

2 Samuel 24

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[0 : 00] Again, the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he had cited David against them, saying, Go number Israel and Judah. So the king said to Joab, the commander of the army who was with him, Go through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, and number the people, that I may know the number of the people.

But Joab said to the king, May the Lord your God add to the people a hundred times as many as they are, while the eyes of my lord the king still see it. But why does my lord the king delight in this thing?

But the king's word prevailed against Joab and the commanders of the army. So Joab and the commanders of the army went out from the presence of the king to number the people of Israel.

They crossed the Jordan and began from Ezer and from the city that is in the middle of the valley toward Gad and on to Jaser. Then they came to Gilead and to Kadesh in the land of the Hittites.

And they came to Dan. And from Dan they went around to Sidon and came to the fortress of Tyre and to the cities of the Hivites and the Canaanites. And they went out to the Negev at Judah and Beersheba.

[1 : 11] So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. And Joab gave the sum of the numbering of the people to the king.

In Israel there were eight hundred thousand valiant men who drew the sword and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand. But David's heart struck him after he had numbered the people.

And David said to the Lord, And when David arose in the morning, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, Go and say to David, Thus says the Lord, Three things I offer you.

Choose one of them that I may do it to you. So Gad came to David and told him and said to him, Shall three years of famine come to you in your land? Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you?

Or shall there be three days pestilence in your land? Now consider and decide what answer I shall return to him who sent me. Then David said to Gad, I am in great distress.

[2 : 23] Let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercy is great. But let me not fall into the hand of man. So the Lord sent a pestilence among Israel from the morning until the appointed time.

And there died of the people from Dan to Beersheba, seventy thousand men. And when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented from the calamity and said to the angel who was working destruction among his people, It is enough.

Now stay your hand. And the angel of the Lord was by the threshing floor of Arunah the Jebusite. Then David spoke to the Lord while he saw the angel who was striking the people and said, Behold, I have sinned and I have done wickedly.

But these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand be against me and my father's house. And Gad came that day to David and said to him, Go up, raise an altar to the Lord on the threshing fold of Arunah the Jebusite.

So David went up at Gad's word as the Lord commanded. And when Arunah looked down, he saw the king and his servants coming on toward him. And Arunah went out and paid homage to the king with his face to the ground.

[3 : 38] And Arunah said, Why has my lord the king come to his servant? David said, To buy the threshing floor from you in order to build an altar to the Lord that the plague may be averted from the people.

Then Arunah said to David, Let my lord the king take up and offer what seems good to him. Here are the oxen for the burnt offering and the threshing sledges and the yokes of the oxen for the wood.

All this, O king, Arunah gives to the king. And Arunah said to the king, May the lord your God accept you. But the king said to Arunah, No, but I will buy it from you for a price.

I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord that my God that cost me nothing. So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for 50 shekels of silver. And David built there an altar to the Lord and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings.

So the Lord responded to the plea for the land and the plague was averted from Israel. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thank you, David.

[4 : 49] Good morning to you. We're glad that you are here with us. I add my welcome to that of Pastor Helm that he extended to you earlier in the service. Join me in prayer and we're getting to God's word for today.

Amen. Blessed be your name. When things are going well, blessed be your name. When things are not going well, blessed be your name.

May your praise be on our lips. And may you be glorified this morning through the proclamation of your word is our prayer. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. Three summers. We've been in the Samuel narratives. 2011, 12, 13.

This summer we've had the privilege of journeying with David, son of Jesse. What a ride it's been with him.

[5 : 52] We followed the king to some very interesting places. His footprints have taken us to the battlefield and to his bedroom.

We have danced with him as he entered Jerusalem with the ark. And we mourn with him as he left the ark in Jerusalem behind.

As he fled from his own son. With David, 2 Samuel chapter 7, we were stunned to hear the words that fell from the prophet Nathan's mouth about the future of David's family.

He had given him two good to be true kind of promises, son. About an eternal reign from a person, from one who would come from his loins.

This who would descend from him. We heard the prophet also speak about devastation that would come to David's house because of his sin.

[6 : 58] On the one hand, our journey ends this morning. We're going to leave a book behind. But we must not fail to carry with us the lessons that you and I have learned along the way.

And I'm not simply talking about information or facts about David's life. Facts about a man that God had chosen for himself.

We've seen him in the narrator here. It concludes or includes some very significant things about him here in chapter 24. We see his heart.

We see his devotion. We see about the continuance of his family. But the greater lessons are about not David.

