

How Much Would You Give Up For The Kingdom Of God?

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This is the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, and on this very day the Egyptian army, the most powerful army in the world at that time, was drowned in the Red Sea. The Egyptian army pictures sin, and how sin pursues us all of the time. The Egyptian army did not want to let the Israelites go.

Exodus 12:15-17 Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. 'On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat—that only may be prepared by you. 'So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance.

That is forever brethren, and not just for Israel.

Now this is what we are doing today. On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Israel was taken out of Egypt. Egypt represents sin, we are all aware of that. So Israel was taken out of sin, then the Egyptian army followed them, and they also picture sin. Satan does not want to let us go, he does not want any of us to get away. Satan and sin pursue us every hour of every day. Sin is after us as it were, that is the battle that we are fighting. Satan has most of mankind right where he wants them, but he also wants you. He is seeking to destroy you, just like the Egyptian army was trying to destroy Israel.

Exodus 13:3 And Moses said to the people: "Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten.

Exodus 13:6-7 Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD. "Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor

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shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters.

Verse 7 says that we need to de-leaven all of our quarters, or living spaces, or homes. That is the question that I have for you, brethren. How diligent were you in de-leavening your home? Why do we go through all of that work? How did you do it? Did you go room-by-room, closet-by-closet, and drawer-by-drawer? Or did you tell yourself, "Nobody ate bread or leaven in this room, or under that couch, or under that piece of furniture?" Did you just throw out the leavened products in your refrigerator and freezer, and call it good?

The process that we go through de-leavening our homes, shows God just how diligent and serious we are about getting sin out of our lives. This is exactly what it represents. Now you get to do it any way that you want, but we need to keep it in mind what we are doing. It is a lot of work to de-leaven our home properly, in fact I was worn out by the time I was finished this year. It takes weeks of work if you go room-by-room, and drawer-by-drawer.

It is also very hard to get sin out of our lives. It takes faith, it takes work, and it hurts to get sin out of your life. It is painful, and it can cost us money to get sin out of our lives. It can cost us relationships, it can cost us our job, and it can affect our families. It is tough to overcome sin. It is hard, just like de-leavening your home.

How real, and how important, is the Kingdom of God to you? Is it real to you? What would you give up for the Kingdom of God? Would you give up your job over the Sabbath or the feast days, for the Kingdom? Would you sacrifice your financial status over tithing? Would you trust God and tithe even if you could not pay your bills for the Kingdom? Would you wait on God for a mate in the church, and have patience and grow in faith for the Kingdom? Would you humble yourself when it comes to your mate, or would you just continue to fight with them until Christ returns, and think "That's okay, I'm not giving that up"?

What would you give up for the Kingdom, brethren? Would you take the time for prayer and Bible study every day for the Kingdom of God? Would you be willing to serve the brethren when it is convenient, and when it is not convenient for you, when they really need help? Would you do that for the Kingdom of God? Would you be willing to watch your mouth, and be careful in what you say, and try not to offend people for the Kingdom of God? Would you be willing to stop gossiping and tearing down the ministry, and the brethren for the Kingdom of God? Would you be willing to stop lying for the Kingdom of God?

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We could go on and on with this. How much leaven, or sin, are you willing to get out of your life? How much are you willing to get out of your home? What will you do to be part of the Kingdom of God?

Now you say, "but we are under grace, we cannot earn our way into the Kingdom of God." That is absolutely correct, but what is grace, brethren? Grace is unmerited pardon.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Do you see what it says there? The wages of sin is death. Every one of us has sinned, so we have all been given the death penalty. But, because of Jesus Christ, and His blood, we are under grace.

I Timothy 2:5 Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

The word 'ransom' here, means one person for another, or the redemption of life by life. Christ's blood for your blood. That is the only reason that we are under grace. It was Christ's blood for your blood.

You and I are worthy of death, and we have been given the death penalty as it were. We are worthy of the electric chair, the firing squad, the gallows, or the gas chamber. But God has pardoned us through Christ's blood. So we all know that Christ's blood covers our sins.

Now if I murdered someone, and I was found guilty and given the death penalty, my only way out would be by a pardon by the governor of the state that I committed the crime in. That is what grace is, brethren, it is a pardon, but that does not mean that I could go back and commit murder again. It is the same with sin. Once we have come out of sin, we learn of the Sabbath and the holy days, we cannot go back, we cannot keep sinning. If I would go out and murder again, do you think that the governor would let me off again? We need to give up the ways of this world, and we need to be very diligent about trying to overcome our sins.

