

Title: David fails as a king

Theme: David's failure as king reveals the need for a Greater King.

Introduction:

When I was in university, I used to be a member of a Christian fellowship. I remember during one of the Bible study meetings, we decided to open up and to share with one another concerning our greatest struggles. I still remember that most of the guys pointed out that their greatest struggles were watching pornography (色情影像图片) and thinking lustful (色欲的) thoughts, and we all agreed that what we see through our eyes certainly cause us to sin. I think it is certainly true that the desire for lust burns within the hearts of teenagers, and young adults, but I also believe that it also indwells the hearts of those who have married. It is also unhelpful that the society in which we live also influences us as the movies and TV shows often promote sexual immorality (不道德). These sexual contents are powerful, they first cause our eyes to wander (到处游荡), then they pollute our minds, and they ultimately consume our being. This is especially true to the text in front of us today.

This chapter certainly sheds a darker light upon King David because it speaks about his weakness. Now, some of you here may remember some of the great things written about him: chapter five recorded David's anointing (受膏) as the king of Israel, chapter six recorded his bringing into Jerusalem the ark of the covenant (约柜), chapter seven recorded God's promise to David about a Son and an everlasting kingdom, chapters eight and ten also recorded for us his conquering of many nations, and chapter nine recorded for us David's demonstration of grace toward Saul's household. From all of these accounts, we may certainly say that David is a great King. However, this chapter marks the turning point of David's dynasty, as we will see in this sermon, we see his lust and his sin. If we read on, we will also see violence and bloodshed in his house. Why? It is because the Scripture is telling us that however great king David was, he was not able to bring God's people into glory! And this passage indicates for us the need of a king who is greater than David.

Today, we shall consider the text in three sections. The first part of the text speaks of the king who idles (无所事事), the second part speaks of the king who sins, and these two points ultimately lead us to the final point as we look to the need for a Greater King, who will deliver us from our helplessness of sin and death.

I. David's idleness

a. Consider the context:

the passage is taken place during the war between Israel and the Ammonites. The passage is interestingly placed as an interruption to the war narrative. The previous chapter (ch.10) speaks of David defeating the Ammonites and the Syrians, while chapter 12 speaks of Joab capturing Rabbah, which is the metropolis (首都, 大城市) of Ammon. One of the main differences between the previous war accounts and this one is that David did not go out to battle with his people during the war, but he remained in Jerusalem. Further, the account also begins with a specific description concerning the time, "in the spring of the year, when kings go out to battle". But why is this important?

b. "David remains in Jerusalem"

It is because this phrase highlights for us the faultiness of David's presence at Jerusalem instead of being at the battlefield (战场). The text is telling us that David sent Joab and his servants to battle while he was staying at home. It is important for us to realize that in the old days, kings and princes were to be on the battlefield. Not only does the presence of the king among the army serves as the motivation (动力) for the whole army, but it is because the king was the representative (代表) of his people. A king's presence among the army demonstrates a great desire to win and to conquer. For this reason, it is David's responsibility (put stress) to be on the battlefield along with his servants and people who are out there fighting against the enemies.

c. Israel's greatest enemy

Have you considered why David decided to stay at Jerusalem? Perhaps it is because David and his army were just one step away from winning the war and he therefore sat back and was just waiting to hear the good news. Another possible reason could be his abundance in power, which led him to become complacent. This may certainly be true. The previous texts tell us that the Lord has given David great possession; the Lord has anointed him, been with him in battle, with him in his going out and coming in. He also has made David a prince over Israel and has given David rest from all his enemies.

But we should remember that these are all visible demonstrations of God's grace toward David. **Did David deserve all these things?** These are all given to David not because he deserved it, but because of the grace and goodness of God! The text here is telling us that power and complacency (自我满足) had taken over David's heart, which cause him to become idle. David was no longer relying on the faithfulness (信实) and the grace of God. But he began to look to his own power. He felt secure in his prosperity (繁荣) . David was forgetting that it was **only** by God's grace and faithfulness to His promises, not because of his own strength as king.

