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The Death of a Good Man

2 Samuel 11:1-25, "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."

⁶ So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. ⁷ When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab was doing and how the people were doing and how the war was going. ⁸ 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. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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?” ¹¹ 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.” ¹² 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. ¹³ 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.

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. ¹⁸ Then Joab sent and told David all the news about the fighting. ¹⁹ And he instructed the messenger, “When you have finished telling all the news about the fighting to the king, ²⁰ 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? ²¹ 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.’ ”

²² So the messenger went and came and told David all that Joab had sent him to tell. ²³ 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. ²⁴ 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.” ²⁵ David said to the messenger, “Thus shall you say to Joab, ‘Do not let this matter trouble you, for the sword devours now one and now another. Strengthen your attack against the city and overthrow it.’ And encourage him.” ¹

Today as every Lord’s Day we celebrate the great and glorious news of the Resurrection of Christ. In fact you may already know this, but Easter is a man-made holiday. As such, whether we chose to observe this one day out of 365 is inconsequential to God. Yet that is not to say that God doesn’t have an opinion as to how we ought to respond to the resurrection of Christ. For He does!

When we look at the resurrection of Christ from the perspective of the Bible we discover that the day is not the issue, but the day of the week! Because Christ rose on Sunday, the first day of the week, the Lord changed the Sabbath ordinance to Sunday which is why we worship the first day of the week.

In light of this, every Lord’s Day when we assemble in this place, it is in light of the great and

¹ *The Holy Bible : English standard version*. 2001 (2 Sa 11:1–25). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

glorious news of the Resurrection of Christ! Yet in order for us to understand the “good news” we must be acquainted with the bad. In John 16, Christ told His disciples these words:

John 16:33, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

Family of God, in the world we have tribulation, but that’s half of it. In the church, in the body of Christ, we also have tribulation! In fact, there is not a person here who is above persecuting another in this body. This occurs not simply on account of our sin, but get this, on account of righteousness!

And that is why 2 Samuel 11 is such a valuable text. This all-too familiar passage of David’s sin with Bathsheba details much more than just David’s sordid affair with Bathsheba; it describes the events surrounding the death of a good man, Uriah, the Hittite. This is the story of David’s persecution and assassination of a man who loved him very much.

I want us to look at this text NOT just as ones who someday may be hurt by another in the body of Christ, BUT as ones who certainly will transgress against the body of Christ and so hurt the “Good Man.” For this is the stage on which the events of Easter take place.

2 Samuel 1:1: “Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out *to battle*, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem.”

In the nineteenth year of his reign as king of Israel (~992 BC), David sent his armies led by Joab to fight against the sons of Ammon. It was springtime when armies went out to battle. It turns out that the battle recorded in 2 Samuel 11 was a continuation of the conflict that began the previous summer. When Saul was chasing David around Palestine, the king of Ammon (Nahash) sought an alliance with David. This is the Nahash who attacked Jabesh-gilead seeking to humble the people of God and whom Saul successfully opposed in 1 Samuel 11. Accordingly when David later became king, Nahash and David continued to enjoy peace and good will- which meant for many years the Ammonites and the Israelites were allies! But then Nahash died leaving his son, Hanun, to rule in his place.

Now you must know that until Nahash, the Ammonites were the enemies of God ever resenting the territory they lost to Israel when Moses came through the Trans-Jordan. Now in truth, they did not lose their territory to the Israelites, they lost it to the Amorites who later opposed Moses as he led God’s people up the east side of the Dead Sea as they prepared to take the Promised Land. It was at this time Israel took possession of the Trans-Jordan, but they took it from the Amorites! Yet years later, the Ammonites made a claim against God’s people which under the leadership of Jephthah was denied. Jephthah asked the king why he was attacking.

Judges 11:13-15, “And the king of the sons of Ammon said to the messengers of Jephthah, ‘Because Israel took away my land when they came up from Egypt, from the Arnon as far as

the Jabbok and the Jordan; therefore, return them peaceably now.’ But Jephthah sent messengers again to the king of the sons of Ammon, and they said to him, ‘Thus says Jephthah, ‘Israel did not take away the land of Moab, nor the land of the sons of Ammon.’”

In other words, *“what are you talking about? We fought against the Amorites back then, not you!”* (cf. Judges 11:20-23)!

