

David at the threshing floor

Description

1 Chronicles 21 and 2 Samuel 24

This story of David on the threshing floor of Ornan is recorded twice in scripture and I believe it holds some deep spiritual truths if we are to be determined to live a life that honours God.

The first point I want to make is that David, we read, was a "man after God's own heart" • Acts 13:22. He was a man, who despite all his failings, only longed for and pursued God.

Here in 1 Chronicles 21 and 2 Samuel 24 we have a story that shows us that even though our intentions may be good our actions can determine a course that can be to the detriment of many and can cause great sorrow, not just to those around us but also to our own lives and ultimately to our own spiritual detriment and if left unheeded will leave us in a place that lacks the fullness of God in our lives. What we will learn is that unless we come onto God's appointed ground with absolute and undeniable repentance there can be and will not be any real hope.

So let's begin, David had been enjoying great success in his kingdom, God had been with him in battles and the enemies of Israel and ultimately God, (the Jews being God's chosen people on earth for Him to be made manifest), were being put to flight. I think it is important for me to say at this point that I do not condone wars and I do not believe that "holy wars" are ever God's intention. God's intention is always to bring His people out of bondage into freedom, which is always spiritual and sometimes physical. If we read our bible carefully and in context we find that God was with the children of Israel in order for them to be the example and to serve as an illustration of His plan of salvation which He always intends for the whole world. The Jews were God's chosen people in order for Him to work out His plan of salvation for the whole world.

The first thing to note is that both passages start with "AND" denoting that these chapters are a continuation of a story not a new one or an isolated one. We have recorded in the preceding chapters snippets of God's greatness toward David who God used to stabilise Israel. In 2 Samuel 23 we can read that David acknowledged that it was God who was supreme and in 1 Chronicles 19-20, although it was ruthless, the children of Israel were very much kept by Almighty God. In 1 Chronicles 19:13 Joab, the

seer, said "let the Lord do that which is good in His sight" showing complete trust in an almighty God. These wars and killings were all about survival not about greed or wealth or land, they were purely about God's people claiming freedom from oppression in order for them to be able to prove that their God was a living and vibrant God who delighted in granting His people a life that glorified Him. And so it is today, God wants you and I to slay sin in order that He can free us from oppression and glorify Him. His worked out plan of salvation is for all to enjoy and for all to experience by faith.

So back to our story after a little explanation of "AND".

We are told that "Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number Israel" 1 Chronicles 21:1 and in 2 Samuel 24:1 "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel and he moved David against them to say Go number Israel and Judah".

Why was it such a bad thing to know how many subjects you have? The answer is two fold:-

The promise that God gave to Abraham was that his descendants would be as many as the dust of the earth, in other words they cannot be numbered.

When a king or ruler sets out to number their subjects it is always to bring about control and checks in order for them to be able to rule and exhort tax. It is a means of control. So to number Israel and Judah were, in effect, to limit God and so make void His promise to Abraham.

The moment that David recognised or to be more precise the moment when God convicted David of his "sin", David acknowledges by saying "I have done a foolish thing" 1 Chronicles 21:8 or "I have done a foolish thing" 2 Samuel 24:10. If at any time we feel or experience conviction of wrong it is always of God and we would do well to heed to the conviction because, rest assured, God wants to work a wonderful work of grace in our lives and He can only do that if we recognise and repent of the sin.

As we continue to read we find in the next verse 1 Chronicles 21:9 and 2 Samuel 24:11 that God mobilises the seer or prophet Gad to confront David with three choices. What is important here is that true repentance will always have a cost and in this story the cost was that of human life on account of David's "sin", actually if we read the story carefully we find that God was displeased with the nation of Israel and David was the instrument that God chose to use to bring them to their knees. God always works through spiritual leadership in order to bring about His plan of repentance so that the whole company can participate in His plan of the reversal of the consequence of sin in order that His created beings be renewed and re-aligned to His original plan of companions and worshippers. Human life that was created in the image and likeness of invisible God.

What is interesting is that Gad, the seer, gave David three choices that were all costly to the nation of Israel and would result in death. David, although asked to choose one option, declined and chose none of them but instead said "let me fall into the hands of the Lord for His mercy is very great". It is always better to let God decide our fate because His mercy endures, He is a just and fair God.

A plague is duly sent and 70000 people die and David helplessly watches as people and families suffer because of his sin. We read that the anger and wrath of God were so great that the almighty sent an angel of death to destroy Jerusalem, the very heart and power house of David's kingdom. Note unless God deals with the heart there can never be renewal. But we read "God relented" and caused the angel to stay the execution and we read he stopped over the threshing floor of Ornan, between heaven and earth.

David recognises it is he who has sinned and pleads with God to hold him accountable, notice here also that the leaders and elders are also identifying with David and had put on sackcloth and join him in being prostrate on their knees before almighty God. We all have to recognise and own up to our sin and we read that David is now talking directly with God 1 Chronicles 21:17. Basically what David was saying was this is all my doing let me bear the consequences of my actions. This is an important lesson for all of us because, whilst Christ died once for all sin, individually we have to recognise that we have sinned or strayed and return to God with a heart that is ready to receive God's forgiveness we can never fully enter into all that God has for us. Life is a life given by God for us to enjoy His creation for this season of eternity, let's not waste it.

David acknowledges and his subsequent demonstration of prostrate worship led him to the inherent need within him to build an altar, a memorial, a place of remembrance. It is important to lay down memorials in our lives when God intervenes in our lives so we never forget, with the passing of time, what lessons we learnt and more importantly, what God has done in our lives when we have acknowledged Him to be Lord of our lives. We have to be willing to move onto God's appointed ground. In our story David moved onto the appointed place of a threshing floor, I am sure David felt that he had been threshed and left useless, but the necessity of threshing wheat or corn is a necessary process in order to separate the life of the grain from the deadness of the stalk.

The point of this part of the story is that we all need to move onto God's appointed ground in order for us to be able to offer the acceptable sacrifice and honourable worship. When we, like David, recognise that we have strayed and sinned against Almighty God there has to be this inner spiritual working of God where He leads us into His appointed ground of repentance. True repentance will always cost us, the work of repentance always requires us to accept and acknowledge our part in the redemptive

work of salvation. Even though “Christ died once for all” we must be willing to identify and recognise the cost of repentance.

David insists that he is to purchase the site, the threshing floor, in order for him to appropriately offer his sacrifice and worship in order for the Lord to stay the execution. Note here that Ornan was prepared to give the site and the oxen for the sacrifice but David insists that he is to purchase it by saying in 1 Chronicles 21:24 “I will not take for the Lord what is yours, nor offer burnt offerings that cost me nothing”. In exactly the same way our repentance will always have a cost and unless we are prepared to make that purchase and come onto God’s appointed place for us in order for us to offer a sacrifice and worship Him as He desires us too then we will never be able to possess all that He has for us in life. He created us to worship and live a life that glorifies Him, a life that is made possible through faith in Him, a life that has been set free from the bondage and slavery to sin to a life that enjoys abundance and freedom. A life that is made possible by a God who is overall and in all.

Are we prepared to acknowledge our failings, come onto God’s appointed ground, however hard and costly that might be, in order for us to be cleansed and purified so that our lives honour and give glory to God? Wouldn’t it be wonderful if a writer like Dr Luke could write of us “They were men and women after God’s own heart”.

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Category

1. Characters
2. David

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