

The Life of David

David and Bathsheba

2 Samuel 11:1-27

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Scripture

Second Samuel chapters 5 to 10 describe David at the pinnacle of his reign as God's chosen king over God's chosen people, Israel. However, Second Samuel 10 is also the beginning of a new section in the account of David's kingdom. Chapters 10 to 12 describe David's battle with the Ammonites. Sandwiched in the middle of these chapters is the shocking account of David's dreadful sin with Bathsheba. This sin marked David forever so that the glory that had shone previously in David's life never did so again.

Let's read about David and Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11:1-27:

¹In 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.

²It 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. ³And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" ⁴So 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. ⁵And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant."

⁶So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. ⁷When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab was doing and how the people were doing and how the war was going. ⁸Then 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. ⁹But 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 displease you, for the sword devours now one and now another. Strengthen your attack against the city and overthrow it.' And encourage him."

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. (2 Samuel 11:1-27)

Introduction

Most people who went to Sunday school years ago know about David, the shepherd boy who later became a king. If they were asked to name some well-known stories about David, the first story named almost certainly would be "David and Goliath." The second story most likely would be "David and Bathsheba."

The story of David and Bathsheba is well known. The basic plot has been the foundation of many novels and movies. It is a story of sin and the terrible results of sin. In his book *Finishing Strong*, Steve Farrar sums up well the terrible price of sin: "Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you're willing to pay."¹

Lesson

Second Samuel 11:1-27 shows us the carnage of sin in a person's life.

Let's use the following outline:

1. The Causes of Sin (11:1-4)
2. The Consequences of Sin (11:5)
3. The Cover-up of Sin (11:6-27a)

¹ Steve Farrar, *Finishing Strong* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 2000), 90.

4. The Condemnation of Sin (11:27b)

I. The Causes of Sin (11:1-4)

First, let's look at the causes of sin.

I read a number of commentaries in preparation for this message. All kinds of causes of sin are given for David's sin. For the sake of time, I want to limit the causes of sin to just two.

The first cause of sin is a wasteful idleness. Verse 1 says, **“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.”** It was not a requirement that David lead his men into battle. There were other times when David did not lead his men into battle (*cf.* 2 Samuel 10:7). His presence was not necessary when an Israelite victory was certain. David had every right to remain at Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the author of Second Samuel seems to make a point that a problem was about to arise because **David remained at Jerusalem.** The author goes on to say, **“It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch”** (11:2a). Resting during the heat of the midday sun was not uncommon, but resting until **“late one afternoon”** is an indication of wasteful idleness. We are not told that David was busy with the affairs of the kingdom or that he was busy taking care of the problems of his people. Instead, he was on **his couch.**

Perhaps you know the idiom, “Idle hands are the devil's handiwork.” It means that when someone is not busy, or being productive, trouble is bound to follow. That seems to be the case with David. He was idle and trouble was about to come upon him.

Now, I want to affirm that the Bible is not opposed to proper rest. God actually ordered six days of labor and one day of rest. Jesus sometimes got so tired that he had to rest. But what I do want to affirm is that idleness—and especially wasteful idleness—

often leads to trouble. So, let me encourage you to beware of wasteful idleness in your life.

And the second cause of sin is a wandering eye. Verse 2 goes on to say, “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.**” The city of Jerusalem was hilly and king David’s palace was on one of the hills. In those days, the houses had flat roofs. It gave the homeowner’s additional space and it also enabled the residents to catch the evening breezes. So, as David walked around on the roof his house, he saw **a woman bathing** and the author emphasized that she was **very beautiful**. If David had inadvertently seen her and immediately looked away, that would have been the end of the story.

But David was captivated by this beautiful woman. We know that to be the case because **“David sent and inquired about the woman”** (11:3a). He wanted to know more about this beautiful woman. **And one said, “Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?”** (11:3b). As soon as David heard that she was married, he should have stopped pursuing her. In addition, David himself was already married with several wives.

In Veggie Tales’ *King George and the Duck*, an adaptation of the story of David and Bathsheba, Larry the Cucumber stars as King George and Bob the Tomato is his faithful servant, Lewis. The privileges of royalty—kingdom expansion, castles, power, and treasures—do not appeal to King George. But King George loves to bathe with his rubber duck. Splishing and splashing, he sings an ode to his rubber duck called, what else? “I Love My Duck.”

One day while standing on the royal balcony in his purple robe and golden crown, King George peers through binoculars, and his wandering eyes grow wide with desire. He spies something wonderful—a rubber duck. But it belongs to Billy, who happens

to be bathing with his rubber duck on his own balcony. Billy's rubber duck looks exactly like King George's rubber duck. Nonetheless, the king covets it, exclaiming, "I want it."

Lewis reminds him that he already has a duck and that the other duck belongs to someone else.

"Are you saying I shouldn't have whatever I want?" asks the King.

Lewis opens a large wardrobe overflowing with hundreds of identical rubber ducks and says, "If I could just jog your memory, you already have quite a few ducks."

King George's rationale is simple. He shoots a condescending look at his unlearned servant and replies, "Those are yesterday's ducks."

"So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her" (11:4a). David's sin was complete.

Verse 4b adds, **"Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness."** She was obeying the Old Testament law regarding her menstrual cycle. The reason the author adds this detail is to assure his readers that the woman was *not* pregnant prior to David's sin with her.

Friends, sin does not just come upon us. It is not foisted upon us so that there is nothing we can do about it. James says in James 1:14–15, "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." Our own desires lead us into sin. In David's case, his desires of wasteful idleness and of wandering eyes led him into sin.

The remedy is for us to keep ourselves busy with proper activities and not to allow our eyes to wander so that we see things that we should not see. Let us be like Job, who said, "I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?" (Job 31:1).