At this time the Ammonites became embittered against Israel which explains why after Nahash died, the nation under his son Hanun attacked Israel. Recall that after David’s authority as king was solidified, he endeavored to express the face and affections of Christ to those who were undeserving; first to Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 9, and then to Hanun after the death of his father in 2 Samuel 10.

We pick the story up in 2 Samuel 10.

2 Samuel 10:1-2, “Now it happened afterwards that the king of the Ammonites died, and Hanun his son became king in his place. Then David said, ‘I will show kindness to Hanun the son of Nahash, just as his father showed kindness to me.’ So David sent some of his servants to console him concerning his father...”

Yet resentment was great toward Israel in Ammon. Hanun mistreated the servants of David, shaved their beards (which was a huge insult), and sent them home. In essence, he declared war on Israel.

David responded quickly and attacked. By the end of that summer as winter set in, the Ammonites fled for their lives. Did you get that? They didn’t surrender; they just fled! Our text in 2 Samuel 11 occurred the following spring when David sent his most trusted general, Joab, into battle against the Ammonites!

And yet instead of going with his armies, David stayed behind in Jerusalem which was a huge violation of his calling as King! As the protector of Israel, it was David’s solemn duty to lead the army as they fought the Lord’s battles. Yet complacency clearly had set in, and so he stayed behind.

One evening, looking out over Jerusalem from the balcony of his palace, he saw a beautiful woman taking a bath. Rather than averting his eyes, David lusted after her and determined to take her for his own (2 Samuel 11:3); which he did ((2 Samuel 11:4-5).

Now upon discovering that Bathsheba was pregnant, this “man after God’s own heart” decided to cover up his crime, and he gave special leave to Uriah the Hittite from the battle field (2 Samuel 11:6-13). David knew that Uriah couldn’t wait to be with his wife; evidently they were newlyweds without children. And David expected that coming home Uriah would go into his wife. And then, nine months later when the baby (who was sired by David) was born, everyone would think that the father was Uriah.

This was quite the plan; yet it was thwarted by Uriah for he refused to go to his home! Instead, he spent his leave from the battle line sleeping at the door of the king (2 Samuel 11:9-13).

The Crime

2 Samuel 11:14-15, “Now it came about in the morning that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent *it* by the hand of Uriah. And he had written in the letter, saying, ‘Place Uriah in the front line of the fiercest battle and withdraw from him, so that he may be struck down and die.’”

Because David’s little ruse didn’t work he turned his focus to exterminating Uriah, and so he began to plot the murder of his lover’s husband! In 2 Samuel 11:14-16 we read that David wrote a letter to Joab instructing him to:

- Place Uriah in the heat of the battle.
- Expose him in the front line by having the battle line withdraw suddenly from him.
- Make sure that Uriah became a casualty of war.

And thus we read of the death of Uriah the Hittite.

2 Samuel 11:17, “And the men of the city went out and fought against Joab, and some of the people among David’s servants fell; and Uriah the Hittite also died.”

The tragedy of this event is compounded when we consider Uriah’s commitment to his king, King David.

The Commitment

Because Hebrew is more inclined to “show it” than to “say it” there are two elements in this passage that reveal Uriah’s deep commitment to David and His kingdom. Notice the first one.

2 Samuel 11:10-11, “Now when they told David, saying, ‘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?’ And Uriah said to David, ‘The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in temporary shelters, 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?’”

What an indictment! For this is exactly what David had been doing... with Uriah’s wife!.

2 Samuel 11:12-13 “By your life and the life of your soul, I will not do this thing.’ Then David said to Uriah, ‘Stay here today also, and tomorrow I will let you go.’ So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. Now David called him, and he ate and drank before him, and he made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his bed with his lord’s

servants, but he did not go down to his house.”

From this passage, we learn of Uriah’s incredible devotion. Uriah refused to enjoy the comforts of home because his comrades were at that moment suffering the hardship of war. How could Uriah...

- Live in ease when his companions were suffering?
- Enjoy the comforts of home when his fellow soldiers were in want?

In fact, taking advantage of man’s inclination for his heart to grow cold when it comes to devotion, David kept Uriah for a period longer than expected, (2 Samuel 11:12) and got him drunk (2 Samuel 11:13). Still Uriah would not go to Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:13b).

