

Trust and Obey; There Is No Other Way

Text: II Samuel 24

Key verses: II Samuel 24:24, 25

Our story today starts out very sad and then gets tragic, but it has an excellent ending. In the life of our hero, one would think after all he has been through, all that he has seen, all that his Mighty God has delivered him from, the two things David should be doing extremely well would be obeying and trusting. And yet, in the twilight of the great king's life, in these two areas, he fails miserably. One of the most indelibly embedded songs from my childhood has a chorus that says: "Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey." I believe those words! David's life does illustrate that one never gets to a point that we get beyond the ability to backslide.

1. THE PRESUMPTION

II Samuel 24:1, 2

David prayed earlier in his life, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression" (Psalm 19:13).

David is not obeying. He presumptuously dives headlong into the sin of numbering the people. Let's go back to I Chronicles 21:1: "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." In II Samuel 24:1, the same incident reads, "And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." Job 1:9-12 serves as a commentary explaining what may, at first, appear to be a contradiction, especially in these words in Job 1:12: "And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand...." James 1:13 says, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." Satan, on the other hand, has no problem with temptation; it is the default of his wicked, fallen nature. Temptation was the method that brought the fall of all mankind.

II Samuel 24:1 tells us, "And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel...." Troy Lacey comments on the Lord's anger, "It is not surprising that the anger of the Lord was directed against Israel at this time: there certainly was cause enough for it. They were ungrateful for the blessings of David's government, and strangely drawn in to take part in rebellion against David with Absalom first (II Samuel 15:1-12) and afterwards with Sheba the son of Bichri (II Samuel 20:1-2). The armies of Israel and Judah had constant strife between their commanders, and Joab proved to be a cold-blooded murderer on several occasions (II Samuel 3:27, 18:14, 20:10). We have reason to think that their peace from outside enemies and the prosperity of the land under David's rule had made them secure and sensual, and that God was therefore displeased with them."

Referring to occasions where God allows the temptations and trials inflicted by Satan to work together for His purpose, John Owen says they are like, "the barks of the sheepdog that the shepherd sends after erring sheep. The dog's pursuit makes the sheep ready to listen to the Shepherd's voice."

What was the sin of numbering (taking the census of) Israel? Exodus 30:11-16 gives us insight to the sin. An offering was required for everyone numbered to make atonement and provide soul ransom. Exodus 30:12: "When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when

thou numberest them.” This verse “speaks to God’s ownership of His people. In these ancient cultures, a man only had the right to count or number what belonged to him. Israel didn’t belong to David; Israel belonged to God. It was up to the LORD to command a counting, and if David counted he should only do it at God’s command and should receive ransom money to “atone” for the counting” (David Guzik).

2. THE PRIDE

II Samuel 24:3-4

For once Joab was right. He knew that David was tempting the Lord. Deuteronomy 6:16a: “Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God....” David failed to obey. David also failed in not trusting the Lord. Joab said in II Samuel 24:3, “...now the LORD thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see it: but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing?” Pridefully, David ignored the warning and did not even bother to answer Joab’s question. II Samuel 24:4a: “Notwithstanding the king’s word prevailed against Joab....”

3. THE POLL

II SAMUEL 24:5-9

The results showed that there were 1,300,000 fighting men among the twelve tribes, reflecting an estimated total population of 6 million in Israel. I Chronicles 21:6: “But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them: for the king’s word was abominable to Joab.” Adam Clarke said, “The rabbis give the following reason for this: Joab, seeing that this would bring down destruction upon the people, purposed to save two tribes. Should David ask, Why have you not numbered the Levites? Joab purposed to say, Because the Levites are not reckoned among the children of Israel. Should he ask, Why have you not numbered Benjamin? he would answer, Benjamin has been already sufficiently punished, on account of the treatment of the woman at Gibeah: if, therefore, this tribe were to be again punished, who would remain?”

4. THE PLAGUE

II Samuel 24:10-17

David was smitten with conviction as soon as the census had taken place. He knew he had displeased the Lord. I Chronicles 21:7-8: “And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel. And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.”

This is the only place in the Scriptures where God gives a person a choice concerning the manner of punishment that was to be inflicted. There were three choices: 1) Seven years of famine. 2) Pursued and punished by Israel’s enemies. 3) Three days of pestilence. I think it is easy to see why David chose the three days. “And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the LORD; for very great are His mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man” (I Chronicles 21:13). Exodus 30:12 gave the warning that a plague would follow a census taken without the appropriate ransom given.

5. THE PROPITIATION

II SAMUEL 24:18-24

Leviticus 4:22-24 states that when a ruler sinned, he was required to offer sacrifice. It is interesting to note that since there was no atonement made for David’s unauthorized census, God commanded His prophet Gad to tell David to rear up an altar in the threshingfloor of Araunah for sacrifice. In I Chronicles 21, Araunah is called Ornan.

Ornan is his personal name. Araunah means “the lord.” This is Ornan’s title. Ornan is the king over Jebus, which later became Jerusalem.

A great statement is made in II Samuel 24:24: “And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.” There is a price for sin! David paid silver for the threshingfloor. I Chronicles 21:25 tells us he paid gold for the homestead (place). See I Peter 1:18, 19.

6. THE PLACE

II Samuel 24:25

This was the life goal of David, i.e., to find a permanent place to worship God (Psalm 132:1-5; Acts 7:46, 47). The Lord promised in Deuteronomy 12:10-11 that once the children of Israel got into the Promised Land, He would choose a place for His people to worship Him. II Chronicles 3:1 records: ‘Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.’

Conclusion:

This was the place where Abraham brought Isaac, but the ram took Isaac’s place. This was the place the Temple was raised up and it was the place where Abraham looked to the nearby mount where the Lamb of God would be sacrificed for our sins! John 8:56: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.”

II Samuel 24 is the story of redemption. David sinned. Death followed by a plague. Sacrifice was made. The plague stopped. Peace came (Colossians 1:20).

- Pastor Pope -