"God, the Government, and the Plague"
1 Chronicles 21:9-14

Since the COVID-19 outbreak in the U.S., 1,067,445 people have contracted the virus, and 60,000 people have died. In Georgia, 26,063 have contracted the virus, and 1,108 have died (as of 04/30/2020). Even though there is a 96% survival rate, this virus has negatively affected our way of life and our economy. We ask if life will ever get back to normal?

In this passage of scripture, King David and the people of Israel deal with a destructive plague. Due to pride, King David ordered a census to determine how many men he would have in the military. Taking a census wasn't wrong, per se, but the underlying reason was pride—trusting in a large army instead of trusting in God. David did not seek God's counsel, and he did not require the half-shekel (approximately $4) payment that God required of the people when a census was taken. The money collected went into the Tabernacle treasury for its upkeep. Because of his sin of pride and disobedience, God sent a plague on the land. What can we learn from this incident in the Bible?

1. <u>Seek God's Counsel</u> (21:7, 14)

"This command was also evil in God's sight, so He afflicted Israel."

"So the Lord sent a plague on Israel, and 70,000 Israelite men died."

- Theologian William Barclay said: "Pride is the ground in which all the other sins grow." King David was tempted by the Devil to take a census of the men in Israel for military purposes (v. 1). David was relying on military strength instead of God for protection of Israel. As he did in other events, David should have sought God's counsel as to whether or not to take a military census. But he did not seek God's counsel or the counsel of others. He did what he wanted to do.

- Our God is the God of wisdom. He wants you and me to turn to Him for counsel and wisdom; for direction and help. The psalmist wrote: *"You guide me with Your counsel…"* (Psalm 73:24). King Jehoshaphat said to a rival king: *"First seek the counsel of the Lord"* (2 Chronicles 18:4). James said: *"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him"* (James 1:5).

- Seeking God's counsel comes through prayer and reading the Scriptures. It comes through asking God's Spirit to guide you as well. Jesus said: *"When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth"* (John 16:13a). Make it a priority to read scripture each day. Spend time in prayer, worshiping your God and Savior, and seeking His counsel in your life. David did not seek God's counsel, and it brought terrible consequences for him and his people.

2. <u>Seek God's forgiveness and restoration</u> (21:8, 13)

"I have sinned greatly because I have done this thing. Now, please take away Your servant's guilt, for I've been very foolish."

"I'm in anguish. Please, let me fall into the Lord's hands because His mercies are very great…"

- David did not make excuses about what he did as king. He confessed his sin to God, even saying, *"I've been very foolish."* He sought God's forgiveness and restoration. This was not the first time David had sought the forgiveness of God. When he committed adultery and covered it up through murder, he turned to God, seeking forgiveness. In Psalm 51, David said: *"Wash away my guilt and cleanse me from my sin. For I am conscious of my rebellion, and my sin is always before me. Against You—You alone—I have sinned and done this evil in Your sight"* (51:2-4a).

- When you go your own way, or when you do your own thing without seeking God's counsel or obeying His Word, there will be consequences. Turn to God in repentance and seek His forgiveness and restoration. Be open and honest with God (He already knows). Seek His forgiveness. Ask Him to restore your relationship with Him and others.

- Jesus said: *"I assure you that any sin can be forgiven…"* (Mark 3:28a). Though you turn away from your sin and turn to God, you will still have to deal with the consequences of your sin. David sought God's forgiveness, but the plague that God sent killed 70,000 men. David prayed: *"Wasn't I the one who gave the order to count the people? I am the one who has sinned and acted very wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? My Lord God, please let Your hand be against me…"* (v. 17a, b). God stopped the plague, and brought healing to Israel. Seek God's forgiveness and restoration, and rely on His mercy to help you through the rest.

During this pandemic, learn from King David. Seek God's counsel; seek His wisdom. If you have sinned, seek His forgiveness. Don't stay defeated. Seek His restoration. God said: *"My wayward children,' says the Lord, 'come back to Me, and I will heal your wayward hearts"* (Jeremiah 3:22). Let us continue to pray that God will heal our hearts and our nation.