

Introduction

Retired Baptist pastor Joseph Smith wrote

The longer we live, the more we have to be thankful for. The longer we live, the more blessings we receive, and therefore the more we have to be thankful for. If you are thirty years old, you can count your blessings, name them one by one. If you are sixty years old, you can count your many blessings, see what God has done. And if you are ninety years old – well, let's not go there, you have probably forgotten how to count! The longer we live, the more we have to be thankful for. But it is also true that the longer we live, the more we have to be forgiven. Count that too: the longer we live, the more mistakes we make, the more people we hurt, the more wrong directions we take, and so the more we have to be forgiven.

Who tempted David? - and why?

1 Chronicles 21 **1 Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel.**

Dr. Russell K. Tardo writes The devil provoked David into numbering Israel. Satan's target (verse 1) was Israel. He wanted to inflict harm on Israel. The devil has always hated Israel and continues to do so to this very day. Israel was the devil's target, but King David was his means to gain what he wanted. What the devil wanted was to do harm, to do injury to the nation of Israel.

And Satan succeeded to a large extent and used David to bring injury and death to 70,000

2 Samuel 24 **1 Again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, Go and take a census of Israel and Judah.**

the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, God was angry with Israel because they had sinned repeatedly. The nature of the sin is not mentioned, but it is known that Israel's prevailing sins were idolatry, rebellion, defiance and pride.

Others suggest that they may not have been appreciative to what God had given them through David, as they now lived in peace and plenty, making them feel secure and become pleasure seekers.

Swindoll writes; **How can we reconcile these accounts? Was the root of David's decision his pride, the Lord's anger, or Satan's hatefulness? The answer is ... yes to all three, because all three played a role in the decision.**

As part of God's judgment, the Lord allowed Satan to tempt David (for God cannot tempt anyone; see James 1:13). Determined to do as much damage as he could, Satan found a crack of pride in David's character and moved him to lead the nation into destruction.

God did not make David sin, it was his permissive will. God just took away his hand of restraint of sin in him, and David's own human pride and vanity did the rest. God tempts no man to sin, but neither is He obligated to restrain any man from his own sin. (See Romans 1)

David's sin

And Joab said unto the king, ... why doth my lord the king delight in this thing? 2 Samuel 24:3

Joab asks why was he "delighting" in this numbering? Joab saw that the course that David was taking was sin and that God would be offended by it, but David was determined. The sin in numbering Israel was not the fact that David counted the fighting men. The sin was in why David counted them. Israel was long troubled with pride and King David was not immune. He was no exception.

David was no spiritual weakling he was the spiritual giant killer, a mighty man of God but he was out of touch with God. There is no record of him praying about the matter or consulting one of God's prophets.

This census occurred near the end of David's life. He had fought and conquered all his adversaries. He had overcome every one of them. He could look back over his life and be proud of what he had done, what he had accomplished.

But no one ever grows too old to fall victim to the devil's snare. It's not only the young who are gullible, but the elderly can also fall prey to deception. Even David the king, wise and mighty in God, was not immune to falling victim to pride.

This census was a military census (the number of men who "drew the sword.") This was a counting of the military men of Israel. This census was solely concerned with the size of Israel's army. David wanted to know the number of fighting men in Israel. Perhaps knowing would give him some sort of satisfaction or gratification. The sin was the temptation to feel confident, safe and secure in the army's military strength. It was the temptation on David's part to place confidence in the number and strength of his army. Was David was relying on human power and might rather than on God Himself.

Then as today, as long as Israel's faith and confidence is in God, they are safe. As long as Israel keep their eyes on God, they are secure. As long as their obedience is unto the Lord, Israel is blessed. If Israel began to look at the numbers, if they foolishly allowed the circumstances to govern their actions, woe unto them.

David's responsibility/repentance

Time passed by nine months and twenty days to be precise,

David was conscience-stricken after he had counted the fighting men, and he said to the LORD, I have sinned greatly in what I have done. Now, O LORD, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing. 2 Sam 24:10

David acknowledged that it was his great sin because he was the one who desired it (verse 2).

David has accurately diagnosed his problem. He has put himself squarely in the human condition. He said that nasty word that most people avoid. He came right out and named it for what it is: sin. Not mistakes, not errors, not miscalculations, not poor information – but sin.

God sent the prophet Gad to repentant David and Gad, says to David, "The Lord is giving you some choices. You can have, as a consequence of your sin, either three years of famine, no food, for the whole country; or you can have three months of flight, trying to dodge the enemies who will be trying to kill you; or you can have three days of plague."

David chose last - perhaps because it was the shortest or perhaps as some suggest that he would rather be subject to God rather than his enemies.

Consequences

Last time we looked at David's sin of committing adultery with Bathsheba and the killing of Uriah. As a result the child Bathsheba bore died and God said that there would be calamity in David's house forever, but the sin that David committed this time led to the death of 70,000 Israelites and would have been greater had it not been for David's penitence.

David knew his sin - his pride. He was grief-stricken and asked God to take away this great sin from him.

Despite repentance, God still punished David and the people for their sin. Even when truly sorry for our sins there are still consequences.

Apple stealing.

David took the third choice, and in three days seventy thousand of his people died.

We peddle a cheap Christianity when we oversimplify the gospel and say that once we pray a "Please forgive me" prayer to the Lord, everything is sorted, over and done with.

Joseph Smith correctly observes

The results of the things we have done to each other do not just evaporate because we've been forgiven. The pain that we have inflicted on someone does not disappear, just because we prayed, however diligent our prayer. The anguish that we caused when we lashed someone with our tongue, the heartache that we created when we lied about a friend – these things remain. And these things have to be dealt with. Sin has consequences. See how David's prayer progresses, how David's confession intensifies. First he had prayed, "I have sinned greatly." That's good, that acknowledges that it's all about sin. Now he prays, "I alone have sinned, and I alone have done wickedly "I alone have sinned." David sees and accepts the consequences of his sin.

David sinned and 70,000 people died.

When David saw the angel was about to strike those in Jerusalem - where many lived, he asked God to punish him and his house rather than the people. He knew that he had to take personal responsibility for his sin.

Instead of simply stopping, God told David to build an altar and make sacrifice at that place where the angel stopped the bringing the plague. David would not receive the threshing floor as a gift but insisted on paying for it. (v. 24).

A sign again of him taking personal responsibility as well as a sign of his brokenness before God.

I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.

Conclusion

The devil may tempt us to look at our strengths, as was the case with David. Confidence in bank accounts, health, etc.

On the other hand, the devil may tempt us to look at our weaknesses, to see our lack in bank accounts, bad health, etc. so we are quickly cast down and deflated.

Either way, the sin is the same because we're looking at numbers, at circumstances.

How are you overcomers? Very well over the circumstances?

Either way, we have taken our eyes off God who is to be our absolute source of trust and confidence.

Some trust in chariots, and some in horses (in today's military, the equivalent is equipment such as tanks and planes, armaments): but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. [Ps. 20:7]

There are a few local churches that proudly boast of their buildings, offerings and numbers, leaving many pastors feeling failures with ever diminishing congregations.

Entrapment is looking at the numbers instead of looking at the Lord. We need to keep focused on God and be faithful to what He's called us to do. The numbers don't matter! God is just as present in

a church of twenty as He is in a church of 10 or 20,000. In fact, God says he is present in a group of only three. Matt. 18:20

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