

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

Lesson 13, Chapter 7

If I was to give the middle verses of Zechariah chapter 7 a title, I think it'd call it "caught red handed" or "busted!". This chapter is short so let's re-read it to get started.

RE-READ ZECHARIAH CHAPTER 7 all

Here's what is happening. The city of Bethel in norther Yehud (Yehud is the name for the Persian Province that previously was called Judah) has sent a delegation of representatives to Jerusalem to get an answer to a pressing issue of major importance to them. In a nutshell, the issue is that ever since Nebuchadnezzar invaded and conquered Judah, and exiled the Judean people to Babylon, those few who were allowed to remain instituted a special day of mourning that they commemorated annually in the 5th month of each Hebrew year. This mourning involved typical Hebrew mourning traditions including fasting and communal weeping.

Clearly the officials of the city of Bethel were aware that God said this punishment of banishment from their homeland would last for 70 years. By the reckoning of the leaders of Bethel, they thought they were in the 69th year, with the next few months turning the clock to the 70th year. So, should they prepare to stop their mourning in the 5th month each year if their understanding of God's instructions and the timing were correct?

Although using the vocabulary of the day these men are said to be bringing this question before God to answer, what this means in practice is that they give their inquiry to the senior priests in Jerusalem, probably even the High Priest since the priests are considered God's servants and, thus, have contact with God. The way this contact between God and priests occurred was via use of the Urim and Thummim stones kept in a special pouch worn by the High Priest. The thing for us to understand is that whatever inquiry was brought to the priests for an answer, it had to be in a form that could be answered simply yes or no because that's all the Urim and Thummim could provide.

More complex answers to theological problems more often than not would wind up in the hands of the Prophets. The Prophets then would, hopefully, get an oracle from God to give to the inquirer OR the Prophet may answer according to his own personal knowledge of God's laws and commands. One of the things to notice about Zechariah and the oracles he gets from God, especially when we read words that are Zechariah's versus quotes from God, is that he has a deep knowledge of the Torah. Whether this was typical for Prophets in his era I don't know. The preponderance of biblical scholars think that Zechariah came from a priestly family (due to his father's name). Since it was actually the job of the priests to teach the Torah to the people, then perhaps due to his father's knowledge Zechariah knew the Torah quite well.

So, it seems that God personally intervened and rather than the priests giving the Bethel delegation the answer to their question, God Himself gave it to His Prophet Zechariah to give to them. I have no doubt it was an answer they were not prepared to hear. This is what is said:

CJB Zechariah 7:5 ***"Speak to all the people of the land and to the cohanim. Tell them, 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months throughout these seventy years, were you really fasting for me? Was it for me?"***

I'll warn you now that much of the remainder of this lesson is going to be rather preachy, and not necessarily comfortable, so be forewarned... it is simply the nature of what we're going to study. So, allow me to give you an illustration to better understand the biting tone of God's response in verse 5. Men, when you buy your wife that state-of-the-art 85" LED 4K TV with a bass reverberating sound bar that can shatter windows for her birthday, would you be so foolish as to be shocked when she looks at you through eyes squeezed down to two tiny slits and says: "And you bought this for **my** benefit? For **my** birthday? For **my** pleasure? It was really ME you were thinking about?"

The answer God gives is like this, and it is intended as a reproach and a teaching moment for more people than only the Bethel delegation. It was for all Judeans: lay people and priests. Questioning everyone's sincerity in the purpose for their fasting and weeping, God speaks of them doing it not only on

the 5th month of the year, but also the 7th. The 5th month we understand as when the Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians, but what happened on the 7th month that would instigate a repetitive time of mourning? The truth is that it isn't 100% certain what the occasion for mourning in the 7th month is, but the high probability is that it refers to the assassination of a fellow named Gedaliah and the massacre of many others. The story of this notorious event is recorded in the book of 2nd Kings, but even more detail about it is provided by the Prophet Jeremiah. It's worth knowing.

