

## THE HAND OF THE LORD

The Life of David— 2 Samuel 24:10–21

We've been going through the life of David, and we get to another account of an incident in David's life. In this case, it's recorded in 2 Samuel 24. If you have a Bible with you, it begins at the top of the chapter. This incident begins at verse 1, but for our purposes we only need to be reading this middle section. Read it with me.

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."<sup>11</sup> Before David got up the next morning, the word of the Lord had come to Gad the prophet, David's seer:

12 "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.' " 13 So Gad went to David and said to him, "Shall there come upon you three years of famine in your land? Or three months of fleeing from your enemies while they pursue you? Or three days of plague in your land? Now then, think it over and decide how I should answer the one who sent me."

14 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." 15 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.

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.

17 When David saw the angel who was striking down the people, he said to the Lord, "I am the one who has sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? Let your hand fall upon me and my family." 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."

19 So David went up, as the Lord had commanded through Gad. 20 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. 21 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."

This is God's Word

I wish there was a Question and Answer time afterwards, because there's almost no way I am going to be able to answer all the questions that will arise in your minds as you read through a narrative like that. I think the best thing we can do is to deal with the two major issues. This account is given twice.

It's also given in 1 Chronicles 21. Actually, it's given with a little bit more detail there as a parallel account. On the one hand, it seems extremely difficult to understand; it even seems very odd. Yet it's really one of the most wonderful texts. Let's ask two questions to it, and I think that will get us at the two issues. The first question is what's so bad about counting the fighting men? In verse 10, "David was conscience-stricken after he had counted the fighting men ..." Up in the very beginning of the chapter ... I'll just read you this.

It says, "So the king said to Joab and the army commanders with him, 'Go throughout the tribes of Israel from Dan to Beersheba 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?' The king's word, however, overruled Joab and the army commanders; so they left the presence of the king to enroll the fighting men of Israel."

If you know anything about the history of Israel, you know Joab was a schnook, to use a theological term. Joab was an unscrupulous man. Joab was a murderous man. Joab was not a man of God. If you know something about Joab, you know this is one of the most amazing texts. Joab trembled with fear when he heard David was going to count the fighting men.

Golly, if you see the sort of things Joab has done in cold blood, you realize this is not a man who's a wimp, and he's also not a man with much of a conscience. What in the world is going on here that even Joab said, "My Lord, don't do this. How dare you do this?" David said, "I'm going to do it anyway."

What is this? What's so bad about this? That's the first issue. The second issue is, as we're going to see, what David is doing is almost the same thing Saul had done, but God rejected Saul as king. Yet here we find God responds to David with grace, and God responds to David by not rejecting him.

Really, the two questions are why this sin? and why this grace? What is wrong with this? Why is this a sin? What is so wrong with counting the fighting men? Then why is it God says, "Enough. Stay the hand. I am not going to smite Jerusalem and David and the government. I'm not going to reject David the way I rejected Saul"? Why? Why this sin? Why this grace?

### **I. Why this sin?**

Why was it so wrong to count the fighting men? If you don't mind, I'm going to take just a couple of minutes to almost digress, and I'll tell you why in a minute. I want you to realize the number one reason why it was wrong for David to count the fighting men was because God said so.

A. The general reason. The reason I'm going to pause and say this and note this for a moment is in some ways when you read this text and you see God angry about something and you see God responding with tremendous displeasure to something, you don't see any good reason why this thing is wrong. David is trying to do something, and you don't see the downside. How is this unwise? How is this hurting anybody? What's so bad? You don't see any reasons why it's bad. All you know is God said it's bad.

There are plenty of times in your life in which you're going to have the same situation. Before I as the communicator here, before I as the Bible teacher go on to try to show you why it's so bad ... I was actually preparing the sermon, and I was running on to say, "Everybody is going to wonder why it's so bad, and I'd better show them why." Then I began to realize why it's a little dangerous to do that too quickly.

Do you not realize very often you're going to find situations just like this text? You read the text. You see God saying, "This displeases me." You see God speaking very intensely, and you don't see any good reason why this would be wrong except God says so. Why is what David did wrong? Ultimately, it's just because God said so.

