

David: A Flawed Hero of Faith

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Flawed: Heroes of the Faith / David; Faith; Adultery; Murder; Covetousness / Hebrews 11:32–34; 2 Sa 11:1–27; 2 Samuel 12:1–14

A believer's life is stained by great sin but God's grace is greater than all our sins.

Introduction

We are concluding our five-week sermon series on [Hebrews 11](#) that I am calling, “Flawed: Heroes of the Faith.”

So far, we have examined the lives of Sarah, Moses, and Jacob.

Today, I am concluding our study by examining the life of David. He is one of the greatest believers in the entire Bible. In fact, God said of David, “I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will” ([Acts 13:22](#)). David certainly should be listed as one of those in “The Bible’s Hall of Faith” in [Hebrews 11](#).

But, as we shall see, David’s life was stained by incredible moral failure. He was a massively flawed hero of the faith.

Yet, despite his sin and failure, we shall also see God’s grace at work in David’s life.

And that should give all of us great hope.

Scripture

As we learn about David, a flawed hero of faith, I would like to read two passages of Scripture for today’s lesson.

The first Scripture passage I would like to read is [Hebrews 11:32-34](#):

³² And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the

mouths of lions,³⁴ quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

The second Scripture passage is about the great moral failure in David's life. It is found in [2 Samuel 11:1-12:14](#). However, for the sake of time, I will read selected portions from this section. Let's begin with [2 Samuel 11:1-5](#):

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 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. ³ 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?" ⁴ 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. ⁵ And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant."

David then sent for her husband, Uriah, who was at the battlefront. He tried to get Uriah to go home to his wife. But Uriah would not do so. Let's pick up the narrative in verse 14:

¹⁴ In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah.

¹⁵ 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." ¹⁶ And as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men. ¹⁷ 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.

Joab sent word back to David that Uriah had been killed. Let's pick up the narrative in verse 26:

²⁶ When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband. ²⁷ 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.

¹ And the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, “There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. ² The rich man had very many flocks and herds, ³ but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. ⁴ Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man’s lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.” ⁵ Then David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, “As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, ⁶ and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.”

⁷ Nathan said to David, “You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul.’ ”

Nathan continued the Lord’s rebuke to David. Let’s conclude the reading with verses 13-14:

¹³ David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” And Nathan said to David, “The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD, the child who is born to you shall die.”

Lesson

In today’s lesson, we learn that a believer’s life is stained by great sin but God’s grace is greater than all our sins.

I. You Are a Worse Sinner Than You Ever Dared Imagine

First, I want you to see that you are a worse sinner than you ever dared imagine.

As we consider David, we should remember that he was now king over God’s people. He was arguably the most powerful king in the region. He never lost a

battle. He was now ruling over his kingdom in the city of Jerusalem. He was at the peak of life and power and influence. He was loved and respected and revered by all his people.

David's downfall occurred when he was on his roof, which was a flat roof. He saw a woman bathing. She was very beautiful. He inquired about her and learned that she was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah who was on the front line with David's army.

Despite the protest of his servants, he called for her. He slept with her. And she became pregnant.

When David learned that Bathsheba was pregnant, he sent for Uriah to come and see him, ostensibly to get an update on how the battle was going. After Uriah gave his report to David, David told him to go to his home.

David was hoping that Uriah would go home, spend the night with his wife, and then later when the pregnancy became evident, everyone would assume that the baby was Uriah's and not David's.

But Uriah would not go home. He was a man of principle. He would not enjoy the pleasures of a family while his fellow soldiers were still out in the field and deprived of these blessings.

When David learned about this, David had Uriah come back to his palace. He got Uriah drunk. But even in his drunken state, Uriah would not abandon his principle and go home to his wife.

David's scheme to cover up his sin of adultery was not working.

So, David came up with another scheme.

He wrote a letter to his commander Joab on the front line of the battle. He told Joab to put Uriah where fighting was the fiercest and then withdraw so that he might be struck down and die. David arranged for Uriah to be killed. And that is exactly what happened.