Moreover, isn't it also interesting to notice that the greatest threat to David's kingdom is not the surrounding enemies nor the Ammonites, but he. The greatest enemy is not even at the frontline (前线) . The enemies at the frontline are so small in comparison to his own heart! We see here David is opening the door to the Devil, to open the door to the threat to his kingdom.

Let us now consider the lessons which we may learn from the first point.

First of all, it is not wrong to take breaks for our bodies and minds. Taking breaks are important for us, because they allow us to get a physical and mental recharge. There is nothing wrong to take a nap, go on a holiday with your family. Taking breaks allow your minds to recharge (充电) . Breaks are important to our wellbeing.

But in contrast, idleness can be dangerous. Here we see that David was neither old nor sick, nor busy with other affairs, but he simply put himself into the state of idleness. The state of resting is not wrong but idling with no purpose is an opening to the devil. We can learn here from David that instead of doing the work as the king, he woke up from his nap, and he had nothing to do so he walked on the rooftop (房顶) and that opened the door for the devil. This is a reminder for us that we should always do the things for which we are responsible, to keep ourselves busy. That way, we will never open the door to the cunning one.

II. David's lust and sin

The next few verses then tell us that David in his idleness arose from his couch, and as he was walking along the rooftop, his eyes glanced over the buildings and came across a courtyard, within which a woman was bathing. David's eyes were certainly caught by her beauty. The literary (字面的) device of the text certainly tells us that it was unintentional (不是有意的) . But this unintentional look at Bathsheba would have soon become a device by which the devil used to lead David to ruin.

While the first gaze was innocent, the second gaze was sinful. David, instead of taking his eyes off Bathsheba, he nourished (助长) it and allowed his lustful desires to rush through the doors of his heart. David, as a married man and the king of Israel, **should have immediately** looked away and asked the Lord for grace and for help him so that he might be able to overcome the temptation (试探) . But instead of doing so, he opened the door to a sin. It is as if he was trying to test out his godliness, but he only found out how weak he actually was.

What happened next almost disheartened (使沮丧) us. The text tells us that David sent his servant to inquire about her, perhaps to see if she was single so that he might take her as his wife and sleep with her. But his enquiry (询问, 查问) seems to go the opposite direction, for Bathsheba turns out to be the wife of Uriah, who is one of his trusted servants from his elite forces (精锐部队) . Knowing David, maybe we may think that perhaps David would walk away after finding out that the woman was the wife of his trusted servant. However, the text tells us that the enquiry of Bathsheba's identity did not discourage him, but he further sent his servants to bring her. We see here that David is out of control, the initial look had become lust, and the burning lust of his flesh had told David that "Uriah is far away in war, her husband is not home, no one will know". We may also think that he may change his mind when he was waiting for the arrival of his servants and Bathsheba, but surely that did not stop him, the baby lust of David has been nourished into a giant monster! The text then tells us that after his servants brought her into his palace, David slept with her. What a shame! We see a king using his power to compel (促使) his servant's wife into his palace, and he laid with her.

Is this the king Israel wanted? Absolutely not! Israel certainly did not want David to be her king! Look at David here in the passage, he not only failed to do the task of the king to protect the brides of Jerusalem; here we also see his failure in upholding the law of God. Instead of ruling above it so that everyone in his country may

enjoy life, and instead of protecting the divinely ordained (命定的) marriage, David has violated (破坏) it. David preyed (掠夺) upon the weaker one. David was the one who fought against bears and lions and the mighty Goliath who was 9 cubits tall! But look at him now, he is now taking advantages of the weak one.