CJB Jeremiah 41:1-10 *In the seventh month Yishma'el the son of N'tanyahu, the son of Elishama, of royal blood and one of the chief officials of the king, came with ten men to G'dalyahu in Mitzpah. While eating a meal together there in Mitzpah, ² Yishma'el and the ten men with him rose and attacked G'dalyahu the son of Achikam, the son of Shafan, struck him with their swords, and assassinated the man whom the king of Bavel had appointed governor of the land. ³ Yishma'el also murdered all the Judeans who were with G'dalyahu at Mitzpah, as well as the Kasdim soldiers they found there. ⁴ The next day, before his assassination of G'dalyahu had become known, ⁵ eighty men from Sh'khem, Shiloh and Shomron came with beards shaved off, clothes torn and gashes on their bodies; they had grain offerings and frankincense with them to present in the house of ADONAI. ⁶ Yishma'el the son of N'tanyahu went out from Mitzpah to meet them, weeping all along the way; on meeting them, he said to them, "Come to G'dalyahu the son of Achikam." ⁷ But once they were inside the city, Yishma'el the son of N'tanyahu and the men with him slaughtered them and threw them into the cistern. ⁸ However, ten of them said to Yishma'el, "Don't kill us, for we have stores of wheat, barley, olive oil and honey hidden in the field." So he relented, and did not kill them along with their comrades. ⁹ The cistern in which Yishma'el threw the corpses of the men he had murdered with G'dalyahu was the one Asa the king had made in fear of Ba'asha king of Isra'el; it was this cistern that Yishma'el the son of N'tanyahu filled with the slaughtered men. ¹⁰ Then Yishma'el carried off captive the rest of the people in Mitzpah—the king's daughters and all the people left in Mitzpah, whom N'vuzar'adan the commander of the guard had committed to the care*

of G'dalyahu the son of Achikam. Yishma'el the son of N'tanyahu carried them off captive and left to cross over to the people of 'Amon.

What happened here was that a man named Gedaliah, who was from a prominent Judean family, accepted the role as governor over what remained of the former Kingdom of Judah on behalf of Nebuchadnezzar. However, even if Gedaliah and his family saw this as at least a small gesture of goodwill towards the Judeans by giving them one of their own to rule over them, the most zealous of the remaining Judeans saw Gedaliah's acceptance of this offer as aiding and abetting the enemy. So, they assassinated him, his family, other Jews that were there with him and even a number of Babylonian soldiers stationed in Judah. Some Jews in Mitzpah, where this atrocity took place, were left alive, but the Judean ringleader of this slaughter took them and fled for the neighboring country of Amon when it became clear he had made a huge miscalculation.

Apparently the Jews of Bethel and in other places in the former land of Judah decided to remember that terrible day by mourning and fasting annually in the 7th month of the year. What we're hearing in this unexpected response of God to the delegation from Bethel's inquiry is that He is not at all impressed or pleased with these fast days and all their weeping. Interestingly, the most religious Jews even in modern times still observe the Fast of Gedaliah on the 3rd day of the 7th month each year. What is the problem in God's eyes with the Jews doing this? It's because this centered on themselves, and not on God. What they had been doing was hypocritical and an attempt at self-righteousness. They instituted special holidays which God had not ordained for them, and they thought them important and obviously their prerogative to establish them.

I made light of God's admonition of verse 5 by using the illustration of a man giving his wife a huge TV for her birthday, something which he no doubt wanted only to please himself. I did that because of what I now am compelled to say to you that is anything but light hearted. To give this some background and weight, here is a most impactful quote to us all from Isaiah that pertains exactly to what is going on here in Zechariah, and it ought to open up some serious self-examination and reflection in us all about the things we do that we

think are God-pleasing expressions of our personal piousness and righteousness.

CJB Isaiah 58:1-9 *Shout out loud! Don't hold back! Raise your voice like a shofar! Proclaim to my people what rebels they are, to the house of Ya'akov their sins. ² "Oh yes, they seek me day after day and [claim to] delight in knowing my ways. As if they were an upright nation that had not abandoned the rulings of their God, they ask me for just rulings and [claim] to take pleasure in closeness to God, ³ [asking,] 'Why should we fast, if you don't see? Why mortify ourselves, if you don't notice?' "Here is my answer: when you fast, you go about doing whatever you like, while keeping your laborers hard at work. ⁴ Your fasts lead to quarreling and fighting, to lashing out with violent blows. On a day like today, fasting like yours will not make your voice heard on high. ⁵ "Is this the sort of fast I want, a day when a person mortifies himself? Is the object to hang your head like a reed and spread sackcloth and ashes under yourself? Is this what you call a fast, a day that pleases Yehoveh? ⁶ "Here is the sort of fast I want- releasing those unjustly bound, untying the thongs of the yoke, letting the oppressed go free, breaking every yoke, ⁷ sharing your food with the hungry, taking the homeless poor into your house, clothing the naked when you see them, fulfilling your duty to your kinsmen!" ⁸ Then your light will burst forth like the morning, your new skin will quickly grow over your wound; your righteousness will precede you, and Yehoveh's glory will follow you. ⁹ Then you will call, and Yehoveh will answer; you will cry, and he will say, "Here I am."*