The reason I say this is a lot of people today ... I would say the ruling understanding of morality today is pragmatism. The way we decide something is wrong is we ask, "Is it hurting anybody?" Something is right if

it works. Something is wrong if it doesn't work, if it hurts somebody, or if it leads to some kind of destruction. We're pragmatists. Even though we become Christians and we profess to be Christians, we are so surrounded by that pragmatic age that very often we function as pragmatists anyway.

In other words, I know there are people here who say, "We're Christians," and yet when you come to something that God says don't do and you don't see a downside and you don't see any good reason why ... You know for 2,000 years the Bible and the church have said, "This is wrong," and yet, as that wonderful theologian once said, "It can't be wrong if it feels so right." Do you remember that? Am I dating myself?

If it feels right and it doesn't hurt anybody and I can't see any reasons why ... The spirit of the age says, "Do it." The Scripture says, "It doesn't matter if it feels good. It doesn't matter if it looks wise. If your unaided human reason can't see any downside and you can't see any reasons why it's wrong, if God says it's wrong, it's still wrong. Do you see one of the reasons I don't want to run on right here? Because I know a lot of us are functioning that way.

I've had this exchange with one of my children a number of times. I say, "Do this." My son says, "Dad, I'll do it if you can show me some reason why." I may say, "Don't do this," and he'll say, "Dad, I won't do this, but you have to show me a reason why." I will usually say, and I'm not the first parent to have this conversation, "Listen, if you do it only because I've shown you a reason why, then you're not obeying. You're just agreeing."

When my son says, "I'll obey you if you show me why," what he's really saying is, "I won't obey you. I will agree. You've made an application. I'm sitting here, and if you want to command me, just fill out this application in triplicate please, and I'll decide if your commandment is worthy, if it's wise, if it accords with my self-interest, if it works in with my mission and personal vision statement. I'll work it out. Please apply. I'll obey if you show me reasons why," which is another way of saying, "I won't obey."

I believe there are probably a lot of Christians who have never obeyed God. All they've ever done is agree with him. In fact, until God shows you or tells you to do something that feels bad, that is frustrating, and you can't see any good reason why other than, "God says it's wrong," until you get to that place and do it simply because God says it's wrong, you have never obeyed. All you've ever done is agreed. You say, "What's so big about obedience?" I'll tell you.

A long, long time ago, in the beginning of time, the first pragmatist came into the garden of Eden and said to Adam and Eve, "Why can't you eat of that tree? Why?" We're not told too much about that conversation. One of the things we're told is, just before Adam and Eve ate of the tree, they looked at the tree, and they saw it was good to eat.

What does that mean? What that means is the Serpent got them to say, "Why would it be wrong to eat of that tree? Is there something wrong with the fruit?" Maybe the Serpent said, "Cut a little piece up and feed it to the little bunny rabbit over there." In other words, the point was Adam and Eve looked and realized, "There's nothing wrong with this fruit. There's no good reason not to eat this thing. I don't see any downside. I don't get it. It seems arbitrary. It seems like naked power," and they ate.

What God was saying was, "The reason I asked you not to eat of the tree ... There was a reason, and that is there was no reason except I wanted to know if you would do this out of love for me. Would you do this, having determined because I am your Creator and your Sustainer you owe it to me to trust in my wisdom over yours?"

Whenever you say, "I will obey what God says as long as it makes sense to me, as long as I agree, as long as I see the reasons," what you're really saying is, "I refuse to make that determination. I refuse to say, 'Just because you're God, just because you're wiser than I, just because you're my Creator, my Sustainer, my Redeemer, just because of that, I will follow you.'" What you're really doing is refusing that.

To say, "I will obey if I see the reason why" is another way of saying, "I will not obey," and to say, "I will not obey," is to say, "I refuse to treat you as God. I demote you." That's serious. God said to Adam and Eve, "The reason you shouldn't have eaten of the tree, was because there was no reason other than who I am and who you are."

By the way, there is a reason why this is wrong. There is, and it's a very important reason. Why was it wrong to count the fighting men? Because God said so. That's an important thing. I'm afraid in a place like New York, if I just run right over and immediately show you the reasons why, you're going to miss a very important lesson that needs to rest on our hearts today, but that's always the general reason something is wrong: because God says so. But there's a very specific reason.

