

Unit III: Special Offerings and the Sanctuary

It'll Cost You Everything

DEVOTIONAL READING: 2 Peter 3:11-18

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: 1 Chronicles 21:1–22:1

PRINT PASSAGE: 1 Chronicles 21:14-30

KEY VERSE

King David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost.
(1 Chronicles 21:24, KJV)

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King David replied to Araunah, “No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the LORD what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing.”
(1 Chronicles 21:24, NIV)

LESSON AIMS

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Explore David’s refusal to give to the Lord an offering for which he did not pay.
- Reflect on judgment being transformed by God’s grace.
- Present a non-monetary offering to God as an expression of gratitude.

*KEY TERMS

Angel of the LORD (verse 16)—Hebrew: *malak* (mal-ak’) and *Yhvh* (yeh-ho-vaw’): The Hebrew word translated as “angel” is *malak*, which means “messenger.” This messenger is not just an angel but the “angel of the Lord.” The messenger of Yahweh—or, in Hebrew, *malak* “Yhvh” (the proper name of the God of Israel)—is the only messenger who bears the name of Yahweh.

Pestilence (verse 14)—Hebrew: *deber* (deh’-ber): thorns; murrain; cattle-plague; “plague” (NIV).

Plague(d) (verse 17)—Hebrew: *nega* (neh’-gah): having (been) struck, as in a blow inflicted upon someone or something; stroke(d); mark(ed). It carries with it the idea of punishment that the person or thing being struck is due retaliation for a prior offense committed.

Repented (verse 15)—Hebrew: *nacham* (naw-kham’): was sorry; consoled oneself; regretted; made a decisive turn toward a new course of action. The emphasis is more



The Biblical Context

The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles were originally one book until divided by the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Jewish tradition attributes authorship to Ezra the priest, and dates their composition sometime after 450 BC. The Chronicles' historical context is the Jews' return to their homeland after their Babylonian exile, predicted by their prophets. The immediate recipients were the generation of Jewish exiles who arrived in their homeland and faced harsh political, economic, and spiritual conditions. Consequently, the author composed this historical narrative to remind God's people of their rich spiritual heritage during this challenging time and to encourage them to remain faithful to God and avoid the mistakes of their ancestors. Regarding the nation's checkered past and the less-than-favorable conditions of the present, the chronicler's overarching message to this post-exilic group was that obedience to God brings blessings, but disobedience cancels them out. Structurally, 1 Chronicles can be divided into two distinct sections: Israel's genealogies (see chapters 1–9) and David's reign (see chapters 10–29). First Chronicles was written from a priestly perspective and focuses on the proper way to worship God and David's preparation for the Temple construction.

on “turning to a positive course of action” rather than “turning from a less desirable course”; “relented” (NIV).

Shekels (verse 25)—Hebrew: *sheqel* (sheh'-kel): was used as units of measure for measuring the weight of gold, silver, or copper; (standard) weights.

Tabernacle (verse 29)—Hebrew: *mishkan* (mish-kawn'): a dwelling place, resting place; tent. The standard translation of *mishkan* as “tabernacle” comes from the Latin word *tabernaculum*, which means “tent” or “hut.” Etymologically, the tabernacle has two essential features: first, it is a tent; second, God dwells there.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

INTRODUCTION

After church was over, one sister observed, “Some folks are shoutin’ on credit!” Her reference regarded church members who show up every now and then, “shout,” or enjoy the benefits of membership, but contribute very little or nothing to the “support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, the spread of the gospel, and to foster education and mission throughout all nations” (a paraphrase of paragraph 2 of *The Church Covenant*). Of course, believers’ stewardship obligations encompass more than tithes and offerings, yet investing their time and using their talents for God’s glory carries the price tag of making costly commitments to God, demanding consistent faithfulness to Him. Jesus taught that following Him demands

total commitment through daily self-denial. There is always a cost attached to any meaningful pursuit or goal: acquiring an education, building a healthy marriage and family, maintaining a productive career, etc. There is also a cost attached to one’s allowing pride, ego, and false trust to lead oneself into willful sin and rebellion against God. Although forgiveness is available through confession and repentance, the cost is some consequence of His judgment. A vivid example of this reality is an incident in the life of David. Despite his intimate relationship with God, at one point during his reign, he allowed Satan to tempt him with the sin of pride and misplaced trust that led to the loss of thousands of lives among his people—an extremely costly consequence of his sin.

