

1 Chronicles 21 - King David and a Painful Lesson

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1 Chronicles chapter 21. It feels like forever since we've been in 1 Chronicles. Well, it was last year, I know that, and we're in the life of David, which is always a great place to be in terms of studying, and this chapter is particularly good, so let's go ahead and open up in prayer.

Father, we thank You for giving us this time tonight to dig into Your Word and open our hearts to what it has to say. We ask you, in Jesus' name, to speak to us, bring wisdom from Your Word, insight and understanding that we can take with us. We haven't just come here, Lord, for learning, we've come for receiving, and we've come also for applying. Help us to receive and also apply the Scriptures tonight. Be with us we pray, in Jesus name, amen.

Have you ever done something that affected a lot of other people? This chapter is about that. It's about the long term and wider effects of consequences. It's probably something that we learn, hopefully we learn as we get older. It's a very, very difficult thing to convey to a young person, particularly teenagers. I've had 4 of those in my home at one time or another, and I was a teen myself and I remember I just couldn't, I didn't have time to listen to anyone talk to me about consequences of my actions, and it's a very difficult thing, but when we see other people suffering because of things that we've done it's a very sorrowful sort of a thing.

The events of this chapter that we're going to be looking at here tonight, 1 Chronicles chapter 21, are also covered in the Book of 2 Samuel but you'll remember that this event is tacked on at the end of David's life as if to sound like it took place during that time, but I don't believe it did. I believe it probably took place sometime in the middle of his reign, and it is given with far more information here in 1 Chronicles than it is in 2 Samuel. We know that 1 Chronicles, 1 and 2 Chronicles were written many, many years after the fact, after the events.

In fact, these books were written after Israel had been taken off into exile in the Babylonian Empire, later to become the Persian Empire and then when they made their way back to their homeland and began to rebuild their life there,

these books were written at that time. So, they have the benefit of hindsight, which often gives us greater clarity on certain things. We're going to see some fresh insights in these passages. It begins this way in verse 1. It says,

“Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel.” (ESV)

Now I want you to stop right there because we already have something we need to talk about. If you were to read the same story in 2 Samuel you would find that it begins by saying, *“The Lord incited David against Israel to do,”* and so forth and so on. But here, the writer of Chronicles clarifies that statement by helping you and I to understand that many times Satan is God's instrument of discipline, and He will use the work of the enemy sometimes in our lives, to bring about His purpose. And I think many times, I mean, it's a reality that you and I at times need to do spiritual warfare. There are times that we need to very much resist the work of the enemy. We're told to do that.

But there are other times when the enemy is allowed to work in our lives by God, and we know that in Scripture. We see it in the Book of Job, we see it in the Gospels where Jesus tells Peter that Satan asked to sift him as wheat, and He basically implies, God we've said yes to that you will be sifted as wheat. The enemy is brought in from time to time, just like God used the Philistines as an enemy nation to discipline Israel when they got away from following the Lord. It's not beyond God to use other people, other situations, circumstances, whatever, as an instrument to get our attention.

There we go. God is going to bring some kind of discipline into David's life and upon Israel as well, and I say some kind of discipline because there's not a lot we know about what's really going on here, and we'll talk about that and I'll explain as we move on. Verse 2.

“So, David said to Joab and the commanders of the army, “Go, number Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, and bring me a report, that I may know their number.”³ But Joab said, “May the LORD add to his people a hundred times as many as they are! Are they not, my lord the king, all of them my lord's servants? Why then should my lord require this? Why should it be (look at this) a cause of guilt for Israel?”

Now, Joab's response is very interesting here, we need to look at it because you guys know, I trust that Joab was not a man who had great spiritual insights. But in this case, he expresses a very important and insightful attitude, and he basically says, if you, if I carry out your command David, Israel will be liable to judgment. And Joab knew something that we don't know. We're not really sure

why counting the people, and he talks about counting Israel but he's counting the fighting men, we know that for what numbers that come back. We don't know why it was such a grievous thing to the Lord.

