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GOD'S BILLS COME WITH GRANTED REQUESTS!

Today's Text: 2 Sam. Chaps. 6-10; Lk 17: 11-18

Extracts:

1. **“And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and *the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies*, that the king said unto Nathan the prophet, see now I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains. And Nathan said to the king, *go, do all that is in thine heart; for the Lord is with thee*” [2 Sam. 7: 1-3]**
2. **“And as He entered into a certain village, there met Him ten lepers... and they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when He saw them, He said unto them, *go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God. And fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And Jesus answering said, were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?* [Lk 17: 11-17]**

Tunde took a short-term loan from his very good friend Isaac to execute a government contract, promising to pay back with 25% interest as soon as he was paid. Within six months, he satisfactorily completed the project and was duly paid. However, Tunde reneged on his promise to pay back what he owed Isaac. One day, Isaac went to Tunde's office and swore not to leave until he had been paid in full and in cash. A few minutes later, a young man was ushered into Tunde's office by his secretary. The young man claimed to have brought an urgent message from a key government official. As soon as Tunde had secured the door, the young man whipped out a gun and threatened Tunde, “Your money or your life!” Tunde dipped his hands into the recesses of his flowing Nigerian robes [called agbada], brought out wads of currency notes and asked his friend, Isaac, who was standing behind him, “How much did you say I owed you? I am ready to pay you in full right now!”

Interestingly, many of us relate to God the same way. When we want something from Him, we promise heaven and earth. However, as soon as our prayers are answered, we do not even as much as thank Him, not to talk of paying our vows. Then, one day, when He allows Satan to get back at us, we are back making promises that we cannot keep. God's bills come with granted requests and they must be paid, even when we are legally declared bankrupt! Therefore, it is about time that we stopped fooling ourselves!

In today's lesson, we shall study how David settled his bills to God soon after he became the king of all Israel, and how to apply the principles therein to our own lives.

1. David's commitments before he became king

You will recall that God's choice of David over Saul began the day that Saul offered sinful sacrifices to God [1 Sam. 13: 1-14]. Saul had just been anointed the first king of all Israel and David was still a teenager. As the Philistines pressed in on the army of Israel, and Samuel the prophet/judge/priest had not shown up on the seventh day to make burnt offerings to God, Saul took on the responsibility himself. Soon after he had made the offerings that he was not qualified to do, Samuel walked in [vv. 5-10]. When Samuel asked him why he had done such an abominable thing, he said, "Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed" [v. 11]. Samuel told the king:

Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which He commanded thee; for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over His people [vv. 13-14]

Therefore, God's first bill to be settled by David whenever he came to the throne was to be a God-fearing leader of His chosen people, Israel. That would have to be reflected in his personal life, his treatment of his people and the worship of the true God.

After Samuel had anointed David and the Spirit of God began to manifest in his life, Saul the king hated him and wanted him dead. However, God developed a strong friendship between the king's crown prince, Jonathan, and David [1 Sam. 18: 1]. Jonathan went out of his way to protect David. As both of them finally parted when David fled into the wilderness, they made a covenant. Jonathan said to David:

The Lord do so and much more to Jonathan; but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace and the Lord be with thee, as He hath been with my father. And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not, but also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever [1 Sam. 20: 13-15].

Both of them made a covenant and Jonathan said, "Let the Lord even require it at the hand of David's enemies" [v. 16]. In other words, even if David were unable to fulfil that vow himself, whoever could prevent him from doing so would not be free of the obligation to protect Jonathan and his descendants forever!

The word of God says, "if a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond, *he shall not break his word*; he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth" [Num. 30: 2]. We are not talking here of the kind of vows that women make in the labour ward! They curse and vow not to

have anything to do with their husbands anymore after that childbirth. A few years later, they are back to the same place and making the same unkeepable vows! We are talking about the kind of vow that Hannah made when she told God that she would offer her son to His service if God ever answered her prayer for a son. When Samuel was born, she handed him over to Eli for God's service [**1 Sam. 1: 10-11; 1 Sam. 2: 24-28**].

