

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

2 SAMUEL 21-24

Chronologically, 2 Samuel ends with chapter 20. David's rebellious boy, Absalom, is dead. His coup de'tat thwarted. David is back on the throne.

There's more to come in the story of David... his succession and death. But that's the subject matter for 1 Kings. The last four chapters of 2 Samuel form an appendix to the book that provides a few flashbacks to fill in the record...

2 Samuel 21, "Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, "It is because of Saul and his bloodthirsty house, because he killed the Gibeonites."

David recognizes that sometimes – *not all times, but sometimes* – physical calamity does have a spiritual cause. David senses this is the case, so he asks God about the famine. He's told it's the result of Saul's injustice to the Gibeonites.

Here's what had happened... When Joshua led Israel into Canaan he made a covenant with the Gibeonites. Saul ignored Joshua's covenant and tried to wipe them out. God takes promises seriously - and because Saul didn't - Israel was suffering a 3 year famine. David's duty was to rectify Saul's greedy mistake.

Here are four lessons to be learned from this story...

First, *God takes promises seriously. He expects us to keep our promises.*

Second, *God isn't just serious about individual promises. He cares about promises made by nations.* **Third**, *time does not diminish a person's obligation to keep his or her promise. There is no statute of limitations on a promise made.*

Fourth, *God's correction may come at a time, long after the infraction.*

“So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them. Now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; the children of Israel had sworn protection to them, but Saul had sought to kill them in his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah. Therefore David said to the Gibeonites, "What shall I do for you? And with what shall I make atonement, that you may bless the inheritance of the LORD?" What can I do to make things right. *We want to eat!*

“And the Gibeonites said to him, "We will have no silver or gold from Saul or from his house, nor shall you kill any man in Israel for us."

So he said, "Whatever you say, I will do for you."

Then they answered the king, "As for the man who consumed us and plotted against us, that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the territories of Israel, let seven men of his descendants be delivered to us, and we will hang them before the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, whom the LORD chose." The phrase “before the LORD” implies “with the Lord's approval.” This was no arbitrary execution.

And the king said, "I will give them." The Gibeonites ask to slay 7 of Saul's sons. David no doubt, picks 7 deserving of death, and he turns them over...

“But the king spared Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, because of the LORD's oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul.” David promised to be kind to Jonathan’s sons.

So the king took Armoni and Mephibosheth (another Mephibosheth), the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bore to Saul; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul (the five sons sired by her first husband), whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite; and he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them on the hill before the LORD.” The five sons of Michal were actually David’s stepsons he had hung.

You hope David didn’t have some personal motivation in picking out these five.

“So they fell, all seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, in the beginning of barley harvest.” Or in the spring of the year.

Verse 10 “Now Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it for herself on the rock, from the beginning of harvest until the late rains poured on them from heaven.” The coming of the late rains indicated the famine was over. Retribution had been made and justice had been restored in the land of Israel.

Rizpah, mother of two of the men executed, held a vigil for at least weeks. During that time the bodies of her sons remained unburied and exposed.

This brought further shame on Israel, but it was the

Gibeonite's way to show that the crimes committed against Gibeon by Saul had finally been vindicated.

And for the whole time the bodies lay exposed. Rizpah “**did not allow the birds of the air (the vultures) to rest on them by day nor the beasts of the field by night.**

And David was told what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done.” Her vigilance was admired. It was a show of respect toward Saul's dynasty. It had been chosen of God, and it needed to be given some dignity.

And David started thinking that he too should show Saul the respect a king of Israel deserved... “**Then David went and took the bones of Saul, and the bones of Jonathan his son, from the men of Jabesh Gilead who had stolen them from the street of Beth Shan, where the Philistines had hung them up, after the Philistines had struck down Saul in Gilboa.**” Saul and Jonathan's bones never had a decent burial. Their bodies were cremated, but their bones were buried under a tree at Jabesh. David digs them up and takes them to the family burial site in Benjamin.

“So he brought up the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from there; and they gathered the bones of those who had been hanged. They buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the tomb of Kish his father. So they performed all that the king commanded.” Saul was a king chosen of God, and David was very careful to give him appropriate honor.

“And after that God heeded the prayer for the land.” God blessed David and Israel for tying up these loose ends... *Let*

me ask you, are you missing out on a blessing because of some loose ends you've yet to tie up? Some promises you made, but never kept? Hey, if God brings it to mind - take care of it tonight!

