

HOW MUCH DOES CONVICTION COST?

By: Mike Benson

“The man after God’s own heart” had followed the crooked path of self-destruction. One sin inevitably led to another, then another, then another. It had all started with a small, perhaps even innocent, distraction from his palace rooftop (2 Samuel 11:2). Little did the monarch realize that this momentary lapse of judgment would lead to much more serious events? Incrementally, David would migrate from lust to adultery to lying and deception to murder and, finally, to an elaborate plan to cover up his indiscretions.

Obvious and unconcerned about the consequences, he continued this activity until God sent a preacher—Nathan—to confront him. The prophet’s divinely-ordained task was to “call down” the king of Israel. Tell a story, expose hypocrisy and then petition his majesty to humble repentance. It is a daunting responsibility, at the very least.

I have often wondered about Nathan’s emotional and mental state just prior to that sermon. Exactly how did he feel? Was he afraid? Did his blood run “icy cold” at the thought of this impending “worship service” with only one member in the assembly? Did he experience any heightened anxiety? [If it had been me, I would have been terrified!] If Nathan were like his contemporaries (1 King 19:3; James 5:17), he experienced some trepidation at his task, and why not? David had with Joab’s assistance, murdered Uriah without remorse (2 Samuel 11:15-25). What would prevent the proud king from the same to this “puny prophet” also? I imagine Nathan was well aware of the potential repercussions of faithfully delivering his message.

While I don’t know exactly how Nathan felt, because the Bible doesn’t tell me; I do know what he did. He preached his “firing” sermon. [The kind of sermon that sometimes gets a man his pink slip] Not the components of Nathan’s bold proclamation.

- There was certainty. *“Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon”* (2 Samuel 12:1, 7, 11), rather than to his own human initiative. He spoke for God and announced His decree.
- There was rigidity. David was guilty of gross misconduct and nothing short of full-fledged penance and contrition could clear his spiritual record before Jehovah (Psalm 51:1-4; 34:18; 2 Samuel 12:13). The King of kings could not simply blind Himself to the sins of the king of Israel (Isaiah 59:1-3; cf., 64:7).

My guess is that it was hard for Nathan to rebuke David. Telling a sovereign king what he didn't want to hear had to be very difficult. It took conviction. That's a trait that few preachers possessed then, or for that matter, possess today.

Exposing sinful behavior is tough. It invites the retaliatory criticism and personal attacks. It opens doors for insult. It can cost a man his reputation, his job, his livelihood, even his very life (Matthew 14:1-12; Acts 7:51-60). But that didn't matter to Nathan. He knew the price of preaching (2 Timothy 3:3-6). He understood the cost of unyielding conviction (Matthew 16:24), and he willingly made the payment.

Sound preachers don't enjoy pointing out people's faults, but it is part of what God called them to do (2 Timothy 4:2-5). "Love the sinner, but hate the sin." Folks bound in the fetters of iniquity need release (Romans 6:17-18). Watered-down, wishy-washy sermonettes won't bring that needed release. Firm, yet loving, gospel preaching will. *"These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority..."* (Titus 2:15; cf. I Timothy 5:20).

Mike Benson, Via The World of Truth September 2002, Reprinted from The West Side Weekly Epistle

Reprinting this writing with a "PS" note is by:
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PS: Note in Mike's writing, how applicable his lesson is to all true Christians even when using the word "Christians" for preachers, "teaching" for preaching etc. Let all of us say, "It's a point well taken and our thanks and appreciations to Mike and the Elders of West Side."

There was a preface to Mike's writing by the Elders of West Side Church of Christ, Salem, VA, and their preface expressed great truthful admonishing and in my thinking must be seriously accepted.

"Each of us may find there is a cost for our own convictions while on this earth. Always remember God has promised that, in the end, He will make it "worth our while" (Revelation 2:10).