What did David do some thirteen years later, after he had been sworn in as king of the whole of Israel?

2. David pays God's bills

After David's house had been established, he took immediate steps to fulfil his obligations to God as follows:

a) *He brought the Ark of God to Jerusalem*

Ordinarily, the Ark of the Lord was a small box that contained the Ten Commandments [**Deut. 10: 4-5**], Aaron's rod [**Num. 17: 10; Heb. 9:4**] and the pot of manna [**Ex. 16: 33-34**]. It was a visible symbol on earth of God's strength [**2 Chron. 6:41**]. Therefore, it enabled the children of Israel to focus their worship of the true God.

As soon as David settled down in Jerusalem, he caused the Ark to be brought there. The first time, it was incorrectly carried, in that they carried it on a cart, contrary to the word of God, which required that it be borne on human shoulders [**Ex. 25: 14**]. Moreover, Uzzah was killed when he tried to steady the Ark from falling off the cart as if the Ark was an idol [**2 Sam. 6: 6-7**]. The true God carries us; we do not carry Him! The second time, however, David cared more about worship than how the Ark felt. David danced "leaping and dancing before the Lord" and "with all his might" and all his people danced and rejoiced with their king [**vv. 13-16**].

b) *David conducted a "Communion" Service*

As soon as the Ark was properly placed in the tabernacle, David offered burnt and peace offerings and "blessed the people in the name of the Lord." Then, he gave to each person, man, woman, all and sundry, "a cake of bread and a good piece of flesh and a flagon of wine" [**vv. 17-19**]. Is that not symbolic of Christ's institution of the Holy Communion during His Last Supper? Compare:

*And He took bread and gave thanks and brake it and gave to them, saying, This is My body which is given for you: do this in memory of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you [**Lk 22: 19-20**]*

c) *David desired to build God's house*

In continuation of his determination to settle all his accounts with God, David told the prophet Nathan that he was desirous to build the temple of God. He felt it wrong that he should dwell in a "house of cedar" while the Ark of God dwelt "within curtains." The prophet advised him to do what his heart desired. However, that night, God appeared to the prophet and told him to inform David that he was not the one to build His temple but his successor. God went on to confirm to David that He had established an eternal house through David and "thy throne shall be established for ever" [2 Sam. 7: 1-16]. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came in flesh to sit on the "throne of His father David" and "of His kingdom there shall be no end" [Lk 1: 32-33].

David was so overwhelmed by what he heard that he simply came before the Ark and "sat before the Lord." He poured out his heart in adoration and praise of the Incomparable and Only God [2 Sam. 7: 18-29].

d) *David fulfils his covenant with Jonathan*

Having been assured that God had confirmed him as the anointed king, David turned his attention to fulfil his covenant to his best friend, Jonathan. He asked, "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness *for Jonathan's sake*?" [2 Sam. 9: 1]. They told him of Mephibosheth, the lame son of Jonathan. David sent for him and assured him, "Fear not, for *I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually*" [v. 7]. Thereafter, the young man dwelt in Jerusalem "for he did eat continually at the king's table, and was lame on both his feet" [v. 13].

3. Lessons for us

David was in deed a man after God's own heart. He paid all the bills that came with fulfillment of God's promise to make him the king of Israel. So, what lessons have we learnt from that story? God has met His side of the bargain. Some of us wanted children. He has granted our request. Some of us wanted a job or promotion or transfer. He has answered us. Some of us have been saved from danger or illness or debts. We have been brought to a place of rest in accordance with His word. Now, it is payback time!

There are two sets of bills that we need to settle: the required and the supplementary.

a) *Required payments*

The *vows* that we make when we are in distress and the *tithes* due on our material prosperity must be paid. God holds us to our promises and we cannot break them. Therefore, we must be careful what we promise when we open our big mouths! Jephthah was a judge in Israel. When he was going to war against the people of Ammon, he vowed to the Lord saying, “If Thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be that *whatsoever* cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace...shall *surely* be the Lord’s and I will offer it up for a burnt offering” [**Judg. 11: 29-31**]. He won the battle and guess who was the first person to come out of his house to meet him: his *only child*! Jephthah collapsed. He tore his clothes and said, “I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and *I cannot go back*.” He offered his daughter as vowed [**vv. 32-40**].

