

THE PRICE TAGS
OF LIFE

Genesis 25:27-34

INTRODUCTION:

We read about the bartered birthright, Esau like Cain stands out in the word of God as a beacon of warning. He stands out like the mask of a sunken ship, that can still be seen but has already been overwhelmed by the tide.

Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a pot of beans. And Jacob gave Esau bread and red pottage - or red beans. He did eat and drink, and rose up and despised his birthright.

He had (a privilege) inherited - Esau being the first born had the opportunity of becoming heir, through natural birth. This was a marvelous opportunity which he had.

This privilege was despised and he perhaps said what profit is this birthright to me - V. 32. The pottage to him was the chief thing at that moment. He allowed his appetite to over rule the higher instinct of nature. And men make this same mistake because of temporal which replace the spiritual.

Things of first importance ought to be put first. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and these things for which so many hunger after, shall be added.

This great privilege was lost. He sold his birthright - he deliberately parted of it - as a thing of no value. And he did not really count the cost.

The heart is never more deceived than when it covets the things which are seen and the things which are temporal. It is always a bad bargain to sell the spiritual for the natural.

Esau was not the first man, nor has he been the last man, to sell his birthright, for a pot of beans. This is the tragedy in life. These decisions must be faced many times. In the moment of weakness many sell their possessions for a pot of beans.

The history of his hour is a revelation that all men can see. When we speak or mention the word (Watergate) It immediately comes to a man's mind - that there are some men of prestige and honor. Men with great careers. Men in high positions - respected in the community, in the government, and yet at some time or some place there was a moment of weakness and they did something that was not quite right. Something that was under the table - a violation of the law. And they did something for a special privilege that no one would ever know about.

But it is exposed and we discover that men have sold their reputation. Their character for a pot of beans.

Now this is nothing new - look in history. In 1923, in the Tea Pot Dome scandal Secretary of Interior A. B. Fall accepted bribes for special interests. There were groups who wanted rights to the Naval oil reserves. For \$100,000 this man sold his position. His honor, reputation, along with others. They sold their birthright for a pot of beans.

The name Francis Bacon stands out in history and still cast influence in the scientific world. Bacon, a child of renown in the 16th and 17th centuries in England, he is said by historians to be the most brilliant man in the world of that day.

He entered Cambridge University as a full pledged student - age 12. He arose from one position to another and became Lord Chancellor of England - a great career in name and history. And yet he took bribes in the cases he decided - and one day it was all exposed. He was convicted - and sentenced to prison to die in obscurity and shame. Just for a few dollars. Selling all that he had for a pot of beans.

The sports world was shaken just a few years back when college basketball players were accepting bribes from the underworld gamblers. To shave points in games and sometimes to throw the games in favor for the gamblers. When this was exposed, young men of outstanding college careers with a national reputation. Some had sold out for less than \$100 dollars.

What we are trying to get across is that there is a price tag on every decision that we make in life. Just remember that. Everyday, everyone of us will stand at what we call the crossroads. We will have to make decisions. We need to examine the price tag, of that decision, and see what it costs.

Jesus tells us in one sentence. Just how this works - Luke 14:28. He said if one of you intends to built a tower - the first thing he does is sits down and counts the cost. Less he begin the building and he is not able to finish it.¹¹ What Jesus was saying - it would be embarrassing for you to begin to built a tower, a house, or some structure without counting the cost. You get started on this building and half way up you have to stop. Now what Jesus said - you first count the cost. This is what I am talking about - the price tag on everything. Now Esau should have counted the cost. Now later he regretted this awful decision which he had made. But Christ expects us to be reasonable men. To sit down first of all before starting, and to seriously undertake the matter of thinking about the price tag. No wise man desires his life to end like the Tower of Babel - in shame and in confusion. To live the

Christian life indeed is a great undertaking.

It costs something to be a Christian. It costs something more than what others are willing to put into it. And whatever the price is, it must be paid.

To be sure a man is going to have to give up sin. Christ gave up himself that he might redeem us from iniquity. Sin is a bad investment. Every scheme in which it has taken place - it has brought corruption.

The surrendering of your will is a cost you must pay. Your separation from the world - you must bear the cross and follow him. Your opposition to the world is another price tag. The temptation that you will have by the Devil through lust of the eye and pride of life. Your self-denial - if any man will follow me - he must first deny himself. And denial, not I but Christ.

Now this is the price tag that we are talking about.