We really don't know. I've read many guesses along those lines, but we honestly don't know, and we're not really even sure why Joab was clued in to the fact that it was a grievous thing. But in this particular case, Joab had it dialed in, he knew that this was wrong, and he attempted to dissuade David, but after that, we're told in verse 4,

“But the king's word prevailed against Joab. (Of course, he's the king. Who's going to say anything against him?) So, Joab departed and went throughout all Israel and came back to Jerusalem.”

And by the way, this doesn't tell us, but 2 Samuel tells us, that this particular census of the fighting men took 9 months and 20 days to complete. Of course, they're going places on horseback or foot or whatever, and counting the people is not an easy thing to do. But that timeframe is interesting in the sense that it tells us how long David had to think about what he had commanded Joab to do. 9 months and 20 days, and there's no understanding that we get from the passage that at any time during that nine months and 20 days, David necessarily felt convicted. He might have, but he didn't act on it until later, until after the numbers were actually given to him, and then he felt convicted. He had a sting in his heart over that particular thing. Verse 5,

“And Joab gave the sum of the numbering of the people to David. In all Israel there were 1,100,000 men who drew the sword, and in Judah 470,000 who drew the sword. ⁶ But he did not include Levi and Benjamin in the numbering, for the king's command was abhorrent to Joab.” Isn't that interesting? He actually left out a couple of tribes just because he hated what he was doing.

Verse 7. *“But God was displeased with this thing, (and it says here at the end of verse 7) and he struck Israel.”*

And again, we're not sure why. This verse ends though with that ominous statement, *“He struck Israel,”* and we're not even told how he struck Israel at this particular point. For that information, the author is now going to back up, and this is very common in the Scripture. What you're going to get here from verse 8 and following is now we're going to zoom in. Often, biblical authors will do this and if we don't recognize it, sometimes Old Testament passages will confuse us. So, what Old Testament writers would often do is they would give a

summary story, and then they would zoom in on like a portion of that story and give you the details that they had left out in their summary.

The Genesis creation account is a really, really good example of that. We have the 6 days of creation that are given to us in kind of an overview form, and then what do we come to? We come to zoom, we zoom in on the last day and the creation of man because that was obviously important to the text and so forth. You get what I'm saying. There's often first a summary given and then a zoom in. Well, the summary is, David counted the fighting men or at least commanded it to be done. Joab warned him. David overruled, they went and counted them, and the Lord was displeased and struck Israel. Now we're going to see exactly the details of how that played out.

“Then David said to God, (Verse 8. Now remember, we're zooming in. This is before any striking of Israel had taken place) “I have sinned greatly in that I have done this thing. But now please take away the iniquity of your servant for I have acted very foolishly.”

Now, so David gets the numbers of the fighting men, and he's pricked in his conscience, and he comes to the Lord, and he says, *“I've sinned greatly.”* Again, we're not sure what was so bad about this. There are some passages about the fact that whenever there was a census taken, there needed to be an offering made for the people to ransom them back for the Lord, but this is not a general census. This is a counting of the fighting men. We don't know if David's pride was involved. We don't know if this was just, we don't really know, but David understood it, he considered it a great sin, and he comes to the Lord, cries out to the Lord, and asks for forgiveness.

Now, this squares with the passage and the telling of this story in 2 Samuel, which tells us again that after the census numbers were reported to David, he was convicted of what he did and sought the Lord's forgiveness. But what we're going to see here in the next few verses is that David's confession of wrongdoing was made before the Lord sent the punishment, as we see here in verse nine. So, he's confessed it and the Lord, here's the Lord's response,

⁹ “And the LORD spoke to Gad, David's seer, saying, ¹⁰ “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.’” ¹¹ So Gad came to David and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Choose what you will: ¹² either three years of famine, or three months of devastation by your foes while the sword of your enemies overtakes you, or else three days of the sword of the LORD, (and then he goes on to define what the sword of the Lord means) pestilence on the land, with the angel of

the LORD destroying throughout all the territory of Israel.' Now decide what answer I shall return to him who sent me."

Wow how would you like those three options to be given to you? Essentially, David is given three, he can choose, he can choose what kind of punishment is going to come upon the nation. And it is three years of famine, three years, or three months of being overrun by their enemies, or three days of the sword of the Lord, and he goes on to describe that as pestilence, which of course is plague or sickness. I probably would have said, is there a fourth option? But which one would you have chosen? You know, you and I might think, well I'll take, how about three months of fighting against our enemies? But David knew better.

