

Value Added - 2 Sam. 24

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Decay

1. I had an emergency dentist appointment Wednesday.
2. For the last couple weeks I've had a tooth that was giving me grief.
3. I could tell a real problem was in the works, so I called on Tuesday & they got me in first thing the next morning.
4. Sure enough, the dentist found *decay* under an old filling. He said I got in just in time.

B. Spiritual Decay

1. As we come to the last ch. of 2Sam, though Israel is enjoying an unparalleled time of peace & prosperity, *spiritual decay* has begun to eat away at the foundations of national life.
2. David has led Israel to its *zenith* but the sun is setting on his reign.
3. And the fire that marked David's earlier years has died down, his passion for God has cooled.
4. David was a warrior & now that there were *no more battles to fight*, his vigor & vitality diminished.
5. His once vibrant leadership began to dull--& as it did, so did the *spiritual fervor & devotion* of the people around him.
6. Slowly, quietly; the nation began to turn from God.
 - a. Not to idols—*yet*; that would come later. At this point, their hearts are beginning to turn from God -
 - b. And as they did, the sins they had been so careful to avoid crept in.
7. God moved to *correct* them by sending a plague.
8. It's sad but true; when life is going well it seems *most people* have little time for God.
9. But when trouble comes, they become *religious*; falling to their knees in a desperate plea for God to rescue them.
10. If this is what it takes to bring His people back to Him, God will send distress.

II. TEXT

A. V. 1

¹Again the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah."

1. Every 10 years, the US federal government takes a comprehensive census of the population.
2. The census is used for determining the proper # of elected officials for an area.
 - a. For taxation. For setting voting districts.
 - b. For knowing where to allocate resources.
 - c. For developing emergency plans, etc.
3. Censuses are something governments have done since ancient times. They're a necessary part of *good* governance.
4. During the Exodus & Conquest of Canaan, several censuses were taken of Israel, so there wasn't anything *inherently wrong* w/numbering the people.
5. What made *David's* action wrong *here* was that this *wasn't* a census so he

- could do a better job of serving the people.
- a. The words used in the next vs. & the parallel passage in 1 Chr. make it clear this was a military census; a *recruitment* of all males old enough to fight.
 - b. *This was an ancient version of the draft.*
6. David knew from that copy of the law he'd written with his own hand that Israel's king was *never* to make moves to bolster his military might *apart* from God's instructions.
 - a. He was never to amass things like war horses or chariots.
 - b. His dependence was to be on the Lord & not in superior technology or numbers.
 - c. And he was only to go to war against those God directed.
 - d. But those days were past. Israel's conquests are complete.
 7. After a few years of peace, the soldier in Dave was itching for a fight so he began to mobilize for war.
 8. This was his preliminary move.
 9. The problem is, it was a bold reversal of David's earlier remarkable dependency on God.
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B. Contradiction?

