

This morning we continue in our series of sermons focused on the life of King David, in search of the depth of what God meant when He said: *“I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will”* (Acts 13:22) – And today we will be looking at one of the most familiar stories in this part of the Old Testament, with the exception of David and Goliath – as we will spending our time walking through the story of David's deadly, adulterous affair with Bathsheba. And next week, in 2 Samuel 12-13, we will be looking at the destructive consequences of that event in the life of the man who is known to be a man after God's own heart. Why did this happen? This is not the David that we have come to know. Pastor and author Warren Wiersbe writes: “Unlike the average campaign biography or press release, the Bible never flatters its heroes. All the men and women of Scripture have feet of clay, for the Holy Spirit paints a realistic portrait of their lives. He doesn't ignore, deny, or overlook the dark side. It should encourage us to know that even the best men and women in the biblical record had their faults and failures, just as we do, yet the Sovereign Lord in His grace was able to use them to accomplish His purposes. Noah was a man of faith and obedience, yet he got drunk, Twice Abraham lied about his wife, and Jacob lied both to his father and to his brother Esau. Moses lost his temper, disobeyed God and struck the rock - and Peter lost his courage and denied Christ three times.”

Of the text we are looking at today, the famed Reverend Doctor G. Campbell Morgan - British evangelist, Bible scholar, pastor of the Westminster Chapel in London, mentor to the renowned Martyn Lloyd Jones – once said: "In the whole of the Old Testament literature there is no chapter more tragic or full of solemn and searching warning than this." Pastor Charles Swindoll spoke into this also when he wrote: “Here David, a man after God's own heart, committed adultery and then murdered in an attempt to cover up his own sin. These sins are greatly intensified because of who he was and because of how he mishandled it. . . . No sin, save the sin of Adam and Eve, has received more press than the sin of David with Bathsheba. . . . This is a good time to remember that David was a man who loved God. . . he was still ‘a man after God's heart.’ He sinned, just as we have but ours have not been recorded for all to read. I am forever grateful that God has finished writing Scripture. There is not a person I know who would want to have his failures and vices recorded for all generations to read and discuss and make movies about and write books on and preach sermons on down through the centuries.”

Brothers and sisters, while we all love the “feel-good” texts in the Bible, and while up to this point most of us have been uplifted and blessed and encouraged by what we've seen in David's life - the verses we look at today and next Sunday will challenge us in a much deeper way. The Spirit of God will use the text before us to invade and reveal the dark corners of our hearts, *because* while the Bible honestly records the sins of God's people, it never does so in a way that makes sin acceptable. The Bible states the true facts about God and about ourselves – and then the Holy Spirit uses those true facts to convict and draws out lessons, and then empower us to repent and make the changes needed in our lives to live out our lives for the glory of God. When God speaks to us through His Word and changes us by His Word, He allows nothing for our human imagination to dwell on. The things before us must be read with a Spirit-directed mind and heart. *“Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted”* (Galatians 6:1).

In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 11:1

This first verse sets the context for the story. It was that time of the year after the agricultural chores had been taken care of and before the heat of summer. It was spring, the time when kings go off to war. But David didn't go off to war. David sent out his army, but he remained in Jerusalem. Though kings usually led their armies personally, David, for reasons not mentioned, remained at home. David delegated the leadership of the army in the field to Joab; David would come once victory was imminent.

In our text King David was now about fifty years old. He had been on the throne approximately twenty years. He had distinguished himself as a man of God, a faithful shepherd, a valiant warrior on the battlefield, and as a leader of his people. But as we look at the next season in the life of David, we find him falling into a period of sin, and that sin had devastating consequences for his family, his reign, and his nation. Sin always bears consequences. At this point, David's spiritual life was like a neglected sea wall crumbling against the constant surge of the tide and the pounding waves of the sea. Unguarded at a weakened moment, his spiritual wall crumbles and he pays a terrible price for it.

It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant." 2 Samuel 11:2-5

The David we read of here stands in stark contrast to the David we've seen in the chapters before this. The God-centered "hesed" love we have seen reflected in David's life is now replaced with the flesh-centered "eros" love of sexual passion. This "passion of the flesh" is reflected in the original language as the story of David's adultery is very short. Everything is told in just twelve lines in the Hebrew text. Old Testament scholar and theologian Walter Brueggemann sees that in the *tone* of the text, when he writes: "The action is quick. The verbs rush as the passion of David rushed. He *sent*; he *took*; he *lay* (verse 4). The royal deed of self-indulgence does not take very long. There is no adornment to the action. The woman then gets some verbs: she *returned*, she *conceived*. The action is so stark. There is nothing but action. There is no conversation. There is no hint of caring, of affection, of love—only lust. David does not call her by name, does not even speak to her. At the end of the encounter she is only '*the woman*' (verse 5). The verb that finally counts is '*conceived*.' But the telling verb is he '*took her*.'"