You might think to yourself, well, we can beef up our army, so we'll take three months of fighting in battle. We fought in battle before, we've been victorious. So we're just going to beef up our army. We're going to get, but we'll buy some more horses from neighboring country You know, maybe a few chariots, and we'll just be stronger. Yeah, so let's fight against, we don't want to fight against God right through the three years of famine or three days of plague. No, I'd rather go up against man because him I can possibly defeat. Well, there's two things about that that David knows. First of all, David knows that man has no mercy.

And second of all, he knows that the Lord told him he wouldn't just be at war for three months. He said, you would be overrun by your enemies for three months, and that's God's way of saying, I'm going to give your enemies the ability to overcome you. Right? You can fight all you want. You can beef up your army as much as you think you might be able to do. Buy as many chariots as you think you can afford David, it isn't going to work, because when the Lord is against you it doesn't matter. You don't want the Lord opposing you at all, right? That's just not a good thing. Notice David's response here in verse 13. This is really interesting.

"Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. (Well, I guess. I mean, all rotten options) Let me fall into the hand of the LORD, (Look at this) for his mercy is very great, (But he says, but one thing don't let happen) but do not let me fall into the hand of man."

Now that is an insightful man. David was an incredibly insightful man. He says, I'll take God. I'll take whatever the Lord is going to bring, let it come. Why? Because His mercy is great. And this is something that we forget so many times. We forget. David never lost sight of God's mercy, even in the midst of his

discipline, right? When David was given the option of which disciplinary action to receive, the thing that guided his choice is, well God is a God of mercy, man is not. Man is not merciful at all, so, I'll take God. But I mean, God can wipe you out with a word, with a thought. Yet he chooses God. I'll take God. He's a God of mercy. He's a God of great mercy. His mercy is great.

Let me ask you a question. When you're praying, do you pray with this in mind? God your mercy is great. When you hear of a desperate situation that's just going very badly for someone, a group, a family, whatever, even a nation, and you feel compelled to pray about it. Does the mercy of God affect or influence your prayer or the words that you say at all? I think it ought to. I think it ought to affect the way we see the things that are happening in our own life as well. In fact, the Bible we're going to, well, we're going to look at a Scripture later on that talks about just how much God likes to give mercy.

But again, we lose sight of that so quickly and we think that God is just this big meanie. And people often tell me how they get angry at God. They're the ones, by the way the ones who tell me they get angry at God, they're the ones who are honest about it. There's a whole lot of other people that would never admit in a million years that they were angry at God, but they are, they just won't say it, they won't admit it in anyone's hearing. I think it happens to a lot of us when we look at what's going on in our lives, when we see what's happening, when we see the difficulty and how burdensome and challenging and hard the things are that we're enduring and going through, and we just, it begins to shape our image of God.

What is your image of God? What do you have as your image of God? Well, it depends. Is your life going good? Did you just get a raise at work or maybe you just got to buy something new, which was fun that you've been wanting to do for a long time. Your image of God, if you think of it like, and we don't have an image of God as far as an understanding of the invisible God. But what is your image? Is He like a kindly father or is he like an ogre who loves to dangle things in front of your face that you want just to pull them away right before you get them and kind of laugh at you?

That's the way some people view God, and our picture of God, you guys, cannot be underestimated. It will affect everything about your knowledge of God and whether or not you ever even want to know Him. You know, it's funny. I'll be, well it's not funny, I've got to be careful how I say that. I'll be talking to people thought about their relationship with the Lord and they'll often say well, God just really feels distant in my life. I just I have a very distant relationship with God, and I don't know why and then we get to talking and we find out why, or

at least I can see as we get to talking that their picture of God is that he's an angry disciplinarian who kind of likes to torture us from time to time.