When it came to Israel and its army, no one could doubt where Uriah’s heart lay. Israel and its welfare were Uriah’s first concern! And for him to enjoy the comforts of home while his comrades were suffering on a battle field violated Uriah’s sense of commitment to his nation and his God. Truly Uriah was a man devoted to Israel and its people. And yet, this was but half of it, Uriah could have slept in any number of places as an “act of participation” with his comrades who were at that moment on the front line, yet Uriah consistently slept in a location that spoke of a deep-seeded devotion to David.

2 Samuel 11:9, “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.”

The “door of the king” is believed to be the barracks that were erected next to the King’s quarters. Because of its strategic location it was the place of greatest protection for David. In fact, the “door of the king” was where David’s royal guard would have slept. If this were the days of Rome, we’d understand that Uriah chose to sleep amongst the Praetorian Guard.

And so, Uriah positioned himself at “the door of his king” that in the event of an attack or ambush, Uriah could protect David!

2 Samuel 11:13, “Now David called him, and he ate and drank before him, and he made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his bed with his lord’s servants, but he did not go down to his house.”

Even though he was under the influence of alcohol and so had impaired judgment, Uriah still chose to sleep with the royal guard at the door of the king! Such was this soldier’s devotion to David! Joyce Baldwin describes it this way:

David had expected and hoped that Uriah would prove to be like himself; instead he proved to be a man of integrity, whose first loyalty was to the king’s interests rather than to his own pleasure. (Baldwin, 189, p. 233)

From this we get a glimpse at the integrity of Uriah’s character; it was God/country first and then

personal satisfaction and David's welfare/protection first and then personal comfort!

It is little wonder that Uriah is mentioned as one of David's mighty warriors (cf. 2 Samuel 23:39; 1 Chronicles 11:41) and was the one entrusted with delivering David's letter to Joab, a letter containing the orders for his own execution (cf. 2 Samuel 11:14)!

But what if he read the letter? From this account it is obvious that Uriah would not. Truly, he of all people was a man who could be trusted! And thus we see the death of a good man; killed by the very one he sought most to protect!

Truly this age is an era in which good and upright men are persecuted not on account of their sin and a violation of any known law BUT for that which makes them most admirable; their devotion, goodness, and fidelity (cf. 1 Peter 2:20b-21a; 4:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; Matthew 5:10-12). And yet brothers and sisters, we fail fully to consider this passage concerning the death of Uriah until we place ourselves in the place of David and consider NOT...

- The neighbor.
- The government.
- Organized religion.

BUT OURSELVES as the ones guilty of murdering the "good man" the one most committed and devoted to us and God.

The Universality of this Sin

And yet you ask, "What good man have we killed?" Consider with me Matthew 5.

Matthew 5:21-22a, "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty [of murder] before the court..."

Matthew 5:27-28, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart."

James describes the Christian this way:

James 4:2, "You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel..."

Once again, describing the Christian, Paul wrote this:

Galatians 5:15, "But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another."

Is it possible for Christians to participate in the death of a good man? From these passages we respond with a resounding, “YES!” Husbands, every time you view your wife as your servant and not your ministry, you strike a blow against the good man. Parents, every time in your selfishness you mistreat your child, you strike a blow against the good man. Family of God, every time you:

- Think the evil thought toward another.
- Speak the harsh word.
- Actively seek to humble another person.
- Choose division over peace.

You strike a blow against the good man! In fact, knowing that we could participate in such a sin, the Bible warns when it comes to our covenant children:

Matthew 18:6, “...whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea.”

It is a serious thing in Scripture to be responsible for “killing a good man.” Truly, we all this day stand guilty with David of killing a good man. And yet, all the violations and sins we could perpetrate against another, if they were measured together, would not compare to the guilt that is ours when it comes to the ultimate lust in our hearts regarding THE Good Man. Indeed, every transgression we commit against one another is NOT ONLY a sin against that person; we know this, BUT ALSO and ultimately a transgression against THE Good Man, Jesus Christ.

When Saul was breathing threats and violence against the early church, Christ said this:

Acts 9:4: “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”

In His sermon on the Mount of Olives in which the *religious* evil and wicked are indicted not so much for what they did but for what they didn’t do, Christ said:

Matthew 25:45, “Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.”

And that is why when David wrote his great Psalm of repentance in which he cried for God’s mercy on account of his sin with Bathsheba and his treachery toward Uriah, he said this:

Psalm 51:4a, “Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight...”