1. Right here in v. 1 we find one of the most *supposedly damning examples of a contradiction* in the Bible.
 2. This is one of the *premier passages* skeptics use to say the Bible cannot be inspired.
 3. 1 Chr. is the parallel account of David's life & in ch. 21 we find this same story.
 - a. While here in 2 Sam. it says God moved David to number the people,
 - b. 1 Chr. says it was *Satan* who moved him. So, who was it—God or the devil?
 - c. The answer is = BOTH! And we need look no further than the opening chapter of Job to see how this works.
 4. The devil is a murderer & destroyer ever looking for a way to ruin on us. It's only the gracious hand of God that holds him at bay.
 5. Here, in ch. 24, Israel had begun to stray from God but was enjoying such abundance their ears had become dull to the voice of God.
 6. So He removed a layer of His protection & allowed the devil to tempt David to wig out.
 7. Because David's own heart had grown cool to the Lord, he gave in to that temptation & gave the order for the census.
 8. Make no mistake—the devil didn't MAKE David DO anything – he merely tempted him.
 - a. That David *yielded* to that temptation only *proves* what was going on in his heart.
 - b. Remember that when the devil went after Job with all the trials & temptations, trying to get him to turn against, God, *Job resisted* & stayed right with God.
 - c. That David *fell* to this temptation *only revealed* that his relationship with the Lord had slipped.
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9. The same thing happens in our lives.
 - a. We go along for months or years, growing in the Lord.
 - b. We reach a kind of spiritual plateau, just as Israel was at a high point here.
 - c. We're cruising along thinking everything's peachy – that we're great!
 - d. But God sees some spiritual decay eating away at our hearts.
 - e. So He pulls back His protection for a moment & the enemy hammers away –
 - 1) And suddenly we find ourselves faced with a massive temptation –
 - 2) And all our supposed spiritual smugness goes right out the window.
 - f. *Sometimes the mature saint falls hard.*
 - g. If that's happened to you, realize the weakness/tendency to that *was always there!*
 - h. God saw it & wanted to deal with it – to give you victory *over* it.
 - i. (seeds)
10. David thought he was fine, that everything was hunky-dorey spiritually speaking.
 - a. The fact is, his heart had strayed from the Lord.
 - b. All that happens here woke him to the reality of the dangerous place he'd let himself go to.

C. Vs. 2-4

²So the king said to Joab the commander of the army who was with him, "Now go throughout all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, and count the people, that I may know the number of the people." ³And Joab said to the king, "Now may the LORD your God add to the people a hundred times more than there are, and may the eyes of my lord the king see *it*. But why does my lord the king desire this thing?" ⁴Nevertheless the king's word prevailed against Joab and against the captains of the army. Therefore Joab and the captains of the army went out from the presence of the king to count the people of Israel.

1. Joab knew something bad was brewing and tried to talk David out of it.
2. But David's mind was made up & vs. 5-9 tell us in a little less than 10 months they covered the entire nation & made a census of all the able-bodied, battle-ready men of Israel & Judah.

D. Vs. 10-14

¹⁰And David's heart condemned him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done; but now, I pray, O LORD, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly."

1. This *proves* what David commanded wasn't merely a census of the population.
2. It was a *military enlistment* of men into Israel's army.
 - a. Other passages referring to the *official standing army* at this time *confirm* this.
 - b. And it explains why it took nearly 10 months to complete the task.
 - c. They weren't just counting heads; they were *inducting men* into the army.

3. Once done, David feels bad. He realizes he's given into temptation & had been contemplated a war not directed by God.
4. Here's another common experience of the believer –
 - a. To be tempted, to yield,
 - b. Then as soon as the deed is done, to *feel horrible about it!*
5. While David was convicted & repentant, the rest of the nation that's experiencing it's own form of spiritual decay, *isn't yet*. They need the heat turned up a bit.
6. David is their leader –the nation takes it's cue from him, especially in the pursuit of God.
 - a. He'd *led them into* the spiritual coolness that resulted in all this.
 - b. And now he would *lead them out* of it back into fellowship with God.
 - c. But they aren't there yet. They *need help* getting there. So . . .

E. Vs. 11-17

¹¹Now when David arose in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, ¹²"Go and tell David, 'Thus says the LORD: "I offer you three *things*; choose one of them for yourself, that I may do *it* to you.'"" ¹³So Gad came to David and told him; and he said to him, "Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? Or shall you flee three months before your enemies, while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' plague in your land? Now consider and see what answer I should take back to Him who sent me." ¹⁴And David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies *are* great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man."

7. Israel would only come to repentance by a time of trouble, so God sent the prophet Gad with 3 options.
 - a. David was to choose what form trouble would take: Famine, plague, or foreign oppression.
 - b. David didn't want Israel's distress to come at the hands of man so war was out.
 - c. He knew God is merciful & that it would be better to look for correction from His hand. God sent 3 days of plague.

¹⁵So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel from the morning till the appointed time. From Dan to Beersheba seventy thousand men of the people died.

8. The plague came on the very one's David thought to forge into a weapon of attack on another nation.
9. The quick lethality & number of deaths made it clear to all this wasn't a coincidence; it was the hand of God.

¹⁶And when the angel stretched out His hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented from the destruction, and said to the angel who was destroying the people, "It is enough; now restrain your hand." And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. ¹⁷Then David spoke to the LORD when he

saw the angel who was striking the people, and said, “Surely I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand, I pray, be against me and against my father’s house.”

10. The plague swept throughout the land for 3 days. In its final hour, it came to the outskirts of Jerusalem.
11. Because David was now right with God & walking in fellowship with Him once more, he was seeing things rightly. God opened his eyes to *see* the *spiritual agent* behind the plague.
12. The angel was paused at summit of Mt. Moriah just north of the city, near a bare piece of rock owned by a local named *Araunah*.
13. As David was given this glimpse into the spiritual realm, he realized the seriousness of his error & asked God to relent from the devastation.
 - a. He thought all that was happening was *solely* his fault.
 - b. He didn’t realize the plague was aimed at bringing not only he, but the *entire nation* to repentance.

F. Vs. 18-25

¹⁸And Gad came that day to David and said to him, “Go up, erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.” ¹⁹So David, according to the word of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded. ²⁰Now Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming toward him. So Araunah went out and bowed before the king with his face to the ground. ²¹Then Araunah said, “Why has my lord the king come to his servant?” And David said, “To buy the threshing floor from you, to build an altar to the LORD, that the plague may be withdrawn from the people.” ²²Now Araunah said to David, “Let my lord the king take and offer up whatever seems good to him. Look, *here are oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing implements and the yokes of the oxen for wood.* ²³All these, O king, Araunah has given to the king.” And Araunah said to the king, “May the LORD your God accept you.”

1. The prophet Gad brought a message David should go to the place where the plague was halted, erect an altar, then offer sacrifices there. David went as instructed.
 - a. When Araunah saw the king approaching, he went out to greet him & ask why he’d come.
 - b. David then asked to buy his threshing floor where the angel stood so he could build an altar.
 - c. Araunah offered to not only *donate* the spot, but to contribute the wood & sacrifice.
2. It was a generous offer because this was *prime real estate*, sitting as it was just north of the capital & center of what was at that time, the *Middle East’s premier kingdom!*

²⁴Then the king said to Araunah, “No, but I will surely buy *it* from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with

that which costs me nothing.” So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. ²⁵And David built there an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD heeded the prayers for the land, and the plague was withdrawn from Israel.

3. Here’s another verse the skeptics love to cap on as a contradiction.
 - a. V. 24 says David paid **50 shekels of silver** while 1 Chr. 21:25 says he paid **600 shekels of gold**.
 - b. Which is it? Again, Both!
 - c. He paid 50 shekels of silver for the threshing floor & the offerings he made *at that time*.
 - 1) A threshing floor isn’t a very large area, maybe a thousand sq. ft.
 - 2) It was a piece of flat bedrock used at harvest time to separate the grain from the chaff.
 - d. Since Araunah’s threshing floor was the *principle feature* of this plot of land, David later offered to buy all of it & paid 600 shekels of gold for the entire area, which covered the entire top of Mt. Moriah.
4. This became the location of the future temple; both Solomon’s & Herod’s temple stood there.
 - a. It’s the same place Abraham had offered Isaac a thousand years before.
 - b. And a thousand years after this it was the place where Christ was crucified.
5. In our day, it’s the center of most of the geo-political tensions in our world because it’s the focal point of conflict between the Jews & Muslims.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Friendship

1. But it’s what David said in v. 24 that I want to end with today.
2. **Why** Araunah offered to donate the land isn’t mentioned.
 - a. He may have thought it the *politically expedient* thing to do.
 - b. It would have *indebted* David to him, allowing Araunah to call in favors later.
3. Whatever Araunah’s motive, David wasn’t in the mood to play politics or begin haggling over price.
4. People were dying & time was of the essence. So he responded to Araunah’s offer with an emphatic, “NO!”
5. Then says something remarkable,
“I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing.”
6. David is the *only person* in the Bible God calls *a man after His own heart*.
7. His response here, now that he’s been restored to the Lord, gives us a clue to understanding what it is God is looking for.
8. David had been told by God through Gad to build an altar & make an offering.
 - a. He didn’t hear this as a call to *religious rituals*.
 - b. It was an *invitation* to renewed fellowship with God.
 - c. David saw *the altar as a meeting place*, an *appointment* God was making with him;