Let me ask you something. If you really, truly knew an angry disciplinarian who liked to torture people, would you want to have a relationship with that person? I sure wouldn't. I'd stay about as far away as possible. If I saw that person walking down the street, I'd probably cross the street and walk on the other side. You know the personality type we're talking about. Those people that can sour milk at 10 paces and just nobody wants to be around them. They're just, arrggg! Some people look at God that way. They literally see God that way, and then they're wondering why they don't want to have a relationship or they, or why they do, pastor, prayer for me is really hard.

You know what? Prayer is talking. Is talking hard? I've had a conversation with some people who told me prayer was really hard and then talked my leg off. So, I know that they can talk, and so I'm like, well now wait a minute. What exactly is going on here when you say prayer is hard? Do you know what the underlying part is? I don't want to talk to Him. He's mean to me. He doesn't like me, and He doesn't like to listen to me. I don't think He listens. I don't think God hears my prayer. He might listen to other people's prayers, but not mine.

If you have that kind of an attitude, how do you suppose prayer is going to be a fun thing for you? When somebody says, hey, let's all get together and pray. You're going to go, hey, look at the time, looks like I've got something I got to do. See you guys, love to stay. Or how about reading your Bible? You know, pastor, I just, I don't feel just motivated to get in and read my Bible. What's wrong with me? Have I, maybe I'm just I don't think I just get it, and they want to sit and talk about all the things that they can't do, but they don't want to talk about the underlying reason.

And the underlying reason is, why would you want to sit and go through the pages of Scripture when all you feel when you read the Bible is condemned? I read the Bible, and every time it says something about hell or something like that, I just feel absolutely condemned. Anything about judgment, anything about what people have done that's wrong, and all these people can see in the Word of God is His anger. They can't even see His mercy because their image of God is such that there's only certain things that they can relate to God about. They can't relate to Him as a merciful God because that's not their image of Him.

And so, when they read about something in the Bible that talks about His mercy, His loving kindness, His patience, His tender heartedness, they don't see

it. They just go right past it because there's really no, there's nowhere to hang that on their image of God. They can't, it doesn't fit. It's like clothing or something that doesn't fit. It just falls away because that's not the picture of God that I have. You see what I'm saying? This is something that we as Christians need to confront in our lives. What is your image of God? David's image was that He was always merciful, and when he was faced with three choices of discipline, and he could have been angry and said, you know what, any one of those choices is absolutely horrific, and any God who would give me a choice of one of these kinds of discipline must be some kind of sadistic deity that I want no part of.

But David didn't do that. In fact, David took responsibility. He said, I'm the one who did wrong. He owned it, and then he owned the discipline that came along with it. But in the midst of owning that discipline, do not forget, dear loved one, that David chose God. David chose a relationship with God. David chose his understanding and image of who God is. He is merciful, and I want to just repeat Verse 13 one more time, because if this isn't underlined in your Bible, it should be. *"Then David said to Gad, I am in great distress."* (What do you do when you're in great distress? He says) *"Let me fall into the hands of the LORD. for his mercy is very great."*

And that should absolutely jump off the page at you and I in the midst of this, of the distress, distressing things in our lives, because we all go through distress, don't we? We go through things that are very distressing. When you are going through that kind of stress and trauma, is the cry of your heart let me fall into the hands of God? God was even disciplining David and he wanted to be by his side, even in discipline, that's where he wanted to be. When my kids knew they were going to get disciplined, they would usually run. If they knew there was something coming, it's like, nowhere to be seen.

I love how David runs to the Father even when he knows that discipline is awaiting him. *"Let me fall into the hands of the LORD (God) for"* there I know I will find mercy. Wow! I don't get tired of talking about David's life because his life is so amazing. I wish I had the kind of insight that David had, has, he's obviously still alive in the presence of the Lord. And then we go to verse 14, we're going to find out that God was true to His Word. It says,

"So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel, (Look at this) and 70,000 men of Israel fell."

I just want to give you a moment to let that sink in. 70,000 people. That's just a little less than seven Ontario's, entire population of people just wiped out by

pestilence. And by the way, this judgment and specifically the loss of the 70,000 men in Israel has, by the way, led many Bible students to wonder if, in fact, David's sin was the sin of pride in the number of fighting men, and in this sense that God is humbling him by removing some of those numbers. But we don't know, but obviously this huge number of men who died because of this reminds us that sin has a domino effect, and this is something else that we forget.

