



THE LIFE OF DAVID

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# AFTER GOD'S HEART

“His Mercy Is Great”  
2 Samuel 24









Norm  
Macdonald

If I am remembered, it will always be by the four years I spent at *Saturday Night Live* ... As long as *SNL* exists, then so do I. When people come to see me do stand-up, it is because somewhere in their memory I live on *SNL*, dressed as a young Burt Reynolds, insisting Alex Trebek refer to me as Turd Ferguson. And they come to see me and I am old and fat and I don't mention *SNL* and I do my answering-



Norm  
Macdonald

machine joke and they are happily disappointed. After the show, they stand beside me and take pictures, the way you would with a donkey at the side of a road. They tell me they are big fans and they don't care what their girlfriends say. They understand me even though they know good and well that nobody else does. I'm dry, they say. The next time I come to their town, they don't show up.





Norm  
Macdonald

It can be difficult to define yourself by something that happened so long ago and is gone forever. It's like a fellow at the end of the bar telling no one in particular about the silver medal he won in high school track, the one he still wears around his neck.

The only thing an old man can tell a young man is that it goes fast, real fast, and if you're not careful it's too late.



Norm  
Macdonald

Of course, the young man will never understand this truth.

But looking back now, I can see that my life since *SNL* has been a full sprint, trying with all my might to outrun the wolves of irrelevancy snapping at my heels. It has all been in vain, of course. They caught and devoured me years ago.













## 2 Samuel 24:1

Again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, "Go and take a census of Israel and Judah."

## 1 Chronicles 21:1

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





## Exodus 8:15

But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, **he hardened his heart** and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said.

## Exodus 9:12

But **the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart** and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said to Moses.



God can use the choices we make, whether good or bad, to accomplish his purposes without diminishing our responsibility for them.