B. The specific reason. The specific reason is really not easy to see, as I just said a minute ago. There are a number of times in which God gives you a rule, gives you a law or a command, and it just doesn't make sense, "But I'm going to do it." However, in this case it does make sense, but you have to stand back. In a sense, you have to look at the history of Israel. If you want a hint, when I give you the context, you'll see what the hint means.

Down here in verse 13, it says, "So Gad went to David and said to him, 'Shall there come upon you three years of famine in your land? Or three months of fleeing from your enemies while they pursue you? Or three days of plague in your land?'" David said, "I would rather not be in the hands of men. I put myself in the hands of God." Actually, that's the meaning of all this. To understand it you have to understand something about the history of Israel. There was another time in which a king of Israel did this in a very different way, but he did it.

All the good commentators and all the good Bible scholars understand this is a parallel passage to 1 Samuel 15. Let me tell you about it. In 1 Samuel 15, God has come to King Saul, the first king of Israel, and he said, "I want you to go and attack the Amalekites." Why? The Amalekites were an imperialistic, militaristic, genocidal, bloodthirsty people, who attacked, plundered, enslaved, and wiped people out. This is what he says.

God says to Saul, "I want you to go attack the Amalekites," but then he says this to Saul. When you first read it, again, it just seems so cruel. He says, "I want you to spare nothing. I want you not only to kill all the people, but I want you to kill every sheep. I want you to kill every cow. I want nothing to be left alive."

Saul goes and attacks. He wipes out the people, but he saves the king and probably the nobles. He brings them as prisoners to his court. He does not destroy the livestock. After all, the livestock is wealth. That was your money. Saul says, "This is a terrific waste," so he brings all the livestock in, and he says, "I'm going to give a big ... I'm going to double tithe. I'm going to bring all this wealth, and I'm going to give it to the priests and to the prophets, and I'm going to make huge sacrifices, and I will give a great amount of this to God."

So Samuel comes to Saul after this is done. God said, "Destroy everything." Saul has destroyed the plebeians but not the patricians, the peasants but not the ruling class, and he has taken the money in. Samuel says,

“You’ve disobeyed God.” What does Saul say? “Well, I obeyed God 98 percent. I kept some of the money, but I’m going to give a lot of it to God. I didn’t kill everybody, but you have to be merciful. I obeyed 98 percent.”

Through Samuel, God says to Saul, “I reject you as the king. The kingdom is ripped from you today. It is torn from your hands. I’ve rejected you utterly. No forgiveness.” What’s going on there? Here’s what’s going on. When God said, “Destroy everybody,” that was not what you might think.

The Amalekites, like every other nation state on the earth except Israel, only the Amalekites were worse, were based on a principle of power. In other words, their confidence was in their military might. Every nation around Israel at that time, its foreign policy and its domestic policy was all and completely based on their military might. A nation would look at itself and say, “How many chariots do we have? How many fighting men do we have? How strong militarily are we?”

Once it decided that, it would turn around, and it would attack the weaker countries. It attacked the weaker countries and enriched itself by plundering their wealth or enslaving them. By the way, it was very, very normal to wipe out the peasants because they had no money, but you take the nobles captive because they could be ransomed by nobles from other countries with whom they intermarried, and so on. In other words, that’s what happens.

You would take your military temperature. You would determine just where you were in the pecking order, then you would attack and you would enrich. If you saw somebody above you in the pecking order, you would retreat, you would avoid, or you would try to buy them off. Every other nation, its foreign power was based on confidence in its military might, and its determining and controlling factor in all of its policy, both outside and inside, was power and exploitation.

The ruling classes exploited the poor. The stronger nations exploited the weak. If you were bigger than they were, you took them in. Israel was the only country in the world that had an utterly different basis for its national consciousness. The basis for its confidence was God, not its military might. Therefore, the determining, controlling hub, you might say, of all of its domestic and foreign policy was justice.

Therefore, when God said to Saul, “I want you to go to the Amalekites and wipe them out,” what he was saying is, “I want this to be an act of justice. If you profit one cent from this attack, you will be as imperialistic as they are. You will have moved the basis for Israel from confidence in God and doing everything on the basis of justice and mercy to confidence in your might and doing everything to exploit and enrich yourself at the expense of others.”

