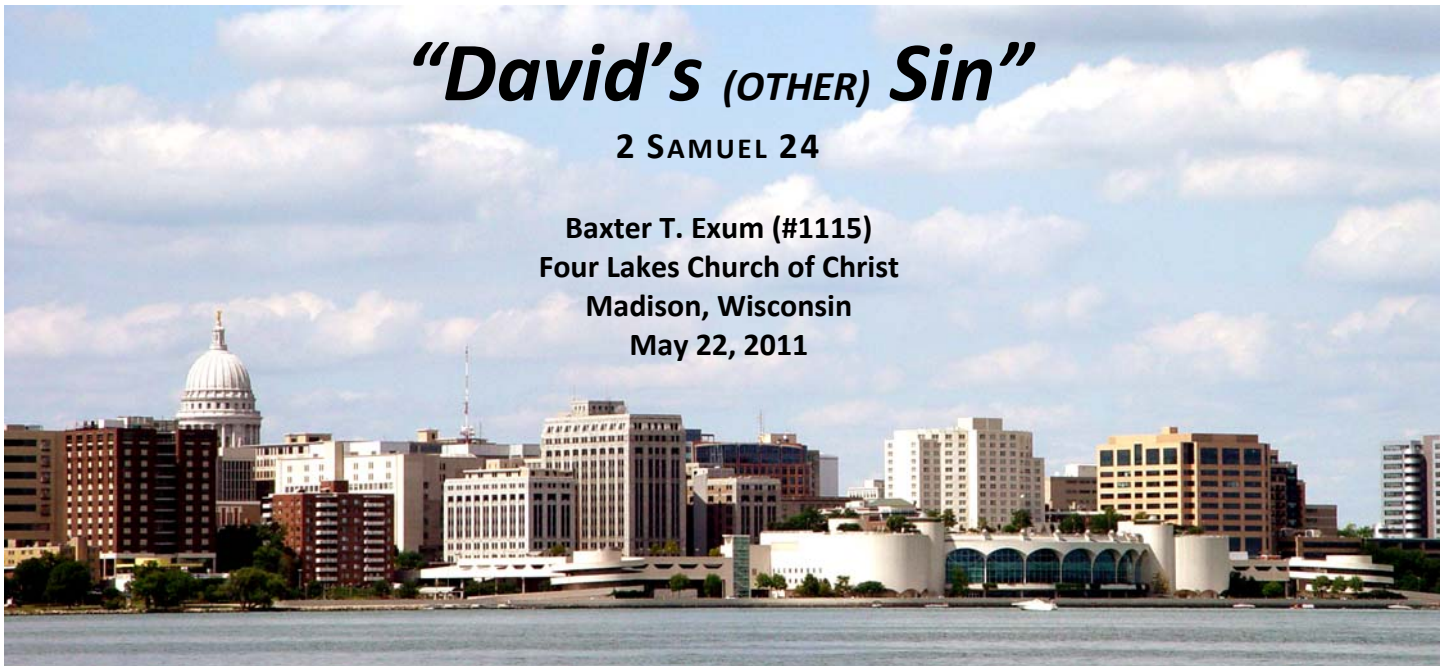


“David’s (OTHER) Sin”

2 SAMUEL 24

**Baxter T. Exum (#1115)
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The longer we live, the more blessings we receive. The longer we live, the more opportunities we have to be thankful. The longer we live, the more experience and wisdom we gain. However, it is also true that the longer we live, the more we need to be forgiven. Of course, I would love to say that age guarantees some level of spiritual maturity, some level of spiritual perfection. I would love to say that as we grow older we automatically grow closer to God, that we automatically grow up, that we eventually outgrow sin, that we grow immune to sin over time, and yet we know that that is not the case. Over time, we make mistakes, we sin, we hurt people, and we need forgiveness. The longer we live, the more we need to be forgiven.

This morning I would like for us to study this basic idea in the life of King David as we study one of David's greatest sins. Of course, when most of us think of David sinning, we think of the sin with Bathsheba, as David abused his power, committed the sin of adultery, and then tried to cover it all up by having the husband murdered. We know from the scriptures that David, his family, and the nation all suffered greatly for that sin. However, many people do not know that David committed another sin later in his life, a sin that was much worse in terms of the consequences, much worse in terms of the number of people who died.

The account of this sin is found in 2 Samuel 24 (p. 536). Not only is this one of the most destructive things that King David ever did, but it is also one of the last things he ever did. By the time we get to 2 Samuel 24, David is an old man. He has been on the throne for close to 40 years. 2 Samuel 24 is the last chapter in 2 Samuel. When we move over into the book of 1 Kings, all we have is basically the death of King David, so this is it, the final act of King David's life.