Do you recall who Uriah was? Years earlier, when David was not yet king, he was constantly being hunted by King Saul who wanted to kill David. If I recall correctly, David evaded 16 attempts by Saul to kill him. During those fugitive

years, many soldiers joined David. They risked their lives constantly for David. One of the greatest of these soldiers was Uriah. David owed his life to Uriah.

What a horrific way to repay a faithful, loyal soldier.

So, David coveted a faithful friend's wife, committed adultery with her, murdered his friend, and then lied to cover up his heinous sins. In just a few days, David's life was overtaken by massive moral failure and sins against God.

David wasn't some ungodly unbeliever. You might expect such a person to shade the truth, shamelessly take someone else's wife, arrange for the husband to be eliminated, and even worse. But this was David. David! A man after God's heart.

Friends, we learn from David that even the greatest of Christians is capable of the most heinous sin. No Christian should ever think that because he is a Christian, he is now immune to moral failure and sin.

Many of you are familiar with Ravi Zacharias. He was one of the best-known graduates of the same seminary that I attended. For more than forty years, he was involved in apologetics and defending the Christian faith. He wrote more than thirty books explaining the Bible. He traveled the world and spoke in many places around the world. However, just after his death in May 2020, he was accused of widespread sexual misconduct. An investigation showed that he lived a double life and that he was involved in dreadful sexual sin.

How does that happen? You must know that you are capable of dreadful sin, even as a committed Christian. Why? Because as the Prophet Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" ([Jeremiah 17:9](#)).

You must never forget that you are a worse sinner than you ever dared imagine. You are capable of great wickedness. Even the greatest Christians are capable of massive moral failure.

So, what can you do about it? John Owen was the greatest Puritan theologian who lived in the 17th century. He once wrote, "Be killing sin or it will be killing you" (*Works of John Owen: Volume 6 (Chapter 2: The Principal Assertion concerning the Necessity of Mortification Proposed to Confirmation)*).

You must constantly examine your heart. Look for any seed of sin. And as soon as you see it, kill it. Turn from it. Don't dally with it, as David did by looking at a

very beautiful woman bathing. Turn your attention to something good and wholesome.

Because if you don't kill sin, it will kill you.

So, first, you are a worse sinner than you ever dared imagine.

II. You Are More Loved Than You Ever Dared Hope

And second, you are more loved than you ever dared hope.

How did God respond to David's sins? [2 Samuel 11:27b](#) says, "But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD." God never winks at sin and overlooks it. Sometimes he deals with it immediately, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (see [Acts 5:1-11](#)). And sometimes God only deals with sin after a person has died and they stand before him at the seat of judgment.

God sent Nathan the prophet to David. This was at least nine months after David's first sin of adultery because the baby had been born.

It is very interesting to note that Nathan did not go to David and say, "Adulterer! Murderer! Liar!" Instead, Nathan said to David that he wanted to bring a case before David of a rich man and a poor man.

Keep in mind that in those days there was no separate Judicial Branch of David's government. The king was the judge. One of the jobs of King David was to adjudicate legal disputes.

So when Nathan came to David, David assumed that this was another difficult legal dispute that he had to adjudicate.

Nathan told David about a rich man who had many flocks and herds. There was also a poor man who had nothing but one little ewe lamb that was like a daughter to the man and his family. One day, a traveler came to the rich man. The rich man was socially obligated to extend hospitality to the traveler but he did not want to bear the expense himself. So the rich man took the poor man's little lamb, slaughtered it, and fed it to the traveler.

Nathan wanted David to make a judgment in this case. Well, David was furious. He applied the Mosaic Law and said that the rich man had to pay the poor man four times what he had stolen. But then David said that the man deserved to die.

Now that is not in the Mosaic Law. Capital punishment was not to be applied in this case. Nevertheless, David was enraged by the rich man's gall in stealing the poor man's precious lamb.

As soon as David said "the man who has done this thing deserves to die," Nathan knew that he had trapped David. So Nathan said to David, "You are the man!" He then went on to expose David's sins to him.