Verse 15 **“When the Philistines were at war again with Israel, David and his servants with him went down and fought against the Philistines; and David grew faint.”** David got dizzy. It happens to us all. His blood sugar was low. You just hope it doesn't happen in battle. David got light-headed, and he was about to collapse.

“Then Ishbi-Benob, who was one of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose bronze spear was 300 shekels...” Ish-Benob was a strong dude. His spearhead weighed 9 pounds. **“who was bearing a new sword, thought he could kill David.”**

But Abishai the son of Zeruiah came to his aid, and struck the Philistine and killed him.” Abishai had David's back. **Then the men of David swore to him, saying, “You shall go out no more with us to battle, lest you quench the lamp of Israel.”**

Let me say David is not the last spiritual leader who became dizzy and weak. Everyone has his moments. That's why we all need a friend watching our back.

After this near miss, David's men insisted that he no longer go to battle. As they put it, **“lest you quench the lamp of Israel...”** Let's not lose our leader.

This insistence could've been what kept David home in 2 Samuel 11, and set him up for his affair with Bathsheba. The irony was that David was far safer in the will of God fighting giants, than he was outside of the will of God, at home idle.

It's been said, "Our greatest enemy is not the giant that comes against us, but the sin that's lurking within us." *Ish-Benob* was nothing compared to *Bathsheba*.

These verses mention several clashes where David and his men end up in combat with giants. *Philistine freaks*. The Hebrew word translated "giant" is "*rephaim*" – it's used in Genesis 6 for the mutant beings before the flood.

When the sons of God – or fallen angels – crossed appropriate boundaries and engaged sexually with the daughters of men – it produced a race of humanoids.

This was why God wiped out the world before the flood. They appeared again in Canaan when Joshua entered the land. This is why God told the Hebrews to take no prisoners - show no mercy - wipe out men, women, and children. God wanted to use Israel to eradicate a demonic pollution of the human race.

And the last place these giants show up was in Philistine country.

Verse 18 "Now it happened afterward that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob. Then Sibbechai the Hushathite killed Saph, who was one of the sons of the giant. Again there was war at Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaare-Oregim the Bethlehemite killed the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam." Note Goliath had a brother.

Evidently, all four of the giants in verses 15-22 were related to Goliath of Gath.

"Gob" is another name for "Gezer" – a town on the border

with the Philistines.

“Yet again there was war at Gath, where there was a man of great stature, who had 6 fingers on each hand and 6 toes on each foot, 24 in number; and he also was born to the giant.”

Here’s a guy who had a hard time shopping for gloves.

Can you imagine walking into Payless Shoes with this kind of a problem?

“So when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea, David's brother, killed him.” Evidently, his extra finger and toe didn’t help him against Jonathan.

Verse 22 “These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants.” 1

Samuel 17 records the famous story of David’s battle with Goliath. You’ll probably remember that when David got to the brook he picked out five smooth stones. *But why five stones?* He only needed one to bring down Goliath. Here we learn why... *Goliath had four brothers.*

David loaded his pouch with enough ammo for the whole family.

Which brings up those 5 smooth stones... Here’s a poem by Samuel Carter:

“Five little pebbles lay in a brook, five little pebbles hid in a nook.

‘*What are we good for?*’ one said to another. ‘*Little or nothing... my brother.*’

Wearing away day after day – it seemed that for ever these pebbles must stay.

If they were flowers ever so gay, surely someone would take them away;

Or if they were big stones that builders could use, some builder those stones would choose. Wait, little pebbles, rounded and clean, long in your loneliness lying unseen, God has a future waiting for you five little pebbles, sturdy and true.

Five little pebbles hid in a brook. David came down and gave them a look,

Picked them up carefully out of the sand: five little pebbles lay in his hand.

Hark! There is fighting today, and boldly these pebbles are borne to the fray:

One stone chosen. Put in a sling. Would we have thought it could take wings?

Onward it sped with a might not its own: onward it sped, by a shepherd boy thrown; swift as an arrow, straight as a dart! For the whole nation that stone did its part, striking the giant's great, terrible head, laying him low – a mighty man dead.

Five little pebbles found in a brook. Mentioned with honor in God's holy Book.

You be a pebble contented and low, ever kept clean by His Spirit's pure flow,

Hidden and ready til Jesus shall look - and choose you, and use you, a stone from the brook." If God can use a pebble to win a victory He can use you and me.

