to live; therefore, let us live to some purpose. Each given day that has dawned will never dawn again. The opportunities that came with it have all passed behind. If we fail to fill each with our service to God we will not be able to return to that day and live it over again. It's as if the wheels of time's chariot have ratchets on them; they move only forward.

In the use of your talents?

When someone is sick, do you visit or minister unto him?

Most of us have this ability. Why not put that talent to work? It cost the Samaritan something to help the wounded stranger.

Most people have a talent to teach in some form or another. Have you talked to your friends, neighbors, fellow workers, or classmates? Why not put this talent to work? He has a soul worth saving as much as yours.

What is a religion really worth that costs nothing?

It is unreal. It is a mere name and pretense.

Real religion begins and is maintained at the cost of much thought, study, and prayer.

Where this exists it must also move the heart to zeal and generosity in the service of God.

It is unacceptable unto God.

Instead of accepting it, He abhors it; it is contrary to His will.

Mal. 1:7-10, "*Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts. And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts. Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.*"

Hence, God's children are required to offer what is valuable, not that which is worthless; that which is their own, not that which is another's

It is, therefore, fruitless of good, now and hereafter.

It does not elevate and improve the worshipper. It can hardly secure even the approval of men.

We are assured of a recompense for our labor in the Lord's service.

God will not let any man be a loser in His service if he is faithful.

- Matt. 10:42, *“And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”*
- 1 Cor. 15:58, *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”*

He gives valuable rewards now to those who expend their energies or substance for Him. Talents employed in His service will be multiplied.

- Matt. 25:29, *“For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.”*
- 2 Cor. 9:8-10, *“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)”*

Great is our reward in heaven.

- Matt. 5:12, *“Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”*
- 2 Pet. 1:11, *“For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”*

Conclusion.

Let us not give the Lord the scraps of our time, talent, and means.
Let us make our religion cost us something.

Our religion cost God something.

John 3:16, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

It cost Christ something.

2 Cor. 8:9, *“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”*

Hence, we ought to be willing to *“present our bodies a living sacrifice; holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service.”*

