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2 SAMUEL 24:1-25

It's been three months since we started our study of **2 Samuel**. And we've covered a lot of ground in a short period of time.

We've seen David as a young man who was promised a kingdom.

We've seen David as a fugitive...running from a very jealous man named Saul.

We've seen David finally become king of all Israel.

We've seen David as a warrior and as an adulterer and as a husband and as a grieving father.

We've seen David as he prayed and wept before the Lord and we've seen him write songs of confession and worship and praise.

David has come almost to the end of his life. And we would expect **2 Samuel** to end with David's crawling into his bed and breathing his last breath, but we would have to go on over to **1 Kings** to see David's death.

We said when we started this study that 2 Samuel is one picture after another of God's grace! And today, we see yet another picture of the amazing grace of Almighty God. We see sin, judgment, repentance and forgiveness.

Verses 1-9...

The first thing I want us to think about is this census and how it angered God.. Now, if we went to 1 Chronicles 21, we would see that it was Satan who moved David to number Israel.

Verse 1 here in chapter 24 simply means that God allowed this to happen...much like He allowed Satan to come against Job and much like He allowed the evil spirits to come against Saul.

This was the work of Satan...not the work of God...because we know that this census was evil in God's sight and James 1:13 tells us that God does not tempt anyone to do evil. And we know that God would not punish David for something that He told him to do.

Satan moved upon David's heart to want to number his people. I believe it's very interesting that Joab discouraged this. This is one of the few times we see Joab having any real spiritual discernment, isn't it?

But, Joab could not dissuade David. David was determined to get these folks numbered!

WHY? What was wrong with this that made God so angry?

Let me tell you this...every time you see God become angry in Scripture, it is for one reason...it is because of sin! Now, it may not be the same sin...but the reason for God's anger is always sin!

And the specific sin that David was committing here was the sin of pride!

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And here God is angry with David and with Israel. I don't know why He was angry with Israel, unless it was because they were just blindly following David in this sin of pride!

But, the bottom line is that God was angry with David for having ordered a census to be taken.

Now, a numbering the people is not necessarily in and of itself a sinful thing. As a matter of fact, there are times in Scripture when God Himself ordered the numbering of the people. That's what the *Book of Numbers* is all about! But, God had not ordered this numbering, had He?

As we said before, *1 Chronicles* tells us it was Satan who moved David to do this and I believe God was very angry with David because David had come to a point late in his life where he was more open to hearing the voice of Satan than he was to hearing the voice of God!!

We've mentioned this before...

There are many old people who finish well. I mean, the early part of their lives may have been rough, but at the end of their life, they're in the Word, they're spending time in prayer, every Word they say exalts Jesus...

And then there are other folks who go the other way...

And here we see David, about to not finish well. He is not listening to God, he's not listening to godly counsel, he is listening to the voice of the devil as Satan speaks to him and tells him what to do.

Let's think about this census for a moment...There were only two reasons why a census was taken. One was for taxation. I mean, if the government is planning on levying a tax, they have to know how many people there are so they can know how high a tax each individual needs to pay...

But, another reason for a census is to raise an army. David was counting all men who were of the age to fight.

And we know this because *verse 9* calls these men "valiant men." Let me ask you...

The last time we had a national census was the year 2000, wasn't it? Did the form mention the number of "valiant people" in your home? No! It just mentioned the number of people. But here, they were counting the number of valiant men!

And it's important for us to know this because we need to understand that David had come to a point in his life when he had turned his back on his own teaching.

In *Psalms 20:7*, David had said:

"Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will boast in the name of the LORD our God."

In other words, there was a time in David's life when he said, "Listen, it doesn't matter how big the enemy is. It doesn't matter how many battering rams they have. It doesn't matter

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how *many swords and spears* they have. It doesn't even matter how *many horses and chariots and men* they have.

...None of that matters, because we're not trusting in the flesh!

We're not trusting in things of earthly value!"

"Some trust in horses and some trust in chariots, but not us! We will trust in the name of the LORD our God."

But, David had turned his back on that and he had listened to the voice of Satan. Satan must have come along and said,

"You know David, there's going to be some problems coming. You're going to have to go to war in your old age. Are you sure your army is big enough? Maybe you need to institute a call-up, a draft, a conscription..."

Before now, David would probably have told Satan,
"I don't need to worry about that! God will fight for us. God will take care of us!"

But, we don't see that happening here, do we? And even Joab and his commanders knew it wasn't the right thing to do!

Joab said, "Listen David, if you need 100,000 more men, God will give you 100,000 more men. If you need a million more, god will give you a million more!"

But, David didn't listen. David was motivated by pride. And pride will do two things...

Pride will blind us to the real Source of our strength...

David had forgotten the Source of his strength.

And pride will not only blind us to the Source of our strength, but

Pride will deafen us to godly counsel God sends our way.

Joab and his commanders gave David good and godly counsel...but David turned a deaf ear to it, didn't he?

Not only do we see the anger of God in this chapter, but we also see the discipline of God.

I don't particularly like that word. I never liked to discipline our boys. Bill almost always had to do that. I like everything to just float gently along...no ripples, no conflicts, no confrontations. And I surely don't want to be at the other end of it either...I don't want to receive discipline!