II. The Consequences of Sin (11:5)

Second, let's observe the consequences of sin.

Verse 5 says, **“And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, “I am pregnant.”**” These are the only words spoken by Bathsheba in this chapter. When David received these words, he must have been stunned. After all, in the Old Testament, the penalty for adultery was death, although one commentator suggests that by David's time the death penalty need not be imposed if the spouse did not want it imposed. Regardless, this news from Bathsheba was not what David wanted to hear.

The consequences of sin are many. Let me list just three.

The first consequence of sin is an unplanned result. David's evening of personal pleasure resulted in an unplanned pregnancy. He certainly did not want Bathsheba to become pregnant, but she did.

You may watch pornography. Your evening of personal pleasure may result in an addiction which may ruin your marriage, family, and career. You may tell a lie, and years later it catches up to you and destroys a friendship. You don't honor your father or mother, and over the course of time you discover that you don't honor superiors and it costs you a career or a promotion.

The second consequence of sin is that other people know about it. This is not explicitly stated in the text. However, clearly other people knew what was going on. The person or persons David sent to inquire about the beautiful woman knew about it. The messengers David sent to bring her to him knew about it. And certainly the person Bathsheba **sent and told David, “I am pregnant,”** knew about it.

Not everyone knows about all our sin. I dare say that we each have sins about which no one else knows. But a consequence of sin is that more often than we like other people know about it. I have told you this story before about the time we had a robbery at the first church I served as an associate pastor. The senior pastor

was out of town and I received a call from the janitor early in the morning. She had arrived at the church and discovered that a robbery had taken place during the night. The thieves had taken a TV and some petty cash. They also took the senior pastor's Dictaphone. The thieves were caught later that same day. It was then that we learned that, unfortunately for them, when they put the senior pastor's Dictaphone into one of their pockets, it turned on and the entire robbery was recorded on tape! The Bible says, "...and be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23).

And the third consequence of sin is that it dishonors God. All sin is a violation of God's law. Even unbelievers have God's law written on their hearts (*cf.* Romans 2:15). However, it is particularly heinous when believers sin against the God who has saved them. David was a believer. He knew the law. And yet he dishonored God when he had intimate relations with Bathsheba.

Beloved, all sin has consequences. Sometimes those consequences show up rather quickly. Sometimes they may not show up in our lifetime. Let us be mindful of the consequences of sin.

III. The Cover-up of Sin (11:6:27a)

Third, let's notice the cover-up of sin.

David was wrong to sin with Bathsheba. When he learned that she was pregnant, he should have immediately repented and sought forgiveness from God, Bathsheba, Uriah, and his people. But, he did what so often happens: he tried to cover-up his sin. Actually, there were several attempts to cover-up his sin.

The first cover-up of sin is to develop a deception. In verses 6-13, we learn that David sent for Bathsheba's husband, Uriah. He had been fighting against the Ammonites. It should also be noted that Uriah was one of David's "mighty men" (2 Samuel 23:39). He was no mid-level soldier. He was one of David's most trusted military leaders. David wanted Uriah to come and see him to give a report

on how the battle against the Ammonites was going. That was not improper. However, David hoped that Uriah would then go home and sleep with his wife so that he would believe that the forthcoming baby was his child. But Uriah would not do so. The next day, David made Uriah drunk, hoping that now he would go home to Bathsheba so that David's sin would be covered-up. Again, Uriah did not go home. David's deception was not working.

Have you ever tried to organize a surprise party for someone but the person learned of it before the surprise? Last year, a friend organized a surprise party for his wife's birthday. The party with some out-of-town family and friends was held at the local clubhouse. When she arrived in the room, she said that she was not surprised because she noticed her grandson's car in the parking lot.

Sometimes our desire to cover-up our sin by some kind of deception does not work.

And the second cover-up of sin is to decree a death. When David realized that Uriah would not go home to Bathsheba, he decided to send Uriah back to the battlefield with a letter to General Joab. The letter was essentially Uriah's death warrant. Joab was to set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he would be killed. And that is exactly what happened to Uriah. David was so desperate that he decreed Uriah's death so that no-one would know that the forthcoming baby was not his child. This was an utterly despicable cover-up.

People are sometimes so committed to covering up sin that they even resort to death. Now, you and I may not do that. But, the point is that we may go to extreme lengths to cover-up sin.

My dear brothers and sisters, let us not cover-up sin.

Verses 26-27a say, **“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.”** Presumably, Bathsheba was still in her first trimester,

and her pregnancy was not yet showing. David may have thought that things would settle down and that all would be well.

IV. The Condemnation of Sin (11:27b)

And finally, let's see the condemnation of sin.

Verse 27b says, **“But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.”** In Hebrew, this verse reads as follows, “But the thing that David had done was evil in the eyes of the Lord.” This is literally the bottom line of the story. God was not simply unhappy about David's sin. What David had done was evil in his eyes. David had violated the law of God. David deserved to die. David's sin condemned him to death.

Conclusion

If David, a man after God's own heart, can fall into sin, is there any hope for any of us? Is there any cure for sin?

The good news is that the cure for sin is found in the gospel. God had promised that David's kingdom would be established forever (2 Samuel 7:16). Second Samuel 11 shows us that God's kingdom will be the kingdom of a *son* of David (7:12-13).

This son of David has come (Matthew 1:1). Unlike David (and the rest of us), this son of David was “without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). This son of David is his Greater Son, Jesus Christ.

David's sin was great, just as our sin is also great. However, Jesus' obedience is greater yet. His death covers the penalty for all of David's and our sin.

Unlike his predecessor, Saul, David eventually repented of his sin and asked God for forgiveness. That is why God accepted David. He forgave him when he repented of his sin.

So, if you have never done so, turn to Jesus in faith and repent of your sin today. Amen.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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