**Prayers of Old**

**3. David’s Prayer**

2 Samuel 24 (ESV)

1 Again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, “Go, number Israel and Judah.” 2 So the king said to Joab, the commander of the army, who was with him, “Go through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, and number the people, that I may know the number of the people.” 3 But Joab said to the king, “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 it, but why does my lord the king delight in this thing?” 4 But the king's word prevailed against Joab and the commanders of the army. So Joab and the commanders of the army went out from the presence of the king to number the people of Israel. 5 They crossed the Jordan and began from Aroer, and from the city that is in the middle of the valley, toward Gad and on to Jazer. 6 Then they came to Gilead, and to Kadesh in the land of the Hittites; and they came to Dan, and from Dan they went around to Sidon, 7 and came to the fortress of Tyre and to all the cities of the Hivites and Canaanites; and they went out to the Negeb of Judah at Beersheba. 8 So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. 9 And Joab gave the sum of the numbering of the people to the king: in Israel there were 800,000 valiant men who drew the sword, and the men of Judah were 500,000.

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10 But David's heart struck him after he had numbered the people. And 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 done very foolishly.”

11 And when David arose in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, 12 “Go and say to David, ‘Thus says the LORD, Three things I offer you. Choose one of them, that I may do it to you.’” 13 So Gad came to David and told him, and said to him, “Shall three 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 decide what answer I shall return to him who sent me.” 14 Then David said to Gad, “I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is great; but let me not fall into the hand of man.”

15 So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel from the morning until the appointed time. And there died of the people from Dan to Beersheba 70,000 men. 16 And when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented from the calamity and said to the angel who was working destruction among the people, “It is enough; now stay 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 the people, and said, “Behold, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand be against me and against my father's house.”

2 Samuel 24:1-17 (NLT)

1 Once again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and he caused David to harm them by taking a census. “Go and count the people of Israel and Judah,” the LORD told him.

2 So the king said to Joab and the commanders of the army, “Take a census of all the tribes of Israel—from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south—so I may know how many people there are.”

3 But Joab replied to the king, “May the LORD your God let you live to see a hundred times as many people as there are now! But why, my lord the king, do you want to do this?”

4 But the king insisted that they take the census, so Joab and the commanders of the army went out to count the people of Israel. 5 First they crossed the Jordan and camped at Aroer, south of the town in the valley, in the direction of Gad. Then they went on to Jazer, 6 then to Gilead in the land of Tahtim-hodshi and to Dan-jaan and around to Sidon. 7 Then they came to the fortress of Tyre, and all the towns of the Hivites and Canaanites. Finally, they went south to Judah as far as Beersheba.

8 Having gone through the entire land for nine months and twenty days, they returned to Jerusalem. 9 Joab reported the number of people to the king. There were 800,000 capable warriors in Israel who could handle a sword, and 500,000 in Judah.

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10 But after he had taken the census, David’s conscience began to bother him. And he said to the LORD, “I have sinned greatly by taking this census. Please forgive my guilt, LORD, for doing this foolish thing.”

11 The next morning the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, who was David’s seer. This was the message: 12 “Go and say to David, ‘This is what the LORD says: I will give you three choices. Choose one of these punishments, and I will inflict it on you.’”

13 So Gad came to David and asked him, “Will you choose three years of famine throughout your land, three months of fleeing from your enemies, or three days of severe plague throughout your land? Think this over and decide what answer I should give the LORD who sent me.”

14 “I’m in a desperate situation!” David replied to Gad. “But let us fall into the hands of the LORD, for his mercy is great. Do not let me fall into human hands.”

15 So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel that morning, and it lasted for three days. A total of 70,000 people died throughout the nation, from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south. 16 But as the angel was preparing to destroy Jerusalem, the LORD relented and said to the death angel, “Stop! That is enough!” At that moment the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

17 When David saw the angel, he said to the LORD, “I am the one who has sinned and done wrong! But these people are as innocent as sheep—what have they done? Let your anger fall against me and my family.”

**QUESTIONS**

1. **Observation** (What does it say?)

Verse 1 raises a number of issues that we will not be able to discuss in this study, since they would take time away from our focus on David’s prayer. However, you are encouraged to follow up on your own to resolve any questions you may have with this verse. Resources are available online at such sites as [**biblehub.com**](http://biblehub.com) and [**bible.org**](http://bible.org). Verses 1 - 9 provide the background needed to understand David’s prayer, but our study will focus on verses 10 - 17.

1. What does v. 10 tell us about the impact that David’s sin had on him?

1. How does he describe what he has done?

1. How does the LORD respond to David’s prayer for forgiveness?

1. What reason does David give for choosing the third option over the other two?

1. How does he react when he sees what the angel is doing?

**b. Interpretation** (What does it mean?)

1. Why do you think that David would want to number the people?

1. What was wrong with counting his troops?

1. This is different from David’s sin with Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11 and 12, where he was confronted by Nathan the prophet for his sin. What caused David to repent of his action here? What does that show us about what David knew when he decided to count the people?

1. David confesses and asks for forgiveness. Why isn’t that the end of the matter?

1. David said that he was in great distress when he had to choose the consequence that would be carried out against him and his people. What do you think was the source of his distress?

1. What do you make of the fact that the punishment fell on the people of Israel and not on David personally?
2. How is David affected by the consequences of his sin?

**c. Application** (What do I do with this?)

1. David appears to have known beforehand that counting the people was wrong, yet he went ahead with his plan. What motivates us to proceed when we know what we’re going to do is wrong?
2. How do you react to God’s response to David’s confession and plea for forgiveness?
3. What does it mean to be forgiven by God? What does it not mean? What about in our relationships with each other?