Here we see David, after passing so many tests of his heart for God and his love for God and his trust in God - finally fails the test of his *faith* in God. In James 1:2-4 the brother of Jesus writes: "*Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*" Verses 12-15 then say: "*Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death*" (James 1:12-15). The long-neglected sea wall of David's spiritual life crumbled against the surge of unrestricted sexual passion.

The sin that set the whole chain of events into motion was *lust*. But lust was not the *cause* but rather the *effect* of something deeper in David's heart. David was not a passionate youth who deliberately walked into this sin, but a man of God who had reached a mature middle age. But it is easy to see how David got into this sin: 1) he was *prideful and comfortable*, after enjoying a multitude of victories and worldly prosperity; 2) he was *disobedient*, staying home when he should have been on the battlefield; 3) he was *lazy*, lying in couch/bed in the afternoon; 4) he was *self-indulgent*, giving freedom to his desires when he should have been disciplining himself; and 5) he was *careless*, allowing his eyes to wander and yielding to the "*the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes*" (1 John 2:16). Here is where lust came into play, which followed the path described in James 1:13-15: 1) his desires were activated by the sight, and he failed to restrain them; 2) desire conceived the sin in his imagination; 3) his will surrendered to lust and led him sin; 4) his actions led to *death*. There is no obvious death at this point, but one could argue that David suffered *the death of his faith in God*, as one of the tragic aspects of this story is that the sequence of sin in David's life does not end in adultery with Bathsheba, but continues with murderous deception.

So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab was doing and how the people were doing and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." And Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?" Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing." Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. And David invited him, and he ate in his presence and drank, so that he made him drunk. And in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die." And as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men. And the men of the city came out and fought with Joab, and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite also died. Then Joab sent and told David all the news about the fighting. And he instructed the messenger, "When you have finished telling all the news about the fighting to the king, then, if the king's anger rises, and if he says to you, 'Why did you go so near the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? Who killed Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman cast an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?' then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.'"

So the messenger went and came and told David all that Joab had sent him to tell. The messenger said to David, "The men gained an advantage over us and came out against us in the field, but we drove them back to the entrance of the gate. Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall. Some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also." David said to the messenger, "Thus shall you say to Joab, 'Do not let this matter displease you, for the sword devours now one and now another. Strengthen your attack against the city and overthrow it.' And encourage him."

When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband. And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord. 2 Samuel 11:6-27

These verses began right after Bathsheba informs David that she is pregnant. While there are some who argue that Bathsheba carries some guilt in all that has happened - there is no textual, traditional, or historical proof to support that. This is David's sin and it's his responsibility, and so Bathsheba informs him. King David comes up with a plan that is simple and, at least in his mind, foolproof. In short, David decides to enable Uriah to do what comes naturally, by enticing Uriah to think and to act as he himself had done to Bathsheba – so that after Uriah has intimate relations with his wife Bathsheba, everyone would conclude that Uriah is the father of the child which has been conceived by David's sinful act. There was only one thing wrong with David's plan: he assumed Uriah was as spiritually apathetic towards God as he - and that Uriah would indulge himself, rather than act like a faithful soldier at war.

David sends word to Joab and orders him to send Uriah home to Jerusalem. While it's not mentioned here, this in itself would have been considered to be out of the norm. Why would a commander and military hero like Joab to be sent to ask a soldier to come home and when he does, David asks Joab for a report on the status of the war. David's request reveals the dark state of his heart - because if he were with his men in the field, a report would not be necessary. In reality David did not really care about Joab or the people or the war *because* his underlying motive was to cover up his sin - to get Uriah home and to go to bed with his wife, and get David off the hook. David's heart was not for God: the very same same king who had compassion on the crippled son of Jonathan, now lacked compassion for Joab and his army and his soldiers and his people and Bathsheba and her husband, the faithful soldier, Uriah.

Our text tells us that King David was unsuccessful in trying to get trick Uriah into covering up David's sin. Uriah was a better man and he refused to go home. What a stark heart difference we see between David's self-indulgence and Uriah's self-discipline. After his first plan fails, David tries another and he gets Uriah drunk. But even under the influence of wine, Uriah was a more disciplined man than a sober David. It was then David decided to have Uriah murdered so he could take his wife. Joab was more than willing to cooperate; this would give him opportunity later on to take advantage of the king – and he would. And so Uriah carried his death warrant to the battlefield; the plan worked and a faithful soldier was needlessly killed. And after a week of mourning was over, David married the widow Bathsheba.

Pastor/professor Kenneth Chafin writes: "David broke at least three of the Ten Commandments that God had given Israel for relating to God and to fellow man. He coveted another man's wife, committed adultery, and murdered. Yet who can judge the judge, who can question the actions of the king? The answer comes in the final verse of the chapter in words that suggest that no one stands above the law of God. What seemed to David a final ending to what would have been a very sticky situation is but the beginning of problems, because *'the thing that David had done displeased the Lord'* (2 Samuel 11:27)." Sin has a sneaky way of compounding itself. Before we know it, we're more deeply involved in it than we ever thought we would be. That is why it is essential to not give in to sin at that first point of temptation. You cannot control the course of your life once you begin to flirt with sin. It will capture you. It will ensnare you. And it will ultimately destroy you. David once killed giants. Now the giant is killing him.

