

Repentance and Restoration

2 Samuel 11-12

Key Verse: 12:13

"Then David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD.' Nathan replied, 'The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.'"

Coveting, lust, stealing, adultery and murder, this sounds like an episode of Desperate Housewives. Unfortunately this became the hobbies of an idle man. I would like to apologize to all the moms in the room today, this is not much of a mother's day passage, where we honor our mothers as one of the commandments says. But through this passage we see the best gift we can give to our mothers, and that is real repentance. Flowers will die, candy can get stale but repentance is a gift that can last for eternity. So you can apply this in many number of ways, you can repent of your sins as a gift to your mother, or you can tell her to repent of hers. I suggest both. That way you can have a lot of time to make up in heaven because at first she's going to be mad at you.

David was finally settling in to his role as king as he expands Israel's territory for God gave him victory wherever he went. However, there was still a little unfinished business that he had to attend to. Our story begins at verse 1. "In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem." Winter is the rainy season in Israel, the time when crops are planted. Spring however, was a good time to go to war because the roads were dry, making travel easier for moving troops, supply wagons, and chariots. In Israel, wheat and barley were ready to be harvested in the spring. These crops were an important food source for their traveling armies. David was still angry with the Ammonites because they hadn't been punished yet for insulting his ambassadors by shaving off half their beards and exposing their butts. When they went to war the previous year David had to first, fight the Ammonite's mercenaries, the Arameans. Because of that, he couldn't get to the Ammonites. So the next year, after the cold winter, David resumes his battle with them. Although kings usually led their armies personally, David, for some unknown reason, remained in Jerusalem.

"One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful,³ and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, 'Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?'" (v2-3) Let's pause for a moment here. What's wrong with this picture? First we see David's love of ease. Satan, the tempter, loves idleness for it give him a stationary target to shoot at. From this verse we see that David isn't where he is supposed to be. When all the other kings were at work, David was at home restless. I don't know what was bothering him, but it caused him to get up and go for an evening stroll. David had a beautiful view from the top of his palace. He could see for miles around and unfortunately he could also see into someone's bathroom. His eyes fell upon a beautiful woman enjoying an evening bath. The second problem we see is that David entertained his lustful thoughts. If David's eyes fell upon a beautiful woman, who could blame him? In our time, temptation is all around us. There is nothing wrong with acknowledging that a woman is beautiful. The problem occurs is we catch ourselves staring at them or worse. The third problem we see is that David was focusing on his own desires. David already had many other wives, he should have gone to spend time with one of them, but he was not content

with what he had and he wanted more. So he sent someone to find out about her. The fourth issue we find is David's sin was deliberate. When temptation came, he looked directly into it instead of turning away. The steps he followed to bring her to the palace required more than enough time for him to resist the initial, impulsive temptation. David's desires went from a glance, then to a stare, it then blossomed into to a thought, and finally it gave birth to an action. (Jam 1:14-15) David should have left the roof and fled the temptation. Instead, he played with the temptation by inquiring about Bathsheba. The results were devastating. When David found out who she was, even that didn't stop him. Bathsheba was the daughter of Eliam, one of David's 30 chief men (2 Sam 23:35) and the wife of Uriah, one of his loyal soldiers. How could he do something to those who were close to him? David didn't care, he was only thinking about satisfying his own desires, that's the nature of sin. "Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (She had purified herself from her uncleanness.) Then she went back home." (v4) The author writes the phrase, "she had purified herself from her uncleanness" to show that Bathsheba had just completed the purification rites following her period. This makes it clear that she wasn't already pregnant by her husband when David slept with her. (If you're interested, Leviticus 15:19-30 gives more information on the purification rites she had to perform.)

David didn't set out to commit sin. People seldom do. At first inquiry, he didn't know this woman's identity or her marital status. Had she been unmarried, he could have pursued her as a wife, and his inquiry wouldn't have been wrong. But by the time he learned that she was married, David had already let lust get its nasty little hooks into his heart, and his lustful desire outweighed his good sense and integrity. Unbridled lust can do that to a person, if you allow it to smolder long enough. By this point, it's apparent that David's intentions have shifted from an interest in taking Bathsheba as a wife, to just plain taking Bathsheba. David had no plans on a long-term affair – just a one-night stand with a good-looking woman.