Let me make one more point about all these giant fighters. When Goliath taunted the armies of God there wasn't a man

in Israel willing to take him on.

Everyone was afraid, until a little shepherd boy with a heart of faith showed his fellow Israelis how it was done. David's example of faith lit a fire in Israel.

It's interesting that now this chapter is full of other giant fighters – besides David... Abishai, Shibbechai, Elhanan, Jonathan were also giant killers.

It's been said, "[Courage is contagious.](#)" And so is faith.

Not all the psalms are in the book of Psalms. Chapter 22 is a song of David similar to Psalm 18 - with just a few variations. It was written after David's fugitive years - in response to the many times God had delivered him from his enemies.

"David spoke to the LORD the words of this song, on the day when the LORD had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.

And he said: "The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; the God of my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; my Savior, You save me from violence. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies.

Understand there are many reasons to praise the Lord.... **God promises to inhabit our praises.** The Holy Spirit reveals Himself as we worship... **Warfare is a part of worship.** When we praise the Lord it drives the devil nuts... **Peace and joy come to us when we worship.** The praise of God builds up our faith...

In numerous ways worship benefits and blesses the worshipper...

But the true motive of praise is **God's worthiness to be worshipped!** *His character demands it. His conduct attracts it.* God deserves to be praised!

Verse 5 “When the waves of death surrounded me, the floods of ungodliness made me afraid. The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried out to my God;” Alexander McLaren translates the phrase “cried out” as “shrieked”.

He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry entered His ears.

Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven quaked and were shaken, because He was angry. Smoke went up from His nostrils, and devouring fire from His mouth; coals were kindled by it.”

In verses 10-11 David tells us, “He bowed the heavens also, and came down with darkness under His feet. He rode upon a cherub, and flew; and He was seen upon the wings of the wind.” Don't be afraid of the storm. God rides on the storm. When the storms of life darken the sky, know that God is at work in your life.

“He made darkness canopies around Him, dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. From the brightness before Him coals of fire were kindled. The LORD thundered from heaven, and the Most High uttered His voice. He sent out arrows and scattered them; lightning bolts, and He vanquished

them.”

“Then the channels of the sea were seen, the foundations of the world were uncovered, at the rebuke of the LORD, at the blast of the breath of His nostrils.

He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters.

He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me; for they were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my support. He also brought me out into a broad place... For years David walked narrow ledges in the wilderness with little room for error. But God brought him to a safe place. “He delivered me because He delighted in me.”

“The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me.” Understand, David is not saying that he deserves God’s blessing. That’s he’s right with God by the cleanness of his hands. He’s not talking about righteousness with God – but righteousness with his fellow man. David treated people God’s way.

This was evidenced in how he respected God’s anointed – King Saul – even when Saul wasn’t very respectable. “For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all His judgments were before me; and as for His statutes, I did not depart from them. I was also blameless before Him, and I kept myself from my iniquity. Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in His eyes.”

God responded to David's integrity and faith in his dealings with people.

In verse 28 David makes note of God's dealings in human relationships...

"With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; with a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless; with the pure You will show Yourself pure; and with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd. You will save the humble people; but Your eyes are on the haughty, that You may bring them down.

I love verses 29-30, "For You are my lamp, O LORD; the LORD shall enlighten my darkness. For by You I can run against a troop; by my God I can leap over a wall." God strengthens us with a supernatural *sprint* and a spiritual *spring*!

When you have *the need for speed* – remember with God you can run against a troop. When you *need a pick me up* – with God you can leap over a wall.

Verse 31, "As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the LORD is proven..." If you're tired of opinion and guesswork, pick up your Bible and follow a proven path.

"He is a shield to all who trust in Him. For who is God, except the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God? God is my strength and power, and He makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the feet of deer, and sets me on my high places." He stabilizes my life. With God you can walk a fine

line. He enables you to navigate tricky places without slipping and stumbling. He steadies me.

“He teaches my hands to make war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.” God is no pacifist. There are times when His will is to make war.

And look at verse 36. David tells the Lord, **“You have also given me the shield of salvation; Your gentleness has made me great.”** He mentions God’s gentleness.

You’ll never see a bullwhip in God’s hand. He doesn’t *drive*, He *draws*.

It reminds me of the Israeli tour guide who told his group you’ll never spot a shepherd driving his flock. He leads them. Later the bus passed a man with a stick, beating the sheep. A passenger asked the guide if he’d been mistaken. Here was a man driving his sheep. The guide answered, **“Yes, but that man is a butcher - not a shepherd.”** God is gentle with us. He tenderly nurtures. He lovingly leads.