People will ask me from time to time, or they'll insinuate when they're talking about someone who's involved in some, clearly, a sinful lifestyle. They'll say, but if it doesn't hurt anybody else, what's the problem? In other words, they're living in this lifestyle which the Bible says is sinful. But you know what? If they're not hurting anybody else, why is it a problem? And see, that question, comes from the perspective of mankind, which is very limited in our understanding of the consequences of sin. We just don't really truly get how much of a domino effect sin can have until sometimes years and years and years down the road many times.

We forget that once a sin is committed, a series of consequences usually follows, and certainly when we cry out to God for forgiveness there is forgiveness for us, predicated on what Jesus did for us on the cross. But many times, the consequences of our sin are already set in motion, and just because we're forgiven doesn't mean that the consequences of our sin are going to cease to have a negative impact on the lives of others and on our own life as well. And many of us in this room, if we had the time tonight and we had the guts to talk about things that we'd done, we could probably get up and tell some pretty hair-raising stories of things that we had done and how they affected other people, family members and so forth down the line.

You know we see this happening in our culture where somebody is accused of some kind of sin, and it comes to light, and it's never just the person who's affected. The family members, those who they violated, it just, it's terrible. How would you like to be personally responsible for the death of 70,000 people? How would you like to have that on your conscience? Would you sleep well that night knowing that you, your actions, your command had resulted in the loss of 70,000 men? Verse 15 says,

“And God sent the angel to Jerusalem to destroy it, (Now, and this statement would suggest that at this moment in time, Jerusalem had at this point been spared. So, apparently maybe some of the outlying towns or whatever were being affected. But we're told here that as he was about to destroy it) but as he was about to destroy it, the Lord saw, (and look at this) and he relented from the calamity. And he said to the angel who was working destruction, “It is

enough; now stay your hand.” And the angel of the Lord was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.”

By the way, you may remember from 2 Samuel that this man's name was Araunah instead of Ornan, but it's just a variant of the same name, okay? And verse 15 is really interesting because it gives us insight, and I love when the Bible gives us insight into spiritual realities that you and I would not be able to see or understand otherwise. But we're told here that literally this destroying angel is approaching Jerusalem. The capital city where David lived, and it says, as the angel is approaching the city, the Lord looked, He's watching all this, and He was grieved by all that had taken place, and it says that He relented, and he called out to the destroying angel, and he said, enough, enough, right? Stay your hand from any further destruction.

And then, we're given this information that at the time that the Lord spoke to him, the angel of the Lord was standing by the threshing floor of this Jebusite, and that's going to figure very importantly into the story so remember that okay? Here for just a little bit. But what we see here is the reality of what David knew, God is merciful, and the NIV renders this passage by saying, “*the LORD saw it and was grieved because of the calamity.*” And that is literally meaning that the heart of the Lord was moved to pity.

And again, that's exactly what David was referring to earlier when he said, hey if I'm going to fall into anybody's hands, let me fall into the hands of the Lord because His heart is filled with mercy and He will pity, but you know what? My enemy, he has no pity, no mercy. Let me show you a passage from Micah, the Old Testament book of Micah, chapter 7, verse 18. It says,

Micah 7:18 (NIV)

Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.

Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever, (look at this) but delight to show mercy.”

Once again people, this is something David understood. The question I have for you is, do you and do I, do we understand this reality about God that He delights to show mercy? Do you know what I've started doing in my prayer, particularly when I'm praying about something that's very heavy? I start off by quoting that passage back to Him. I do, because it's not in my, I didn't write the

Bible. I didn't inspire Micah to say that, He did. And I figure, hey, if He inspired Micah to say that, well, it must be true, right? And if it's true, he's probably not going to mind me reminding Him of what is true in light of what I need to be praying about.

And so, I come to God, and I bring up this individual who I'm grieved about because they're going through such a traumatic time right now. And I say, Lord, I'm bringing this person before you, and I'll tell you why. Because you delight to show mercy. And so, in light of that fact, I bring this person before your throne, and let me remind you, you're the one who delights to show mercy. Now I'm asking you to do it. I'm asking you to show it. In fact, pour out mercy on this person or pour out mercy on that situation, right? I don't think God minds when you and I hold Him to His Word.