I. If you will, then, let us please look at the opening paragraph—2 Samuel 24:1-9—as we discover THE CRIME, THE ACT OF REBELLION, THE SIN THAT LEADS TO THE FINAL SCENE IN KING DAVID'S LIFE.

Let us please look at 2 Samuel 24:1-9,

¹ Now again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and it incited David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah." ² The king said to Joab the commander of the army who was with him, "Go about now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, and register the people, that I may know the number of the people." ³ But Joab said to the king,

"Now 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; but why does my lord the king delight in this thing?"⁴ Nevertheless, the king's word prevailed against Joab and against the commanders of the army. So Joab and the commanders of the army went out from the presence of the king to register the people of Israel.⁵ They crossed the Jordan and camped in Aroer, on the right side of the city that is in the middle of the valley of Gad and toward Jazer.⁶ Then they came to Gilead and to the land of Tahtim-hodshi, and they came to Dan-jaan and around to Sidon,⁷ and came to the fortress of Tyre and to all the cities of the Hivites and of the Canaanites, and they went out to the south of Judah, to Beersheba.⁸ So when they had gone about through the whole land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days.⁹ And Joab gave the number of the registration of the people to the king; and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men who drew the sword, and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.

As we look back at this paragraph, we discover that God was very angry. But is interesting to me that God was angry before the census ever began. In verse 1, we find that the ***"anger of the Lord burned against Israel."*** The word ***"anger"*** goes back to the Hebrew word for "nose," and so we have the idea that God's nose was burning. I'm kind of thinking about that feeling you get right before you sneeze. That's not very pleasant, is it? The burning, the frustration, the tension is building! And that's the kind of feeling that God has here. And we find that this burning anger incited David to number the people. Now, this is pretty strange, because in the parallel account in 1 Chronicles 21, the text says that ***"Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number the people."*** I am not really sure how to handle this other than to suggest the possibility that this is something that God allowed Satan to do. God was angry with the people, and so perhaps the Lord then allowed Satan give King David a little nudge in a particular direction.

But regardless of the reason behind it, we find in verse 2 that David ordered the commander of his army to take a census of the people. But this was not a census as most of us might think of it. The first census in our own nation took place in 1790 and took 217 people 9 months to complete. In 1790, they came up with a total population of 3.9 million people, and a similar count has been taken every ten years since then, with the most recent census taking place just this last year, coming up with a total of just under 309 million people. As most of us know, the census is called for in our constitution. It is used primarily to determine congressional districts and is also used to determine federal funding.

But as you can imagine, David's census was different—this was not a matter of counting the children so that he could build better schools. But rather, we find that David called on his top military commander to number the men who were able to bear the sword. It was a military census, and the Bible tells us that they came up with 1.3 million men who were able to fight. Now, we need to understand that taking a census was not necessarily wrong—Moses had done it twice, Saul had done it, and even David had done it once before; however, something is missing here. Way back in Exodus 30, God had said that whenever a census was taken, each person counted was to give half a shekel as a ransom (as a contribution) to the Lord. But we have no record of this being done in 2 Samuel 24. That's the first problem.

There is something else that just doesn't seem right in this passage, and it has to do with the motivation behind it. David is coming off a long series of military victories. At this point in the history of Israel, things were going pretty well, we do not read about any upcoming military struggles or challenges, and so there is no obvious reason for numbering the military. Some have suggested, then, that David was doing this for his own good, perhaps so that he could brag about the numbers, perhaps so that King David could boast in his

position. In light of all of God's blessings, perhaps David's pride got the best of him. As someone has said, "Sometimes it is more difficult to carry a full cup than an empty cup." In other words, sometimes we do well, and the success makes life more difficult. Sometimes the blessings themselves end up as a temptation, a temptation to trust in our own wisdom. We remember what Solomon, David's son, said in Proverbs 30:8-9, ***"Keep deception and lies far from me, give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is my portion, that I not be full and deny You and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or that I not be in want and steal, and profane the name of my God."*** Success, therefore, can sometimes go to our heads.