Therefore, when Saul said, “I obeyed 98 percent,” how ironic! What Saul had done by taking the livestock and taking the king captive was to do exactly the opposite of what God asked, the utter opposite, the polar opposite. Really, what had happened was he was moving them on to another entire basis and way of doing things. He said, “Well, I have to be merciful.” He was deceiving himself. He said, “Well, I’m going to give an awful lot of this money to God. I’m going to make these huge sacrifices.” Samuel said, “To obey is the sacrifice God wants.”

What really was going on here is something really quite profound. When God said, “Wipe them out,” he was saying work on the basis of justice, not enriching yourself. There are really two principles on which you can operate in this world. You can either operate on the basis of justice and mercy and say, “My life for yours,” or you can operate on the basis of power and exploitation and say, “Your life for ours.”

Saul was moving from justice and mercy to military power. He was moving Israel into a covenant with power instead of a covenant with the Lord. He was moving Israel into its basis from doing the things it did with other countries and within the classes. He was already moving ... By even taking Agag captive he was already moving into a class-consciousness that God had said shouldn't happen in Israel.

An exploitation of the ruling classes of the poor wasn't supposed to happen in Israel. He was already beginning to attack in order to enrich himself, which wasn't supposed to happen. God comes and says, "You must not do this." God was very concerned about something, and boy, there's a profound insight here. It was so hard for Israel, surrounded by people who operate on the basis of power and exploitation, not to defend itself by doing it back.

Kathy's and my favorite book outside of the Bible is *The Lord of the Rings*. In it there's a single, simple theme, a simple plot. An evil figure has created a ring of power. The ring of power falls into the hands of the good guys. The good guys know if they put the ring on to defeat the evil forces, they will become oppressors themselves. If they use power to defeat exploitative power, they will become oppressors themselves.

The only thing they can do to really defeat evil is not fight evil with evil and not fight power with power, but to take the ring and destroy it utterly through a quest of sacrifice, helplessness, weakness, and service. In other words, the only way to really destroy evil and power and exploitation is not by becoming exploiters back. Do you realize how easy it is? Power and exploitation that God was trying so hard to keep Israel free from is so seductive.

If you are the victim of racism, how incredibly easy it is to grow up harboring bitterness, harboring prejudice, and saying, "When I get the power, I'm going to do it back to them." If you put the ring of power on, you just become another oppressor. How many people have I seen who grew up in self-righteous churches, filled with self-righteous, religious people, and what they said is, "I am not going to be like them"?

So you move to New York. That's the first thing you want to do. If you want to get away from moralistic, religious, traditional churches, you move to New York, and then you become every bit as self-righteous and rigid and as condescending in your unbelief, in your hatred of religion, in your hatred of tradition, in your hatred of traditional morality, as they were toward you. If you put the ring of power on to fight oppression, you just become an oppressor yourself.

That's what was happening to Saul, and that's what was happening to David. Do you know what David was doing? It was wrong for David. It was wrong for Israel. God did not want Israel to have a standing army. Israel only had an army to defend itself. It was not allowed to have a standing army.

David was about to set up a standing army. It's the same thing. Why did he want to know what his military temperature was? Why did he want to enroll the fighting men and create a standing army? If you have a standing army, then as soon as you feel, "This nation over here has slighted me," you attack. David was moving right on down.

Everybody knew, Joab himself knew, why God had said, "Don't you dare have a standing army. I do not want you to be like the other nations of the world. 'Not by chariots, not by might, not by fighting men, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord." Your confidence is to be in me, not in your military might, and your controlling principle for all of your national dealings is to be justice and mercy, not exploitation and power." And David was moving right on down.

By the way, if you say, “Well, I don’t know what that has to do with me,” it has a whole lot to do with you. Do you not realize how incredibly easy it is in a power-driven world to say you’re a Christian, like David, or the people of God, but they were starting to lust after being like everybody else.