I might get a little nervous if you do it to me. If I say something and then you come back and go, yeah, well Paul, I remember one time you said I might go, yeah, well, and fudge and shuffle my feet a little bit and cough, and well, circumstances were different back when I said that. Hey, God's not going to do that. God's not going to say, well, no wait a minute. Hey, listen, He delights to show mercy, so start your prayers that way. Put it on Him, put the pressure on Him. He doesn't mind. And I'm not talking about doing it in a mean or boorish kind of a way. Doing it in a faith filled way.

Lord, I come to you because you delight to show mercy. I come to you Lord, because you are faithful. I come to you because of your loving kindness, now here, I'm bringing you this situation. Right? That's the stuff David understood. The last thing I want you to notice is a comment about where, again, the destroying angel was standing.

Again, you'll notice at the end of verse 15, *"he was at the threshing floor of this Ornan, the Jebusite*. Keep that in mind now as we move on. Verse 16,

"And David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven, and in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces."

Can you imagine? Now obviously, for David to see this angel, that was something God had to open his eyes to. You and I just can't see angels. I have no doubt there's probably some in this room right now, but we can't see them. But there are times in the Scripture we see that God allows an individual to have those scales removed from their eyes to see, in the spirit realm, what is actually

transpiring, and so God allows David, and apparently the elders who are with him, to see this angel literally standing between heaven and earth right?

Which, and heaven there basically means the skies, all right, so he's basically standing elevated above the ground between the sky and the ground. Big, huge, this is not one of these little cupid angels, like these naked little baby things. The destroying angel doesn't look like that. We're talking something that is going to absolutely elicit fear and awe from your heart, right? And so, David doesn't know probably at this time that God told the angel to stay his hand. All he sees is this angel with this sword stretched out over Jerusalem, that's all David sees, okay? Oh, mercy. I probably would have just dropped over dead at the very sight. Now I want you to listen to David's intercession. Verse 17,

“And David said to God, “Was it not I who gave command to number the people? It is I who have sinned and done great evil. But these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand, O LORD my God, be against me and against my father's house. But do not let the plague be on your people.””

Wow! So, what do you think of David's comment? Did you notice there's no hint of anger, bitterness? God, why are you doing this? Four things quickly I want to bring out about this. First thing is we saw back in verse 8, that David had made a confession of sin. He had asked the Lord to pardon him, but now we see that he's owning it in a new way, because he says to the Lord, *“It is I who have sinned and (done this) great evil.”* He's willing, as we're going to see here in a moment, to take the consequences himself, but he sees the devastation, and these are the consequences so many times that you and I can't see.

The things we tell our kids just because we've lived long enough on the earth to know that certain actions have consequences. We tell them, no, this isn't going to go well, and they're like, don't worry, dad, and then they get down the road and they see. They see the devastation, and they look back on it and they go, Oh, I see what you meant. And that's always a very challenging time, and we wish we could go back and rewind time and save the people who were in the path of destruction because of our actions and our choices.

Secondly, we do see that David accepted full responsibility. Notice he says, Lord, please let your hand be against me and my house. Not these people, and David knew that he was the one, he was the one, and he should be the one to suffer. Thirdly, and this is closely aligned with the previous point, we see that David threw himself on the mercy of God. Once again, no anger, no bitterness. He simply says to God, I'll take it. I'll take it. There's something about opening yourself up to judgment to a merciful God that is strange and amazing at the

same time. But what David is basically saying is, I trust you to discipline me instead of them, okay?

I trust you to let this thing fall on me instead of them, and this reminds me of that statement that Job made in the midst of his horrific circumstances. He said, yet though he slay me, still shall I trust in him. (Job 13:15) Right? Even though he slay me, even if he takes my life, I will trust Him. That's pretty mind blowing. And then the fourth thing that we see from this prayer, short prayer of David is that he expressed a very tender concern for the people who were under his leadership. He refers to them as sheep, and he understands that it was his decision, his choice that brought their ruin, and he cries out on their behalf. Let's see what happens. Verse 18,

“Now the angel of the LORD had commanded Gad (who was a prophet) to say to David that David should go up and raise an altar to the LORD (oh look at this, look at this) on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.”

