

Nov 29th 2009: 2 Samuel 24: "GRACE APPRECIATED"

On July 8th 1741 Jonathan Edwards preached a sermon...found a place in history
Entitled:--Sinners in the hands of an Angry God

It's a title...may well shock you

For today when we think of anger....we think mainly of violence--→Uncontrolled.....evil.....malicious
Mostly we see the angry party....**as the one in the wrong**
The strong against the weak.....The abuser against the victim

We delight to picture God as love.....As our heavenly Father who runs to greet the prodigal
..Delights to forgive the repentant.....And who ...as Rom 5:8 reminds us:-

demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

But to see Him as an angry wrathful God.....**as**....according to Hebrews 12:29...**a consuming fire**
..is not something that we like to dwell on

We don't like to remember that God's anger against people who have sinned.....is a terrible thing
He is unable to turn a blind eye....To excuse it

And that includes the unconfessed...continuous sin.....that too often surfaces in His own children

Consider His words to the church at Ephesus.....Rev 2:4-5

Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. ⁵Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

This anger of the Lord against sin.....is a recurrent theme of Scripture...in both the old and...
And it's found in our Bible reading..... in the first verse of 2 Sam 24

Again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel,

It's happened before.....Now it happens again
And the Hebrew word used for anger here.....is a very strong one....

Literally it means... to blow hard in the nostrils....to flare
used only of God's displeasure against sin....implies His aversion to it....readiness to punish it.

And then.....to emphasize the serious of God's anger...**another** word for anger that means to burn
also used.....**So what are being told**...is that...the anger of the Lord angered red hot against Israel

We are not told why this was so.....but we can guess that it concerned their support of Absalom
Their falling away from the worship of God....towards the idols
And a general spiritual deterioration.....from the king downwards

Whatever caused it.....God's anger against His people.....including David.....was great
....and as usual....out of that anger God acted:→

the rest of 2 Sam 24:1 says:
and he incited David against them, saying, "Go and take a census of Israel and Judah."

The alternative account of this story.....found in 1 Chron 21:1.....explains that **the he** who.....
was in fact Satan

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

Again we are not told why.....numbering Israel at this stage was such a great sin against God
From the passage we can clearly see.....that everyone but David knew it was wrong.....
as soon as David mentioned it

Even Joel.....who was less than super spiritual.....knew how wrong it was....1 Chron 21:6-7
But Joab did not include Levi and Benjamin in the numbering, because the king's command was repulsive to him. This command was also evil in the sight of God; so he punished Israel.

In fact Joel seems to have drawn out the process over ten months.....giving David time to change
Yet David persisted

The biggest sign of it being such an evil act is...of course....**that** it was generated in David's heart
...by Satan.....**As James tells us**...God doesn't tempt anyone to sin.....but here He allows Satan
So that through the punishment th

So despite the opposition of Joab....and the captains....the census takes place

David is given the results....and that night he couldn't sleep

He is conscience stricken because he knows the wrong he has done....and how great....

The next morning he is not surprised to find the prophet Gad.....doorstep
Gad brings the judgment of God.....It's a judgment against the people for their sins....
And against David for his.....**And David**....so aware of his sin....is expecting no doubt
that God would surely abandoned them completely.....

Instead he findsthat God offers him the choice of punishment
God will not obliterate His people.....though they deserved no less.....But He will punish

What to us seems so harsh.....was to David...a lot better than he had expected....
And that's why he speaks....when he chooses the punishment.....of God's great mercy:--v14

David said to Gad, "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."

So the punishment fell and 70,000 died.....but when the angel came to Jerusalem
God cut short the terrible punishment.....2 Sam 24: 16

When the angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, the LORD was grieved because of the calamity and said to the angel who was afflicting the people, "Enough! Withdraw your hand." The angel of the LORD was then at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

Chronicles tells us that when the Lord stopped the angel....the angels' sword was raised
..and the place.....The threshing floor**Was** a high point in Jerusalem
Indeed the very place where.....many centuries before...Abraham had raised his knife...

- **And God then** told David through Gad.....that he must build an altar.....and offer a sacrifice

So David meets with the owner.....and the owner....a non-Jew.....is fearful of the king coming
And when David offers to buy the threshing floor.....he offers to give it...and the sacrifice

But David knows how great is the mercy of the Lord to him.....**He understands**
How justified God was in His wrath against the sin.....and he must do this act.....
He must offer at his own cost...this sacrifice.....that will cover his sin and the sin.....

So in v24 we read:-

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."

When I first read this sometime ago.....I made a mark against this verse in my bible
For I know how easy it is.....to forget the full extent....of what I have been saved from thro.....
and because of I have forgotten....be content to give Him.....less than my very best

YET God's anger against sin in us has not changed

He is holy.....and the characteristic of His holiness.....is that sin in every form.....demands His wrath
...and it is only by His Grace.....that I have been saved from that terrible wrath

(A while ago I remember a man who had been bitten by a shark.....And he said in response ...that he didn't want the shark shot...The shark was just doing what sharks do It was hungry.....I was in the water...He took a bite...IT wasn't evil....it was just being a shark)

**When God punishes....He is simply being God.....THAT's what a holy God does
He punishes sin**

David knew that.....and that's why he refused to offer cheap obedience
Only something that cost him.....could begin to show his understanding of God's great mercy
And the extent of his gratitude.....for the reprieve he had been given

And for us who understand Calvary.....For us who know that close to that threshing floor
900 years later.....**the hand of** God visited His wrath for our sins.....upon One.....
Who being God....took my place.....Bore that wrath for my sins

Surely we must come anew before God**in** thankfulness that He found a way to save us
...**by making Him who knew no sin.....to be sin.....in our stead**

COME EACH DAY.....WITH AN APPRECIATION OF THAT GRACE THAT SAVED A WRETCH
.. **not to offer Him**..... something that costs us nothing.....but **something** that costs us everything

Our lives.....LIVING sacrifices....HIS to use...to send..... to cleanse..... to purify....to command

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.