Verse 37 is also an intriguing passage, **“You enlarged my path under me; so my feet did not slip.”** In other words, God cuts us some slack. Rather than expect perfection His allows us a margin of error. Rather than expect me to toe the line - God is kind enough to just enlarge my path. With God I can slip, and not fall.

Hey, God *wants* you to succeed. He does everything He can to help you.

"I have pursued my enemies and destroyed them; neither did I turn back again till they were destroyed. And I have

destroyed them and wounded them, so that they could not rise; they have fallen under my feet. For You have armed me with strength for the battle; You have subdued under me those who rose against me.

You have also given me the necks of my enemies, so that I destroyed those who hated me. They looked, but there was none to save; even to the LORD, but He did not answer them. Then I beat them as fine as the dust of the earth; I trod them like dirt in the streets, and I spread them out. You have also delivered me from the strivings of my people; You have kept me as the head of the nations.

A people I have not known shall serve me. The foreigners submit to me; as soon as they hear, they obey me. The foreigners fade away, and come frightened from their hideouts." God established David not only as king of Israel – but as a world leader. Foreign nations submitted to his rule, and obeyed his commands.

"The LORD lives! Blessed be my Rock! Let God be exalted, the Rock of my salvation! It is God who avenges me, and subdues the people under me;

He delivers me from my enemies. You also lift me up above those who rise against me; You have delivered me from the violent man. Therefore I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the Gentiles, and sing praises to Your name.

He is the tower of salvation to His king, and shows mercy to His anointed, to David and his descendants forevermore." The last line of the psalm was a reference to 2 Samuel 7 and the Davidic Covenant. God promised David an heir who would reign forever over Israel and establish an eternal

kingdom.

Of course Matthew 1 and Luke 3 identify that heir as Jesus Christ.

2 Samuel 23 begins with David's farewell speech.

"Now these are the last words of David. Thus says David the son of Jesse; thus says the man raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel:" Notice the four ways David identifies himself – **by lineage**, the son of Jesse - **by legacy**, a man God had exalted - **by loyalty**, a leader anointed by God - **and by love...** David's passion was worship. He was a psalmist at heart.

David's name is attached to 73 Psalms. He composed half the Hebrew hymnal.

"The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue.

The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me: 'He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain.'" In other words, a ruler's vision, his direction, his judgments should be clear. They can't be hazy or foggy.

Verse 5 "Although my house is not so with God, yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. For this is all my salvation and all my desire; will He not make it increase? But the sons of rebellion shall all be

as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands.

But the man who touches them must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear, and they shall be utterly burned with fire in their place."

In verses 8-39 David lists his 37 mighty men. And apparently, they're listed in order of prominence... *The first three men are at the head of the class...*

"These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb-Basshebeth the Tachmonite, chief among the captains. He was called Adino the Eznite... Adino means "luxuriousness" Eznite means "the stiff-backed". Perhaps he fought upright and with flair. "He had killed 800 men at one time."

And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo, (that's what they call my boys).

But Eleazar was anything but a dodo. "Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle, and the men of Israel had retreated.

He arose and attacked the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand stuck to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to plunder." Eleazar was so tenacious in battle his hand froze to the grip of his sword. He couldn't pry his fingers off the handle.

We need to remember our chief weapon in the spiritual battle against Satan, sin, and this world - is the sword of the

Spirit, which is the Word of God. We need a good handle on God's Word. Learn the Word... *a vice-grip is needed for victory.*

“And after (Adino and Eleazar) was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite.

The Philistines had gathered together into a troop where there was a piece of ground full of lentils. Then the people fled from the Philistines. But he stationed himself in the middle of the field, defended it, and killed the Philistines.

And the LORD brought about a great victory.” When everyone else ran from the Philistines, Shammah **“stationed himself in the middle of the field, defended it.”** Shammah is the only soccer player in the Bible - *he defended the mid-field.*

A lovely story of loyalty and devotion is told in the next few verses...

“Then three of the thirty chief men went down at harvest time and came to David at the cave of Adullam. And the troop of Philistines encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. And David said with longing, "Oh, that someone would give me a drink of the water from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!"

David is a fugitive. He's held up at the cave of Adullam. He's reminiscing about better times, and remembers the sweet water drawn from the well of Bethlehem.