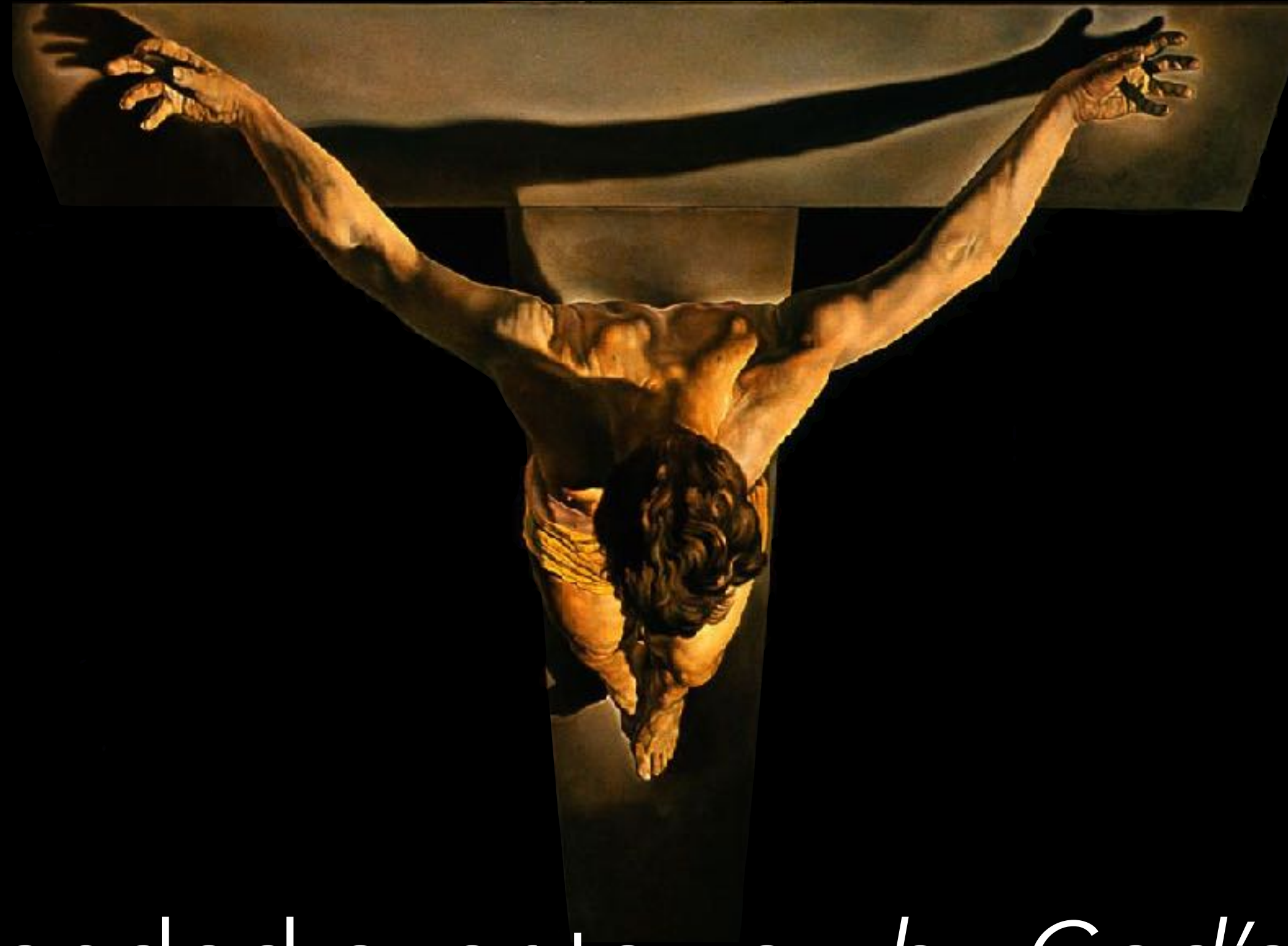




You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Genesis 50:20





This man was handed over to you *by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge*; and you, with *the help of wicked men*, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

Acts 2:23



God does not owe  
us an explanation.





The Bible is highly  
selective in the details  
it reveals for any  
given story.







# 1 Chronicles 20:1-3

In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, Joab led out the armed forces. He laid waste the land of the Ammonites and went to Rabbah and besieged it, but David remained in Jerusalem. Joab attacked Rabbah and left it in ruins. David took the crown from the head of their king –its weight was found to be a talent of gold,





# 1 Chronicles 20:1-3

and it was set with precious stones—and it was placed on David's head. He took a great quantity of plunder from the city and brought out the people who were there, consigning them to labor with saws and with iron picks and axes. David did this to all the Ammonite towns. Then David and his entire army returned to Jerusalem.





# Dale Ralph Davis

If we are upset over a text that tells us Yahweh is angry, but does not tell us why, are we not saying that we really don't trust him to be just? Is there not a strain within us that insists there must be no mysteries in God? Don't we sometimes subtly assume that God owes us an explanation?





# Dale Ralph Davis

We can easily brandish an arrogance that does not worship, that comes into the presence of the Most High with a strut instead of a bow. Are we angry because God is not perfectly transparent? Can we live—and worship—with mystery?





# Eugene Peterson

God will not fit into our idea of how we think God should act. But if we stay with the story long enough (all the way to Jesus!) we find that God is more, not less, better, not worse than what we expect. Truth that is larger than ourselves, whether scientific or theological, is always at first baffling.





# Eugene Peterson

It is painful to be torn away from the womblike security of accepted concepts. Honest readers of the Bible spend much of their time scratching their heads. And those who teach others to read the Bible do well not to be too ready to cook up explanations that eliminate the difficulties.





## 2 Samuel 24:2

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."





## 2 Samuel 24:3

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 census represented  
a desire for military  
conquest not approved  
by God.





Taking a census  
revealed a lack of  
trust in God.







## Psalm 20:6-7

Now this I know: The LORD gives victory to his anointed. He answers him from his heavenly sanctuary with the victorious power of his right hand. Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.



## 2 Samuel 24:4

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.