And yet whatever the reason, it appears that King David had lost his trust in God—he allowed his pride, or worries, or whatever, to overrule not only what he knew was right, but also the best judgment of his most trusted advisors. And so stubbornly, then, David insisted that the census continue until it was done, for more than nine months. Think about that! Nine months—that's a long time to be distracted, that's a long time to have your most trusted military advisors tied up in what is basically an unnecessary distraction. And besides, David should have known that in Israel, warriors do not win battles, God wins battles! And in verse 3, Joab understands this, ***"Now 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; but why does my lord the king delight in this thing?"*** Even Joab knew that God was ultimately responsible for the growth and safety of the kingdom. Joab understood what God would go on to say later in Isaiah 31:1, ***"Woe to those who...rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the LORD!"*** David, however, apparently forgot all of this and ordered a census of the military, and I would imagine that David's pride was reflected in most of the people of Israel, and that is what made God so angry—many in Israel had forgotten what the Lord had done, many in Israel were putting their trust in numbers instead of in the Lord.

II. **Now that we have looked at the problem, let's keep moving as we look at WHAT HAPPENS AS A RESULT OF WHAT KING DAVID HAS DONE, or, as it says up here, let us look at the CONSEQUENCES.**

Let us please look at verses 10-17,

¹⁰ Now David's heart troubled him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O LORD, please take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have acted very foolishly."¹¹ When David arose in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying,¹² "Go and speak to David, 'Thus the LORD says, "I am offering you three things; choose for yourself one of them, which I will do to you.'"¹³ So Gad came to David and told him, and said to him, "Shall seven 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 see what answer I shall return to Him who sent me."¹⁴ Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Let us now fall into the hand of the LORD for His mercies are great, but do not let me fall into the hand of man."¹⁵ So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning until the appointed time, and seventy thousand men of the people from Dan to Beersheba died.¹⁶ When the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented from the calamity and said to the angel who destroyed the people, "It is enough! Now relax your hand!" And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.¹⁷ Then David spoke to the LORD when he saw the angel who was striking down the people, and said, "Behold, it is I who have sinned, and it is I who have done

wrong; but these sheep, what have they done? Please let Your hand be against me and against my father's house."

And with this, we find that David has a change of heart. According to verse 10, ***"David's heart troubled him,"*** and his heart was so troubled that David said to the Lord, ***"I have sinned greatly in what I have done."*** David, therefore, realized that what he had done was a sin. This is huge! This is the first step towards forgiveness. Of course, these days most people would rather not say ***"I have sinned."*** If we are bothered by something we have done in the past, most people around us would rather go to the doctor and get a pill to help them sleep through the night. Most people would much rather deal with the symptoms. Many people would rather just "suck it up" and plow forward as if no sin had ever happened. But if we are talking about a sin, if we are talking about something we have done, the first step is to admit that what we have done is, in fact, a sin. And that's what David did. David's heart was troubled, so he went to God and made the confession that he had sinned.

But wait a minute! David confesses, and then God gives him three terrible choices concerning a punishment! I thought confession makes everything alright! But apparently not! Apparently there can still be consequences even after we admit that what we've done is a sin. Confession does not erase the consequences. Confession does not undo the pain that we have caused to another person. Confession does not erase the heartache that came from telling a lie to a good friend. Confession does not heal the children after a painful divorce. Confession is necessary for forgiveness, but sin still has consequences. I have said before: What a different world it would be if we had to pay the price for sin before we're allowed to do it. When you think about it, we are working on the credit system right now. We sin, and then we pay the price later. But you know, hell is described as a place of torment. It is described as a lake of fire. What if we had a candle up here, and what if we had to put our finger in the flame of that candle for five minutes before being allowed to tell a lie? How many lies would be told? What if we had to pay for our sins now instead of later? Nevertheless, King David admitted that he had sinned, but things were not yet right between David and God. God, therefore, sent the prophet, and David then had to choose a punishment. David begged for God's mercy, and God sent an angel with some kind of plague, but limited the scope of the plague so that only 70,000 people died.

At that point, God steps in and stops the angel right as the angel gets to the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. And with this tension in the air, David begs God and basically says, "Dear Lord, punish me! I am the one who committed the sin, but please, do not punish the sheep for the sin of the shepherd, do not punish the nation for the sin of the king." David, therefore, finally understands that his sin has had some terrible consequences.