Again, I am going to ask this question a few times, brethren. What would you give up for the Kingdom of God? How far would you go? Even so far as to giving up your life if it was required? How much faith do you have? Do you have enough faith to give up all of

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the leaven in your life, and all of the sin in your life?

I am going to tell you a story about a friend of mine. This friend of mine worked for Air Canada, and he was living in Baltimore. This was back in the late 60s. He was married and he was part of God's church, but his wife was not, she had not been called at that time. It was his first third tithe year, and he stepped out in faith and he started paying third tithe.

I think that you have all looked at your finances when you are on a third tithe year, and I know for me for the thirty-five years that I was working, when I was on third tithe I sent the church more money than I had for me and my bills. For example if I sent off \$100 for third tithe, I would have about \$85 left for me to pay my bills. So third tithe takes some faith.

Well this man started paying third tithe, but with his wife, not being in the church, it became a bone of contention immediately. Now his problem did not go away right away. He had a year, week by week, to pay tithes and listen to his wife nag him, complain, and even threaten to leave him. She had one fit after another.

He continued to pay his tithe. Late in that year he came home from work and he opened the front door and all of her bags were packed. She told him that she was leaving him, and was going to divorce him. She said, "We're not making it financially, and we're going into debt." He was borrowing money so that he could pay his tithes. He tried to talk her out of it, but nothing was working. But then God stepped in because she could not get a flight out that night, and they said that it would probably be Monday before she could get a flight. So he has two days to talk to her, Saturday and Sunday.

He did not get anywhere with her the next day and half, but Sunday afternoon his boss called and said, "I have good news for you, and I have bad news for you." He said the bad news is that you are going to have to move to Los Angeles, but the good news is you are going to get a raise in pay, you are going to get a promotion, and we are going to have your house appraised and we will give you the money immediately so that you can get set up in California."

Well this changed everything, and his wife stayed with him. They moved to California and they bought a house, equivalent to what they had on the east coast, for less money. With the extra money they were able to pay off their bills. Happy ending.

James 2:26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

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There is also works involved with faith, brethren. This friend of mine, Gordon, had the faith to do what God said. The works were that he paid his tithe, week after week, no matter what his wife said.

It takes both faith and works to overcome sin. It takes guts to step out on faith and say, "I'm going to the Feast of Tabernacles, no matter what. I am going to save second tithe, no matter what. I am going to tithe, no matter what. I am putting my problems in God's hands and I am going to start doing what is right, no matter what. I am going to pray to God and let Him find me a mate. I am not going to look outside of the faith, and I am going to have the faith that God will work it out for me, no matter what. I am going to stop gossiping and badmouthing the ministry, no matter what. I am going to pray every day, no matter what. I am going to study every day, no matter what. I am going to stop drinking and getting drunk, no matter what." It takes faith and works to get rid of sin.

What are you willing to give up for the Kingdom of God?

James 2:22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?

James 2:18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

It is impossible to have faith without works, brethren. If we do not have faith that God will take care of us, we cannot get the sin out of our lives. That is the first step, and the second step is the work. Just like de-leavening our home, it takes work. We have to start working on the problem or the sin. The works are how we live our lives, how we keep God's laws and His commandments.

Matthew 25:1-12 Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And

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while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'

What do you think that the parable of the ten virgins is all about? A full half of them did not have enough of the Holy Spirit to enter into the Kingdom. Why? They were part of God's church. They attended Sabbath services, *some* of the time. They went to the Feast of Tabernacles, *some* of the time. They tithed, *some* of the time. They prayed and studied, *some* of the time. But they never grew in grace. It takes faith and works to grow in grace.

I am going to read II Peter 3:18 out of the Amplified version because it just makes more sense to me:

II Peter 3:18 (Amplified) But grow in grace, undeserved pardon, or undeserved favor, spiritual strength and recognition in knowledge, in understanding of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to Him be glory, honor and majesty and splendor, both now and for eternity.

It said, "but grow in grace, undeserved favor." Brethren, we grow in grace by faith, and we grow in faith by putting God to the test, and by our works and obedience to God's law. The more obedient we are, the more faith we have.

Malachi 3:10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.

He is telling us to prove Him, put Him to the test. My friend Gordon did. He stepped out in faith and God blessed him. He blessed him with a good marriage, and He blessed him with a better job with more money. I have known this man ever since 1970, when I came into the church, and I am telling you, I have never ever seen him fight with his wife in all those years. But they had a huge fight over third tithe. It took a whole year. God lets us grow, and He teaches us patience.