The main way in which they felt they could defend themselves ... Poor little Israel. How are they going to defend themselves with all these people around? God said, “Trust me.” They said, “No, we want a king. We want a standing army. We want to enlarge our borders. We would like to conquer every country around us so we can have a buffer zone.” If you don’t think that’s possible yourself ... Whenever I ask people about giving, you know the Bible says you should give away an awful lot of your money to the poor and to the church.

You’re supposed to at least tithe 10 percent. Do you know why a lot of people don’t do it? They’re scared. You’re scared. Why? “I want a buffer zone. I want to know I have a lot of money. I don’t want to just trust God to take care of me. I want to count the fighting men. I want to know I have stuff in the bank. It’s nice to trust in God, but you have to save. You have to have money there. What if this happens? What if that happens?”

It’s the same thing. Why you won’t be generous is you’re being seduced into making an idol of power, of status, of money. That’s the thing that really makes you feel you can walk down the street with confidence instead of living a life of service and a life of sacrificial giving.

How do you work? In your work, do you stab people in the back? Do you box your opponents out? Do you suck up to your superiors? In your relationships, do you only talk to people who look like they’re going to help you in your career? Do you have some friends who actually have a lot of problems and they’re kind of a drain on you, but you listen to them and you serve them?

Does power characterize your relationships? Does power characterize your approach to work? Does power characterize the way in which you use your money? It is very easy to do what David did. It is very easy to do what Saul did, to be surrounded like this, to be seduced in. Now what David did was incredibly serious because, as he says, when God is smiting Israel, he says, “These are but sheep.” Do you remember that? Over here in verse 17, he says, “I am the one ... These are but sheep.”

In other words, the reason God was smiting Israel, the reason God was chastening Israel, was he was trying to show them, “It’s not the hands of man, it’s not your military might, it’s not your economic might that is your security, but me and me alone.” That’s the reason why he says, “Do you want to have famine? That would be economic disaster. Do you want to have three years of that? Do you want to have three months of losing to your enemies? That would be military disaster. Or do you want three days of plagues?”

What does David say? He makes the right choice. He says, “I realize now I’d rather be in God’s hands than in the hands of men.” God was taking away all the things David was putting his hopes in, and David was leading his people. He was the shepherd, and the sheep were going along. The whole country, the culture, was turning this way, toward power and exploitation. So God says, “I have to do something. I have to chasten. I have to show you your weakness and your need.” That’s the sin of David. He had made an idol out of power.

## **2. Why this grace?**

Last of all, but very importantly, why is it ... As I said, the commentators realize ... God has been worried and concerned. You can say God is worried. Yes, he’s worried about his people. He’s anxious about his people because they ask for a king. He says, “You’re going in the wrong direction.” He gives them a king. This raises all kinds of questions about God’s control of history and all that.

The point is God is concerned. He sees his people moving in this direction, asking for a king. Then Saul started to move them in the direction of being imperialistic like everybody else. Now David is doing the same thing. Why is it David is met with grace and Saul is not? Here are the reasons. There are just two.

First, David repents. He says in 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 ... Take away the guilt of your servant.'" Here's what's so wonderful. Literally, the NIV says conscience-stricken. It's trying to get rid of the archaisms. The literal Hebrew says, "And David's heart smote him ..."

Do you know what's wonderful about this? When David had sinned against Bathsheba, that was a much more obvious sin. That was a kind of concrete sin. This is a much more abstract kind of thing. Back then God had to send David a prophet to tell David a story and to say, "Thou art the man," before David got it. Here, David's heart smites him.

What does this mean? The more mature you are, the faster you repent. The chief Christians are the chief repenters. The more you know God, the faster your heart understands sin, sees it, gets rid of it, throws it away, and repents. If you think the more mature you get in Christ and the longer you are a Christian and, you might say, the more advanced a Christian you are, the less and less you will need to repent, the less and less you will see sin. Instead, you'll see yourself as being a pretty good person. You're wrong.

The more mature you are, the faster you repent. Saul was filled with self-deception. Saul was filled with rationalizations. David makes absolutely none. Do you know what David could have done? David could've said, "God, in Numbers 1:2-3, you told Moses to count the fighting men." Of course, he knows that was a different situation. There are all kinds of things he could've done. He said, "No excuses." He repents, but here's the wonderful thing.

