

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Jan.29

MONDAY

After nine months and twenty days of traveling across the land, the census (or at least, a phase of taking a census) is completed.

READ: II Sam.24:5-8

The places mentioned do not encompass the entire country, although vs. 8 certainly refers to “the whole land”. Why those places and not others, I don’t know. But included in the list are cities of the Philistines, the Jebusites, the Hitvites, and the Canaanites. Allowing these peoples to remain in Israel broke God’s command, and instead of honoring oneself with a census (“I am great!”), David would have been better off sending his uncounted army to battle these cities and remove the citizens from the Promise Land. We must learn that obedience is high on God’s list of what He requires of us.

TUESDAY

Joab reports that there are 1,300,000 fighting men in the country. No sooner are the results in than David is conscience-stricken about taking the census and begs God to take his sin from him.

READ: II Sam.24:9-10

Somehow, David is convicted of his sin in conducting the census, and he immediately confesses his sin to the Lord. David is called “the man after God’s own heart” largely because of the manner in which he deals with his sin. He confessed his sin and asked God to take it from him. To be a man or woman after God’s own heart, we, too, must deal with our sin in the same manner: we must acknowledge it and ask God to forgive us. That is always the perfect starting place.

WEDNESDAY

God sends the prophet Gad to David with God’s own response to David confessing his sin, and he gives David three consequences to choose from.

READ: II Sam.24:11-13

It’s a unique situation, God gives David three choices of punishment and each is a different time frame: 3 years, 3 months, or 3 days? This comes after David’s repentance. So we can say this: “In response to his repentance, God offered David these three choices.” Where’s the mercy here? It’s in this, that when the punishment is completed (however long that may take) there is the hope of reconciliation - of being made right again! That’s pure mercy! And a picture of the punishment Jesus accepted on the cross on my behalf and yours. It was by His death there that we are reconciled to God! Praise His holy name!

THURSDAY

Offered three choices of punishment for his sin of taking a military census, David chooses to suffer at God’s hand rather than man’s.

READ: II Sam.24:14

With God, there is mercy. David knows this well, and he asks therefore that it be from God that the punishment come, not from man. He puts himself squarely into God’s hands. Like Job 500 years earlier, David says, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.” Whether it is for punishment or for wisdom, guidance or grace for living, we do well to place our lives into His hands. They are hands of mercy.

FRIDAY

The punishment came. It was a pestilence from which 70,000 Jews died. The angel inflicting the pestilence was about to destroy Jerusalem when God said, “That’s enough.” When the angel stopped, he was on Araunah’s land.

READ: II Sam.24:15-16

David did well to throw himself upon the mercy of God! It was mercy that stopped the angel’s hand, in the same way it had been mercy which stopped Abraham’s hand when he was about to slay Isaac. (that comes to mind since Araunah’s land is on the very same mountain where Abraham laid Isaac on the altar) How many times in life does God stop the evil that would come to us? How many times does He mercifully lessen the consequences of sin that come our way? We will probably never know. But we know that He does, for He is a God of great mercy.

SATURDAY

As the people of Israel were dying of the pestilence, David prayed that God would direct the punishment away from the people and towards him. These people (*sheep* he calls them) have not done wrong, he says. The angel told Gad that he should tell David to go to Araunah’s land and build an altar to the Lord there. David did just as Gad (and the Lord thru him) had said.

READ: II Sam.24:17-19

How wrong David was about the people not doing anything wrong! It was because of their sin that God incited David to take the census in the beginning! Because of their sin, *God’s anger burned against them*, verse one tells us. But David’s example to us is great: he is facing his own sin and not using the sin of others (even greater sin) as an excuse for his own. *It is I who have sinned* he prayed. Dealing with our sin in this way is essential. The problem I have with God is my sin. Not the evil world we live in; not the sins of my parents; and not the sins of the government; it is my sin. But with God there is forgiveness! This very day, there is forgiveness.