a three-day plague that cost seventy thousand lives (**verse 14**). Yet, God was moved with compassion, showed mercy, and stopped the plague just as His angel was about to destroy Jerusalem near the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite (**verse 15**). Upon seeing the angel standing between heaven and earth with a drawn sword, David and Israel's elders humbled themselves before God (**verse 16**). Then, David prayed, confessed his sin, accepted personal responsibility, expressed his desire to receive the consequences personally, and requested forgiveness, restoration, and the plague's removal (**verse 17**). In response to David's prayer, God commanded Gad, David's seer, to instruct David to build an altar on Ornan's threshing floor, where the plague ceased (**verse 18**).

This incident in David's life is a much-needed lesson for the faith community now: willful sin brings God's judgment no matter who the sinner may be. Therefore, it is essential that believers guard themselves against the temptation to allow pride and ego to lead them to rebellion against God. Additionally, David's humble confession and acceptance of the responsibility for his sin against God illustrates the proper path to follow to receive God's forgiveness and restoration of a relationship with Him. Any child of God can be tempted to sin by Satan and fleshly desires, but doing so always involves a personal choice. Therefore, believers must be vigilant in pursuing spiritual maturity and becoming more like Christ so that they will sin less and avoid the costly consequences that sin brings.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Why is willful sin so displeasing to God, and how can believers avoid it?

Presumptuous Sin's Price (*1 Chronicles 21:19-25*)

KJV

19 And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the LORD.

20 And Ornan turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves. Now Ornan was threshing wheat.

21 And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshingfloor, and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground.

22 Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of this threshingfloor, that I may build an altar therein unto the LORD: thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people.

23 And Ornan said unto David, Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes: lo, I give thee the oxen also for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering; I give it all.

24 And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost.

25 So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight.

19 So David went up in obedience to the word that Gad had spoken in the name of the LORD.

20 While Araunah was threshing wheat, he turned and saw the angel; his four sons who were with him hid themselves.

21 Then David approached, and when Araunah looked and saw him, he left the threshing floor and bowed down before David with his face to the ground.

22 David said to him, "Let me have the site of your threshing floor so I can build an altar to the LORD, that the plague on the people may be stopped. Sell it to me at the full price."

23 Araunah said to David, "Take it! Let my lord the king do whatever pleases him. Look, I will give the oxen for the burnt offerings, the threshing sledges for the wood, and the wheat for the grain offering. I will give all this."

24 But King David replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the LORD what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing."

25 So David paid Araunah six hundred shekels of gold for the site.

David's sin required an atoning sacrifice or offering to restore fellowship with God. Hence, he was commanded to build an altar for the Lord on Ornan's threshing floor. David obeyed immediately, indicating his total submission to God's will (**verse 19**). Consequently, David went to the designated site to purchase property as instructed. Ornan and his sons were threshing wheat, but when they saw the angel, they were overcome with fear and hid themselves (**verse 20**). However, when David arrived, Ornan came forward and bowed before David out of honor and respect for him despite the current circumstances (**verse 21**). David explained that he had only come with the intention to purchase his threshing floor for its total price so that he could build an altar to the Lord and halt the plague from destroying the people (**verse 22**). Seeing the angel and realizing the gravity of the situation, Ornan offered to give David the property and the necessary elements for the atoning sacrifice he would need (**verse 23**). However, David refused Ornan's generous offer, insisted that he could not offer God anything that cost him nothing, and paid Ornan the total price for the property (**verses 24-25**).