David had sinned, and as usual, sin had its consequences: "The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, 'I am pregnant.'" (v5) Oops. David hadn't thought about that possibility. Now what's he going to do? He demonstrates that he was just like the rest of us, he went with his first instinct and tried to cover it up and shift the responsibility to someone else. Take a look at verses 6-13. "So David sent this word to Joab: 'Send me Uriah the Hittite.'" And Joab sent him to David.⁷ When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going.⁸ Then David said to Uriah, 'Go down to your house and wash your feet.' So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him.⁹ But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house.¹⁰ When David was told, 'Uriah did not go home,' he asked him, 'Haven't you just come from a distance? Why didn't you go home?'"¹¹ Uriah said to David, 'The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my master Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open fields. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and lie with my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!'"¹² Then David said to him, 'Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back.' So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next.¹³ At David's invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master's servants; he did not go home."

Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, was a faithful soldier who was out on the battlefield – the same battlefield where David should have been. David called Uriah in from the battle and after a few pleasantries and war stories, he gave Uriah a gift and told him to go home, assuming of course that Uriah would have marital relations with Bathsheba while he was there. This would allow him to think that the baby was his, effectively covering up the incident. But the one thing that David didn't consider was Uriah's sense of honor and loyalty. Uriah wouldn't go and enjoy the pleasures of home while his fellow soldiers were in the battlefield. David even tried getting him drunk, but Uriah's sense of duty and honor was strong enough to overcome all of David's tactics.

Finally, David gets desperate, and like most desperate men, he does something stupid: “In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah.”¹⁵ In it he wrote, “Put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die.” (v14-15) In a cold-blooded act of cruelty, David dispatches a letter of Uriah's own death sentence carried in the hands of the loyal soldier himself, enlisting Joab to partake in David's sin. Giving way to sin hardens the heart, and provokes the departure of the Holy Spirit robbing a man of his reason, leaving his defenses exposed. David put both Bathsheba and Joab in difficult situations. Bathsheba knew it was wrong to commit adultery, but to refuse a king's request could mean punishment or death. And now that she was pregnant their adultery would be evident to all. And according to the law, the penalty for adultery was death for both of them. (Lev 20:10) Joab didn't know why Uriah had to die, but it was obvious the king wanted him killed. We sometimes face situations with only two apparent choices, where both seem wrong. When that happens, we must not lose sight of what God wants. The answer may be to seek out more choices. By doing this, we are likely to find a choice that honors God.

David's plan succeeds. However, it appears that the only way that Joab could arrange for the death of a seasoned soldier such as Uriah was to use some unwise battle tactics, which caused several other good men to die with him. Cover ups are often like this, where a lot of innocent people get hurt while we are trying to hide the truth. Joab was so sure that David would react poorly to the battle strategy that led to Uriah's death that, when the messenger went to update David on the war, Joab gave him specific instructions of what to say and to make sure that David knew Uriah was dead. The deed was done. David had accomplished his mission. But what happened? David was supposed to be a shepherd for his people, but he took advantage of them and used them for his own purpose. David is proof of just how far even the best of men can go when they forfeit the restraining grace of God.

David's response to Uriah's death seems so insensitive especially how he grieved deeply for Saul and Abner who were his rivals. (2 Sam 1, 3) He showed no grief for Uriah, a good man with strong spiritual character. Why? David had become callous to his own sin. The only way he could cover up his first sin (coveting) was to sin again, and soon he no longer felt guilty for what he had done. Feelings are not reliable guides for determining right and wrong. Deliberate, repeated sinning had dulled David's sensitivity to God's laws and others' rights. The more you try to cover up a sin, the more insensitive you become toward it. Don't become hardened to sin, as David did. But the problem is, we have already become calloused to our sin. Most of us think that we are ok. The group, Way of the Master, like to use this little test to soften our hearts to sin. Please be honest for just a moment. Raise your hands if any of these questions pertain to you. Have you ever told a lie? Have any of you stolen anything? Have any of you used God's name

wrongly? Have any of you ever been really angry with anyone? Jesus considers that to be the same as murder. (Mt 5:22) Have any of you ever looked at someone lustfully? Jesus considers that the same as adultery. (Mt 5:28) So by your own admission, you are a lying, thieving, blasphemous, murdering adulterer. Do you see how easy it is to become numb to our own sin? After this incident, David would confess all his known and even his unknown sins to God. He would ask God to search his heart and reveal all his sins so that he could confess them before God. We need to confess our wrong actions to God before we forget they are sins.