## 2 Samuel 24:8-9

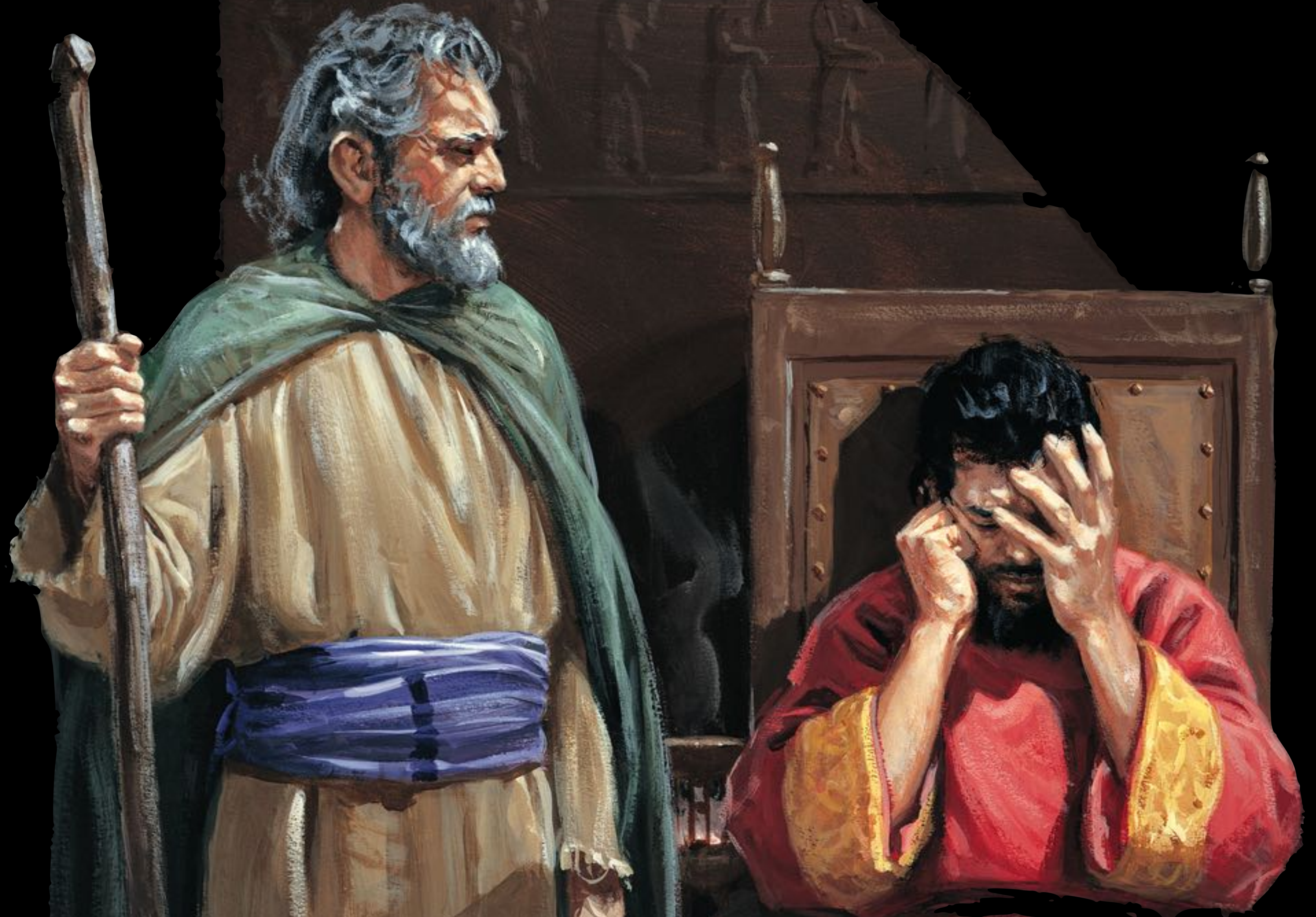
After they had gone through the entire land, they came back to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. Joab reported the number of the fighting men to the king: In Israel there were eight hundred thousand able-bodied men who could handle a sword, and in Judah five hundred thousand.



## 2 Samuel 24:10

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, LORD, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing."