David's refusal to accept Ornan's offer establishes a fundamental principle for authentic worship: it requires sacrifice at the worshipper's expense. If one's worship does not involve a cost, then there is no real sacrifice. It is simply unacceptable "cheap" worship. David was familiar with the high cost of serious sin (see 2 Samuel 12:7-14). Thus, he refused to give God something that cost him nothing. The "price" of authentic worship is self-sacrifice, submission to God, spiritual preparation, and consecration. Believers who want to offer God worship that costs them nothing would do well to reflect on what it cost Him to redeem us from sin—His only begotten Son. This may prompt a change of heart regarding the necessary sacrifices for entering His presence for worship and the privilege of communing with Him.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Beyond monetary tithes and offerings, what does it cost you to worship God

authentically? How much time and effort do you spend preparing and consecrating yourself to serve and worship God privately and publicly?

A Response to Repentance (1 Chronicles 21:26-30)

KJV

26 And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering.

27 And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof.

28 At that time when David saw that the LORD had answered him in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there.

29 For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon.

30 But David could not go before it to enquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD.

NIV

26 David built an altar to the LORD there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. He called on the LORD, and the LORD answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering.

27 Then the LORD spoke to the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath.

28 At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, he offered sacrifices there.

29 The tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses had made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt offering were at that time on the high place at Gibeon.

30 But David could not go before it to inquire of God, because he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the LORD.

David built an altar on the threshing floor, offered the appropriate sacrifices, and prayed to God (**verse 26a**). The burnt offering was the sacrifice required for atonement (satisfying God's just wrath) and seeking His favor. Symbolically, in this context, this sacrifice was an expression of repentance for his willful sin, devotion, and complete surrender to God for himself and the nation. A peace offering was also necessary because his sin broke his sacred fellowship with God. The offering that David made symbolized restoring peace and reconciliation between himself and God, and renewed a right relationship with Him. God responded by consuming the burnt offering with fire from heaven and stopping His judgment (**verses 26b-27**). From that point on, David worshipped at that site because God's response marked it as sanctified or set apart for Himself (**verse 28**). The tabernacle and the altar that Moses had built were in Gibeon at the moment (**verse 29**). However, along with the fact that God sanctified Ornan's threshing floor during the days of the plague, David's reasons for not worshipping at Gibeon

arose due to the fear of being struck down by the plague for his sin (**verse 30**), and the fact that God's acceptance of Ornan's threshing floor seemed to be His choice for Israel's new worship center (see 1 Chronicles 22:1). Later, Solomon did build the Temple on this piece of land. Summarily, God still responds to contrite and repentant hearts that humbly confess their sins and seek His forgiveness. David's atoning sacrifice stopped a deadly physical plague and prefigured the sacrifice of his ultimate descendant, Christ, who gave Himself at Calvary to prevent the more deadly plague of sin and eternal separation from God. All who accept His substitutionary sacrifice by faith can expect Him to respond favorably and restore their fellowship with God.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Christ atoned for our sins, resulting in peace with God. How do we maintain this peace or restore it when broken?

A CLOSING THOUGHT

Before David confessed, repented, prayed for forgiveness, and offered an atoning sacrifice to appease God's wrath, his presumptuous sin caused the deaths of thousands. The message is clear: sin costs—but God's grace motivates Him to forgive and restore the repentant. Following God requires total commitment that involves self-denial and a commitment to doing the things that please God. Consider whether your commitment to God costs you anything spiritually or materially. Decide what you can offer God as a nonmonetary offering, beginning with placing yourself on the altar as "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

YOUR LIFE

Take inventory of how much time and effort you regularly commit to serving and worshipping God. If you discover areas in which you give God nothing or very little of your time, talent, and spiritual service, make a deliberate plan to ensure ways in which you can give God more worthy and meaningful sacrifices of yourself.

YOUR WORLD!

The consequences of David's decision to impose an unauthorized census motivated by pride and ego displeased God and cost thousands of lives. David's actions remind us of how easily we can succumb to the same kind of sin and find ourselves under God's judgment. To remain focused and grounded, we must prioritize maintaining a vital relationship with God. When we commit sin, we must let David's story remind and assure us that with repentance, God's grace offers us forgiveness and restored fellowship with Himself.