“When Uriah’s wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him.”²⁷ After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.” (v26-27) Bathsheba mourned for her husband, as was proper. Then, as a gesture of supposed nobility, the king took the poor widow in and made her one of his wives. My, what a noble gesture - in today’s world, the king’s press secretary would have made it a photo-op, and gotten it on the front page of every newspaper in the country. David thought the whole incident was covered. Probably no one knew the whole story only pieces. Bathsheba couldn’t testify what she knew because she was now David’s wife and her silence was motivated by fear for her own life. Joab wouldn’t testify what he knew because he was just as guilty and besides he was loyal to the king - even when the king was outright wrong. And maybe there were some servants or others who knew pieces but they were probably compensated for their silence.

David thought that all of his bases were covered except that he overlooked one small detail: you can’t hide your heart from God. He knows all our hidden secrets. (Mt 6:6) Take a look at 12:1-6. “The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, “There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor.”² The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle,³ but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.”⁴ “Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him.”⁵ David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, “As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die!”⁶ He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.”

Nathan set David up, and David took the bait. David still had a moral compass, even though he had ignored it in his own situation, and that moral compass screamed for justice. David, as king, had authority to pronounce judgment on such criminals, and that’s exactly what he did - not realizing that he was pronouncing his own judgment: the death penalty.

It was then, in verse 7, that Nathan dropped the bomb, “You are that man!” (Notice the !) This must have hit David like a slap in the face. He thought that he got away with it but he was caught red handed by the Lord. Then Nathan delivered God’s message. “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul.’⁸ I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more.”⁹ Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? **You** struck down Uriah

the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.¹⁰ Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.’¹¹ “This is what the LORD says: ‘Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight.¹² You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.” David must have been stunned. Nathan reminded him of how gracious God had been to him and how much God had blessed his life. Everything David had, and was, had been given to him by the Lord. David realized that God is bigger and smarter than we are. Nathan, who hadn’t taken part in any of this incident, recited back to David EXACTLY what had happened, in painful detail, and pronounced God’s judgment on the king. On top of that, David had already pronounced his own death sentence and was backed into an uncomfortable corner.

It’s important to understand the dynamic of this situation. Nathan literally risked his life bringing this accusation before the king. The king had the power of life and death, he could have told one of the guards to kill Nathan on the spot. He could have denied his sin, and argued with Nathan. He could have defied them and continued in his denial. The choice was David’s to make. Nathan understood the risk, yet also understood that obedience to God, even to the point of death, is better than a long life of rebellion and disobedience.

A while ago, I heard Robert Lewis teaching about this moment of decision in David’s life. Lewis pointed out that David could have continued in denial, with words such as “I did NOT have sex with that woman, Bathsheba.” Instead, the element of David’s being that made him “a man after God’s own heart” rose up within him, what Lewis calls “the face of the king” - and David, face-to-face with himself, made the most noble statement of his life. Let’s read verse 13a. “Then David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the LORD.’” David didn’t use any of the blame-shifting “but” phrases that Saul did. There were no excuses, no spin, no double-talk or finger pointing. David saw his situation clearly, and dealt with it boldly. With his admission of guilt, it would have been fully justified if God had carried out the sentence pronounced upon him by his own judgment and struck him dead on the spot. David confessed his sin, and expected to die for it.

It’s when we are truly honest with God, and ourselves, that we find God’s mercy and grace. Let’s read 13b, “Nathan replied, ‘The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.’” This was an important defining moment in David’s life. He confessed his sin, and was prepared to accept his punishment, instead, God showed His grace by forgiving David, and allowing him to live. For the rest of his days, when David opened his eyes in the morning, he knew that he was alive for one reason and one reason only: the sheer grace of God. That turning point changed the direction of David’s life, and deepened his relationship with God to a level he had never known before. Understanding God’s grace will have the same effect on you and me.

Psalms 51 is David’s prayer of repentance. It illustrates that David’s repentance was not just a “sorry, I’ll try to do better next time,” sort of thing, but a deep, heartfelt plea to God for forgiveness, healing and restoration. Verses 1-3 say, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is

always before me.” David didn’t try to shift the blame for his sin. This Psalm doesn’t contain one single word of self-justification. David didn’t try to blame Bathsheba for his downfall (like Adam), or talk about the enormous stresses and responsibilities in the life of a great leader. He faced his sin head-on, and called it what it was: his sin. Verse 4 continues “Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.” David understood that, while he had indeed sinned against Uriah and Bathsheba, any sin is first and foremost a sin against God, and his first step of repentance is confession before God. He saw his sin for what it really was: a deadly disease that could be cured only by God himself. Only the Grace of God can purify us and forgive our sins.