We also begin to see that David has begun to seize things from his people, he has taken even the wife of his trusted servant! Do you find this “act of taking” familiar? Is this not also what the Lord had told His people through the prophet Samuel before the Lord ordained Saul? The Lord had warned Israel before ordaining them kings, 1 Samuel 8:11 “these will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots (马车) and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots.¹² And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements (补给) of war and the equipment of his chariots. ¹³ He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. ¹⁴ He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards (橄榄园) and give them to his servants. ¹⁵ He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. ¹⁶ He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work.¹⁷ He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. ¹⁸ And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day.” We see here this text which was fulfilled during the days of Saul was again being fulfilled. In the days of Saul, the Bible tells us that he took and took. David here finds himself no different than Saul, who disobeyed the law of God and disregarded His statutes. He has become like Saul and has begun to take from his people, even from his servant. We know that God had taken away the kingdom from Saul, and **here we also see that David here is playing with fire**, this is the sin which can potentially harm not only his own kingdom, but more importantly, harming to the very promises of God! Will what happened to Saul happen also to David? Will God also take away David’s kingdom? If you read on, the Lord was faithful to His promise and did not take away David’s kingdom, but David was going to pay for his sins.

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, if it were not for the faithfulness of God, where would we be? If this had happened for David, it can also happen to us. We see here an important lesson, in the first point we talked about idleness giving room to the devil, and now here we see a vivid picture of that, and it only gets worse if we do not put up our guard against sin. Satan is so cunning that he rejoices when he sees you fall into one trap after another, until no more joy can be found in you. Like David in Psalm 51 cried out that he had no joy in him, it was as if all his bones were broken.

Furthermore, is it not also true that we need to put up our guard against anything on the TV or on the internet. Brothers and sisters, look around! You are living in a world that promotes and endorses sexual immorality, they are spreading their seeds all over us, if you do not immediately suppress your thoughts and let your zeal for Christ take over you, those seeds grow and they lead you into ruin. James rightly puts, “¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured (被引诱) and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived (怀了胎) gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.” (1:14-15). If you come across anything evil on the TV or an advertisement on the internet, you must turn it off, flee from it. Lust is a sin that sinks down deep within us, if we do not suppress (压制) it; it grows bigger, and it kills us. Lust is a sin that ultimately creates deep wounds, wounds that leave deep scars (伤疤) .

That is why you need a King, One who will enable you to fight the battle against the desires of the flesh. You need the One who also will give you a zeal for His glory and His kingdom. And that now leads us to the third point, it is because the Greater King is here!

III. The Greater King is here

As a matter of fact, this Greater King than David has been mentioned in chapter 7, in which God speaks of the greater **Son of David who will forever sit on the throne**. The son of whom the Lord promised is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is the one who was promised to forever sit on the throne! **The Lord Jesus is the One and true eternal King who never fails**. Unlike David, when Jesus was tempted, he did not sin. He also used three verses from Deuteronomy (申命记) to refute the tempter (试探者) . The Lord Jesus is the king who does not fail to represents us, but the great King who was tempted in every way just like we and sustained all temptations. He exercises His authority not for His own selfish ends, but He exercises His authority by giving His life so that through faith in Him, we gain the new life and kingdom! He came to save those who have failed and have fallen! You and me!

The Bible speaks of David that he “reigned over all Israel. And David administered justice and equity (施行公义和公平) to all his people” (2 Samuel 8:15). However, the Lord Jesus is one who is greater than David! In fact, Jesus was the One to whom David cried in Psalm 51, after Nathan had confronted David. David repented (悔改) of his sin and he cried, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out (涂抹) my transgressions. ² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity (罪孽), and cleanse me from my sin!” Jesus is the One who cleansed David with a hyssop (牛膝草) branch dipped in blood, the One who washed David so that he might be as white as snow, the one who blotted out all his iniquities, the One who restored to David the joy of His salvation (救恩). That is why Jesus is David’s son and yet also David’s Lord! As Jesus Himself testified (见证) in Matthew 22:42-45. If it were not Jesus, David’s cry would have been an empty cry. David was a king, but he was not the Redeemer (救赎主). He too needed the Greater King to wash him clean. Jesus was the means by which David’s sin was put away (12:13).