Even if it is not a vow, we owe God *gratitude* for what He has done for us. He ranks gratitude and thanksgiving over sacrifice [**Ps. 50: 12-15**] and it is in His will [**1 Thes. 5: 18**]. His word says, “Offer unto God thanksgiving and pay thy vows unto the Most High; and call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me” [**Ps. 50: 14-15**]. Jesus was impressed with the action of one of the ten lepers who came back to thank Him after he had been healed [**Lk 17: 17**]. Unfortunately, most of us do not show gratitude to human benefactors, not to talk of God. Children now say it is their parents’ responsibility to provide for them and they do not need to be grateful for that. How can such people then thank their heavenly Father that they cannot see?

Another sore point for most of us is paying tithes (10%) on the material blessings that God has poured on us. Yet, God says that if we do not pay our tithes, we are robbers [**Mal. 3: 8**]! Why is that so? The tithe is like the tax that we pay to the state and they share the following characteristics:¹

- Taxes are only paid by income earners (salaries, profits, dividends, etc.). Only income earners also pay tithes.
- Taxes are paid to the state, not to the government or the people running it. Therefore, you do not have to love the present political leaders before you pay your taxes [**Rom. 13: 6-7**]. In like manner, tithes are paid to Christ, a priest of the order of Melchisedec [**Ps. 110:4; Heb. 7: 1-28**], the Head of the Church [**Eph. 5: 23**], not to your church leaders. Therefore, it is immaterial whether your local church leaders are corrupt or wasteful, you must still pay your tithes.
- Without tax revenues, the state cannot run essential services or pay salaries. In like manner, tithes are for the

¹ “Giving”, *Weekly Bible Series*, Vol. 2, No. 3: 4 February 2001; p. 3

upkeep of the church and its workers and for the support of “the stranger, the fatherless and the widow” [Deut. 14: 29].

- If you cheat on your taxes or delay payment, the state authorities can prosecute you and send you to jail (if found guilty) and you must pay interest along with the tax due. In like manner, you are a robber in God’s sight if you default on your tithes [Mal. 3: 8]. If you delay payment, you must add an interest of 20% [Lev. 27: 31]!

b) *Supplementary bills*

With the obligatory bills, you do not have to be cheerful when you pay them, just as you can hardly see a cheerful taxpayer! Supplementary bills, on the other hand, are what we have chosen of our own *free will* to do to show God our appreciation for what He has done for us. In all cases, God calls us according to our gifts, which He will not withdraw even when we refuse to use them [Rom. 11: 29]. The only requirement is that we pay such bills *willingly* [1 Chron. 29: 3-9], *liberally and cheerfully* [2 Cor. 9: 6-17]. Examples are voluntary thanks offering at all times [Ps. 100: 1-6], help to the needy [Prov. 19: 17], or offering oneself as a living sacrifice [Rom. 12: 1]. God rewards unsolicited gratitude and thanks as He did for Solomon [1 Kgs 3: 3-15].

4. Conclusion

Our needs always outstrip our means. That is why most of us rely heavily on credit cards or bank loans. With human institutions, we can pay off such debts or refuse to use credit cards, preferring instead to live within our means. When we are overwhelmed by debts, we can file for bankruptcy and be discharged. However, there are certain debts [state taxes, for example] that we must still pay in such circumstances.

With God, we can never be self-sufficient. We always owe Him more than we can ever pay back. Therefore, we are perpetually using His credit card! All He is asking of us is to make prompt payments of the small bills that He sends along with His statements (blessings), such as gratitude, payment of vows and tithes and worship. Is that too much? Please, pay up before Satan comes like the armed robber that came to Tunde’s office to steal the blessings that God has given you. God’s bills come with granted requests. Pay in full, and be prompt!