Most people would like the story to end on verse 13, because we love stories with perfect, happy endings. Not only that, we want our sin to be forgiven without any consequence. In reality, we can be forgiven for breaking a window, but we still have to clean up the broken glass and fix the window. There are consequences to our actions, and like it or not, we must coexist with those consequences, just as David did. Take a look at verses 14-15. “But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt, the son born to you will die.”¹⁵ After Nathan had gone home, the LORD struck the child that Uriah’s wife had borne to David, and he became ill.” David pleaded with God for his child. He fasted and went into his house and spent the nights lying on the ground. The elders of his household stood beside him to get him up from the ground, but he refused, and he would not eat any food with them. On the seventh day the child died. (v16-18) When David hears that his child is dead, he gets up, washed, puts on clean clothes and goes into the house of the Lord and worshiped. The death of David’s newborn son seems, at first look, to be a cruel and unfair punishment of an innocent child. However, the child’s death does underscore an important truth; our sin affects not only ourselves, but also those around us. The long-reaching effect of a moment of sinful self-indulgence can be disastrous. We seldom pause to consider that factor in a moment of temptation. If we could see the end results of our actions clearly, we’d say “no” more often. There were other consequences, too. The judgment proclaimed in verses 11 and 12 comes to pass as David’s family life will be filled with pain and bloodshed.

However the best news of all is that the story does not end with the consequences of sin. Where there is sin, there are consequences, but where there is grace, there is restoration and healing. Take a look at verses 24-25. “Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and lay with her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. The LORD loved him;²⁵ and because the LORD loved him, he sent word through Nathan the prophet to name him Jedidiah.” Who would think that a relationship with such a sin-drenched foundation could even survive, much less prosper. God demonstrated His grace in the sanctification of a relationship that had once brought the condemnation of death. This is not a “healed but always deficient” relationship, but a “healed and holy household,” a union that brought forth Solomon, a child regarded by both sacred and secular authority as one of the wisest men ever born. He succeeded his father as king, and his name appears in the direct bloodline of Christ in the New Testament genealogies.

The restored, healed, sanctified marriage of David and Bathsheba bears both God’s hand and His blessing. It is purely poetic that the same prophet chosen to bring God’s condemnation of sin was also chosen to deliver God’s blessing on the fruits of this healed, holy relationship. The LORD

sent word through Nathan that He had a special name for this special child: Jedidiah - which means "loved by the Lord." It's important to note that the healing and reconstruction of this relationship didn't happen immediately. Several years passed between the death of the first son and the birth of Solomon, who is their 4th son. (1 Ch 3:5) God's healing takes time. It's also apparent that, although David had many wives, Bathsheba became his favorite and her son is the one that becomes king after David. A marriage built on the healing grace of God always produces very special, intimate, bonded relationships.

God never brings us condemnation without offering us grace and healing. God wants to have an intimate relationship with each of us, and goes out of His way to invite us into that relationship. The whole point of Nathan's charge against David was not to punish him, but to restore him. There have been many parallels between this chapter of David's life and the lives of men who have fallen into sin. Whether the man is a well known person like Jim Bakker or Bill Clinton, or you or me, we all stand at the foot of the cross. It doesn't matter what you've done, or where you've been – God's healing, restoring grace is available for you, just like it was for David.

God witnesses to us – here it was through Nathan, but sometimes it may be through a guilty conscience or someone close to us or through the Bible. What we have to do is be willing to face God – and with the same painful honesty and confess like David. That's first step toward rebuilding you life. Sometimes we may feel that our sin is too big for God to forgive, but this Satan's lie that he uses to keep us from going to God. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. (Ro 8:39) He sent His Son Jesus to pay the price for us and take away our sin. To confess my sin of lust and porn was one of the hardest things I ever had to do. I was afraid of what would happen or what people would think. But this fear kept me trapped, isolated and powerless. But when I confessed it, I was set free and God restored my heart. Are you ready for a fresh start? Your life can be healed, restored, and rebuilt, just like David's was. I can tell you from experience that it will not be an easy journey, but it will be the most worthwhile one of your life. Why hesitate?