At the time Bethlehem was occupied by Philistines – off limits to Hebrews.

So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David.” As a statement of love and loyalty to their leader - Adino, Eleazar, and Shammah go to Bethlehem, and bravely slip behind enemy lines – they risk their neck to fill a canteen of water from the sweet-sipping well – *just for David*.

When they return with the water he'd been craving, he's stunned. He can't believe such a lavish display of devotion and dedication would be shown him.

He's not worthy to gulp down water won by such sacrifice.

“Nevertheless he would not drink it, but poured it out to the LORD.” David poured out the water as a libation to the Lord – or a liquid sacrifice. Only the Lord deserved that kind of unflinching loyalty and sacrificial love.

“And he said, "Far be it from me, O LORD, that I should do this! Is this not the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?" Therefore he would not drink it.” I love this story because it proves a vital point - *real love is lavish*.

It goes to extravagant lengths to express itself. When was the last time you did a crazy thing for God just to show Him how much you love Him?

Hey, give an offering you can't afford... Spend an hour accomplishing nothing - just praise the Lord... Take a risk to share your faith... Go out of your way to help a person who'll never be able to pay you back... Real love goes to extremes...

Verse 17 closes, “These things were done by the three mighty men.”

Verse 18 starts the next group - “Now Abishai the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief of another three. He lifted his spear against 300 men, killed them, and won a name among these three. Was he not the most honored of three? Therefore he became their captain. However, he did not attain to the first three.”

Benaiah was the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man from Kabzeel, who had done many deeds. He had killed two lion-like heroes of Moab.” Brave men.

“He also had gone down and killed a lion in the midst of a pit on a snowy day.

And he killed an Egyptian, a spectacular man. The Egyptian had a spear in his hand; so he went down to him with a staff, wrested the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his own spear.” Benaiah *a-nile-a-lated* the Egyptian.

“These things Benaiah the son of Jehoiada did, and won a name among three mighty men. He was more honored than the 30, but he did not attain to the first three. And David appointed him over his guard.” ... the king’s chief bodyguard.

“Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem, Shammah the Harodite, Elikah the Harodite, Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite, Abiezer the Anathothite, Mebunnai the Hushathite, Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite, Heleb the son of Baanah (the Netophathite), Ittai the son of Ribai from Gibeah of the children of Benjamin...

And I am really taking a risk with this chapter. If I

mispronounce one of these names, and anger its owner I could be in big trouble when I get to heaven.

These are not the type of fellows you want to upset... If we get to heaven and you see me getting beat-up. Grab David and tell him to get his mighty men off me.

“Benaiah a Pirathonite, Hiddai from the brooks of Gaash, Abi-Albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite, Eliahba the Shaalbonite (of the sons of Jashen), Jonathan, Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Hararite,

Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maachathite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite,” Ahithophel was Absalom’s chief counselor, but his son was one of David’s mighty men. “Hezrai the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite, Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite, Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite (armorbearer of Joab the son of Zeruah), Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite,” And notice the final name in verse 39, “Uriah the Hittite: 37 in all”.

Chapter 24 records another of David’s sins. Verse 1, “Again the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, “Go, number Israel and Judah.” Ancient kings - like pastors today – liked to use the size of their congregation as a reason to boast. That’s why David ordered a census.

Now, there’s nothing wrong with a census per se’...

In Numbers 1 and 24 Moses counted the people of Israel.

In the New Testament we know 3000 people were saved at Pentecost. Someone had to count them. Counting in and of itself is not evil.

What made this census wrong was David's haughty attitude. Counting implies ownership - and it should always be done cautiously - only for a legitimate purpose.

"So the king said to Joab the commander of the army who was with him, "Now go throughout all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba (north to south), and count the people, that I may know the number of the people."

And Joab said to the king, "Now may the LORD your God add to the people a hundred times more than there are, and may the eyes of my lord the king see it. But why does my lord the king desire this thing?" Joab wants a practical reason for the census. In reality, the king's only real reason was to inflate his own ego.

Joab must've sensed that was David's motivation and reluctantly obeyed.

"Nevertheless the king's word prevailed against Joab and against the captains of the army. Therefore Joab and the captains of the army went out from the presence of the king to count the people of Israel." They're gone 10 months.

"And they crossed over the Jordan and camped in Aroer, on the right side of the town which is in the midst of the ravine of Gad, and toward Jazer.