They're about the God of David. Who lives and who has revealed himself in David's greater son. The Lord Jesus Christ. So this morning, my goal would be to leave with you some lessons that transcend the life of the flawed character.

[8 : 10] Flawed man. Lessons that stay with us beyond this particular series. Three of them arise from our text today.

The first one you see in verse 1. Look at it with me. See it there? Again, the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. Here's the lesson. He is a God.

Lessons about God from the life of David, if you will. Our God, or he is a God of wrath. Who exercises judgment.

He is a God of wrath. Who exercises judgment. How do you like the way that the chapter begins?

Again, the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. Not too inviting, is it? It may give you a little pause. Do we really want to go further?

[9 : 08] Do we really want to see what's here? It makes one a little bit nervous when we read the kind of words that begin our text today. It seems like this kind of introduction, it's a prelude to judgment.

And it is. Similar introductions are found elsewhere in scripture, particularly in the Old Testament record. You may recall one. It's back in 2 Samuel chapter 6.

You remember Uzzah and the ark in chapter 6? The wrath of God was kindled. And then judgment was exacted.

Listen to what it says. 2 Samuel chapter 6 verse 7. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah. And, here it is, here it comes.

God struck him down there because of his error. And he died there beside the ark of God. You remember? David, well-meaning. But didn't exactly dot the I's and cross the T's like he needed to.

[10 : 15] For such a holy endeavor of bringing the very ark of God, where the presence of God dwelled over the mercy seat. That's where God came to meet with his people.

In today's text, the narrator likely has the incident that we had in chapter 21 in mind. There, the Lord had sent a famine.

Why? Because of the sin of Saul. Saul had put to death some Gibeonite people that Joshua and Israel had made a covenant with them to keep them alive.

The three-year famine in the land, chapter 21, was the result of the Lord's judgment because of this injustice. And, thus, the narrator here says, again, as it was in chapter 21, again, the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.

So, here in our text today, we're on the cusp. We're on the edge of yet another judgment situation. Notice, and he incited, that's God did, the Lord did, chapter 24, verse 1, David against them saying, go number Israel and Judah.

[11 : 34] Just why the anger of the Lord was about to be expressed in judgment, we're not really told. But, though the cause of the wrath is not stated, knowing who our great God is, we know that it was not unwarranted.

Some posit that it was Israel's rebellion against David through Absalom and others. And they followed not the anointed king, but a bogus king, so to speak.

Contrary to what some may think, the Lord does not relish wrath. Scripture's portrayal of the living God is one whose first option, his first option, is not judgment.

He's long-suffering. In other words, he's long on anger. And he's merciful. Yet justice is a major strand in the divine DNA.

To strip God of this particular aspect of his character, we then do not have the God of the Bible. It's the aspect of the divine character that incorporates discipline and correction and, yes, punishment when we stray from his ways.

[12 : 51] The path that is ultimately good for us. When we sin, we suffer. While the narrator in Simeon knows that the Lord was behind David's command to take the census, the chronicler in 1 Chronicles 21, and turn over there with me, notice what he does or who he assigns the blame for this particular incident on.

1 Chronicles chapter 21. Look at verse 1. Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel.

Wait a minute. Didn't you just read, Pastor Jay, in 2 Samuel 24 that God incited him? Are these two accounts in contradiction?

Well, the chronicler says that Satan was the agent who was on call who actually did the enticing of David. But in reality, there's no contradiction here.

The Lord has an unstated issue with his people. Something in Israel, unstated, had incited the Lord's anger. David's folly became the means of the vehicle for the visiting of God's wrath on his people.

[14 : 16] David's sin was not the initial cause of the Lord's wrath. It did, however, become the avenue through which divine wrath was expressed. Given the nature of the punishments the Lord offered to David, it seemed to be clear that God was punishing his people because of some kind of covenant violation.

God's judgment was not without due cause. So, just as in Job, God ultimately sovereign, but then Satan becomes the vehicle by God's permission for the temptation of Job, for, you might even say, the wrecking of Job's life.

So, God allowed Satan, as it were, to do this particular work, working through David's vulnerability. Tempting him.

God is not the one who does the tempting. James 1 makes that clear. Let no man say that when he's tempted that I'm tempted of God because God tempts no one. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away, when he is enticed.

God's judgment was not without due cause. Not random. Not capricious. But on the basis of what he was executing against his people.

[15 : 40] Back in 2 Samuel 24. David's command to Joab was clear. Go number Israel and Judah.

He was to take a census. He was to take an inventory of valiant men. Men who drew the sword. He was to go and to number the army.

