

The Fire Within

2 Samuel 24:1-25

March 7, 2010

Intro

Late in David's life he decided that he wanted to number the people of Israel. In other words, he wanted a census to be taken. No specific reason was given for David's desire to count the people, but as we study through this chapter, the reasons become clear.

There is some question as to who incited David to do this. From reading both this account and a parallel account found in first Chronicles, we understand that the anger of the Lord burned against Israel and that Satan incited, or tempted David to take this census.

We also know that Joab, the commander of the army who was with him, tried to change David's mind with very strong words. Apparently, the other commanders of the army also tried to convince David not to do this thing. But David went against all counsel and insisted on getting his way. He wanted the census taken and he would not change his mind.

By the time David had become an older man, Israel had become a strong and successful nation. In fact, other nations around Israel were paying tribute to David in recognition of his superiority over them. No foreign armies had been able to defeat Israel with David as their king.

But just how successful had David become? Just how powerful were David's forces? There would be only one way to know; take a census and find out. David here wasn't looking to declare how great God was, this one was all about David.

Had David lost some of his faith in his older years? Was he beginning to rely on himself rather than God? Before David would die, they would be one final revival in David's heart.

I. In God Alone We Must Trust

- 1 When Joab returned from taking the census and gave the number of the people to the king, David's heart troubled him and he knew he had done the wrong thing.
- 2 I like the King James here because it says that David's heart smote him. That's a powerful picture of a man who is being convicted in his heart.
- 3 "I have sinned greatly in what I have done," David said to the Lord. What was David beginning to understand?

A. Let God be your security

- 4 When David ordered that this census be taken, it was an indication that something had changed in David.

- 5 Here was a man of self-sufficiency. He had become successful. No foreign army had been able to prevail against them. He had put down two different attempts to overthrow him. And now there was peace and security in his old age.
- 6 But as soon as the number came back to David's ears, he knew he had done wrong. He had an army 1.3 million valiant men strong. That was an awesome fighting force! But perhaps he could then see that he was becoming like some of the strong men that he had defeated.
- 7 Perhaps some of David's own words came back to him at that moment...

Psalm 20:7, Some boast in chariots and some in horses, but we will boast in the name of the Lord our God.

Psalm 32:7, You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance.

Psalm 3:5-6, I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustains me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me round about.

- 1 The question of where we place our trust is an essential question to faith. It's easy to misplace your faith both when you are old and when you're young...

App - When your old your security can be in the stuff that you collected over all those years, or in the bank account, or the retirement account, or in Social Security, or in Medicare.

Illus - Perhaps you remember the story of the old man who didn't trust banks and so he stuffed all his money in his mattress. But then on his deathbed he asked his wife to put all his money with him in his coffin...

Illus - When you're young your security can be in your youth itself. Your future is before you. You have time on your side and you have the strength of youth on your side.

- 2 But this is what set David apart from other men even when David was young. He wasn't like other young men.

1 Samuel 17:46-47, "This day the Lord will deliver you up into my hands... that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the Lord's and

He will give you into our hands.”

B. Leave faith as your legacy

- 1 In that day and in that culture, taking a census would have sent ripples of fear throughout the nation. A king would not want to number the fighting men of a nation unless he was preparing for a massive war.
- 2 This would have been very disturbing to the very people David was asked to shepherd. They knew that a large campaign of war would bring destruction, serious loss of life, and terrible hardship.
- 3 Is this what David would leave them with? If it became known that the reason David wanted to number the people so that he could know how strong he was, wouldn't they say of him, "Where is the David of old?"
- 4 What do we leave our children? If we leave them only material things, then we have left them nothing at all.
- 5 We need to leave a legacy of faith. When David was 17 he didn't rely on the strength of an army. This is the same David who faced the great challenges of his life by relying on the strength of God.
- 6 He had confronted both a bear and a lion that attacked the sheep he was watching. He took on Goliath with the strength of his faith, and then by faith he faced Saul and then the entire Philistine army.
- 7 This is the same David who took the renegade men of Israel; men who were indebted, bitter of soul, and everyone who was in distress, and made them into the mighty men of Israel.
- 8 Faith is the best legacy to leave our children because faith is the crisis of our day even now.

Luke 18:8, “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”

C. When you fail, get up and run to the Lord

- 9 David was called a man after God's own heart. Clearly, this wasn't because David never sinned. We have already seen many times when David fell short of what God wanted.
- 10 One of the ways you see David's heart is right here, first, because his heart was troubled within him. That's a very good thing when that happens.
- 11 It means that it matters to you when you let God down.

Illus – I remember that one of my first sermons was so terrible that I took Jordi into another room and cried my heart out. Later a friend said, “But that means that it mattered to you! God will bless that.”

- 1 Some people are so hard of heart that they can sin without even the slightest tinge on the conscience.

1 Timothy 4:2, ...having their conscience seared as with a hot iron.”

- 2 Maybe David has learned something from what happened with Bathsheba. Back then, he tried to hide his sin both from God and from people. But now, things are very different.

Psalm 32:3-4, When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;

- 3 God then gave David three choices, which is interesting of itself.

Illus – We used to ask our girls to choose their consequences and they were always harder on themselves than we were.

- 4 David wisely chose the one which would put him directly under the mercy of God.
- 5 That’s one of the things we have to love about David here, he knew how to be submitted to the Lord.

Hebrews 12:5, My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;

Illus – When David was fleeing Jerusalem he also submitted then to the Lord, accepting what God was doing in his life with the right heart. Remember Shimei? David received his rebuke as God allowing it and he submitted to God with a humble heart.

Illus – It’s always discouraging when you see someone getting disciplined from the Lord or even from someone else and then having a hard and bitter heart about it.

II. Come Back to Your First Love

- 1 The Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning until the time it ended. It would seem that from reading the text that this lasted less than one day. David was right to choose the mercy of the Lord.
- 2 And then the prophet Gad came to David and said to him, "Go up, and erect an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah."

- 3 From the book of first Chronicles we know that when David did this, fire came from heaven upon the altar of sacrifice that David offered to God.

A. Offer God that which is most valuable – your heart

- 1 When David came to Araunah and told him that he desired to have the threshing floor so he could build an altar to the Lord, Araunah offered it to him for free.
- 2 No doubt, a lot of people would have been tempted by the offer. But here again is where we see David being a man after God's own heart, because he responded, "I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God which cost me nothing."
- 3 In other words, "I will not offer another man's sacrifice; that which cost me nothing."
- 4 A consecration offering is to represent his whole heart and his whole life. "You withheld nothing to save me, how could I withhold anything from you?"
- 5 No one can serve God for you and no one can worship God in your place. You can't rely on the faith of your spouse or your children; God wants you to trust in Him with your whole life.
- 6 David is coming back to the Lord. You can almost hear him say, *I want the security of just trusting you again.*

B. We need the holy fire again

- 7 There are so many scriptures that tell us that what God wants is for us to return to our first love; that's Him; that we should be a living sacrifice.

Romans 12:1, Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

- 8 If you were to ask David what it was like when he met Goliath that day, or when he was crowned king, or when the ark came into Jerusalem, I am convinced that he would say that it was nothing in comparison to the moment he came back to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah and he fell to his knees and fire fell from heaven. We need holy fire in our lives.

Illus – "Lead me to the cross where your loved poured out."