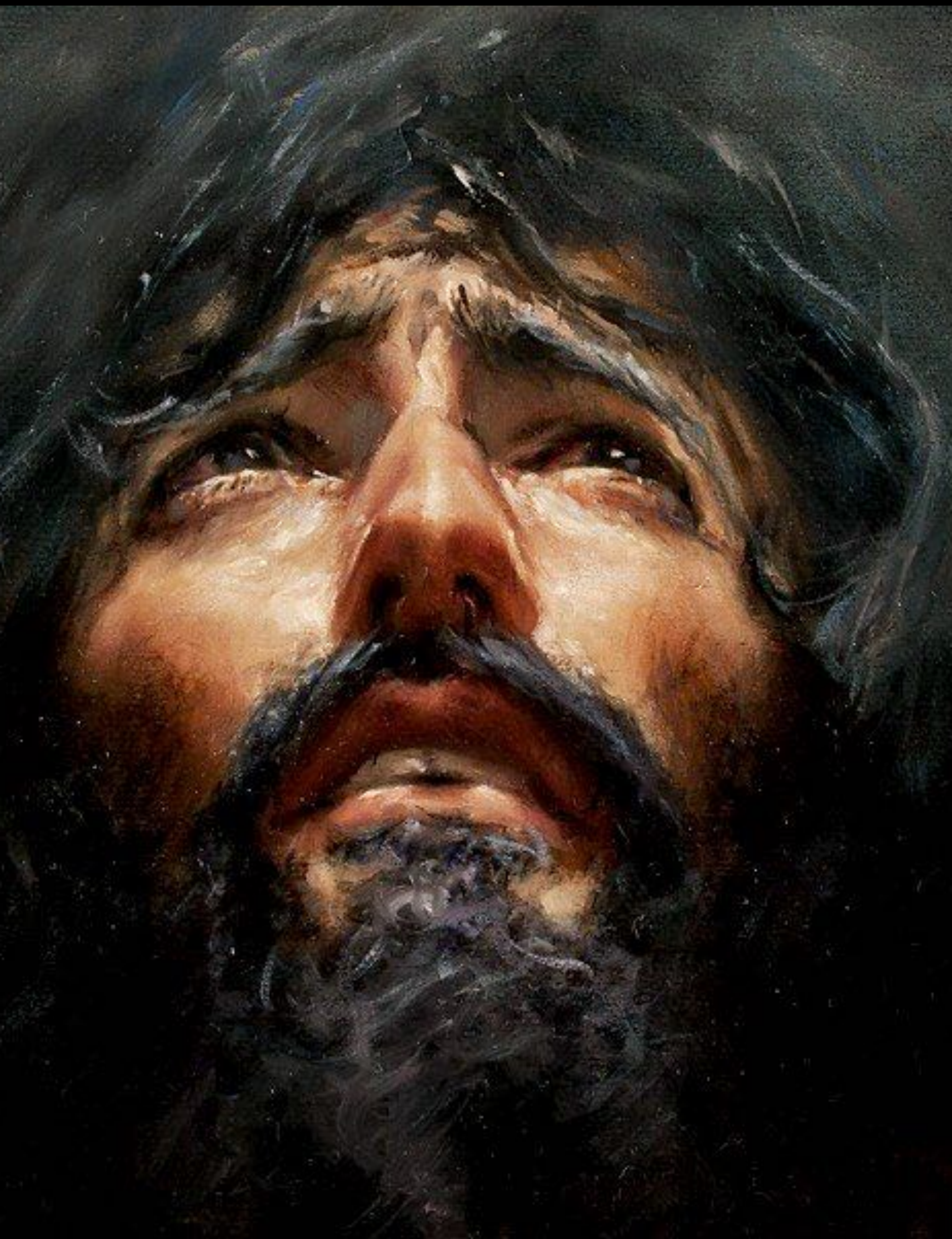












## Eugene Peterson

David does not always obey God, but he always deals with God. David is not always sensitive to God, but he always ends up calling on God. David is not always prayerful, but he always ends up praying.





## 2 Samuel 24:11-13

Before David got up the next morning, the word of the LORD had come to Gad the prophet, David's seer: "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.' "

So Gad went to David and said to him,





## 2 Samuel 24:11-13

"Shall there come on 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."





## 2 Samuel 24:14-16

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 human hands."

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.





## 2 Samuel 24:14-16

When the angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, the LORD relented concerning the disaster 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.





## 2 Samuel 24:17

When David saw the angel who was striking down the people, he said to the LORD, "I have sinned; I, the shepherd, have done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? Let your hand fall on me and my family."





## 2 Samuel 24:18-25

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."

So David went up, as the LORD had commanded through Gad. When Araunah looked and saw the king and his officials coming toward him, he went out and bowed down before the king with his face to the





## 2 Samuel 24:18-25

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."

Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take whatever he wishes and offer it up. Here are oxen for the burnt offering, and here are threshing sledges and ox yokes for the wood. Your Majesty, Araunah gives all this to the king."





## 2 Samuel 24:18-25

Araunah also said to him, "May the LORD your God accept you."

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."

So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them.





## 2 Samuel 24:18-25

David built an altar to the LORD there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then the LORD answered his prayer in behalf of the land, and the plague on Israel was stopped.





## 2 Chronicles 3:1

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 the Jebusite, the place provided by David.







David's willingness to confront his sin with brutal honesty was rooted in his absolute trust in God's love and mercy.







# Martin Luther

There are two kinds of sin: one is confessed, and this no one should leave unforgiven; the other kind is defended, and this no one can forgive, for it refuses either to be counted as sin or to accept forgiveness.





# Miroslav Volf

Without confession I will remain unforgiven – not because God doesn't forgive, but because a refusal to confess is a rejection of forgiveness. ... Confession is hard. When I confess that I've committed an offense, I stand exposed, pointing an accusing finger at myself and at the guilt of my offense. Almost instinctively, I want to clothe myself with denials and exculpatory explanations. Yet we know that confession is wonderfully freeing. After we confess, we have nothing to hide, nothing to run away from. But how do we





# Miroslav Volf

summon the courage to walk into the land of freedom through the gate of shame? Amazingly, God doesn't wait until we've confessed to offer and even enact forgiveness; God forgives before we confess. We know from the start that whatever it might be that we confess it will not count against us. We are loved notwithstanding our offense. We are forgiven so we can be freed from the burden of our offense and return into the arms of the loving God.







# Summary

A broken world filled with wrongdoing and sin cries out for justice, but justice without mercy leaves no survivors. Only the cross of Christ can meet this need for both justice and mercy.