This was brilliant. As someone said, Nathan's comment to David that "You are the man!" was the most direct application of a sermon to an audience in history. But Nathan did not begin with that statement.

Nathan did not go in and say to David, "You are an adulterer. You are a murderer. You are a liar." Why?

Nathan was a prophet of God and he was reflecting God's love and grace to David.

You see, God wants to bring about conviction; he does not want to bring about condemnation. God wants to soften hearts; he does not want to harden hearts. God wants people to turn from their sins; he does not want them to double down on their sins. God wants people to repent of their sins; he does not want them to excuse their sins.

People who are engaged in ongoing sin put up all kinds of defense mechanisms. They vehemently deny direct accusations. Before Ravi Zacharias died, there were accusations against him alleging improper behavior toward women. However, he pressed back against them and said that it would show disloyalty if his own organization investigated him.

Can you imagine how difficult it would have been to get the king to admit to a direct accusation? David could have easily turned against Nathan. But Nathan very wisely got David to see that what he had done was wrong.

We know that David admitted to his wrongdoing because of what we read in [2 Samuel 12:13](#) where David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die."

We don't have time to examine David's repentance today. However, David articulated the best expression of true repentance in the entire Bible which is captured in [Psalm 51](#). The thing I just want you to see is that David truly

repented. He recognized the enormity of his sin, he deeply regretted it, and although he could not undo it, he did turn from it in his life.

However, I do want to focus on God's response to David's sins. David was guilty of the most heinous sins. Adultery, murder, lying, deception, and the list would just grow longer and longer. But, Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die."

Doesn't that seem unfair? How can God just pardon a person no matter what sins that person has committed?

Here is the answer. Pastor Eugene Peterson is best known for writing *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*. He once preached a sermon in which he said something like this, "There is a remarkable similarity between Nathan standing before David and Jesus standing before Pilate. Nathan said to David, 'You are the man!' And Pilate said of Jesus, 'Behold the man!' " (see [2 Samuel 12](#) and [John 19](#)).

Peterson is right. There were two courtrooms. The courtroom of David and the courtroom of Pilate. There was a judgment seat in each courtroom. But things were upside down in both courtrooms. In both courtrooms, the man sitting on the judgment seat should have been in the dock as the accused. David, the man on the judgment seat, should have been in the dock. And in Pilate's courtroom, the man in the dock, the man accused and condemned, should have been sitting on the judgment seat.

In the first account, God sent Nathan the prophet to confront the man in the judgment seat: "You are the man!" Suddenly, the one who was sitting on the judgment seat realized his sins, and he repented of his sins.

But in Pilate's courtroom, no one showed up to set things right. God did not send a prophet to say to Pilate and all the people and say, "You are the men!" That never happened.

Why? Because Jesus had to die. On the cross, Jesus was utterly forsaken and he paid the ultimate penalty "for the sins of the whole world" (see [1 John 2:2](#)). The supreme Judge of all the earth who never committed a single sin died as a condemned man.

Jesus died so that David could receive forgiveness for his heinous sins. Jesus died in place of David.

But Jesus did not die only for David. He died for every sinner who recognizes his or her sin and repents of that sin.

Friend, do you see that you are more loved than you dared hope? No matter how great your sin, no matter what your sin, you can receive forgiveness when you turn to Jesus in repentance and faith.

Conclusion

In today's lesson, we learned that a believer's life is stained by great sin but God's grace is greater than all our sins.

The two points for today's sermon came from a well-known statement by Pastor Jack Miller. He was a professor at Westminster Theological Seminary, and he also started New Life Presbyterian Church in Jenkintown, PA. He was famous for saying, "Cheer up: you're a worse sinner than you ever dared imagine, and you're more loved than you ever dared hope."

That is a true statement. And that is the gospel. You are a sinner. You are a far worse sinner than you ever dared imagine. That's the bad news.

But, the good news is that you are more loved by God than you ever dared hope.

If God forgave David his heinous sins, and he did, then he will forgive your sins too, no matter how heinous they are. Just come to him in repentance and faith. And do it today. Amen.