Remember I asked you to be remembering that, that location. Kind of a strange thought, to put an altar on a threshing floor is. You know what a threshing floor is, where they thresh grain, and they would often put them on mounds, because they wanted the winds to blow because the threshing process was essentially taking the grain with like a pitchfork and literally throwing it up in the air, and the wind would separate the lighter chaff and it would blow away, and the kernel of seed, which was heavier, would drop to the ground.

And so, it was this process of sifting, you'd throw it up. So, anybody who had a threshing floor would build it literally on a mound or a high space where wind would blow, unless you were worried about your enemy seeing your threshing floor. The angel says, the angel of the Lord tells Gad to tell David to build this altar on this threshing floor, and so it says in verse 19,

“So David went up at Gad's word, which he had spoken in the name of the LORD. (So, we come back to this threshing floor) ²⁰ Now Ornan was threshing wheat. (or had been threshing wheat. I doubt he was, as he's seeing what's going on) He turned and saw the angel, (the Lord allowed him to see the angel too) and his four sons who were with him hid themselves.”

And that's usually the response when people see some great sight. It's just like, get me out of here. By the way, that's why people who are convicted of sin don't want to come to church, read the Bible, or pray. Same thing. If you're ever talking to somebody and you're like, hey, you want to come to church with me? And they're like, pfft, no way. And you think, you take it on yourself personally

like they just rejected you. It's the very same thing that you're reading right here. It's the same thing that happened in Genesis when after Adam and Eve had sinned and God came down and walked in the garden in the cool of the day and He said, Adam, where are you?

And they went, and they hid themselves, right? Listen, sin always makes us want to hide ourselves from a holy God. And people will say, I don't sin. I'm not such a bad person, but they don't want to come to church because they know the spotlight's probably going to get turned on and they don't want to see what there is to see, right? Anyway, this whole idea of hiding themselves, that's what people do.

“As David (verse 21) came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David and went out from the threshing floor and paid homage to David with his face to the ground. ²² And David said to Ornan, “Give me the site of the threshing floor that I may build on it an altar to the LORD—give it to me at its full price—that the plague may be averted from the people.”

²³ Then Ornan said to David, “Take it, (you can about imagine) and let my lord the king do what seems good to him. See, I give the oxen for burnt offerings and the threshing sledges for the wood and the wheat for a grain offering; I give it all.” (I'll just give it all, it's yours, David) ²⁴ But King David said to Ornan, (listen to this) “No, but I will buy them for the full price. I will not take for the LORD what is yours, nor offer burnt offerings that cost me nothing.”

Very, very powerful statement that David is making here. By refusing to offer to the Lord that which cost him nothing, David was revealing and confirming a truth that God takes no pleasure in the man who gives him that which involves no sacrifice. Please understand, Christians, when I say that I'm not suggesting to you that when it comes to your sin and the payment of your sin that God's looking for a sacrifice because He's not. That sacrifice has already been made. Do you hear me? Jesus made it. He sacrificed for you and I on the cross. We're not talking about payment of sin here.

We are talking about giving to the Lord that which costs us nothing. And David says, I'm not going to do it. I'm not going to give to the Lord that which costs me nothing. Right? Do you know in the New Testament, we have an idea of this, that the apostle Paul gave us from Romans 12:1, let me put it on the screen for you. It says,

Romans 12:1 (ESV)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Now, this is a fascinating passage, where Paul is telling you and I as believers, that we ought to be ready and willing to sacrifice our very bodies for the Lord, which he says is our act of worship. But you've got to admit, giving your body to God is a pretty personal thing, and guess what it's going to do? It's going to cost you. We like to say like the world, the world likes to say, it's my body, I can do what I want with it. We can't say that as Christians because we've been bought with a price. I can't say, it's my body, I'll do what I want with it. It's the Lord's. He purchased it. Right? Paul says, since you've been purchased, now, offer it as a living sacrifice.