Remember those final words of Zechariah 7:4? ***"were you really fasting for me? Was it for me?"*** Those words are expressing the same kind of sentiment that God tried to explain to King Saul about how He views animal sacrifices... the same sacrifices that He ordains in The Law of Moses.

CJB 1 Samuel 15:22 *Sh'mu'el said, "Does ADONAI take as much pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying what ADONAI*

says? Surely obeying is better than sacrifice, and heeding orders than the fat of rams.

Samuel is telling Saul that sacrificing exists mostly because of disobedience. Sacrificing is a most gracious way of God creating a way for us to NOT to get what we rightly deserve. But it costs Him a great deal. He requires that innocent creatures that He created and loves must lose their lives as a substitute for our crimes against Him...so greatly does He love humans above all other living creatures. God looks first to the condition of our mind and spirit to see what sort of sincerity we harbor towards Him. But, over and over in the Bible... in so many different ways.... He tells us that our sincerity in our worship of Him can only really be expressed in one way: our obedience. Making up our own religious occasions to worship God, or to express some sort of message to Him that seems good to us, may not necessarily be sinful. On the other hand, if at the same time we ignore God's appointed times, disobey His most fundamental laws and commands, and then see animal sacrifice as a cheap way out of our rebellion, or think that hanging our heads and weeping and fasting because it is an annual day marked on a calendar is going to impress Him and convince Him of our righteousness before Him... think again.

God already gave Israel a day of mourning and fasting and weeping to atone for their sins and sorrows: Yom Kippur. The more days they fast on an occasion they decided to create doesn't help. It might make them feel better...to feel more righteous... but that's all the good it does. So, how silly and vain for this delegation to travel from Bethel to Jerusalem to piously ask if it's OK with God if they stop doing something He never told them to do in the first place.

Let me make this even more personal and probably more meddling. God has given us His holy days to celebrate. Do we celebrate them the best we can in the challenging circumstances we all live under? Do we do it out of obedience and sincerity, or is it a day on a calendar and so we do it because it's time again? Believers of all ilk's, let me take this down one more level. Do you celebrate Church created holy days like Christmas and Easter because they seem good to you? Days that you deem as "holy", which seem not only harmless enough, but you think actually expresses a special righteousness?

Days that God never instituted or ordained nor did He give us permission to establish. Do you think you are impressing or even pleasing God when you do them... or in truth, do you do it mostly because you like it? It gives you a warm and satisfying feeling. And, to put a finer point on it, do you do that *instead* of obediently celebrating the fasts, feasts or sabbaths that God DID ordain?

Judaism has invented many days of mourning and remembrance over the centuries, and they have religious services and traditions to commemorate them. Who is this pleasing? God's Word says it may not be Him. Hebrew Roots people, do you then turn around and think it good to mimic these Jewish... but not biblically ordained... observances? Or have lengthy or elaborate or expensive services on days God calls out, but on the other hand He doesn't really ask for what it is you're offering? Then whom are you pleasing? God's Word says it may not be Him. What matters most to God is our simple obedience, and approaching Him in all these things with a contrite heart. He wants us to love our fellow man in practical ways rather than going all out to do things in an effort to impress Him with our righteousness. I have to remind myself about these things all the time. I have to remind myself that even in prayer God already knows what I'm going to ask before I do. So, lofty words and lengthy prayers are for me or those hearing me, and not necessarily for Him. God sees me; He knows me far better than I know me. He knows my motives, my priorities, my needs, my secrets and my faults. He wants my obedience to Him given from my love and allegiance to Him; not because it's part of my religion or custom. He wants me to take care of my family, my fellow God followers, and to help people where I can in the ways they need it. He wants me to bless His people, Israel, and to stand up for them. And, to do it all in the ways He has instructed and not in ways that I think are better.

