

URIAH WENT NOT DOWN

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Sexual liberation in the western nations has brought with it many problems. Sixteen percent of married people are unfaithful to their spouses. The divorce rate in the United States of America is between forty percent and fifty percent, and higher for subsequent marriages. Sexual liberation has led finally to sexual repression. People's unchecked sexual lust has brought very strict rules for behavior. Some advise that people make contracts with each other before they have relations. One company has created a mobile application for this purpose. With the application, the parties agree to terms, and, if there is a breach of contract, the application generates cease and desist letters. People either do not know, or do not care, what kind of behavior is appropriate, so authorities have to make rules for them. Media services provider Netflix has given its workers rules for how they must conduct themselves while working on set. One employee said, "Senior staff went to a harassment meeting to learn what is and isn't appropriate. Looking at anyone longer than five seconds is considered creepy. You mustn't ask for someone's number unless they have given permission for it to be distributed. And if you see any unwanted behaviour, report it immediately." Millions of people say that they are enslaved to pornography, and evidence of its harmful effects is growing. This is not liberation; this is bondage. Saint Paul wrote to Saint Timothy, "The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient." (1 Timothy 1:9) If people will not control themselves, then someone will control them. In *The Faerie Queene*, Edmund Spenser wrote of the seven deadly sins, and he portrayed the man consumed with lust this way:

Inconstant man, that loved all he saw,
And lusted after all, that he did love,
Ne would his looser life be ty'd to law,
But joy'd weak wemens hearts to tempt and prove
If from their loyal loves he might them move;
Which lewdness fill'd him with reproachful pain
Of that foule evil, which all men reprove,
That rots the marrow, and consumes the Brain;
Such one was Leachery the third of all this train. (Book I, Canto IV)

King David was a man after God's own heart, but even he fell victim to lust.

When God created man, He said that it was not good for him to be alone, and He would make a corresponding helper. So, God took a rib from Adam and fashioned it into a woman. When God presented to Adam the woman He had made, Adam immediately recognized her as a creature like him, and unlike the animals that God had made. So, God said that a man leaves his father and mother, and joins to his wife, and the two become one flesh. When the Pharisees asked Jesus about grounds for divorce, Jesus told them that when two are joined together, they are no longer two, but one flesh, and that no man ought to separate them. (Matthew 19:3-9) When a man and woman are joined together in marriage, only death separates them. As Saint Paul wrote to the Romans:

For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth;
but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. So then if, while *her*
husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her
husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to
another man." (Romans 7:2, 3; cf. 1 Corinthians 7:39)

Adultery is a serious sin, and in the Mosaic law is a capital offense. It says in the Book of Leviticus, "And the man that committeth adultery with *another* man's wife, *even he* that committeth adultery with his neighbour's

wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.” (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22) Man’s desire for woman, and woman’s for man, is natural, but God has ordained that it be satisfied only in marriage. Sinful people, however, take what is good, and corrupt it, as King David did when he took Bathsheba.

God gave David great success in his battles against the pagan nations, first under king Saul, and then as king himself. In one campaign, David sent his army, under the command of Joab, to wage war against the Ammonites, but he remained in Jerusalem. Why did David not lead in battle, as he had done so many times before? Certainly, he had nothing to prove, for he had proved himself many times over. Yet, it was customary for the king to lead. Even the rebellious king Saul died in battle against the enemies of Israel. Perhaps David had wearied of battle. Perhaps he had grown soft. Perhaps he thought himself too important to risk his life. In any case, the warrior who had slain tens of thousands remained in Jerusalem while another led his armies. One afternoon, while the soldiers were at war, David arose from his rest, and walked upon the roof of his house. It was then that David saw a woman bathing. He saw that she was beautiful, and he desired her. He inquired after her, and was told that she was Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, one of David’s greatest warriors. Here David made a fateful mistake. He ought simply to have dropped the matter. He ought to have sent Bathsheba back to her home, but he did not. In his heart he had conceived lust for her, and that lust would give birth to sin. (James 1:13-15) He was determined to have her, even though she belonged to another, and he had messengers bring her to him. She came to him, and he had relations with her. Afterward, she ritually washed herself according to the law of Moses, and when evening came, as she was no longer ritually unclean, and she went to her own home. (Leviticus 15:18)