It's very pleasing, it's a very holy sacrifice that God wants you to make. But it's a very personal one, it's going to cost you, make no mistake about it, it will cost you. David says, that's the only sacrifice I'm going to give to the Lord, that which costs me because that's what it means to sacrifice, right? Listen, if you've got 15 TVs in your house and one of them is a little bit on the fritz and you decided to give that one away, what have you sacrificed? You guys will probably remember me, those who've been around long enough, telling the story about Joni Erickson Tada when, after her diving accident which rendered her a quadriplegic.

Her friends took her out to cheer her up, to go have pizza or something like that. It was a cold winter's evening, and they were just like kids do, they were messing around, and they were running with her wheelchair. They hit some ice, and she went flying. And while they were waiting for help, because when you're dealing with a quadriplegic you don't want to move them. You can't even tell you if you're hurting them any further. One by one, all these kids got around her and took off their coats and laid them on her on the ground to keep her warm until help arrived.

And as Joni tells about that in her book, she recounts that whole story and how special it was that they all made a sacrifice. They all stood there cold, while they were warming her up. And she talked about how special that was, that they sacrificed for her and she was blown away by it but she also thought about what

it would have been like if somebody who was driving the car maybe had a trunk full of blankets, and he could have run over to his trunk, unlocked it, brought all the blankets over, put them on top of her. It would have done the same thing, kept her warm, but nobody would have had to sacrifice and it wouldn't have been nearly as special.

So, you see what makes a sacrifice special is that it involves some kind of sacrifice on our part, some cost. David understood. At a time like this, this needs to be special, right? I'm not going to give what doesn't cost me something. Verse 25,

“So David paid Ornan 600 shekels of gold by weight for the site. ²⁶ And David built there an altar to the LORD and presented burnt offerings and peace offerings and called on the LORD, and the LORD answered him with fire from heaven upon the altar of burnt offering. ²⁷ Then the LORD commanded the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath.” What a day. Then we're told in verse 28.

“At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he sacrificed there.”

And the writer of 1 Chronicles wants you to understand his usage of the word, there. *“...he sacrificed there.”* because he's sacrificing on this Ornan guy's threshing floor. It's like, why would they go there? I mean, why would they do it there? Sure, he was told to do it once and God answered, but why would he keep sacrificing there? And we're told then in verse 29, and this is almost like a parenthetical comment,

“For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses had made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt offering were at that time in the high place at Gibeon,”

They hadn't been moved to Jerusalem. That's really where David should have gone if he wanted to offer any further sacrifices. He should have gone there but you know why he didn't go? It says in verse 30,

“but David could not go before it to inquire of God, for he was afraid (he still had a great fear. And you see a big angel with a drawn sword that's going to, something's going to stick with you. And he was afraid) of the sword of the angel of the LORD.”

And so, he feared God. All right, now I want you to read just the very first verse of the next chapter and that's as far as we're going to go tonight. Verse 1 of the next chapter,

“Then David said, “Here shall be the house of the LORD God and here the altar of burnt offering for Israel.”

Where is he pointing to? The threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. And we know that David didn't actually build the temple where those sacrifices were going to take place, his son Solomon did. And we know that that mound where Ornan had his threshing floor, we know what it's called. It's called Mount Moriah. And you might say to yourself, big deal. Why is that significant? Well, it's significant because hundreds of years before, God spoke to a man by the name of Abraham. He said, Abraham, I want you, well here, let me put it on the screen for you.

Genesis 22:1-2 (ESV)

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.

Now, let me, and if you're not familiar with the story, let me fill you in real quick. Abraham didn't sacrifice his son, Isaac, there on Mount Moriah. He got ready to, he got ready to. In fact, as they're putting this altar together and everything, Isaac and Abraham are having a conversation and Isaac says, Father, the wood and the fire are here. But where's the lamb for the sacrifice? And Abraham said the most amazing thing. He said, God himself will provide the lamb.

And here they are on Mount Moriah, the place where the sacrifices would then take place and point to the coming of the final sacrifice, who is Jesus Christ for our sins, and God himself did provide the lamb right on the same spot, where David purchased this land from Ornan, built a temple and where, for years, it became this symbol of the final sacrifice that would one day happen for our sins.