I'm not saying this to you because this is my opinion; this is what we've just read and I have to tell you it is pretty convicting to me. These words God speaks to the delegation from Bethel...and to us... that seem so harsh are not meant to condemn or to beat us down. They are meant to correct and to teach, as a loving Father does. So, let's not be stubborn or prideful, but rather let's be open to His admonition and His instruction even when it stings a little or maybe a lot.

Verse 6 completes the thought begun in verse 5, as it speaks of "eating and drinking". These two terms used together are a common expression that simply refers to a full meal. So, essentially, this idea of fasting for the sake of self-righteousness can even be extended to feasting for the sake of self-righteousness. Therefore, beyond eating only what God considers food, or beyond obeying God's appointed times of fasting, how much food or how little food is a matter of indifference to Yehoveh. It has no bearing on one's righteousness to Him, but if one attempts to frame it as a show of righteousness then it brings God's ire.

Verse 7 says:

CJB Zechariah 7:7 *Isn't this just what Yehoveh proclaimed through the earlier prophets, when Yerushalayim was inhabited and prosperous, as were the cities around her; and the Negev and the Sh'felah were inhabited?'"*

The earlier Prophets mean the Prophets that spoke and wrote prior to the exile to Babylon. And, what they proclaimed was that Judah was on the wrong track and without immediate and clear reform, disaster at the hand of God was coming. The question asked here is of course rhetorical. That is, the expected response is "yes, it is". We are in a section of Zechariah in which symbolism takes a bit of break in favor of examining what Judah was told by God through His Prophets in the past, how the Judeans responded (generally ignoring the warnings), what the result was (being conquered and exiled), and what the future is going to look like. In the past, pre-exile, Jerusalem was thriving as well as were the associated fortified cities and villages around her. The Negev (the southern desert region of Judah) and the Shephelah (the coastal plain) were also well populated and prosperous. Although the hill country is not mentioned, the idea is that all of Judah was blessed and doing well.

Verses 8 and 9 continue with:

CJB Zechariah 7:8-9 ***⁸ Then this message from Yehoveh came to Z'kharyah: ⁹ "In the past Yehoveh-Tzva'ot said, 'Administer true justice. Let everyone show mercy and compassion to his brother.***

So, this is not Zechariah's words or conclusions, these are God's words. What follows are 4 fundamental precepts upon which all Judeans are to operate in their daily lives, but obviously have not or there would be no reason to warn. I want to highlight something that it's been a while since I've spoken about, but probably bears repeating. Just as these 4 fundamental precepts are given, that does NOT mean all others of God's laws, commands and precepts have been abolished in favor of only these 4. I doubt most anyone would think otherwise. And yet, when we arrive in the New Testament and we have an interested follower of Yeshua ask Him about some fundamental precepts, Constantinian Christianity takes an entirely different tact.

CJB Matthew 22:33-40 ***³³ When the crowds heard how he taught, they were astounded; ³⁴ but when the P'rushim learned that he had silenced the Tz'dukim, they got together, ³⁵ and one of them who was a Torah expert asked a sh'eilah to trap him: ³⁶ "Rabbi, which of the mitzvot in the Torah is the most important?" ³⁷ He told him, "'You are to love ADONAI your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.' ³⁸ This is the greatest and most important mitzvah. ³⁹ And a second is similar to it, 'You are to love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All of the Torah and the Prophets are dependent on these two mitzvot."***

The Church says that at this moment Jesus abolished the Law of Moses and replaced it with the Law of Love. That is, when asked what are the greatest and most foundational commandments, Christ answered with Love God, Love your fellow man, and then followed that by saying that all the Torah and the Prophets were based upon those 2 underlying principles (saying the Torah and the Prophets was an expression meaning the entire Old Testament). Frankly, common sense and a plain reading of what is said utterly refutes the new notion invented by the Church to reduce all of God's commands to a single new one called love.

Here's a way to mentally picture it: think of God's commands to love Him with all our minds, soul, and strength, and to love our fellow man as ourselves as the 2 pillars upon which the 10 Commandments are built. The 10 Commandments tell us what loving God looks like, and what loving our fellow man looks like, otherwise we would be left to decide individually what loving God and loving our fellow man amounts to. And, effectively, this is precisely what the Church has been preaching for centuries and says we may now do. We may decide for ourselves.

