

Sin escalates part 1 - David and Bathsheba 2 Samuel 11 1-5

Disclaimer: Material from this message was adapted in part from messages found on the Sermon Central website.

Fifty years ago, this week (June 17, 1972), D.C. hotel personnel noticed that a stairwell door lock had been taped in the open position. Three police officers responded to find five unauthorized individuals inside the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee. Burglars had broken in to readjust some of the bugging equipment installed in an earlier break-in in May.

No one really seemed able to explain just what these burglars expected to gain from their crime. Whatever it was, if there had been an honest confession of all that was done and what they were attempting to do, it may have been taken as a minor crime of political intrigue with minimal impact. It was the attempt to cover up the crime which led to massive repercussions. At the end of it all, Richard Nixon, the President of the United States, was forced to resign amid talk of impeachment, while a number of his closest associates were indicted, convicted, and sentenced to prison terms.

Throughout history, many attempts have been made to cover up incompetence, immorality, and even crimes. In the Bible, cover-ups appear very early. Adam and Eve sought to cover their nakedness and to hide from God, not realizing their very efforts betrayed their guilt. Today's story of David and Bathsheba is one of the great cover-up attempts of all time, and like so many others it fails tragically while causing long-term consequences for the rest of David's reign. The story of David and Bathsheba is recorded here so that we might learn that sin, unrepentant and unconfessed, always escalates. Here is the full story in brief – but more than what you heard in Sunday School.

Our story opens by noticing, *"in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle ... David remained in Jerusalem."* On one of those fine spring days, getting up from a late afternoon nap to stroll on his rooftop, David spies a beautiful woman, further down the hill on her rooftop, taking a bath. Instead of turning away in modesty – allowing her privacy as he should have done – David lingers, continuing to watch, which leads him to desire and then to a sinful decision. David finds out that the woman, Bathsheba, is the wife of one of his friends, a famous warrior who was currently away at the battle where David should also have been. This warrior, Uriah the Hittite, was one of David's thirty "mighty men," who had been with him since the early years when he was fleeing from Saul. Knowing all this, David nevertheless sends for Bathsheba, sleeps with her, and sends her home. It was only meant to be a one-night fling, a little self-indulgence; David had no intention of marrying her – he already had plenty of wives of his own. No one would ever be the wiser of his little affair, except of course that from it Bathsheba became pregnant.

Let's stop here for a moment to notice what the author of this story wants us to notice from his opening sentence: which is that David's life was already heading in the wrong direction before he ever glanced at Bathsheba; big sins usually grow from little seeds.

First there is the comment about "*spring being the time when kings go out to battle*," meaning that David should not even have been home at this time; he was Israel's warrior king, God blessed and sent to defeat his country's enemies, but this spring he chose instead to send a general out in his place. So, David's first misstep was in failing to do what he was supposed to be doing; staying at home rather than out on the battlefield where he belonged.

Then there is the second comment about David arising from a "*late afternoon nap to walk on his rooftop*." Taking a nap during the heat of the day has always been a wise and regular practice in hot countries, but sleeping late into the afternoon, when a person should be out of the house and back to work, implies laziness, it suggests that David had too much idle time on his hands.

You have heard the expression, *idle hands are the devil's workshop*? Our Biblical author wants you to know that David's much bigger troubles grew out of these earlier smaller missteps. Had he been elsewhere doing what he was supposed to be doing, fighting Israel's wars, David wouldn't have been lounging around on his roof top late in the day, to idly observe and begin coveting someone else's wife.

Sin always escalates. David's troubles began because he was where he should not have been and doing what he should not have been doing. From that point forward an immodestly long look led to sinful desire, that desire led to adultery, the consequences of which then grew to deception, and finally murder not just of one man, but of several of David's best warriors all in an attempt to cover up a sin that never would have happened had David been where he was supposed to be.

The story continues. Learning of Bathsheba's pregnancy, David first schemes to conceal his sin by deceiving Uriah into thinking the child was his. Calling him back from the war under the pretense of getting a progress report, David tries to get Uriah to go home and sleep with his wife. But Uriah was not called a "mighty warrior" for nothing. Noting that his friends are fighting and sleeping out in the fields where he should still be, Uriah refuses to return to the comforts of his own home, choosing instead to sleep on the king's doorstep. The next night David even tries to get him drunk, but Uriah still does not go home. So David sends him back to the battle, with a private note for his General Joab to intentionally desert Uriah when he is in the midst of the fiercest fighting.

Joab willingly obeyed David's murderous plans, but felt that they were too obvious. So instead of just deserting Uriah, he places him among his friends, some more of David's "*valiant warriors*," then sends them all into the fiercest part of the fight where in the course of the battle Uriah dies along with several other of "David's servants." Thus, Uriah's intentional murder was concealed under what we now call collateral damage.

After Bathsheba had finished the mourning period for her dead husband, David then brings her into his home and marries her, claiming the son she was soon to bear as his own, which the child really was. But all that the public saw was noble king David stepping up to care for a warrior's widow and her orphan child.

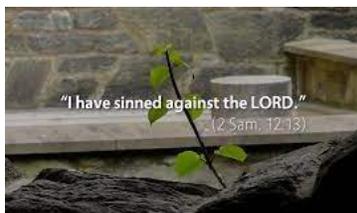
Thinking he has safely covered up his private little indiscretion, David expects life to return to normal. But as the last verse of this chapter notes, *the thing that David had done displeased the Lord*, Who then sends Nathan the prophet to confront David with his sin. (11:26),

Giving him a sad tale of a rich man stealing a poor man's only lamb, Nathan tricks David into pronouncing judgment upon himself. With the declaration, *You are that man!*, Nathan proceeds to relate how David's sins were more than coveting, adultery, and murder, but were in "*despising of the word of the Lord*"; David's sin was foremost personally against the righteous God who had made him king.