Let us take a look at our works. Our works are not the works of Mother Theresa. She did

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wonderful things, just like a lot of the churches in this world, brethren. Mother Theresa worked all over India doing great things, and she helped a lot of people. But that is not what you and I are called to do, that is not our work. Our works are praying daily, studying daily, paying our tithes—first, second and third—going to the Feast of Tabernacles, keeping the Sabbath, keeping the holy days, overcoming our sins, and yes, serving the brethren. These are our works.

Luke 18:18-25 Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.' And he said, 'All these things I have kept from my youth.'" So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

He could not give that sin up. He could not give up the last bit of leaven for the Kingdom of God.

What are you willing to give up? This man kept the Sabbath, he kept the holy days, he did not commit adultery, he did not kill or steal, he honored his parents, but he could not give up idolatry. He could not give up his money, his station in life, and his lifestyle. His lifestyle was probably very comfortable and hard to give up. He did not have the faith to give up what was required of him for the Kingdom of God. He did not believe that God would take care of him.

We have to de-leaven our homes diligently, brethren, and show God that we really want to get rid of sin in our lives. We will never get all of the leaven out of our homes. You cannot do it. I have worked from February on and I know that I have leaven in my home. But, brethren, you cannot get sin out of your lives either. We are not going to be sin-free until Christ's return. Does this mean that we just stop trying? Do we say, "I've had enough of this; I can't make it. I'm going to commit a little adultery, I'm going to lie, I'm going to steal, I'm not going to pray and study any more, it's too hard." Do we do that, brethren?

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It is work to de-leaven our homes, and it is a lot of hard work to get the sin out of our lives. Do we see the parallel here, why God wants us to de-leaven our homes?

I am going to tell you another story, about a minister friend of mine. I was at his house, about three years ago, in California. It was just before the Days of Unleavened Bread, and this man said to me, "I'm not going to go through and de-leaven my home room by room, I just am not going to do it."

He said, "I'm going to get the leaven out of my kitchen, my refrigerator and my freezer, and I'm going to spend that time praying and studying." Sounds good, right. What is better than prayer and study?

Brethren, we cannot afford to fall into this trap. There is a lesson in de-leavening our homes, and that is what the Bible tells us to do. It does not tell you, at this time of the year, to pray and study more. We are supposed to examine ourselves before Passover, that is correct, and you can pray and study more, but you cannot stop de-leavening your home and think because you did the other it is okay. It sounded good that he was going to spend more time in prayer and study, but it was not biblically correct. It takes faith to get sin out of our lives, because we have to rely on God. Faith comes by obeying God, and obedience to God's laws.

I Samuel 15:22 Then Samuel said: "Has the LOORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LOORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.

I think that sums it up pretty good right there. We are to obey His commandments. There are works involved, we cannot just say I believe, and do nothing. As we work on our sins and rely on God, we grow in faith. As we become more obedient through our works and faith, we grow in grace.

Hebrew 11:4 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. . . .

Hebrew 11:8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. . . .

Hebrew 11:11 By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive

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seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. . . .

Hebrew 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. . . .

Hebrew 11:20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. . . .

Hebrew 11:24 By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

I think that we can all see by this that there are works involved in faith. Every one of those there had works involved in it. They did not just sit on their couch and say, "Okay I have faith, I'm good to go."

Just like the story that I told you about my friend, his works were that he paid his tithes. His faith was that he trusted in God, no matter what, and he stepped out on faith. God came through for him, and He blessed him. He also grew in grace.

Malachi 3:10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the LOORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.

God says, "Prove me." We need to put God to the test, brethren. Do not be afraid to step out on faith.

When you pray to Him, tell Him, "I want to see this happen, this is your word, show me God." Tell God that you have the faith and you are stepping out on it. I am not saying that it is going to happen tomorrow, but God will work it out for us.

I would like to end on a positive note. By proving or testing God, and overcoming sin, we will be blessed, brethren. These are the promises that God gives us.

God promises us good health:

Exodus 15:26 If you diligently heed the voice of the LOORD your God and do

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what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you.

God promises us prosperity:

Malachi 3:8-12 Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it. "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," says the LORD of hosts; "and all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land," says the LORD of hosts.

He promises us children that will be obedient and you will be happy with if you do what the Bible says. If you talk to them about God all of the time, and you are not afraid to spank them when they need it:

Psalms 127:3-5 Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate.

He promises security:

Psalms 46:4 He will choose our inheritance for us, the excellence of Jacob whom He loves. Selah.

Then He promises a life in His Kingdom:

John 17:1-3 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should

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give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

Romans 6:23 . . . but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I am going to ask you the question one more time, brethren. What are you willing to give up for the Kingdom of God? How much leaven are you willing to get rid of to be part of God's Kingdom?