He was to take an inventory, you might even say, of the troops that were there. And over nine months of traversing the land, east and north and west and south, then they returned with the numbers.

For some reason to David, the numbers were important. Numbers. Did you ever think about numbers and the motivation for numbers? They can be a very, very mixed bag.

According to the count, and chronicler he does differ a bit, there were 1.3 million valiant men who drew the sword. Fighting men, army men.

[16 : 44] But yet, David, we would have hoped, would have known this or learned this, yet the strength of the nation was not in their numbers. Huh? It wasn't in their numbers.

According to 1 Samuel 2, verses 9 and 10, the Lord was the ultimate guard of his faithful ones. He was the one who ultimately cut off the wicked.

Not by might shall a man prevail. The Lord was the one who was to give strength to his anointed. He was the one who anointed the power of his king.

Think about it. Last week, in chapter 23, the previous chapter had essentially said the same thing, did it not? David's men, those 30, 30 plus men, they were people who could sort of put, one could put a thousand to flight.

Huh? They were these kind of God-empowered, mighty men who joined the purpose of God through his anointed. Did David have a momentary lapse of memory or judgment?

[17 : 52] Was he motivated by pride or was he trying to see how Israel compared or stacked up against the other nations that were around? Did he want a reputation based on military strength?

Had he forgotten the words that he uttered when he was a young, strapping kid against Goliath? The day the Lord will deliver you into my hand.

The Lord's going to do it. And all this assembly we know that the Lord saves, not with sword or spear, for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hand.

Not sure when David wrote this, but these were words in Psalm 20. You remember that great passage? Now I know that the Lord saves his anointing.

The Lord does it. He will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand. Listen to this. Some of us learned it when we were kids.

[18 : 52] Some trust in what? Chariots. Some what? In horses. But we, God's people, we're going to remember the name of the Lord our God.

They collapse and fall. We rise and stand upright. David's folly became the means by which the Lord exercises anger against his people.

What about the God of David? David's folly. He's the God of wrath. Who sovereignly exercises judgment. You can't tell him when. You can't tell him how.

He's God. And you aren't. Huh? But not only is it God who wrath, who exercises judgment. He also is the God of mercy who redeemed, who restrains his wrath.

See that in verses 10 through 17. Who among us has not at one time or another acted foolishly? Maybe even as recent as this morning.

[19 : 59] Who knows? Huh? You've done something or said something that you later regret. Your words. Like arrows are launched.

And you want to get them back. Huh? The send button is pressed. And you want to retrieve a text or an email. Huh? Initially we felt that our course of action was right.

It was justified. It was the expedient thing. The right thing to do. The best thing to do. It's practical. It's safe. Huh? That's the way we normally feel with our actions. But then.

Huh? We've convinced ourselves that what we were doing or saying was in everybody's best interest. But later on. Huh? Felt a little uneasy.

Uncomfortable. Guilty. Our disease perhaps grew to the point of without question. Boy, I blew it that time. I've made the wrong decision.

[20 : 59] The wrong choice. Ever been there? You got your way. You did it your way. You did the Frank Sinatra thing. Huh? But you paid.

The price. That was David's situation by the time we get to verse 10. Look what it says. But David's heart struck him after he had numbered the people.

And David said to the Lord, I have sinned greatly in what I've done. But now, oh Lord, please take away the iniquity of your servant. For I have done very foolishly.

Huh? Look at the book in, in verse 17. Where David says this. Behold, I have sinned and I have done wickedly. The nature of sin.

Foolish. And wicked at the same time. And here David is confessing. Huh? He got what he wanted. The numbers were in.

[21 : 57] And the numbers were significant. He had gotten the tally. Huh? Huh? But he also what he didn't. He got what he didn't bargain for. Conviction.

Big time. Huh? Ever been there? Gotten your way? But of what price? Huh? Begins this particular section and ends with confession.

David's heart was smitten. It was stricken. Huh? That's a good thing. Huh? If you can have your way and do what you want and do your own thing without your heart smiting you, something is not right somewhere.

Huh? Does your heart smite you when you do something foolish? Do you feel guilty? Huh? Oh, you remember John?

We don't talk about John and 1 John much. But he speaks about if your conscience convicts you, God is greater than your heart.

[23 : 06] Huh? Huh? If you can sin without conviction, it's not good. Huh? It doesn't feel good. But ultimately, conviction is healthy, friends.

And what do you do with that conviction? Do you try to squelch it? Do you try to push it down? Do you ignore it? No. Give full vent to it. Come before the Lord with confession and admitting you're wrong and turning away from it.