The Law of Moses then rests atop the 10 Commandments, in the same way the American civil law system rests upon the Constitution. Each of the roughly 600 laws of Moses provide a more nuanced and detailed case example of one or another of each of the 10 Commandments to see how the foundational pillars are to be carried out in real life. Whether emphasizing 4 fundamental precepts of behavior in Zechariah chapter 7, or the 2 foundational principles of obedience to God in Matthew 22, that hardly replaces *all* the other precepts, principles, laws and commands.

Judah (and the former Israel) had essentially done what the Constantinian Church has done. It went its own way, pushed aside God's commands in favor of their own precepts, then claimed that this is what God wants and it pleases Him, despite Him saying "no!" to such a thing, and calling it rebellion, and eventually exacting a huge punishment upon His people for such a blasphemy. Here in Zechariah 7, God is reminding them of just how they got here from there, and what a terrible price even partial restoration from their exile has cost them. Let those with ears, hear.

Now; with all that in mind, what does God mean by "administer TRUE justice"? Why not just "administer justice"? True justice is referring to God's system of justice. Just as in ancient times, every society in the world today has decided for itself what justice amounts to and how they wish to administer it. We look on in horror to some of the harsh justice systems in the Middle East, for instance, as hands are cut off for stealing something trifling, or people are beheaded for disobeying some nuance of Islamic law such as a woman not properly wearing a head scarf. We see some societies that find no fault in pedophilia, and others treat the matter with the death sentence. Who is right?

We tend to always think that however our society decides is the correct way. But, to God, there is only one way... one TRUE justice system... and that is His. Any deviation from that no longer adjudicates TRUE justice. But, where do we find His system? There's only one place: The Law of Moses.

So, Judah had been adjudicating justice under their own system, and not God's, and He is telling them to return to the true one. Certainly, they retained elements of God's system, but modified other parts to their liking, and of course, rationalized that God would be approving. Fellow Believers, I can say with 100% confidence that when Our Messiah does return and set up His Father's Kingdom on earth, ruling from His throne in Jerusalem, the Torah-based justice system will be returned in full. A Torah-based justice system that should be operating in full today, but it is not. And, we see in living proof what kind of injustice, chaos, and wickedness this has led to.

After telling Judah to administer TRUE justice (return to the Law of Moses), the second of the 4 precepts is spoken: everyone should show mercy and compassion to his brother. The Hebrew is **chesed** and **rahamim**, and this is a common biblical word pairing. While both of these words have a range of meanings, mercy and compassion capture the essence of it. And, of course, this is referring to human behavior. We should note however the addition of to whom mercy and compassion is to be shown: your brother. This Hebrew word is **ach**, and it, too, has a range of meanings. It can mean a sibling, it can mean a close friend, or it can mean a fellow Israelite. However, from the context this is not referring to people outside of the Hebrew community. This does not mean that Judeans are not to show mercy and compassion to gentiles; but, that is not what this particular verse is aimed at.

It is like for us, today, as followers of Yeshua. On earth, our first obligation to folks to whom we are show mercy and compassion is our family. After that, our fellow followers of Yeshua. Then after that come all other humans. The one caveat I might add to that is a sub-category that is Israel. We are certainly to put Israel ahead of the "all other humans" category, although it takes much wisdom to know exactly how to carry that out in the proper spirit.

True justice and showing mercy and compassion are organically linked, and not separate issues. And yet, as demonstrated by many biblical examples, administering true justice must be first before showing mercy and compassion. It's when we get that order backwards that we wind up with justice systems that deviate greatly from God's, such as in the USA where in most states, out of mercy and compassion, the death penalty for a murderer has been abolished. What has been the result? Even more murder and violence. And, just as we must refer to The Law of Moses to even know what true justice is in God's eyes, we must do the same to know what true mercy and compassion are in God's eyes. For instance, in the name of mercy and compassion we now have a few Western societies that offer assisted euthanasia to anyone who wants to end their life, no matter the reason. That in no way reflects God's definition of mercy and compassion.

Verse 10 adds two more precepts to the two already given.