This is a very odd situation. God sends the Angel of the Lord, and the Angel of the Lord begins to smite with plagues, and a lot of people die. We're told in verse 16, "The angel of the LORD was then at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. When David saw the angel who was striking down the people, he said to the LORD, 'I am the one who has sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? Let your hand fall upon me and my family.'"

First Chronicles 21 tells us David actually saw the Angel of the Lord with his sword stretched out toward Jerusalem. This was near the end of the three days. The important thing to understand is God had smitten all these people, but now he was turning toward the seat of power. The sword of God was about to come down really on the heart of Israel, because in the city of Jerusalem were all their intellectuals, all their artists, all of their government, all the leaders of their culture, and David himself.

The plague was about to come down, and this would have utterly destroyed ... In a certain sense, it would've been certainly fair, because they had made an idol out of their power. They wanted to be a sophisticated urban culture just like all the rest. God starts to smite the city. David sees it, and he says, "Let your hand fall on me, not them. They're the sheep. I know they're guilty, but I misled them. Smite the shepherd that the sheep might go free. Strike the one that the many might be saved. Let your hand fall on me."

If you want to understand why God looked down and suddenly God himself ... This is very mysterious. It says, "... the LORD was grieved ..." Do you see that? You say, "What does that mean? Does the Lord suddenly changed his mind?" No, I can't get into that too much right now. What was it that caused the Lord this intense emotion? Because an awful lot of stuff happened at that spot.

You might find the key to understanding this whole text is actually a little verse in 2 Chronicles in the beginning of chapter 3, when it says, "Then Solomon began to build the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David. It was on the threshing floor of Araunah ..."  
Do you know what's going on here? That's the only place that ties this all together.

First of all, 2 Chronicles 3 says the place where Araunah the Jebusite had a threshing floor was a rock, Mount Moriah, which later was called Mount Zion. What happened on Mount Moriah? On Mount Moriah, years and years before, God had come to Abraham and said, "Take your son up to this mountain and slay him for me." Abraham went up to the top, he stretched out his hand, and what did God say?

What God said to Abraham was, "Withdraw your hand. Enough. You don't have to kill him. I wanted to see whether you would put me first in the heart. You don't have to slay the lad. I will give you a substitute." Then a ram was caught in the thicket, and Abraham slew a substitute instead of his son.

Years later, the Angel of the Lord is standing in that same spot with his hand outstretched, and God again says, "Enough. Withdraw the hand. Don't destroy all of Israel. Don't destroy David and his family. Don't destroy any of them." Instead, he says, "Build an altar right here. Build a temple right here and put a sacrifice there." What does that sacrifice point to? It points to Someone greater than David who really did say, "Smite the Shepherd, not the sheep. Let your hand fall on me and not them."

The reason God was able to respond in grace to David's repentance was not because David's repentance merited that, but because God knew, just as he was able to say to Abraham, "Enough. Stay your hand," and just as he was able to say to even the Angel of the Lord, "Enough. Stay your hand," he was only able to do it, not because Abraham was good or David was good or David's sorrow merited, because one day, God brought his hand down. One day, that sword did come down. It came down on his only Son.

If you understand that, you will see that's how to destroy the ring of power. The answer to power is service. God did not send his Son down here to destroy evil with a sword but to take the sword himself so he could destroy evil without destroying us. God sent his Son to take the way of weakness.

Jesus did not put the ring of power on. He threw the ring into the fire along with himself. What happens is, if you understand, God will not put his hand down on you if you repent, because he put his hand down on his Son. Because he put his hand down on his Son and he sent his Son to live a life of sacrificial service, that's the way you will triumph over evil. That's the way you will triumph over exploitation, trusting in him, not trusting in your pocketbook, not trusting in power relations. Trust in him. This is how it's done.

What was David's sin? To make an idol out of power. What was David's grace? Someone who came and destroyed evil without destroying us by giving himself, so you give yourself. Then you should be living your whole life, not on the basis of, "Your life for me," but on the basis of the One who said, "My life for yours."  
Let's pray.

We thank you, Father, for granting us an insight into the history of this rock, this threshing floor. The reason every time the hand of the Lord was raised against sin and was stayed was at one point you brought your hand down on your own Son.