When we seek to conceal our sin, things only get worse. The best course of action is to confess our sins and to renounce them. Proverbs 28:13 says: *"Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy."* How much better it would have been for David had he confessed his sin with Bathsheba and found forgiveness then, rather than trying to cover up his sin, which only made matters worse. Fallen humanity has been trying to cover up sin ever since the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve thought they could cover their sins by hiding their nakedness by hiding themselves from God. But God lovingly sought them out, not only to rebuke them and to pronounce curses upon them, but also to give them the hope and promise of forgiveness. It was God who provided a covering for their sins. The sacrificial death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is God's provision for covering our sins. When we confess and repent of our sins we receive the gift of God's forgiveness in the person and work of Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross of Calvary.

Sin snowballs. Sin is not stagnant; sin is not static. Sin grows. Look at the progression of sin in our text. David's sin starts when he ceased to act like a soldier of God. David's sin grew from adultery to murder. His sin began privately, but as the story progresses, more and more people become aware of it, and worse yet, more and more people become participants in it. He acted out his first sin by his taking another man's wife, and then taking her husband's life, and along with his life, the lives of a number of men who must die with him to make his death credible. David's sin blossoms so that it transforms a true and loyal soldier (Uriah) to be his enemy - and his enemies, the Ammonites, in some sense, into his allies.

Uriah's senseless death reminds us that God does not always deliver us from deadly tragedy or unjust trouble or seemingly needless suffering. When Uriah faithfully served his king, he lost his life. God is not obliged to "bail us out of trouble" or to keep us from trials, pain and suffering just because we trust in Him. Sometimes it is the will of God for those who trust Him to suffer adversity from which God may not deliver them. Faith in God is no guarantee that we will not suffer in life. In fact, most often spiritual intimacy with God *is the result* of our sufferings. The one and only true deliverance that we need in life is that from the consequences of our sin – and we already have that in the crucified and risen Jesus Christ! In Colossians 1:13-14 Paul tells us that God *"has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."*

God's Word doesn't gloss over anything in the story of David and Bathsheba. It dramatizes David's humanness in an unforgettable way. It offers amazing insight into the elements that make us spiritually vulnerable. It reminds us that in accomplishing His purpose God always is forced to use fallible people. It also should warn against presumption upon position and status to which all people are vulnerable, and that no one is above God's law. These sins give perspective to the events that occur in the chapters to come as a result of God's judgment upon David. The repercussions of David's sins do not end with Uriah's death but seem to lay the foundation for a whole series of tragic events of more death, rape, murder, and insurrection. The shock waves of sin that began with a lustful heart on a rooftop were still being felt when, as David lay dying, he was pressured to make Solomon his successor on the throne.

This is the king God chose (1 Samuel 16:13) who was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14) to do all of God's will (Acts 13:22). The warning in this text reaches far beyond King David and touches all followers of Jesus Christ regarding how suddenly and fatally any of us can fall. There is a verse from Robert Robinson's hymn *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing* that undoubtedly applies to all of us;

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love.

Robert Robinson understood this. He had come to faith in Jesus Christ under George Whitefield's preaching in 1752 and he later became a Baptist pastor in Cambridge. Toward the end of his life he began to go through a number of prolonged spiritual trials and struggles. One day during this period he was traveling by stagecoach. Another passenger, a lady and a total stranger, was going over some hymns, persistently referred to 'Come, Thou Fount' as one that had brought her immense blessing. As the carriage rolled forward the woman began to sing the words of a hymn. And when she sang the verses: "Prone to wander Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love" Robinson asked the woman to stop singing. She said, "Why would you not want to listen to such an inspiring hymn?" To which Robinson replied, "Madam, I am the poor, unhappy man who composed that hymn many years ago. I wrote those words and I've loved those words – but right now I am now drunk."

We dare not hear that story nor read the words from our text for today and respond by saying, "I would never do that." If you believe that, you've taken the first step in your wandering away from God. We are cut from the same cloth as the men and women of Scripture who had feet of clay. Even the best men and women in the biblical record had their faults and failures. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?*" Isaiah 53:6 says: "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way.*" In Matthew 15:19 Jesus said: "*Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.*" Don't ever be surprised at what you are capable of. The only safe ground is to pray with Robert Robinson,

O to grace how great a debtor Daily I'm constrained to be;
Let that grace now, like a fetter, Bind my wandering heart to thee.

In Romans 7 the apostle Paul wrote: "*For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. . . . Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*" (Romans 7:18-20; 24-25). Amen? Amen!

2017-03-19

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