But something even more breathtaking is this! This King who sits eternally on the throne, born from the **line of David had Bathsheba as His mother** (Matthew 1:6). David’s sin had caused great ruin to his kingdom, yet the Lord did not forget His promise. The very sin that threatened to ruin the promise of God, God used to carry out His promise! The Lord even used David’s sin to accomplish His promise. This is His wonderful providence (护理之工).

It is so marvelous, isn’t it? May be some of us sitting here are feeling guilty because of some of our past sins. We feel that the wounds are so deep that there is no hope! They often come to haunt us, they come to discourage us. But take heart, your sins might be great, but the grace of God is far greater! He rules over sin and is willing and able to lead His repentant people into glory. There is no sin too great and no wound too deep for the blood of Christ to heal. Look to Jesus, put your faith in Jesus! Remember what He has done at the Cross, at which all your sins are washed. Bring your sins to the Cross, repent! cry out to Jesus like David did! The Lord will not leave his repentant child in despair. He is your King, and He is here to wash you clean!

Even greater news is this, the Lord Jesus has also given us His Spirit so that we may subdue (制服) all our enemies, including our sinful passions and desires! In Lord’s Day 12 of the Heidelberg Catechism (海德堡教理问答) says, “He is our eternal King, who governs us by His Word and Spirit, and who defends and preserves (保守) us in the redemption obtained for us.” Jesus is the one who will truly represent you at the cross, not only does he help you in our daily battles, but he lived the law perfectly for you and died in your stead, in order to satisfy the wrath of God, so that you may have justification (称义), righteousness and life. He is the true King who can represent you before the holy judgment throne of the Father, in whose righteousness you are clothed, and who declares us righteous before the Father. You have been given the power to fight against sin now! What joy! What glory!

Conclusion

In closing to our sermon this morning, this text in front of us points out that as great David was, he was only a sinner who failed to represent his people. The text also reminds us that we have all been tempted, and we have all sinned. Maybe some of us here today have sinned, greatly. Yes, our sins may be so great and so overwhelming in our own eyes and the consequences and guilt may also seem so huge for us to bare. But let us remember that our sins are never too big for the grace of Christ. Sin has no dominion (统治权) over us who are in Christ. Pornography and lustful desires have no dominion over us. **The insufficiency of David points to Jesus as the true king, who totally satisfied God’s wrath through His obedience, and even took the punishment for our sins.** It is because Jesus is not only our King, but He is also our Prophet (先知). He is the one who announces an end to all our sins. Not only that, Jesus is also our priest (祭司). He is our great High priest who offered Himself as the Sacrifice (献祭, 祭物). Let us therefore, cling onto Christ. Remember that the blood of Christ that was shed at that old rugged cross is sufficient to wash away all our sins. As vile (极坏的) of a sinner you are, there is no sin too sinful or great for the blood of Christ to wash away.

Let me ask you a question. Is it not wonderful to know that you do not need to rest your hope upon an earthly king, who will fail you, but your hope is on the King who is sufficient in all? Does this not cause you want to leap for joy, does this not cause you want to sing louder all the more? One of my favorite hymn writers wrote:

“Yea, the Lord is full of mercy
And compassion (同情) for distress,
Slow to anger and abundant
In His grace and tenderness.
He will not be angry always,
Nor will He forever chide (斥责) ;
Though we oft have sinned against Him,
Still His love and grace Abide.” O My Soul, Bless Thou Jehovah, Psalm 103.

David also wrote in Psalm 32

“Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. ² Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.” Psalm 32:1-2

Finally, if you are not a Christian, the Lord is against you because of your sin, but if you look to Him today, and turn from your wicked ways, he is full of mercy and he shall have compassion on you, still the blood of Christ will wash you clean.

Let us pray.