Truly, behind every sin we commit is the unquenchable passion to crush, destroy, and wound Christ!. When it comes to the non-Christian, this we know is their outlook. They hate God (Matthew 24:51; 25:30; cf. Acts 7:54). And though we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, nevertheless the flesh still remains such that this passion for the destruction of the Lord continues!

And with this we come to a very important message of the Bible. In the heart of every man lies a passion which continues to seek to rule, conquer, and destroy God. That is what the fall of mankind was all about (Genesis 3:5). That is the sin that compelled Paul to his ravenous destruction of the church in Acts 9. And as Uriah is a *type* of Christ, no doubt that is what compelled David in his heinous crime against this man!

2 Samuel 11 is about the death of a good man, but we miss the significance here unless we see that David's actions ultimately were against God! That's the bad news; but herein we read of God's amazing grace.

The Amazing Grace of God; the Message of Easter

2 Samuel 11:14-15, "Now it came about in the morning that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent *it* by the hand of Uriah. And he had written in the letter, saying, 'Place Uriah in the front line of the fiercest battle and withdraw from him, so that he may be struck down and die.'"

Recall that Uriah carried a letter to the front lines and handed it to General Joab, a letter which cried for his own death. That brothers and sisters is what Easter is all about!

In the days of Christ if a person accumulated a debt that he could not pay, he was placed in Debtor's Prison where he would remain until his debt was paid (cf. Luke 12:58-59). While in this prison, a document known as a "certificate of debt" would be placed on his prison door detailing his obligation.

Colossians 2:13-14, "And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

Just as Uriah bore the letter whose contents called for his execution, so also Christ bore the letter, the certificate of debt, whose contents called for our execution! And thus, as Uriah died to protect a man who had ruthlessly violated him, so also Christ died to protect the very ones who not only had violated Him, but would continue to violate Him every time they sinned.

Oh I hope you see that each of us is guilty of the death of THE Good Man! Yet let us understand that in His amazing providence, God used this unto His glory and our good. Speaking of Christ, Peter wrote:

1 Peter 2:24, "And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed."

Isn't that glorious news? Yet how ought we to respond? Notice David's response in Psalm 32! Most of us are familiar with Psalm 51 in this context. Yet it is Psalm 32 with which I want to close.

Confession

How did David respond to so great a sin? He responded with confession.

Psalm 32:3-5, "When I kept silent *about my sin*, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away *as with the fever heat of summer*. [Selah]. I acknowledged my sin to Thee, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord'; and Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin."

From Psalm 51 we learn of the object of David's transgression.

Psalm 51:4a, "Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight..."

And this is where our restoration and forgiveness begins! Truly, we must see our sin for what it really is...

- A transgression against Jesus Christ!
- A seeking to dominate and control Christ.
- A murdering of the Good Man!

If you are in need of forgiveness today, go to Christ and confess your sin and ask for His healing grace. In the words of Matthew:

Matthew 7:7-8, "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened."

Confidence

We need to respond with confidence. Again I remind you that the context of this passage is David's sin.

Psalm 32:6-7, "Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found; surely in a flood of great waters they shall not reach him. Thou art my hiding place; Thou dost preserve me from trouble; Thou dost surround me with songs of deliverance. [Selah]."

As a forgiven sinner, David knew that God was gracious and righteous to forgive sin! As such, he didn't fear condemnation. Rather, he lived in confidence knowing that it was well with his soul!

Passion to Tell Others

We need to respond with a passion to tell others.

Psalm 32:8-10, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you..."

Knowing the forgiveness of Christ produced in David a passion to instruct others in the way they should go. And what way is that? The way of forgiveness... the way of the cross (vv. 10-11)!

Joy

We need to respond with a passion for joy.

Psalm 32:1-2, 11, "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit!... Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous ones, and shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart."

Do you understand what you have today in Christ? The forgiveness of sin; past, present, and future!

Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Romans 8:33-34, "Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us."

If Christ is your savior this day, then regardless of what you have done, do, or will do, you will forever be acceptable in His sight. You are His! As that is the case, let us rejoice this day in the Lord. Let us exalt in the God of our salvation!

VISIT US WHEN IN Broomfield, COLORADO

Feel free to visit Bethel Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Bethel Presbyterian Church meets at Broomfield High School, Eagle (10th Street) and Main, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Bethel Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

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About the Preacher

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on April 24, 2011. Greg is the preacher at Bethel Presbyterian Church.