

When God cashes in on a sermon

What have all UK banknotes got in common?

P When the Bank of England was founded in 1694 they started printing on Bank notes, "I promise to pay the bearer on demand, the sum of £xx".

The bank notes were what were called Promissory notes - you could walk into the Bank of England HQ in Threadneedle Street in London and exchange your banknote for the equivalent value in gold.

For 100s of years that's how the banking system in the UK worked. Sad to say, in 1931, the rules changed and the banking system is no longer based on just gold. All they do now is offer you a new banknote instead!

Hold that point in mind - "I promise to pay the bearer...."

Several years ago God spoke to me about preaching on killing sin.

Sin kills & stifles & hinders.

The Gospel in Lystra

P In Acts 14:8ff we read about Paul and Barnabas going to a place called Lystra

This was in about 48AD.

- Whilst preaching the Gospel there, a man who had been crippled from birth was healed.
- Crowd thought the gods had come down in human form!
- There was a riot stirred up by some Jews from a place Paul had previously been to. Paul was stoned and left for dead - some people think he was raised from the dead.
- Paul and Barnabas then moved on to Derbe and preached the Good News there.

P A few months later they went back to Lystra.

Acts 14:21-22

They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch,²² strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to continue in the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.

What did they do?

- Strengthened the disciples
- Encouraged the disciples.
- How? By teaching them.
- What did they teach?

"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,"

What was the apostolic message to the new disciples? What did they say to them to strengthen them?

Continue in the faith - not to keep on believing but to keep on being a disciple, to keep on learning, to keep on growing, to keep on pressing in to God and all that He has for us. To learn more about Jesus, to discover more of the riches of the Gospel. Don't plateau out, don't stop moving forward. There is infinitude ahead of us!

Christianity is here called, "the faith". That gives us a clue that it is something to be believed, something to be trusted, something to have faith in, something to lean on. In order to do so there must be facts - facts about a Person and historic events and promises as well.

saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. Disciples are addressed here - people who are already saved, people who are already in the KofGod.

Jesus' sufferings are the way we enter - not our own. But, between the time of conversion to the time we die we are involved in a war, a conflict - there will be tribulations, sufferings - *thlipsis* - antagonism of persons, pressure of circumstances. These conspire against the disciple and war against him. Our souls need to be strengthened for the battle.

What do we mean by the KofGod?

A kingdom is a place where a ruler reigns.

= God's manifest rule.

Signs of the KofGod? Righteousness, Peace & Joy, Liberty, Release.

If we want to see the KofGod extended in our lives, families and locality then we need to be prepared to fight, to know struggles & to suffer. To suffer demonic opposition, persecution, misunderstanding, financial sacrifice, time, emotional pain etc.

Paul himself had exemplified this - being stoned to death!

Timothy

About 2 years later Paul went back to Lystra.

P Act 16:1-2

He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. ² The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him.

Timothy was about 18/22 years old at the time.

We read in **2Tim 1:5** that Timothy's mom, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois, were both people of vibrant living faith.

In **2Tim 3:14-15** we learn that Timothy had been taught the Bible since he was a child and that he too had a vibrant faith in God.

The disciple's in Lystra spoke well of this 18/22 year old man.

Paul was due to go elsewhere to preach the Good News - in fact he was going to have a vision and take the Good News about Jesus into Europe soon after this.

Timothy would later be the lead elder at Ephesus and spend time with Mary, Jesus' mother. He was going to be a Spirit-filled co-worker with Paul and help preach the Good News all over Europe and the Middle East.

As Paul spent time in the church in Lystra he possibly felt something about this young man and how he saw the hand of God on his life. Timothy could be someone to travel with him and help on the team!

P Picture of tools!

Just one problem - let's imagine the conversation:

Paul - Timothy, I've been talking to some of the people in the church and I've seen your consistent commitment and passion for God. I'd like to ask you to come and join us in telling people about Jesus.

T - What? Who? Me? Me travel with you?

P - Yup, I'll help you, train you and help you teach people and how to pray for people. Do you fancy coming along?

T - Sure!!

P - There's just one problem. I'm a Jew by birth and I have a burden wherever I go to start off first of all by going to the local synagogue and preach to the Jews first.

T - OK - what's the problem?

P - Well your dad is a Greek right?

T - Yes

P - So that means you haven't been circumcised?

T - Nope!

P - Well if you want to come with me and help spread the Good News about Jesus in a Jewish culture, they won't let you in a synagogue unless you...

T - Unless I get the snip?!

P - That's right! So, are you still up for it?

Hit pause!

Paul stoned there 2 years ago!

Remember the sermon Timothy would have heard 2 years before this, "**Thru many hardships....**"

It's OK to sit there and nod your head in a sermon, to be encouraged at the time but there comes a time in all of our lives when we hear sermons, when God drops something in our heart and maybe not straight away, maybe not for a few months or a few years but God will come knocking at the door of your heart.

Remember the, "**I promise to pay the bearer....**"? All those nods, all those songs, all those prayers, all those things you've committed to in God - God is going to lay them at your feet one day and say - "It's pay day - pay up!"

Timothy - are you going to be circumcised in order to preach the Good News to the Jews?

Are you going to let them cut away your foreskin and endure the pain?

Are you going to bite your lip and go for it in God?

He did!

There was no law saying that Timothy had to be circumcised, it wasn't a requirement of salvation - that is by grace. But in order to see the KofGod come, he underwent the painful cutting away of his flesh.

Us

What about us?

How desperate are we to see the KofGod come here in this town? In this country? We won't see it unless we are prepared to suffer hardship!

Getting up early to pray

Fasting

Persecution

Emotional pain as people don't get it or misunderstand you.

Financial sacrifice

Letting go of legitimate things.