Now it is going to cost you something if you are (not a Christian). As well, as it costs to be one. And I think that you can not afford not to be one. When you think about what you are going to lose. A man who is not a Christian loses the forgiveness and the love of God. He loses the saving power of Christ. He loses the comforting presence of the Holy Spirit. He loses the promises of the word - the Bible. He loses the joy of service. He loses the blessed hope of seeing Christ again. He loses the rewards of everlasting life.

Now we would like for you to count the cost - think of the price tags. What did it cost the prodigal

I. THE PARENTS

First, I would like to say a few words to parents. I believe there are some price tags that you ought to give consideration too. The young people are facing marriage - there are decisions that you are going to make about your family. About your children. There are price tags hanging about your church loyalty, about your spiritual convictions. There are decisions you will make concerning the fidelity of your marriage vows. About the integrity of your life, in the marriage relationship.

First, think about the vast number of young married people today. How easy it is to be caught up with the busy affairs of society. Your career, your business, your school, your home. You fail to see the price tag on the neglect of your spiritual and religious life.

It is the old story in the Sunday School. Young people come right on up while they are Juniors, Intermediate, and Young People in Sunday School Classes. They are faithfully, dedicated, devoted, and loyal to the church. And then they get married.

When they marry, they face a new routine. Here is the young wife trying to learn how to cook. And she discovers that she can't get breakfast ready for everyone and still get them off to Sunday School in time. The young husband is independent - no longer at home with his parents. He says, I don't get up early on Sunday Morning. I like to rest and read the paper. And this couple of newly marrieds drop out of Sunday School, drop out of Church. Oh well, we will get started one of these days but they get caught up with the excitement of married relationships and they forget the awesome price that they are paying for their neglect.

Then the baby comes and things change to another routine. And a second one comes.

And you could find a village today or a city - or even in the countryside - you can find young adults once active in church life as young people, once committed but now they are rearing their families outside the church. Outside the influence of the Bible and godly instruction. Look at the price tag.

I remember standing in the Holy Land overlooking the Jordan Valley - it is a rich, beautiful valley - but out beyond on the barren hills. And as you stand there, you think of two families coming to stand at that same spot. There is an uncle and there is a young nephew. And they come to this Promised Land because God has spoke, to the uncle Abraham. They had traveled together. And at this point, they must separate. Abraham said to Lot, our herdsmen are in conflict. They have problems over grazing the flock. And our stock is being mixed up. And so we must separate - now the older man said, now Lot, you may take your choice of the land that lies before us. There are two roads - one that leads down into that fertile valley, and the other road goes up unto the barren hills beyond us. Which road will you take.

I imagine Lot asked the difference about the choices. And the old man, Abraham said - now this road leads into the mountains. The grass is scarce and the water holes are few. It is not the best land for your cattle to thrive - and your donkeys and camels. But the other road, the valley, the grass is knee deep and the water is plentiful, a wonderful place for a man to go. He could have easy luxury living. The herds will multiply. And Lot says, certainly this is the right choice.

I imagine Abraham said to Lot, there is more involved - this road leads to the fertile valley, and the water - but this road leads to the city of Sodom and Gomorrah. Those cities are out there on the plains. And they are reported to be the most wicked cities in all the world. Now Lot, as you go down that road, take

advantage of the business opportunities. But you are going to risk involving your family and your children. It is not a good place to raise children. You'll make a lot of money living near the city, but you'll be in pagan, wicked environment.

Now this road leads into the mountains - there are not many people. There aren't any wicked cities - not a very good business proposition. But I'll tell you it is a wonderful place to raise your children. You are close to God - you can train them right and protect them from the wicked influences of Sodom and Gomorrah. You won't have a lot of money but you will have a great life for your family.

So it was, Lot stood at the crossroads to make a decision. He looked up one road and down the other. He thought about gold and he forgot about God. He thought about making a fortune and he forgot about his family. He thought about his own popularity and good times, and he forgot about the purity of life in Godly living. He began to think about his cattle, but he forgot about his children. The Scripture says that Lot took the road toward Sodom and pitched his tent in that direction.

Now there are young people who say as they start out with their family life, when I get ahead, when I get on top, when I get a new house paid for, when I get a car paid for, when I get all these pressures straight - I am going to get started to church. And then I will get my religious things worked out. But right now, I've got to give everything I have to business. I am going to give everything and get on top. So the young couple takes the low road of Sodom. Intending someday to turn around and come back.

But (look) down that road (25 years) later. Lot's family is grown - he is still there. He has moved into the city. He's become one of them. And God had to send his judgement to destroy those cities. He lost everything he had - he lost his gold,

he lost his fortune, his cattle, his family, his children.

Now if you look with me, you can see this again and again.