But, we see in this chapter the discipline of David by God...

Verses 10-14...

If we're God's children, He will surely discipline us when we go astray, won't He?

And have you ever thought about how the Lord's discipline begins? It always begins in your heart. What is this called? It is called conviction.

Conviction is not usually a pleasant thing and the reason is that it is the first step in God's discipline. And if someone professes to know the Lord and they can go week after week and month after month and year after year, and they never come under conviction of their sin, it's a pretty good sign that they've never been saved!

If you belong to God, and you fall into sin, He's going to deal with your heart.

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David had listened to the devil. David had not sought God. David had refused good counsel! David sinned. And when all this was over, he was smote in his heart....he was troubled in his heart.

You know, have you ever noticed that the more you're in God's Word and the more time you spend in prayer and the closer you seek to walk with God, the quicker you're convicted? Things you used to get away with...you just can't get away with anymore!

The Holy Spirit just gets "pickier and pickier" with us, doesn't He? And when we do things outside of the will of God, our heart becomes troubled...it becomes convicted!

After conviction comes confession...

Verse 10...

If David had been stubborn and gone on about his way, and had never listened to his troubled heart, then God may have had to get his attention in a more drastic way.

But God dealt with his heart and David turned to Him in confession and he said, "Lord I have sinned and I've acted very, very foolishly." And then the discipline of God turned from internal to external.

Let me tell you an important truth...

If David's sin had simply been a private sin, then his confession would have been enough. But, you see, David's sin was not a private sin. It was a public sin...it involved the entire nation.

If David's sin had been private, God would have dealt with his heart, and David's confession would have been enough.

Private sin can be taken care of in private confessional. But public sin demands public restitution.

And that's why God told the prophet Gad to go to David and give him a choice of three things...

"David, you can pick your punishment. Your land can suffer seven years of famine. Or you can be pursued as a fugitive for three years...or your land can suffer three days of pestilence."

God's discipline moved from internal to external. God gave David three choices...none of which sounded like much fun. And David chose the three days of pestilence.

Verse 15...

Day number one came and the pestilence fell and 70,000 men died in one day! Now, we all know the impact that 9/11 had on our country. How many people died? The first estimate was over 5,000, but the bottom line was what...3,000 or so?

And here, 70,000 men died in one day!

Verse 16...

Here was God's angel headed for Jerusalem and God said, "Enough! Don't go any farther!"

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In just these two verses we see two precious attributes of God...His justice and His mercy!

Let me ask you something...

Does God discipline us because He is a mean, vindictive God? **NO!** *Hebrews 12* tells us God disciplines those He loves.

If a person can just sin and sin and sin and get by and get by and get by and never, ever be disciplined by God, the writer of Hebrews says he is not God's child.

Well, having dealt with God's anger and God's discipline, this chapter ends with reconciliation.

Can a person who has been in fellowship with God and then that fellowship with God is broken because of sin...can that fellowship ever be restored again? **YES!**

Verses 18-25...

Where did David's reconciliation with God take place? It took place at the altar.

You can go to class after class after class...

You can go to Bible Study after Bible Study...

You can go to seminar after seminar after seminar...

But you won't be truly reconciled with God until you come to the altar.

The altar I'm speaking of is not a piece of furniture. I think there is something precious about going to the altar in our church and letting our hearts be dealt with by God...but I'm speaking more right now of a place you can go to get alone with God and allow Him to do a work in your heart.

David went to the threshing floor of Araunah.

This was a real place. It was a place of sacrifice. It was the place where Abraham had offered Isaac and the place where Solomon would build the Temple...it was a real place!

I want us to also think of the price of the altar. David would not accept the threshing floor without cost. And I want to tell you...true worship costs us something.

True worship will cost you some time...

Some energy...some missed opportunities to do other things and go other places...

It might even cost you some money.

What did David do at the altar?

He offered burnt offerings and peace offerings.

The burnt offerings speak of offering for sin.

The peace offerings speak of praise and thanksgiving.

And I want to tell you this...

Confession of sin...having our sins cleansed and forgiven...

reconciliation with God...Getting back into fellowship with

Almighty God...

These are worthy of our praise and thanksgiving!

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We send up our burnt offerings...our confession of sin and what happens? We are forgiven by God and reconciliation is made and we are filled with a deep sense of gratitude and joy and thankfulness!

And we want to say,

“Lord, I just want to tell you I love you. Lord, I just want to tell you how grateful I am. Lord, I wouldn't be anything without you. Lord, everything I am I owe to You and Your grace.

Thank You, Lord...Thank You and I praise You...I worship You!”

That's the purpose of the altar!

God's anger is real! God's discipline is real! But broken fellowship can be reconciled if you'll come to the altar...and just make things right with God!

And all of this is possible by the blood of the Lord Jesus!

I hope we've learned a lot from David. He remains one of my favorite Bible characters because looking at his life is like looking into a mirror.

I pray that if we don't learn anything *else* from David, we will have learned this...

When we follow the counsel of God we will never go wrong...

When we follow our own counsel, we not only get in trouble ourselves, but we harm other people as well.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a future and a hope.”

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares Satan, “plans to totally bankrupt you and to harm you, plans to make destroy your future and make you hopeless.”

May God help us to follow *His* plans for our lives!