Then they came to Gilead and to the land of Tahtim Hodshi; they came to Dan Jaan and around to Sidon; and they came to the stronghold of Tyre and to all the cities of the Hivites and the Canaanites. Then they went out to South Judah as far as Beersheba. So when they had gone through all the land,

they came to Jerusalem at the end of 9 months and 20 days.”
Verse 9, Then Joab gave the sum of the number of the people to the king. And there were in Israel 800,000 valiant men who drew the sword, and the men of Judah were 500,000 men.”

The number of men Moses counted when he led Israel out of Egypt was 603,550. Now, 600 years later the number has swelled to 1.3 million - the population had doubled. With women and children... maybe 4 million...

Verse 10 “And David's heart condemned him after he had numbered the people.” David knew in his heart his motive had been wrong. Though the census may've had a few practical benefits its primary motivation was the king's pride.

David knows he's wrong and asks for God's forgiveness. “So David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done; but now, I pray, O LORD, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly.”

Now when David arose in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, "Go and tell David, 'Thus says the LORD: "I offer you three things; choose one of them for yourself, that I may do it to you.”

God forgives David, but he still has to be disciplined for his foolishness. But God takes an unprecedented step. *He lets David pick his own punishment.*

David can pick his own poison. God gives him three options...

“So Gad came to David and told him; and he said to him,

"Shall 7 years of famine come to you in your land? Or shall you flee 3 months before your enemies, while they pursue you? Or shall there be 3 days' plague in your land? Now consider and see what answer I should take back to Him who sent me."

David may've thought... **Famine?** Been there, done that for 3 years. **On the run from my enemies?** Wo, been there, done that... for 15 years. Had enough of that... **Three days of plague** – Well, it's the only option I haven't already tried.

When I was in High School I got sent to the principal for fighting, and he gave me 3 choices – 100 laps around the baseball field - a 3-day suspension - or 3 licks with a paddle. I took David's approach. I took the three licks. I wanted to get the punishment over with as soon as possible. *David takes the three days...*

"And David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man." David is sure of one truth - God is far more merciful than wicked men.

"So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel from the morning till the appointed time. From Dan to Beersheba 70,000 men of the people died." A heavy price was paid for a prideful, haughty spirit. Humility is a virtue we need to cultivate.

"And when the angel stretched out His hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented from the destruction, and said to the angel who was destroying the people, "It is enough; now restrain your hand." Thankfully, it was over.

“And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

Then David spoke to the LORD when he saw the angel who was striking the people, and said, "Surely I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand, I pray, be against me and against my father's house." Notice, God never answered his question.

And get use to it... Often we ask the same question, “God, why does the innocent person suffer?” God is not obligated to provide us an explanation.

Verse 18 “And Gad came that day to David and said to him, "Go up, erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." This threshing floor was above David's palace – it was north of Jerusalem – the old city of David.

So David, according to the word of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded.

Now Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming toward him. So Araunah went out and bowed before the king with his face to the ground.

Then Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?"

And David said, "To buy the threshing floor from you, to build an altar to the LORD, that the plague may be withdrawn from the people." Now Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take and offer up whatever seems good to him.

Look, here are oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing implements and the yokes of the oxen for wood. All these, O

king, Araunah has given to the king."

And Araunah said to the king, "May the LORD your God accept you."

Then the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing." Araunah offers to donate the plot of ground to the king – and even animals needed for sacrifice - but David refuses to offer a cheap sacrifice...

As he puts it, "that which costs me nothing."

I wonder how often we've served the Lord with our scraps and leftovers - rather than reserving for Him our best, and most costly... We give Him leftovers of our time, our money, our energy... Is your gift to God rushed – cheap - sloppy?

Doesn't God deserve the best we can muster?

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 heeded the prayers for the land, and the plague was withdrawn from Israel." Remember this plot of land. It was on the mountain just north of the city of David - outside the walls of Jerusalem - on Mount Moriah.

This was near the spot Abraham had offered Isaac as a sacrifice – and it will become the location on which God chooses to build His Temple in Jerusalem.

David paid just 50 shekels for Araunah's threshing floor. I'm

sure he didn't realize the land he'd bought would one day become the planet's most expensive piece of real estate. This is where Solomon constructs the Temple – where God's glory resides for the next 500 years. It becomes the focus of heaven and earth.

Even today Araunah's threshing floor is Jerusalem's centerpiece. We call it the Temple Mount. One day Jesus will rule the universe from this exact spot.