A couple came to see a pastor - we've lost our boy. What can we do about it. And the preacher said there is nothing you can do now. You could have done something when he was 8 years old, when he was 10, 12, or 5. But you know what you were doing then - and the father dropped his head in shame. Yes, I wasn't much of a Christian - as I should have been. Our home was not the Christian home - though we claimed to be Christians, we weren't. We were not setting an example. But now this boy is 20 years of age and it is too late. He is not going to follow your example now. He will say, I'll go my own way. All the preacher could do was get on his knees and pray to God that he would intervene in behalf of this boy who was beyond the reach of father and mother. And they could not lead him.

But there was a day when they could have led him, but like Lot, they were too absorbed in their society and their own affairs, their own business, and social activity that they neglected God, the claims of God, their church and the effect it has upon their lives.

Now at this moment, I may be preaching to some parents - some prospective parents, or some young parents. I say to you, look at the price tag on that decision that you are making. What are you doing about your church? What have you done about Christ? What have you done about the Scripture in your home, and prayer in your home? Someday it will be too late and you will come to someone ringing your hands and saying - what can I do. And the preacher will have to say, I can do nothing. We just have to put these children in God's hands right now. Now you could have done something - but you know, you sold your birthright for a pot of beans back yonder and

it is too late now.

I do not know how it is with you on this. But it really breaks your heart, and it is a heart breaking reality, to face mothers who care nothing about bringing their children to church. And you see fathers who care nothing about attending with their children in Sunday School. Then we try to say, why not bring your boy or your girl - and parents will not set the example.

So many times we discover that here is a mother who tries to bring her children to Christ, and we thank God for those who are fighting against the flood tide of evil.

Quite often there are men who work several Sundays out of the month and the Sundays they are off, they do not give attention to the church. And they do not unite with the church. And week after week they go on and think that things are going to change. But I would say, let us turn this price tag over -- what is it going to cost you if you let everything else come in the way.

There came one day a woman to D. L. Moody and said, will you please pray for my husband. He told her I certainly will - tell me about him. He said, I belong to church - I am here every time the door opens. But my husband won't come near the church. Moody said he studied her a minute and said, may I ask you two personal questions. She replied "yes". So he said first, do you ever say harsh things to your husband. "Embarrassed, she said, yes Sir, I am afraid that I am guilty of that. Second, do you ever become angry and say harsh things to your children, or about your neighbors. She hung her head and said, yes Sir, I am guilty of that too.

Moody said don't you think I had better pray for you first. She whispered, yes sir. She got down on her knees. She got down on her knees and he prayed with her.

About a week later she came back, I just have to tell you Mr. Moody - your questions burned holes in my heart. I got my family together and I told them all that I wasn't the kind of Christian that God wanted me to be. I was ashamed of it and wanted to ask their forgiveness for every single ugly thing that I ever said to them. And furthermore, I promised them that with God's help I would never say them anymore. I asked them to forgive me. We were all crying and we all got down to pray. And my husband prayed aloud - Dear Jesus, I give my life to you this day. I want to be the kind of Christian my wife wants to be.

Beloved, have we looked at the price tags on our homes. Have we let Jesus down and become as inconsistent as the Pharisees. And as Judas, who sold him for 30 pieces of silver. I wonder if we are still betraying him.

Now I want to talk to you Christians, you church members - right here and now. About the price tags on some of your decisions - as a child of God. You make decisions every day and you are to witness for Jesus. I want to ask you, have you been witnessing for him today. I want to ask you, if you are doing the work of the Lord. Are you one of those who say, well, I don't have any talent. Listen, every person listening to me can do something for the Lord. There is not a single one but what can do something. You can - and God intends you to be happy in your Christian life. And the greatest thing is, you must face up to this. There are some people who make an appearance once a month, maybe even once a year. Sometimes not that often, to the church. And they wonder why they are not happy. They used to be in the services. They used to attend prayer meetings and Sunday School. And when the church was going on in its meetings - but now some have not been in years. And you wonder why you are not happy. God wants you to make a decision of renewal - of commitment. He wants you to put your life in service. He wants you to go to work for him. And to serve him.

A country preacher said, I stopped by to see a fine old farmer. He was getting

ready to plow a field. The preacher got out of his buggy, and walked across the field and said, "What are you fixing to do?" I'm fixing to plow up the grass and turn it under. Between these corn rows. The preacher looked and said, well, I can't see any grass, and he smiled. You know perfectly well the grass is there. You get down close enough and you will see it. And the little seeds are sprouting and I am going to turn it over before it gets to be grass and absorbs the fertilizer and strength of the soil. I am going to turn it over so it will never grow. I want that corn to have all the strength in the soil.