Not many days later, she knew that she was with child, and not by her husband, who was still away at war, but by David. If her adultery should become known, then she would be put to death, for the law of Moses says, “And the man that committeth adultery with *another* man's wife, *even he* that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.” (Leviticus 20:10; cf. Deuteronomy 22:22) So, Bathsheba sent word to David, and he, when he learned of her condition, devised a scheme to cover up their sin. It would, however, come at a great cost, and would compound their sin. David would arrange for Uriah to have relations with his wife, and so to believe that the child she bore was his. David called Uriah in from battle on the pretense of inquiring of him concerning the progress of the war. He then sent Uriah home for rest and recuperation, and sent also food from his own table. However, Uriah, honorable man that he was, slept, not in his own home, but in the guard chamber. When David’s servants reported to him that “Uriah went not down unto his house,” David asked Uriah why. That righteous man answered the king, “The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? *as* thou livest, and *as* thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing.” Uriah would not indulge in the pleasures of life while his fellow soldiers were at war. These noble words ought to have pierced the heart of the king, who not only stayed away from the battle, but who had taken the wife of this great warrior. David’s heart was too hard on the matter, however. He commanded Uriah to remain another day, and the next day he dined with Uriah and made him drunk, in the hope that he finally would go to his wife. Yet, Uriah again deprived himself, and slept with the servants. David, his first intrigue having failed, hatched another plot: he would have that good man killed. The king wrote a letter to Joab, commander of the armies, ordering him to set Uriah on the front line of battle, and then, without Uriah’s knowledge, withdraw so that Uriah would be killed. If this were not sinister enough, David placed the letter in Uriah’s own hand to take to Joab. Joab did as the king commanded, and Uriah was cut down in the field, just as David had planned. Then, David took Bathsheba to be his wife. David had concealed his and Bathsheba’s adultery. But at what cost? At the cost of the even greater sin of murder, and that of a faithful and righteous man.

Saint Paul wrote to the Corinthians that the judgments upon the children of Israel serve as a warning to the Church. He wrote, “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” (1 Corinthians 10:11, 12) David was a good man, but he was not a perfect man. The Christian must learn from his failings. Lust is a deadly sin, and brings misery and ruin. David’s son, Solomon, in his wisdom warned of its pitfalls. He wrote:

Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent. *Men* do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; But *if* he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house. *But* whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he *that* doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away. (Proverbs 6:27-33)

Saint Paul lists adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness as works of the sinful flesh. (Galatians 5:19) Lust is a vice, and its opposite is the virtue of chastity, or sexual purity. Saint Paul told the Corinthians to flee fornication, and that a man ought to have his own wife, and a woman her own husband. (1 Corinthians 6:18; 7:2) When Saint Paul appeared before Felix, the Roman procurator of Judea, and his wife, Drusilla, whom he stole from her husband, Saint Paul discussed with them, righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come. (Acts 24:25)

David committed the deadly sin of lust, but he also committed the deadly sin of greed. When he took Bathsheba, he already had several wives. Before the children of Israel entered into the promised land, Moses told them that they would ask for a king, and he warned that the king must not aggrandize himself. He said, "But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold." Yet, King David fell into temptation, and greedily coveted another man's wife, and then took her to himself. (Deuteronomy 17:17, 18) Greed is a vice, and its opposite is temperance, or self-control, a fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:23) Those who are led by the spirit keep their passions in check.

Of course, David, to his sins of lust and covetousness and greed and adultery, added the sin of murder. This is simply the logical end for the wicked man who does not have what he desires. Saint James wrote, "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts." (James 4:2, 3)

It is a sad fact of human nature that people are often more virtuous in difficulty than in ease. David was most virtuous when he was at his lowest. When Saul sought his life, and he had to flee, and to hide, then was David at his best. More than once he had opportunity to kill Saul, yet he never laid a hand upon him, because Saul was God's anointed. David trusted in God. What else could he do? Saul acknowledged David's righteousness, and said to him, "Thou *art* more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil." (1 Samuel 24:17). Saul's own experience was similar. He had begun his reign in humility, but soon ruled as an arrogant tyrant. Saint James wrote, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." (James 1:14, 15) Lust is a deadly sin, but so is pride, and pride may be the source of all sin.

David, before he became king, is a type of Christ, and king Saul a type of the ruler of the Jews in the time of Christ. Although God anointed David to replace Saul as the ruler of Israel, Saul refused to concede, and sought to kill David. David acted righteously, and endured persecution, patiently waiting on God to exalt him in good time. So, God anointed Jesus to be ruler over Israel, but the religious leaders would not yield to him, and finally murdered him. After David ascended the throne, however, he underwent a change. It seems that pride, and complacency, set in. In this, David was not a type of Christ, but the antithesis of Christ. David, drunk with power, greedily and covetously took another man's wife, and then had that man killed. These things Christ did not do. Yet, it will always be true of David that he was a man after God's own heart. The Book of Kings gives this summary of his life: "David did *that which* was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any *thing* that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." (1 Kings 15:5)

William Shakespeare, in his Sonnet 129, wrote of the cruel treachery of lust:

The expense of spirit in a waste of shame
 Is lust in action; and till action, lust
 Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame,
 Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust,
 Enjoy'd no sooner but despised straight,
 Past reason hunted, and no sooner had
 Past reason hated, as a swallow'd bait
 On purpose laid to make the taker mad;
 Mad in pursuit and in possession so;
 Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme;
 A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe;
 Before, a joy proposed; behind, a dream.
 All this the world well knows; yet none knows well
 To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

Let us not indulge our sinful passions, but put them to death. Let us by the power of the Spirit exercise self-control. May the Lord make all that we do to prosper. But may we be content with all that he gives us.

Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen