

**David**  
**A Compromised Heart**  
**Part 7**  
**2 Samuel 24**  
**Pastor Charles Price**  
**December 13, 2015**

Well Chris said, “Focus on what the preacher is trying to say” so you can do that for the next few minutes.

I am going to read from 2 Samuel Chapter 24 this morning. And this will be the last week that we are looking at events in the life of David. We have had to be selective, of course, because we have a lot of information about David.

And I feel that this event I am going to read to you and talk about this morning, which comes at the end of David’s life, or towards the end of his life, in my Bible the heading is: “David counts his fighting men.”

When I was studying this week Hilary came into my study and said, “What are you preaching about on Sunday?”

I said, “David counts his fighting men.”

She said, “Oh man, that doesn’t sound very exciting.”

Sounds like that old nursery rhyme we used to have in England – I don’t know if you know it, you know,

*The Grand Old Duke of York (do you know that one?)  
Had ten thousand men.  
He marched them up to the top of the hill,  
Then he marched them down again.*

*When they were up, they were up,  
When they were down, they were down  
And when they were only half way up  
They were neither up nor down.*

Do you remember that one? How many know that one? Oh yeah – quite a few of you do. Good, good, good.

Well let me read then from 2 Samuel Chapter 24 about David counting his fighting men. And you will see why this is of value in its principles to us as well.

Let me first of all read a little bit of the story to give you its basic ingredients. It is a story that has several mysteries in it. We read it and scratch our head. “Why is that?”

Verse 1 of 2 Samuel 24:

“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.’”

That’s the first mystery. Why was it an incitement to get David to take a census?

Verse 2:

“So the king said to Joab...”

(Joab was his faithful commander.)

“The king said to Joab and the army commanders with him, ‘Go throughout the tribes of Israel from Dan...’”

(That’s way in the north.)

“... to Beersheba...”

(That’s way in the south.)

“... and enroll the fighting men, so that I may know how many there are.’”

“But Joab replied to the king, ‘May the LORD your God multiply the troops a hundred times over, and may the eyes of my lord the king see it. But why does my lord the king want to do such a thing?’”

So they go and count them and in Verse 8,

“After they had gone through the entire land, they came back to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days.

“Joab reported the number of the fighting men to the king: In Israel...”

(That’s the northern part.)

“In Israel there were eight hundred thousand able-bodied men who could handle a sword, and in Judah...”

(That’s the southern part.)

“...there were five hundred thousand.”

In other words, an available army of 1.3 million people in total.

Next Verse 10:

“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.’”

That’s the second big mystery. Why does David, having done what God told him to do, then suddenly become conscience-stricken and full of remorse?

Well down in Verse 11:

“Before David got up the next morning, the word of the LORD had come to Gad the prophet, David’s seer: ‘Go and tell David, “This is what the LORD says: I am giving you three options. Choose one of them for me to carry out against you.”’”

And the three options were – and I will just summarize them to you – he could have either three years of famine that would come throughout the land, or three months of being pursued by his enemies or three days of a deadly plague.

“So David, which of those three would you choose?”

And in Verse 15, David had chosen the short option – the plague.

“So the LORD sent a plague on Israel from that morning until the end of the time designated, and seventy thousand of the people from Dan to Beersheba died.”

And down to Verse 18:

On that day Gad went to David and said to him, ‘Go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.’

“So David went up, as the LORD had commanded through Gad.

“When Araunah looked and saw the king and his men coming toward him, he went out and bowed down before the king with his face to the ground.

“Araunah said, ‘Why has my lord the king come to his servant?’

“‘To buy your threshing floor,’ David answered, ‘so I can build an altar to the LORD, that the plague on the people may be stopped.’”

“Araunah said to David, ‘Let my lord the king take whatever pleases him and offer it up. Here are oxen for the burnt offering, and here are threshing sledges and ox yokes for the wood.

“‘O king, Araunah gives all this to the king.’ Araunah also said to him, ‘May the LORD your God accept you.’

“But the king replied to Araunah, ‘No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.’

“So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them.

“David built an altar to the LORD there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then the LORD answered prayer in behalf of the land, and the plague on Israel was stopped.”

Well that’s the story and it’s a rather strange one. I want to ask four questions about it, and from that perhaps we might recognize why this is in the Scripture, because everything in Scripture is for our benefit, for our instruction, for our encouragement, for our growth.

And the four questions I am going to ask are simply: who, why, what and where?

First of all, who instigated this counting of the fighting men of Israel and Judah? Because the narrative takes us behind the scenes and it says in Verse 1,

“The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, ‘Go and take a census of Israel and Judah.’”

So it’s very straightforward – the LORD incited him. But the intriguing thing is that God later punishes him for the thing which it says He incited him to.

However there is a second account of the same story in 1 Chronicles Chapter 21, exactly the same story, almost word for word. But it says there,

“Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel.”

Now those are two conflicting statements. The one says “The LORD incited David to take a census”; the other says, “Satan incited David to take a census.”

Now you will appreciate that confusing what the Lord does and what Satan does is a pretty important thing to not do. If something is of the devil and we call it of the Lord or something of the Lord and we say it’s of the devil, it’s going to get us into all kinds of trouble because the Lord and Satan are in diametric conflict with each other.

They are not equals of course, good and bad fighting equally; Satan is a created being; God is the Creator. God is omnipresent; Satan is not omnipresent – he is in one place as he moves around.

But on the one hand here it says that the Lord incited David and on the other hand it says that Satan incited David.

So why does it attribute the same thing to both?

Well it's always important when we study Scripture to ask the question, what is the context in which this has been written?

And many of you know that the books of Samuel and the books of Kings, 1 and 2 Kings, and the books of Chronicles, 1 and 2 Chronicles, cover a lot of the same material, sometimes with the same stories.

And so we are good at reading 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings; we know those books quite well. But when we get to Chronicles, it's so repetitive, most of us skip it; we have read all that before.

But they write from a different perspective. Samuel and Kings write from a human perspective - if you like, a journalist on the ground writing what they see.

Chronicles writes from a divine perspective. Chronicles writes with insight only God has and from a perspective that God has.

So for instance, if you read the life of David in Chronicles you find all his big sins are missing. Why? Because when God forgives, He forgets.

From the human perspective, when you look at all the sins of David, they are there in all their gory detail.

The only one that is included in Chronicles is this event, and it's included in this event because, from the Chronicles point of view, the divine point of view, there is a deeper issue here going on.

Behind the scenes Satan rose up against Israel and incited David.

Now I read a very helpful thing by Walter Kaiser, who has written a book called "The Hard Sayings of the Old Testament," a good reference book. You look up some of these tough sayings and see what he has to say.

And he says, according to Hebrew thinking, whatever God permits, Satan commits. So he says under divine providence, because Satan has to be permitted to do what he does, everything ultimately goes back to God. So why not say that in the first place?

In other words, if Satan did this attack on David but he could only do it with God's permission, so God in His permissive will had a reason why He let Satan do this, though it is Satan who attacked him, why not attribute it to God who permitted this to happen in the first place?

And we have this dilemma several times in the Scripture. The story of Job, of course, is a well-known example of this. Job was a good living, innocent, prosperous man.

And one day God called His angels before Him. Satan is a fallen angel and once in a while he is hauled up to stand before God.

“How are you getting on?”

“Causing as much trouble as I can.”

“How about Job?”

And Satan said, “Well, You built a hedge around Job. You made life good for Job.”

“Alright,” said God “we will take the hedge down and you can attack him. Don't take his life; don't hurt his body.”

And you remember how that Job's life began to fall apart because of the attack that originated in Satan. And then he was permitted to go further and to attack his body, but not to kill him.

And he goes through 36 chapters of suffering, and at the end of them, Job speaks to God and he says, “I know You can do all things and no plan of Yours can be thwarted.”

So Job says, “Behind all of this stuff I have been through, You have a plan, You have a purpose through this.”

Now it was satanic attack but within the permissive will of God when Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. It was the devil who did the attacking, but it was the Father, through the Holy Spirit, who led Him into that situation and allowed it to take place.

Everything Satan does is ultimately by the permission of God. God sets the parameters. So in Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 10:13 Paul writes,

“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

Temptation is going to be a common experience, he says. It is common to man, but it is also a controlled experience. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. And it is a conquerable experience because there will always be a way, when you are tempted, a way out that you can escape.

The point is God sets the limit but He is not responsible for the sin.

And in the book of James, Chapter 1:13, James writes,

“When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me,’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.”

Though God permits, He does not originate things that are evil and sinful. And this is a satanic attempt to derail Israel (we’ll see why in a moment), to derail Israel, but on a divine commission and therefore they are attributed to both sources.

But from the devil’s point of view, he is tempting Israel to weaken them. From God’s point of view, He is allowing this to test David and to test Israel to strengthen them.

And often the very thing the devil would use to destroy us is the very thing God uses to perfect us and purify us and strengthen us.

So that’s the first question – who instigated this? Under divine permission, Satan did. This was an evil thing.

Second question is why? Why was it a problem? Why is taking a census a problem?

We have a national census in Canada every five years and it gives a picture of the nation so that our governments can plan the necessary infrastructure and schools and hospitals and roads and public services and so on, and knowing how many people here is essential to be able to do that.

So why was it wrong for David to take a census? And the answer is we don’t know any law that forbids this. I can’t take you back to a verse even back in Leviticus, someone says, “Do not count the people.” There is no law that we are aware of that forbids that.

But clearly at some point David had been forbidden and Satan comes in on this area that had been forbidden, this important issue, and tempts David to do what he evidently was not to do.

But I want to suggest to you a reason why he was forbidden to count the people. Satan asking him to count the people was an attempt to turn David’s attention from divine resources (upon which he has depended all his life) to human resources on the basis of how many people we have and how equipped they are. This is the fighting men and the potential conscripts into the army that he has been asked to count.

Up until now there has been one explanation for the success of David’s reign. If you go back just two chapters, to Chapter 22 and let me read you Verse 2 through 4, although that chapter is all about this.

Verse 2 to 4 of Chapter 22:

“The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior – from violent men you save me.

“I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies.”

Now just those three verses alone; where did David find his refuge? It was in the Lord.

What was David’s rock? It was the Lord.

Who was David’s fortress? It was the Lord.

Where did David find his deliverance? It was by the Lord.

Who was his shield in battle? It was the Lord.

Where was his stronghold? It was in the Lord.

Where did he find refuge from violent men? It was in the Lord.

How was David saved from his enemies? It was by the Lord.

All those are in those three verses he has just written. But the answer is the same to all those questions. It is the Lord who is the source of His strength and safety and security. It is the explanation David has given for his life right from the time he was a boy.

You remember when, as a boy with his sheep out in the field, a lion came and he said, “The LORD delivered me from the lion.” He took the lion and slew it. Then a bear came. “The LORD delivered me from the bear.”

He didn’t say, “You know I have been doing some lion slaying courses and I have learned how to do it and now I did a course on bear killing and I got the weapons and I was hoping it would come to see if it works. And it did, you know.”

No, he says, “I was caught unawares and the LORD saved me from both these.”

And that was before he went in to fight Goliath. You remember, he went to fight Goliath because nobody else would take him on. And David, just a boy, went to him and I am going to read to you what it says in 1 Samuel 17:45,

“David said to Goliath, ‘You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.



“ ‘This day the LORD will hand you over to me...All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD’S, and he will give you into our hands.’ ”

And that is exactly what happened.

And then you go back following David’s life, his battles with the Philistines, his battles with the Ammonites, his battles with the Gibeonites. And his explanation was always the same.

You can go back one chapter from where we are looking into 2 Samuel 23. He has been in battle with the Philistines, and in Verse 10,

“The LORD brought about a great victory that day.”

This has been David’s strength and his dependency. Now Satan says, “You had better look at how many people you have got. You had better examine your resources – human resources.”

Sometimes as we grow older in our Christian lives we lose that trust, that willingness to risk everything on God and we start to become wanting more security, wanting being propped up.

David, count your fighting men so you know your resources, you know your strength, you know your capabilities, so that you can rely on that when you go into battle.

You know I have known Christian ministries in my life. I have known some missionaries. I have known churches that start with nothing but God and their dependence on Him and their obedience to Him.

And then as God begins to bless they get big and they accumulate assets and they build staff and they have big budgets. Nothing wrong with any of that, but they have become secure and predictable. And there is no longer any risk taking. In fact there is a risk aversion.

And there are churches even in this city today who were once strong, who were once vibrant, who once reaching out into their community, who were once producing men and women of God, but today they are a shell of their former selves.

It’s not because the demographic nature of their environment has changed; it will be because they have stopped that simple trust and obedience they once lived by, that enthusiasm that they knew.

Now you say, “Well we have to be practical.” And the answer is of course we do. We have to live within our resources – of course we do. We have to live within our manpower capability – of course we do. I mean Jesus acknowledged that in Luke 14:28:

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. We he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?”

That is good common sense, of course. But the problem is that this good common business sense has become separated from spiritual dependence, so this becomes the driving force.

A couple of verses later Jesus said,

“Suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand?”

And of course that is exactly what a king would do – find out the strengths of his enemy.

But here his military strategy has become separated from the spiritual dependence. And all this is about one key thing – not how many men David has; the issue here is all about where do you place your dependence?

Not do you or do you not have other resources – those are necessary – but where do you place your dependence?

And of course David knew all about human skill. When David slung his sling, for instance, and got Goliath in the forehead, I mean he knew how to sling a stone. He had done it many times as a shepherd. He had kept lots of animals away.

He didn't go out there and say, “Well Lord, I'll trust You just that this sling will send the stone in the right direction. The thing goes off in that direction, does a circle, does a figure 8, comes back and boom! right into Goliath's forehead.

No of course he took aim. And he was a good aim.

So these human factors are there and they are necessary, but David had known all his life, “if I credit my slingshot ability for the death of Goliath, I have missed the whole point. It was God who took me into that situation, humanly impossible; it is God who gave us victory over him,” as he says so many other times as well.

But now in his older years he is tempted to forget.

You know what we learn spiritually is equally important to know what we forget spiritually. We learn things and we grow. But you know what happens when we get older? We forget things we knew. We forget what brought us the joy of the Lord into our lives. There are things that we did once know that we no longer live by.

And you know I meet some grumpy old Christians who are complaining about this and about that and they were never like that in their younger days. But they have lost the freshness of the presence of the Lord Jesus in their lives. They have lost the vitality of their spiritual life. They have lost their joy in His Word. They have lost their fresh communion with Jesus.

You don't find this grumpy spirit amongst young Christians; you find it amongst old Christians because we forget what we knew. And we are settled now for comfort. "Don't rock my boat. Let me make sure everything is in place and I can live according to it."

It is David's temptation to count his men and become dependent on that instead of his lifelong habit of being dependent on God.

It translates so easily into our lives and David is forgetting the truth of Zechariah 4:6 which is written after David, but nevertheless he knew this truth that Zechariah wrote:

"It is not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the LORD Almighty."

Evidence I think that this story is about gaining confidence in their own resources instead of simply in God is because in Chapter 24:3 Joab replied to the king when he asked him to go and count the men,

"May the LORD your God multiply the troops a hundred times over, and may the eyes of my lord the king see it."

"Well I wish this could be bigger, larger, more numerical" because Joab's thinking now and David's thinking is the bigger the better, the stronger the safer, the more the merrier. "And I wish we could be 100 times stronger than we really are."

So he counted all the way from the north down through the area known as Israel and there were 800,000 fighting men capable of wielding a sword. In Judah, the southern area, 500,000 men. Together, 1.3 million soldiers.

And when the news of the count came back, Verse 10, immediately,

"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.'"

Do you notice David's conscience has become re-sensitized. I think about two or three weeks ago we talked about his conscience, how it had hardened. One sin led to another to another to another, and in the process his own conscience has become hardened. And we talked about the awful dangers of that.

But now it is re-sensitized. A work of God in our hearts will re-sensitize our conscience.

And David pleads to God that He will take away his guilt. Guilt is a word we don't like in our society but guilt is like pain. We don't like it, but it tells us something is wrong, draws our attention to something. It is like a siren that goes off in our hearts, to be heard, to be responded to.

Now it is true there is false guilt, usually related to shame. But there is true guilt as well and that true guilt, as in David's case, doesn't send him to hide under a tree somewhere but sends him back to God.

And God says that there is to be chastisement for what has gone on. Now we talked, I think it was last week, about the fact that those He loves He chastises. He is treating us as sons.

And He gives to David three options and he is to choose one of these options as a chastisement from God.

First one: for the nation to endure three years of famine throughout the land.

The second one: to have three months of fleeing from his enemies while they pursue him.

And the third one was three days of plague would sweep through the land.

David fell into deep distress over this choice, but he chose the shorter option (let's get it over with): three days of plague. And in three days 70,000 people died a highly infectious, deadly Ebola type disease.

Leaving aside the calamity of that, do you know what that did? Amongst other things, do you know what that did? I will tell you: it put a huge dent in David's carefully counted numbers.

In fact, each of the three options he was given would have undermined the very thing that he had been accumulating – the number of people. Joab was saying, "I wish it was a hundred times more than this."

Now, having tried to shore up their men by counting them, God's discipline was to reduce them, put a hole in their numbers, to humanly, physically, materially, to weaken them in the process, to bring them back to a position of dependence.

In your life and mine, when God chastises us (and He does because He loves us), when He disciplines us (and He does because He treats us like sons and daughters, like His children), the end of that discipline is a greater dependence on God. Not greater ability, but greater dependence upon God.

And the fourth question – who? was the first. Who instigated this? Satan, under divine commission with divine parameters.

Why was it a problem? Because it was an attempt to create a sense of self-sufficiency on which they would depend.

Third question: what happened? God brought judgement and discipline upon them.

Now the fourth question is where? Where was it to be rectified? Where was David to go in the face of this trauma and disaster?

In Verse 14,

“David said to Gad” (who was his prophet), “I am in deep distress. Let us fall into the hands of the LORD, for his mercy is great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men.”

And then in Verse 18,

“On that day Gad went to David and said to him, ‘Go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

“So David went up, as the LORD had commanded through Gad.”

Let me say at this point, this was a regular journey for a penitent sinner in the Old Testament. They took the journey to the altar of God, in this case to build it on the threshing floor of Araunah.

Every time you sinned you had to go to a priest and the blood of an animal would be shed as a substitute to cover your sin. There were the major offerings that they participated in to deal with their sin: the guilt offering, recognizing what they had done, the sin offering – recognizing they had done what they had done because of who they are, their own nature, the fellowship offering – being reconciled to God, the grain and the meal offering which is about fellowship and communion with God. And there was the burnt offering where everything you put onto the fire is burnt up and nothing left.

And David offers a fellowship offering to reconcile him to God, bring him back into fellowship with God. And the grain offering – everything I am, everything I have, everything I depend on is to be given up to you. That is the symbolism of the burnt offering.

And back in Old Testament days of course they repeated this time after time. They repeated it day in, day out, week in, week out, month in, month out, year in, year out.

In Hebrews 10 where it writes about this, Verse 11, it says,

“Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.”

Isn't there a feeling of monotony in that very verse? Day after day, again and again, but never sufficient.

That was under the Old Covenant.

In Verse 24 [25],

“David built an altar to the Lord there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings.”

And this of course, the repeated day after day, month after month, etc. is a foreshadowing. We know now because we read through New Testament glasses these Old Testament events and we know this is a foreshadowing of the cross of Jesus Christ where He once and for all finalized the issue of our sin.

And so the Hebrew writer in Hebrews 9:12 says,

“He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.”

Verse 26:

“But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

David lived in the day after day, again and again, week after week, month after month era but looks ahead now to the once for all era.

That’s why when Jesus Christ died the curtain in the temple, when He cried out, “It is finished,” was torn from top to the bottom. It was the curtain which separated the Holy of Holies, which is where the priest accessed once a year on the Day of Atonement with blood; that curtain was torn down.

There is no longer any offering in sacrifice like that. There is no longer a Day of Atonement. It is once for all; it is done; it is over; it is finished.

And we live in that era and we live in that day and we are invited to come with all our failings, all our sin, not to the threshing floor of Araunah but to the cross of Jesus Christ.

But, as we saw last week as well, we don’t come superficially – that doesn’t work - we come seriously.

And that is reinforced again in the final detail of this story, because David comes to purchase the threshing floor of Araunah and to purchase some wood from him for the fire, and then some oxen from him for the burnt offerings.

And Araunah tells him, “you don’t need to purchase it; I will give it to you free.” But the king in Verse 24 said to Araunah,

“No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.”

David is saying, “I am not going to get this cheaply or second hand or on your coattails. I am going to take full responsibility for this and I am going to be as sacrificial as I need to for this. This has to be at my expense. This has to hurt.”

Now don't parallel from that that we contribute to the forgiving power of the cross because, of course, we don't. But we don't just come to the cross for the free cleansing of our sin – we do that, but then we are to take up our cross, we are to deny ourselves; we are to relinquish our rights to Him. That's a New Testament teaching.

Is our Christianity just a religious exercise? Is it cheap, convenient balm for my conscience? (“Oh, my conscience is being disturbed” – deal with it – back to life.)

Or, in the words of Luke 14, Jesus said,

“Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”

Is my free forgiveness the basis then of a full surrender of everything we have (which is the burnt offering image) – everything we have, because “apart from that you cannot be My disciple.”

Somebody said many years ago, “*The entrance fee to heaven is nothing but the subscription is everything you have got.*”

There is a surrender and there is a cost there, and David recognizes that and he takes seriously the cost. And in Verse 24 and 25,

“David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them.

“David built an altar to the LORD there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then the LORD answered prayer in behalf of the land, and the plague on Israel was stopped.”

As I close, are you are Christian this morning but you have wandered from God? You have lost that exciting spirit of dependence you once enjoyed?

If you are an older person, like me, and forgotten what you once knew, forgotten what motivated the excitement of your Christian life when you were in your twenty's and thirty's, but now it is a drudgery, an obligation.

Are you living life in daily dependence upon God? Are you looking for a cheap relationship? Not a free one – the Gospel is free – but a cheap one, that makes no demands, requires no discipline of mind, requires no developing of fellowship and of trust? Because this incident is in our Scriptures not just to flesh out a bit of detail of David's life, but to teach us about these traps that Satan can lead us into of turning from our dependence on the Spirit of God, turning from our dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ, turning from our love for Him and our obedience to Him to living a life purely by human resources.

And like David, God may have to dent those human resources. His counted men – they had to revise that number because 70,000 of them died in the plague. It was the discipline of God.

You depend on them; God will dent them. For what purpose? To be spiteful? No, to bring you back, to bring you back to saying these things don't matter and the way I have made them matter; it is God Himself who is the center of my life and the One that really matters.

Let's pray together. I don't know how the Holy Spirit of God may have spoken to you personally. I don't know what issues have come into your mind in these last minutes. I don't know what thoughts have been triggered. Often in a situation like this our minds go to our problem area right away – we don't have to rummage around for it; it leaps out at us.

And I wonder if there are things in your life which are robbing you of your dependence on our living God. You need to confess that and ask the Lord that though those things are part of your life, they are not the determination of your life; they don't create the value to your life. It is the Lord Himself you place your unreserved trust.

Just a moment of silent prayer to talk to Him about anything about which He has spoken to you.

Lord, I pray for every person in this building today. I thank You for each person. I thank You that You love us, You work relentlessly to draw us to Yourself and then deeply into Your heart, into our union with Yourself.

I pray for those of us who may have never come to know Christ here this morning. We don't as yet have crossed that threshold of coming to the cross, confessing our sin and thanking You for our forgiveness made possible through the death of Jesus. We pray that we will do that this morning; we will know that we are clean as we leave here and that the Holy Spirit of God has come to indwell our lives.

For those of us who have known You, especially those of us who have forgotten what we once did know, we pray, Lord, You will restore to us the joy of our salvation, restore to us the depth of our walk with God, restore to us the excitement of our experience of You.