Do you want Jesus Christ to have all of you. There might be some weeds that need to be pulled out and thrown out of your heart and soul. They will grow and ruin your life. And that is certain.

X
A few years after the close of World War I, the Kiannis Club of Davison County, Tenn. put up a beautiful monument in a park in Nashville. It was in memory of the boys who had sacrificed their lives in France and elsewhere. The monument portrayed a mother of a wounded soldier, kneeling by his side, and holding his head in her lap. A broken rifle rested in the arms of the soldier. On two sides of the monument are bronze tablets, with the names of the men who died. On the front, you can read this inscription: "I gave my best to help make a better world."

No tribute is too great for the war dead. How much better it is - however it is to honor the living while we have opportunity. This past week the nation again had called to its memory the released prisoners of war from Vietnam. Those men who stayed in prison who offered what they had in order to help make a better world. So many people do not deserve to be honored because they have lived so unworthy. This is true - but how fine it is to be able to say of a person - he lived life at its best.

A group of American artists were living together in Rome. They were studying and

old man of wealth, made friends with them. In fact, he had made a fortune and he was willing to spend his money helping young artists. The old man noticed one young fellow in the group of Americans who did not go out with the others with their celebrations. They seemed to look for an excuse to have a drinking celebration. The young man was a friend of the old man and the entire group had respect for him. Two years passed, and the old man noticed that this young artist never lowered his ideals. He had restraint while he was in Rome.

One night he wanted to find out what was the strength of this young man, so on a Sunday evening while the others were celebrating, the old man took a walk with this young boy. And they stood there by the mountain looking at the clouds and the sunset. And the old man broke the silence. Son, I have watched you for two years. Withholding yourself from wild parties. I know there is something in your life that helps you do that - what is it. The boy looked up into the old man's face - and then lifted his eyes Westward, pointing his finger - do you see that sunset over Westward beyond the mountain of crimson clouds lies America. And in a little village over there is a quiet little home. And in that home lives a girl I love. I am keeping myself clean for her.

Now John had known what the price tag of life was. And he knew that there was something to purity and keeping himself pure.

I remember and recall that hymn "I would be true". Now that hymn came from the heart of a brilliant young American. Back in 1906-07 - he was in Tokoyo, Japan. This young man, Howard Arnold Walter had graduated from Princeton and he was having deep spiritual vision for the cause of Christ. And he was teaching in Japan when he wrote a poem entitled "My Creed" and he sent it as a tribute to his mother in Conn. He intended the poem only for her. Now this mother was proud of her son in the accent of life and she shared it with other young people. She sent it to Harpers Magazine and it was published in 1906. I would be true for there are those who trust me.

I would be pure, for there are those who care.

I would be strong, for there is much to suffer.

I would be brave, for there is much to bear.

I would be friends to all the foe, the friendless.

I would be giving, and forgetting the gift.

I would be humble, for I know my weakness.

I would look up, and laugh, and love, and lift.

The poem is simple - yet it was the philosophy of Howard Walter. He was only 23 years old when he wrote these lines and they express the splendid spirit of his heart.

I would be true - for there are those who trust me. God trusts each one of us. And we need to be pure for the sake of those around us. And that we would hurt none. Here is a spirit of one that is glorious, that will help a strong man run a race. He is not by himself. This young man left the world a legacy - he took up a larger service with the WMCA. He went to India to work with a group of students. And there he died, at an early age of 33. His life was brief but it was brave and it was glorious because he knew that the price tags of life were valuable.

Now a last price tag of life, I would like to direct to the lost person. Some of you listening to me are not even Christians. You have never given your life to Jesus Christ. Look at the price tag - what are you paying by saying No to Jesus Christ. You are selling your birthright for a mess of beans. What is the birthright God has given to every man. Is it health - no. Is it physical life - no. You are already alive - the right to the pursuit of happiness, etc. on the Constitution says. That this is the right of everyone. But that is not your birthright.

The birthright that God has given you, and has offered you, is the birthright to become the son of God. Every creature born on the face of this earth - God gives to them the birthright to become his child. The most holy sacred thing God can give.

And the way to become a son of God is through Jesus Christ, as we accept him as Lord and Saviour.

Now what is the price tag if you say No to Jesus Christ. It will cost you your inheritance, eternal life, and it will cost you forgiveness. It will cost you his presence, his blessing, day by day.

I would urge you today not to despise your birthright as did Esau in the Bible. If you have not received Jesus Christ as your Lord, and your Saviour, and become a child of God, do it now. Make your decision today. Remember there is a price tag on life.