

## The Severity and Mercy of God

*2 Samuel 24*

**Introduction:** As Steve mentioned on Sunday, the overarching plot of the Bible is that God loves us so much that He sent His Son to die for our sins. God could have washed His hands of the entire human race, but His compassion compelled Him to provide a sacrifice for our sin. How good it is for us to know that God is full of mercy. But if we are to have an accurate view of God, we must, as Paul says in Romans 11:22, not only contemplate the mercy of God, but His severity as well. In 2 Samuel 24, we see both God's severity and mercy. Through this study may we continue to grow in a right understanding of God that fuels a life the honors Him.

**Opening Discussion:** When is the last time you can remember being afraid of something or someone?

**Read 2 Samuel 24** (see also 1 Chron. 21:1)

1. Why do you think David's numbering of Israel and Judah was so offensive to God?
2. How does David deal with his sin?
3. How is the severity of God revealed in this passage? How is the kindness of God revealed?

Steve said:

I think that the foundational take-away from what we've seen today is that ***We should fear God's severity so that we can experience His mercy.*** We should live with the realization that our heavenly Father once sent a plague that wiped out 70,000 people. It's not the case that God was in a bad mood back then. No, God's severity is a reflection of the sinfulness of sin. God's severity reminds us that the wages of sin is death. This suggests that we should cultivate what the Bible calls "the fear of the Lord." We should have a healthy fear of being at odds with God and His will. Therefore, we align our lives with His will so that we can experience His mercy.

4. How often do you tend to consider the severity of God? Why?
5. How can we cultivate "the fear of the Lord" in our lives?

6. How does the cross of Christ change the way we think about the severity and mercy of God?
  
7. If we are believers in Jesus does this mean that we will never experience the severity of God? Why or why not?

Steve quoted John Piper:

There's a reason why people run away from scenes of terror in real life, but still go to movies to see the same terror. There's a reason why no one wants to fall out of an airplane, but they will pay money at Valley Fair for the same sensation of falling. The reason is that we were created to be safely afraid of God. Everything else is an echo of this truth. We were made to be safely afraid of God, because when we are safely afraid of God—when there is no condemnation and we know that he is our Father and our Friend—then what remains in fear of God is deeply pleasant.

8. What do you think it means to be "safely afraid of God"?