Huh? Did you notice, though, that confession did not avert the punishment? As the text moved on, the deed was done, but judgment was waiting.

It was just a matter of time. And three choices, huh? Three choices were given through the prophet Gad. Notice what those options were.

Three years of famine. Verse 13, on your land. Three months of fleeing from your enemies as they pursue you. Or three days pestilence or plague, perhaps some kind of disease in your land.

[24 : 12] Now consider and decide what answer I shall return to the one who sent me. Each one of these was noted in the law as a chastisement, a way of discipline upon God's people.

You can look in Leviticus chapter 26 and see where that is given. In fact, let me just read a few verses from that Leviticus 26, 23. And if by this discipline you are not turned to me but walk contrary to me, then I also will walk contrary to you.

And I myself will strike you sevenfold for your sins. And I will bring here to a sword upon you that shall execute vengeance. Notice what? For the covenant, covenant violations.

And if you gather within your cities, I will send. Here it is. Pestilence among you. And you shall be delivered into the hand of your enemy. When I break your supply of bread, there's famine.

Ten women shall break your bread in a single oven and shall dole out your bread again by weight. And you shall eat and not be satisfied. That's famine. How would you like to be faced with those kind of options that David had?

[25 : 26] If you've ever had the occasion to go before a judge, judges are not quite, you know, that prepared in that way. We've got A, B, C, and D.

Now, if you do a plea bargain, that might be something else. But that was not the case here. Judgment was on the way. It's not an easy choice. Each of them was a scourge of God's anger.

And rightly, David says, I'm in distress here. But rightly, he chose not to be put at the mercy of man. How awful.

Man can be. We can be an inflicting pain on each other, on other people. From the atrocities of an Ariel Castro. Who mercilessly held three ladies captives for years.

Or the allegations of cruel chemical weapons being used on innocent people. Or our own cruel insensitive words that we use on one another.

[26 : 31] Man on man. People on people. Can be very, very cruel. But notice what he says. Let me fall in the hands of God. The living God who always does right.

Why? Look at verse 14. For his mercy is great. Daniel knew about it. Oh my God. Incline your ear. Open your eyes.

And see our desolations. And the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness. But because of your great mercy.

The psalmist says. Great is your mercy. Oh Lord. Give me life according to your rules. It's mercy. It's great.

Notice what follows in the text. Judgment did indeed come in the form of pestilence. A God ordered plague comes.

[27 : 27] Again disease. We don't know exactly what it was. But it ravished the nation. 70,000 people. Ah. Yet in the midst of all of this.

In wrath. God remembered mercy. Huh. For verse 16. The text says that the angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem.

And the Lord relented. From the calamity. And spoke to the angel. It's enough. Huh. Here it is.

From this divine heart of mercy. Comes words of mercy. That lead to an act of mercy. On God's part. Huh. Here we are. Have to exercise a divine pity.

A change of heart. A change of mind. A change of direction. That resulted in divine restraint. Destruction could have been much, much worse. Huh. Friends.

[28 : 24] You should never cease. To include. This particular snapshot. Of God. In your understanding. Of who he is. Huh. The living God. Indeed. Is of God of mercy. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Who according to his great mercy. Has caused us to be born again. To a living hope. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Don't lose sight of this aspect of his character.

Don't lose sight of this when you're praying for yourself. Or praying for your loved ones. While he is certainly a God who exercises wrath. Mercy is deeply embedded.

To the character of God. Huh. The God of wrath. Is also a God of mercy. Who's revealed himself through the person and the work of Jesus. This brings us to the last point.

Huh. What about the God of David? It's the God of wrath who sovereignly exercises judgment. He's the God of mercy. Who restrains his wrath. But he's also the God of forgiveness.

[29 : 27] Who responds. To sacrifice. You see that in verses 18 through 25. This week marked the 50th anniversary of the great march on Washington.

And the absolutely superb. I have a dream speech of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. If you haven't read it recently.

Or heard it recently. Listen to it. Listen to it well. It's unparalleled. In its poetic beauty. As well as its content.

One of the things that Dr. King refers to in the speech. Is the actual context. The space. That they had come to. Lincoln Memorial.

And the environs there in Washington D.C. If you've been there. You know what I'm talking about. But this is what he said. We've come to this hallowed spot. To remind America.

