

Trusting In Numbers

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2 Samuel 24:1-2 And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah. For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which was with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people.

1 Chronicles 21:1-2 And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel. And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beer-sheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it.

- I. To number the people was a sin in God's eyes.
 - A. This is made very clear from this whole account given here of this matter.
 - B. Israel had sinned and Satan provoked David to sin, as well.
 - C. Most people would not consider this to be a sin at all, and cannot understand why or how God could consider it to be a sin...
 - 1. Especially bad enough for the grievous punishment dealt out by God to deal with it.
 - D. The reason it is such a terrible sin is what the motives were behind the numbering of the people.
 - E. The reason was pride - in the people of Israel, and in the heart of their king, as well.
 - F. After weathering all the storms the nation had been through they began to be lifted up in their pride.
 - G. They began to nurture a pride and confidence in themselves.
 - 1. What a great nation they were.
 - 2. What great warriors they were.
 - 3. How much favor God had bestowed upon them.
 - 4. How they were the greatest nation ever to be on the earth.
 - H. In other words, they became very patriotic and gave themselves the glory instead of God.
 - 1. Thus, "...again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel."
 - I. The fastest way to lose the favor of God is to forget Him and start believing in yourself.
 - J. Numbering the people was the final straw, as it was a confirmation and the publishing of their pride and self-confidence on paper.
 - K. It was a means of comparing themselves to other nations and either being proud because they were more in number, or being proud because they were less in number but greater in power.

- II. Churches number their people for the same reason that David did, and fail to associate it with sin.
 - A. For years we have seen Baptist churches brag and boast and publish their numbers as proof of their success in the work of God.
 - B. Publishing their large numbers does not glorify God, but themselves.
 - C. The Catholic Church has the largest number of members, but that does not prove it is blessed of God.

- D. So counting the people and being encouraged or discouraged by the number has nothing to do with pleasing God, but with seeking to boost our self-image and pride.
- E. It was Satan who provoked David to number the people – not God.
- F. God never increased the people so they could win a battle or do a great work for God – He always diminished them, so that no flesh should glory in his sight.
- G. In spite of this, churches are always ashamed if they are small in number and proud if they are large in number.
- H. Everyone gauges the value of a church by how many attend.
 - 1. If the number is small they just don't count for anything and God is not with them.
 - 2. If the number is large they most certainly are blessed of God, successful, and surely are doing it right.

III. Any boasting or seeking to affirm our pride is sin.

- A. When we look around at our family, our church, or our nation we should see blessings from God, not be puffed up about who we are or what we have, or what we have accomplished.
- B. Those who brag to others about their families are guilty of the same thing David was here.

Proverbs 27:2 Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.

- 1. But then do not be lifted up in pride if they do.
- C. Those who brag and boast to others about their church and entertain a feeling of pride which sets their church on a pedestal above others are guilty of the same sin.
- D. The spirit of patriotism is the spirit that brought judgement upon Israel in this case.
 - 1. It is based upon, and its motivating power, is pride alone.
- E. This is the reason that God's anger was kindled against Israel and this is why this whole thing happened.

IV. So let us count our blessings and be truly mindful and thankful to God from whence they all came.

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

- A. Be truly humble before God and depending completely on Him like Jacob when he came home and met Esau.

Genesis 33:5 And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who are those with thee? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant.

Genesis 33:11 Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it.

- 1. Jacob had been increased greatly outwardly but reduced inwardly until there was no pride in him and he truly realized that God was the only reason he had anything, even his own life.
- B. Do not count your blessings by numbering them and then entertaining the notion that somehow you are special and God favors you more than others.
 - 1. But realize that it is only the mercy of God that you are not destitute and barren.