

David: Life Lessons

Week 10 – Mercy at the Altar
(2 Samuel 24:10-25)

OPENING QUESTION

Where can guilty sinners find mercy when God's judgment is deserved?

KEY VERSE

“He built an altar to the LORD there and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then the LORD was receptive to prayer for the land, and the plague on Israel ended.” - Psalm 51:17

DAVID'S PRAYER

1. David's numbers **cannot give him security.** (2 Sam. 24:10-14)

David's conscience troubles him after the census, and he confesses that he has sinned greatly. But when judgment is announced, he discovers that the strength he counted cannot give him the security he needs.

David says, “Let us fall into the LORD's hands because his mercies are great.”

Lesson: Our security must rest in God, **not in what we can count.**

2. Judgment falls, but **God's mercy moves first.** (2 Sam. 24:15-16)

The LORD sends a plague, and seventy thousand people die. As the destroying angel destroying the people extends his hand toward Jerusalem, God says: “Enough, withdraw your hand now!”

David had not yet built an altar or offered a sacrifice. God takes the initiative in showing *mercy*.

Lesson: God's mercy comes from **His own gracious character.**

3. A sinful shepherd **cannot save the sheep.** (2 Samuel 24:17)

David sees the people suffering and pleads, “But these sheep, what have they done? Please, let your hand be against me and my father's family.” As their shepherd-king, David is willing to bear the judgment in place of his people—but the king who offers himself is also a guilty sinner who needs mercy.

Lesson: Human compassion cannot provide the redemption that only God can give. The problem of sin **requires a Savior greater than us.**

4. God provides the way **for Sinners to approach Him**. (vv. 24:18-23)
God sends Gad to David: “Go up and set up an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.” (v.18). God identifies the place. God commands the altar. David does not devise his own way to approach God; he responds in obedience to the way God provides.

Lesson: God provides **the way for sinners to approach Him**.

5. God receives **the sacrifice and restores peace**. (2 Sam. 24:24-25)
David purchases the threshing floor and says: “I will not offer to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.”

David builds the altar and offers burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. The LORD receives the prayer, the plague ends, and the story that began with God’s anger ends with restored peace.

Lesson: God receives the sacrifice He appoints and **restores peace with His people**.

THE MAIN IDEA

What is true? God is righteous in His judgment, abundant in mercy, and gracious in providing the way for sinners to approach Him.

What should we do? Put your confidence in God’s mercy and come to Him through the provision He has made.

Main Idea: The God who rightly judges sin is rich in mercy and graciously provides the way for sinners to come to Him.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

David wanted the judgment to fall upon him instead of the sheep, but David was a guilty shepherd who needed God’s mercy himself. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. We cannot remove our own guilt, satisfy God’s justice through our works, or invent our own way back to God. God must provide the way. And He has. God provided the ram at Moriah. God provided the altar for David. God provided the sacrifices at the temple. And ultimately, the New Testament tells us: *God provided His Son*. Only Jesus is the answer because He is the sinless Shepherd who gave Himself for the sheep and the sufficient sacrifice who brings sinners to God.

APPLICATION

1. Stop trusting **what cannot save you**. God’s gifts must never become substitutes for *God Himself*. **Ask:** What am I depending upon to give me the security that only God can give?
2. **Put yourself in God’s hands**. David says: “Let us fall into the LORD’s hands because his mercies are great.” We cannot control everything or fix everything. We cannot guarantee tomorrow or undo yesterday. But we can trust God's character because His mercies are great.
3. Come to God through **the provision He has made**. We do not need to build another altar, offer a sacrifice of our choosing, nor invent our own way to God. Scripture tells us God has provided His Son. Jesus died for sinners and rose again. So come to Jesus and rest in Him.