- [30 : 26] Of the fierce urgency. Of now. Aruna's threshing floor. In the broader space. That housed it. How is it? Indeed.
- Would become. A hallowed. A sacred. Spot. Because it was there. That a sacrifice. A sacrifice. That averted.
- The plague. Would be offered. Huh? Here. We follow the Lord's. Anointed. Oh. We've been following him. In a lot of different places. But here.
- We follow. The steps. Of the Lord's. Anointing. To the place. Of sacrifice. And. Forgiveness. Huh? How?
- The Lord had restrained the angel. In verse 16. But there was a sense. In which. Things remained incomplete. Look at verse 21. Huh? Aruna said.
- [31 : 20] Why has my Lord the king. Come to his servant. David said. To buy the threshing floor. From you. In order to build an altar. To the Lord. That the plague. May be averted. From. The people. Indeed. The chronicles. Account. Actually. Knows. That the angel. Did not put up his sword. Until after. The sacrifice. Was offered. Aruna.
- Then proposes. To give. The oxen. And the other implements. To David. David. Then uttered. The famous words. That we find. In verse 24. I will not offer.
- Burnt offerings. To the Lord. That cost me nothing. So David. Bought the threshing floor. And the oxen. For 50. Shekels. Of silver. And so.
- The Lord's anointed. Who had already. Interceded. Then. Paid the price. And made the sacrifices. Needed for forgiveness.
- [32 : 18] And restoration. Of covenant fellowship. The Lord responded. Oh I love the way this ends. See it in verse 25. And the plague. Was averted.
- From Israel. Huh. Indeed. Here was a sacrifice. That averted the plague. Note several things about it. It was costly. It was not free.
- A price. Was paid. For the sacrifice. That averted. The plague. It was. Wrath averting. Huh. The plague. Was stopped.
- Huh. The wrath of God. Was restrained. Israel was spared. Here. From further. Casualties. Huh. And do not our minds.
- Then fast forward. To Calvary. Huh. When David's greater son. The Lord Jesus Christ. Offered himself. As a sacrifice. That averts.
- [33 : 16] God's wrath. For all. Who put. Their trust in him. Huh. Oh. The songwriter. Put it well. Mercy. There. Was great. And grace.
- Was free. Pardon. There was multiplied. To me. There. My burdened soul. Found. Liberty. At a. Sacred. Hallowed.
- Place. At Calvary. Huh. Great sacrifice. Without. Without. The shedding. Of blood. Huh. No remission.
- No forgiveness. Huh. So. The. The. The narrator's account. Ends. Huh. David. Great sinner. Great saint.
- Great warrior. Great worshiper. We're reminded. Through his life. That faithful living. Is not. Perfect living. Huh. He's a flawed man.
- [34 : 13] But he's a faithful man. Not only that. But we also notice this. God's forgiveness. Can trump. Our. Foolishness. Our folly.
- Huh. Ah. Because it's at the cross. Where. Folly. And. Forgiveness. Meet. And guess what. Forgiveness wins. Ah.

What a joy it is. Huh. He served God's purposes. For his generation. May we then. As flawed. But forgiven people. Do the same. Huh.

David's resume. Is great. But we learn lessons. From his life. But his resume. Pales. Friends. In view of his great God. Huh. The God and father.

Of our Lord Jesus Christ. The greater son of David. That we love. Honor. And serve. These lessons. Are lessons. That we can take with us. Not just. For summer. But throughout our lives.

[35 : 09] Huh. We are left with reminders. That the God of wrath. Is also the God of mercy. Who spares. And forgives us. Through. The ministry of his son.

His anointed. The Lord Jesus Christ. Huh. To the praise. Of the glory. Of his grace. And may we never forget. And.

We. We. We. We. We. Come. To the table. In view of. And this table. Friends. Helps us. Not to forget. Because. We do need.

A reminder. We need. A reminder. About. The sufficiency. Of God. And not. The sufficiency. Of ourselves. Huh. We need. A reminder. About his sufficiency. Regardless.

Of the things. That we. The trappings. That we have. Around us. In life. Huh. Oh. The songwriter. Again. Puts it. Well. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing. In my hand. I bring.

[36 : 04] Simply. Simply. To. Your cross. I claim. We need. A reminder. May we never. Doubt. The sufficiency. Of God. In all things.

Especially. As it relates. To our eternal. Salvation. So. We come. To the table. That reminds us. Of that. Hallowed. Spot. Where Jesus. Paid the price.

For us. And when we. Come today. May each. Of us. Partake. In. And be. Nourished. And strengthened. To live.

For the God. Of David. Who's made himself. Known. In David's. Greatest son. The Lord. Jesus Christ. We're coming. To the table. And we're so glad. And we're so glad.