- d. And the *offering* was the *means* by which they could *commune*.
- 9. On Tuesday of this week, I'm meeting with a good friend for lunch.
 - a. Now, it's been *too long* since we got together.
 - b. We used to work-out together & spent quite a bit of time with one another. I love the guy & know he feels the same way.
 - c. We have that kind of friendship where all either of us would have to do is pick up the phone & say, "Hey, can you help me?" And we'd drop what we were doing & be there
 - d. But our schedules are slammed, so we haven't just hung out for too long.
 - e. We were supposed to grab lunch a couple weeks ago but something came up & we had to postpone. God willing, we'll meet Tuesday.
 - f. Bandits is the place; lunch is the event – and through these we'll share life & enjoy our friendship with one another.
- 10. Now, here's the deal – **I'm buyin'**! He bought last time. I'm buyin' this time, not just because it's my turn, but because *I want to*. I want him to know how much I appreciate him & what a good friend he is.
- 11. For David, the altar was the place and the offering was the event of his fellowship, his friendship with God.
- 12. He wanted to let God know how much he appreciated all God had done for him & how *now* he recognized he'd allowed himself to *take that relationship for granted*.
- 13. So when Araunah offered to donate the place & offering, David said, **"No! I'm buyin'!"**
- 14. He wanted to let God know how much he treasured & valued His friendship.

B. Autopilot

1. Have you ever woken up to the fact you've taken an important relationship for granted?
 - a. Maybe your husband or wife?
 - b. Your children or parents?
 - c. A good friend?
 - d. God?
 2. It hits you like a ton of bricks you've let a *very important relationship* slip into *autopilot*, & you've been cruising on like that for weeks, maybe months or years.
 3. Early on the morning of Sept. 1, 1983, Korean Airlines Flight 007 was shot down by Soviet fighters after having flown a long way into restricted Soviet airspace. 269 people were killed.
 - a. It was later discovered the aircrew had put the autopilot on the wrong setting.
 - b. At first the deviation from the approved flight path was so slight no one took any notice.
 - c. But hours later, they were hundreds of miles off course & weren't responding to the numerous warnings that were being sent, thinking they couldn't be referring to them.
 4. Our relationship with God cannot be put on autopilot. It's a living, dynamic, daily reality that requires constant focus & attention.
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C. Value-Added

1. What we see in David here provides a great example for how to come back if we realize our spiritual course has taken us into dangerous territory.
2. What we learn from David's words is that the relationships that are truly important to us, *we will gladly sacrifice for*.
3. Because we *value* them, we'll *invest ourselves in them*.
 - a. Look at the young couple in love. See how *he works to show her* his love.
 - b. Observe how *she sacrifices* to show him hers.

4. "Value-added" is a phrase used today to describe something *added* to a product or service that increases its value.
 - a. A company adds value to something because they want to make it more appealing to the consumer.
 - b. It's a product or service they hope will develop a *closer loyalty* on the part of the buyer because of the quality.
 - c. When a company *adds value* to something – what they're aiming at isn't just to make a "*sale to a customer*" – they're seeking to *build a relationship with a long-term partner*.
5. That's what David did that that day on Mt. Moriah.
 - a. Gad came with an invitation to renew his relationship with God.
 - b. In answering the invitation, *David invested himself* because he understood God wasn't asking for a mere religious ritual.
 - c. He was renewing the love & friendship they had once knew, but David had let slip.

6. This passage puts an important question before us this morning – What is our relationship with God costing us?
 - a. Think about what it cost Him.
 - b. God loved us so much, He sent His only Son.