III. And with that, we come to the final paragraph as we see that GOD DEMANDS A SACRIFICE.

Let us all please look together at verses 18-25,

¹⁸ So Gad came to David that day and said to him, "Go up, erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." ¹⁹ David went up according to the word of Gad, just as the LORD had commanded. ²⁰ Araunah looked down and saw the king and his servants crossing over toward him; and Araunah went out and bowed his face to the ground before the king. ²¹ Then Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?" And David said, "To buy the threshing floor from you, in order to build an altar to the LORD, that the plague may be held back from the people." ²² Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king

take and offer up what is good in his sight. Look, the oxen for the burnt offering, the threshing sledges and the yokes of the oxen for the wood. ²³ ***"Everything, O king, Araunah gives to the king."*** ***And Araunah said to the king, "May the LORD your God accept you."*** ²⁴ ***However, the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price, for I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God which cost me nothing."*** ***So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.*** ²⁵ ***David built there an altar to the LORD and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. Thus the LORD was moved by prayer for the land, and the plague was held back from Israel.***

And so we find that God wants a sacrifice from King David. The sacrifice would redirect David's attention to God. The sacrifice would help to smooth out that relationship. The sacrifice would refocus David's priorities. At the beginning of the chapter, David is thinking about himself, "I'm going to number these people." But by the end of the chapter, David is back to thinking about God.

And so we learn that David goes and explains the situation to Araunah, at which point Araunah basically says, "Oh my Lord the king, take it all! You can have it—the land, the oxen, you can even use my tools for firewood! It's all yours!" How would he make a living after that? I don't know. What would he tell his wife at the end of the day? I don't know. Araunah offered it all, no holding back. Certainly this would have worked out really well for King David; after all, what a bargain! However, David turned down the offer and in verse 24 said, ***"No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price, for I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God which cost me nothing."*** And with that, David gets it! David understands the meaning and the purpose of sacrifice. As we plan on singing in just a few moments, "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all."

We know that anything worthwhile requires sacrifice. Yesterday my son and I had a chance to attend the 2nd Annual WiMP Games over in Middleton. WiMP stands for "Wird's Mightiest Programmer." To participate, you had to have at least an undergraduate degree in computer programming, and you had to have at least three years experience in the field. These men were tossing old computer monitors like a shot put. They were dragging an old server that had been filled with concrete. They were doing weight-lifting competitions. It was an interesting afternoon, to say the least. But one thing was sure: Those who participated had obviously sacrificed to be there. These were men who had obviously done a lot of working out! They had sacrificed to get in shape. Over the past several years while I was watching NCIS on Tuesday evening, these guys had been at the gym. They had sacrificed.

In a similar way, God also wants a sacrifice—He does not want the leftovers, He does not want our attention only when we can't find something better to do, He does not want the \$11 we have left on Sunday morning after we've paid the mortgage, and the cable bill, and the car payment, but God wants the best, He wants us, He wants our time, He wants our resources, He wants our families. And when we sacrifice, when we put God first, that is our way of telling God that He is important to us. When we sacrifice, we are giving to God not because it is expected, not because it is a habit, not because someone might notice, but we are giving because that is our way of telling God that He is worth more than all the world to us. We do not come to worship God empty-handed, and we certainly do not sacrifice to God that which cost us nothing.

Conclusion:

As we come to the end of this chapter, we also basically come to the end of David's life. Again, in the opening chapters of the next book, David dies and passes the kingdom on to his son, Solomon. And what an interesting progression! David comes on the scene as he is anointed by Samuel and then kills Goliath, he has a

long and turbulent reign as king, and then we end with the census, the plague, and the sacrifice here in 2 Samuel 24. This may not seem like an appropriate way to end the story of the most beloved king in Israel's history, and yet the account is here for a reason. We can learn from it.

Someone has said that God can do a lot with broken pieces, but the lesson from King David this morning is that God must first have all of the pieces! David was a man after God's own heart because when he blew it he was willing to give all of those broken pieces back to God. The lesson from 2 Samuel 24, then, is that God wants to help us put things back together, but at the same time, we need to be willing to sacrifice to make it happen. And more than anything, God is willing to take some amazing steps to make things right.

One thing I haven't told you this morning is the significance of this particular location. Jewish history tells us that this is the same mountain upon which Abraham was prepared to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. By purchasing the threshing floor of Araunah, King David was demonstrating the same faith that Abraham had. But there is more. Since David was such a violent king, God gave the responsibility of building the temple to David's son Solomon. The Bible says in 2 Chronicles 3:1, ***"Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan [or Araunah] the Jebusite."*** For hundreds of years, this threshing floor would be the place where God would come to meet His people, it would be the place where Jesus performed much of His ministry, and it would also be the place where the New Testament church would be established.

I am so thankful for the opportunity to study this passage with all of you here this morning. I need to let you know that God's plan is for each person to count the cost involved in becoming a Christian and to make the decision to do whatever it takes. We must turn away from all sin, and we must then allow ourselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our past sins. At that point, we are born into God's family, and the Christian life begins. If you have any questions, please ask. If you would like for us to pray about some special concern in your life right now, we would invite you to write it down and bring it to the front. But if you are ready to obey the good news right now, you can let us know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com