

THERE ARE NO SHORT CUTS

The cost of gasoline has been a real attention getter for better than a year now. Two to three dollars a gallon two years ago was simply unheard of in most cities in this country. Now if you find a gallon for less than three dollars you think you are doing alright. For those who remember it being twenty-nine cents a gallon, prices today must really be a fright.

Yet, gasoline prices, like all other things remind us that everything in life costs something. It is the way it has always been, even before gasoline was invented. From the beginning of man's time on this earth, he has come to recognize what it costs to live. Adam had to work by the sweat of his brow, Genesis 3:19. If you want the finer things of life, you must work for them, and be prepared to sacrifice to make things happen.

No matter the subject, however, there is always going to be someone who will want a deal. They will want to get by without paying what everyone else does. They want the discount, the double coupon price reduction, etc. This is not always bad; some even call people like that thrifty. Such makes for good economic sense. But special deals and discounts do not work in everything.

For instance, going to heaven has never been packaged with coupons or discounts. Yet some seek such by the way they live. Take the "good 'ole boy" that would give the shirt off his back to help his neighbor, yet refuses to submit himself in humble obedience to the Christ of Calvary. Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven," Matthew 7:21.

C.H. Spurgeon once said, "Morality may keep you out of jail, but it takes the blood of Jesus Christ to keep you out of hell!" Access to that blood comes through personal willingness to sacrifice all in order to receive it, Colossians 1:9-14.

If we expect Christ to pay it all, which He has; why should we expect any less from ourselves? Many get caught up on whether they are doing enough for Jesus, or if they can get to heaven by doing just enough. Those with attitudes like this do not understand the sacrifice of Christ, or the nature of relationship He has with Christians. Jesus sacrificed it all! He gave His life! Why would He accept anything less in return? He said, ". . .If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me," Matthew 16:24. The Christian must do this every single day of his Christian life, Luke 9:23.

Repentance, confession and baptism for the forgiveness of sin is a good start, but it is just a starting point. Faithfulness to Christ though church involvement is a requirement of steadfast faith, Hebrews 10:25; Matthew 6:33. Attendance on Sunday morning alone is an effort, but not sacrificial. Sitting in a pew during a worship assembly is a good thing, but participation by singing, praying, and giving at least ten percent of your gross income when the collection plate comes by is sacrificial. Reading the Bible from time to time is an effort, but teaching it to others is sacrificial. Putting food on the table for your family is an effort, but faithfulness to your mate and children is a sacrifice.

The person who said the best things in life are free was foolishly mistaken! The best things in life cost, and they cost dearly. The best things in life are forgiveness of sin, the church of Christ, and the hope of heaven. It took all heaven had to offer to provide them, and it will cost all earth has to tender to participate in them. No short cuts! No coupons! No deals!

-Scott Harp