Several times in the Gospels Jesus teaches and warns people to count the cost of becoming a disciple of His.

Context of man building a tower or a king planning to go to war

P Luke 14:33

In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

Any of you

Everything!

Cannot!

Forgiveness is free but being a Christian & staying a Christian should cost us everything we have. **Release International**

Have you got a cause, a big thing you're living for? Something like we were singing about earlier?

In Deut 30 we read about where God is giving instructions to the people for what they are to do when they come into the Promised Land.

P Deut 30:6

The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.

What does God want of us most of all? He wants our heart, our love, our devotion - and because of that He will circumcise our hearts.

God will trim away whatever it takes from our hearts and lives in order to win our devotion to Him. God wants to take the scalpel of His word, the scalpel of His Holy Spirit to our lives and cut things away so that we will see the KofGod come in increasing measure.

Heart

P Deut 10:16

Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer.

Timothy didn't need to be literally circumcised as I've said - but in order to see the KofGod come in a fuller extent - then he did.

P Heb 12:1

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Who is that in pic?

Have you ever seen him run dressed like that?

We're not just called to get rid of the sin from our lives but the things that hinder, the things that hinder your devotion to God, the progress of His kingdom in your own heart, the things that cramp your daily walk with Jesus - throw them off! Circumcise your heart!

Now you might be sitting there thinking, "You can't tell me what to do, I'll do it if I want to." but I'll read the verse again,

P Deut 10:16

Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer.

Don't be stiff necked! **EXPLAIN** - Be pliable! Let God shape & mould you!

There came a time in my life a few years ago that in order to know any peace with God, in order to move forward in God from the things of the past I had to take all my cards off the table, to get rid of my agenda and surrender it all to God and say, "I don't care about my plans any more - You have Your way!"

Ears

P Jer 6:10

To whom shall I speak and give warning,
that they may hear?
Behold, their ears are uncircumcised,
they cannot listen;
behold, the word of the Lord is to them an object of scorn;
they take no pleasure in it.

Uncircumcised ears. Not heeding God, not taking pleasure in God's word.

O friends, we need to come before God and ask for Him to give us a hearing ear! Have you ever had your ears syringed? I used to have an ear syringe as a boy - a real one I used to place with!

But we need to ask God to unstop our ears and to cut away all the junk and doubt and fear that we listen to.

P This is about the stuff we choose to listen to:

Mark 4:24 - **WHAT you hear** - **edifying?** Bring closer to God?

Luke 8:18 - **HOW you hear** - **faith building? Cynical**

Expand on both. If we want to see the KofGod come then we can't afford to listen to the junk and doubts of the world and then expect to see the Kingdom come in power without living a Kingdom lifestyle in what we listen and how we listen.

Lips

P Exodus 6:12

But Moses said to the Lord, "Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me. How then shall Pharaoh listen to me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?"

Uncircumcised lips - **meaning here lips that are no good, unacceptable, of no use to God.**

What are your words like?

Sure, people might diss you, they might cross you, drivers may cut you up - and you can say what you want! But if we want to see a greater measure of the KofGod coming in our own lives, our homes and our area then we need to circumcise our lips.

P Eph 4:29

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

P Eph 5:4

Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

This includes not just spoken words but typed words on Facebook and texts etc!

Personal testimony

So - uncircumcised lips - no unwholesome talk, no obscenity, no foolish (Godless) or coarse joking - these are out of place!

Instead - build up others & thanksgiving.

Mindset

P Jer 9:25-26

"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will punish all who are circumcised only in the flesh—²⁶ Egypt, Judah, Edom, Ammon, Moab and all who live in the desert in distant places. For all these nations are really uncircumcised, and even the whole house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart."

God hates hypocrisy, He can't stand it when people make a religious show of things. Look how God links nations together - Egypt, Judah, Edom, Ammon & Moab - circumcised only in the flesh. Their religion is one just of show - no inward reality.

God then says that Israel, His own people are uncircumcised in the heart. Back to where we were earlier - heart, heart, heart.

But here, the people of God - Judah & Israel - are lumped together with the other nations - Egypt etc. Why? Because they shared the same attitudes, worldview and mindset! [Explain mindset](#)

God wants us to go past the stage where we just come to church on a Sunday but live like the rest of the world in the week - in what we say, listen to and do. If we want to see the KofGod come then church on a Sunday won't do it for us! We need to have a different mindset, a different worldview.

P Rom 12:2

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Circumcise your mind! Don't conform! Undergo a change, a metamorphosis.

P Eph 4:23

be made new in the attitude of your minds

Have a different attitude, a Kingdom mindset, a mind that looks for God and expects His in breaking & intervention.

Summary

I realise this has been a heavy sermon - but I want to be faithful to what God has shown me.

Think of the folk at Lystra years ago -

Seeing Paul being stoned for preaching - and then being raised from the dead. See how they saw that dynamic Kingdom reality right in front of them of a man who would tell people about Jesus even if it meant death!

Listening to Paul preach and encourage - stay true to God, remain loyal, keep trusting Jesus because through many sufferings, persecutions and hardship we enter and see the KofGod coming on Earth as it is in Heaven.

Think of how they would have nodded and responded and thanked Paul for his word that day - "So encouraging to be in church today and hear of what Paul is doing!"

But then one day - God comes in and says, "Those nods, those prayers for My Kingdom to come, those things you've sung, those promises you've made - you've promised to give me your all. So here I am."

P Timothy - you want to see the KofGod come in greater measure? Then suffer - be circumcised, lay down

your ambitions, rights and legitimate desires and get circumcised.

Child of God - you say you want to see the KofGod come in your life in a greater measure?

Circumcise your heart

Circumcise your lips

Circumcise your ears

Circumcise your mindset and attitude.

Let God cut away what He wants - and go and build His Kingdom.