CJB Zechariah 7:10 *Don't oppress widows, orphans, foreigners or poor people. Don't plot evil against each other.'*

Not the best translation. Here is a more literal one.

RSV Zechariah 7:10 *do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor; and let none of you devise evil against his brother in your heart."*

Most translations leave out the word "brother" and many also leave out "in your heart". Just as in verse 9, this is mostly aimed at what you do not do to your brother... your **ach**. While we could extend this beyond its intent... which more or less is referring to your fellow Judean... we should not do so except as a model for how to treat all people. Here, this concerns itself with how one Jew is to treat another Jew. By adding back in "in your heart" (meaning in your mind), the idea is that all evil begins as a thought. So, don't even let the thought of evil get a foothold, and this is a foundational precept.

As for the first half of this verse, this is regarding the socially disadvantaged and most vulnerable among the Judeans. Typically, this not about doing

something violent against them but rather it has to do with economics. Cheating them, using the court system against them unjustly, withholding wages or not paying them a fair wage. But, the Law of Moses also creates a kind of welfare system for this group by allowing them to glean fields, by borrowing money at no interest, and by being paid at the end of every day without fail so that they can buy food for them or their families. Thus, this connects right back to true justice. And, no doubt, this had not been happening. Also notice that here the word sojourner or foreigner is included. That is, this does extend beyond how one Judean treats another Judean. If a gentile is living among the Judeans and is a widow, fatherless or poor, they, too, are not to be subjected to oppression.

Verses 11 and 12 are, for me, as impactful as was verses 5, 6, and 7.

CJB Zechariah 7:11-12 ***¹¹ But they wouldn't listen, they stubbornly turned their shoulder away and stopped up their ears, so that they wouldn't have to hear it. ¹² Yes, they made their hearts as hard as a diamond, so that they wouldn't hear the Torah and the messages that Yehoveh-Tzva'ot had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. This is why great anger came from Yehoveh-Tzva'ot;***

"But they wouldn't listen". The Hebrew word translated here as "listen" is **qashab**. It carries a stronger meaning than the word "listen" does in modern English. It more means to heed, to pay attention. Listen is a very passive term in English, while heed or pay attention is more urgent and involves the element of taking what you are being told seriously. What wouldn't they hear? Verse 12 says that they wouldn't pay attention to the Torah and the messages of the Prophets. What did this result in? God's great anger against them.

The underlying concepts in this choice of words are covenant and revelation. The Torah lays out a covenant that all who hope to establish a relationship with Yehoveh must buy into. This covenant is the mandatory basis for the relationship, or none can exist. Prophetic revelation is a second means of God conveying His instructions to His people. Both must be heeded. This is why I have long highlighted that the problem with the Constantinian Church is that it is founded on the principle that both the Torah and the Prophets are not for

Believers in Yeshua. By doing this, people are led astray, and I fear many are living in a false sense of eternal security as a result.

I am going to pause here for today but before I do I'm going to appeal to you all one more time. When an institution and its beliefs are built upon principles that are not the truth, then it cannot be reformed. I have received literally hundreds of letters and emails from people that have belonged to various denominations for decades, and they now realize they have been taught wrong doctrine. So many of these folks, though, naively believe that they are going to stay where they are and reform their Church. I've never received a follow up email or letter from anyone claiming more success than perhaps the Pastor has agreed to allow the teaching of the Old Testament, or perhaps they will attempt to do a Passover seder of sorts. The vast majority of the time, these same people end up disappointed and are trying not to be bitter because they are having no luck at all in reforming their Pastor or Church.

It is a hard, hard thing to eventually come to the realization that there is no other route than that of the Pilgrims who came to the American shores early in the 1600's. They left the Church entirely. They realized after years of their like-minded friends and family members being jailed and worse for even trying to reform their Church, that they can't perform religious alchemy. You can no more reform the underlying principles of an existing denomination than you can make gold from lead because both are fundamental elements that are unique. The Pilgrims didn't leave Yeshua, they went somewhere that they could obey Him without fear of reprisal. If God has spoken to you, and now you see the tragic error of Constantinian Christianity that prides itself on being disobedient to God's laws and commands, then get out no matter what it may cost you in the way of friends and sometimes even family. Your relationship with God trumps all these concerns.