David's pronounced penalty would be severe.

- Because he has used war to hide a murder, his own rule would never know the end of conflict.
- Because he had destroyed another man's family, David would have continuing trouble within his own family; including having others committing adultery with his wives. (2 Samuel 16:20-22)
- And while David thought he had done these deeds in secret, God's punishment of him would be very public.

Yet here in the midst of these pronounced dooms for his committing of such heinous crimes, David proved he was still "*a man after God's own heart.*"



Faced with his sin, David did not try to rationalize or excuse his way out. He simply said, ***I have sinned against the Lord.*** Nathan's reply was, *now the Lord has put away your sin (you are forgiven), you shall not die... But the child that has been born out of this affair will die* (12:13-15).

Which is what happens. The child sickens and dies, David goes on to write Psalm 51 as a public self-confession and life returns to apparent normal until many years later when David's firstborn son Amnon rapes his half-sister Tamar, which going unpunished sets up a cycle of revenge and rebellion that will plague David's household until the end of his reign. But that is the story for next week.

For this week then, what lessons can we learn from David's supposedly "hidden" sins?

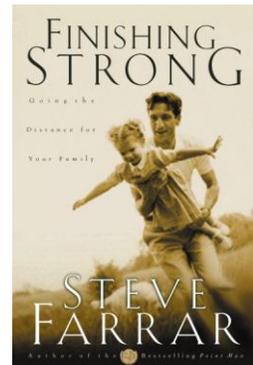
First, recognize that the story of David and Bathsheba is just one of countless cautionary tales about **a powerful person thinking that he or she is above the law**. This tale is sadly too well known and too often repeated in real life.

Stop and think. How many political leaders, religious leaders, can you recount in your own lifetime who have had their profession or their ministry ruined by walking down that same path, usually into financial or sexual sin but sometimes simply by doing something as stupid as trying to spy on your political opponents during an election year, or like Boris Johnson, Prime Minister of England, getting caught partying with friends in defiance of his own Covid quarantine regulations. No one is above the law, especially God's laws concerning sin.

Second that **the consequence of sin is usually an unplanned result**. All sin has consequences. Sometimes those consequences show up rather quickly. Sometimes they may not show up in our lifetime. David's evening of personal pleasure resulted in an unplanned pregnancy. He certainly did not want Bathsheba to become pregnant, but she did. Boris Johnson could never have imagined that a private evening of cocktails with cronies would result in both fines and the most likely end of his political career.

- 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 wonder why your children don't honor you.

Third, that unrepentant, **unconfessed sin always escalates**. Steve Farrar, author of Finishing Strong: Going the Distance for Your Family, 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."

Steve Farrar.

James, the brother of Jesus advises us, (James 1:13-15)

*No one, when tempted, should say, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one. But one is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it; then, **when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death.***

Just as big oaks from little acorns grow, unconfessed sin can grow until it consumes your life.

The fourth consequence of sin is that **other people will usually find out about it.** While this was not explicitly stated in David's story, clearly other people knew what was going on. The **person** David sent to inquire about that beautiful woman knew something was not right, he specifically informed David that this woman was someone's daughter, someone's wife ... the implied question being "*what are you doing David?*" The **messengers** David then sent to bring her to him for the night, would easily have guessed what went on that evening. And certainly the **person** Bathsheba sent to tell David, that she was pregnant, knew about it. Then there was General **Joab**, who conspired with David's cover up by killing several valiant warriors. And of course **Nathan** the prophet whom God personally sent to confront David with his sin.

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 will know about it. The Bible warns, (Numbers 32:23)

Be Sure Your
SIN
Will Find
YOU Out!

Even if you think you've hidden your little indiscretion from everyone else, remember that God still sees and knows. Nathan's message to David was

Why have you despised
the word of the Lord,
to do what is evil **in his sight?**
2 Samuel 12:9

All our sins, hidden or public, first dishonor God. All our 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 horrible when believers sin against the God who has saved them.

David was a believer. He knew the law. And in his reply, he knew who he had sinned against the most: *I have sinned against God.* While God then forgave David's confessed sin, nevertheless that single evening's dalliance impacted the rest of his life in multiple unhappy ways.

In conclusion, if David, a man after God's own heart, can fall into such 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. Long before the Bathsheba episode, God had promised that David's kingdom would be established

forever (2 Samuel 7:16). So, while the first child David conceived with Bathsheba died, their second son, Solomon, would go on to be the next great king of Israel. And eventually David's ultimate son, unlike David (and the rest of us), would be "without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). This son of David, being his promised King who would rule forever, is Jesus Christ, our savior.

David's sin was great, just as our sin is also great. However, Jesus' obedience is greater still. His death covered not only the penalty for all of David's sins but also for ours and the sin of the whole world.

Unlike his predecessor Saul, David eventually repented of his sin and asked for God's forgiveness. When David repented God forgave him. While he still faced future consequences which grew out of that sin, David's relationship with God was restored – he did not die from this sin: physically or spiritually. The same is true for us when we repent and confess our sins, regardless of whatever future consequences we may have to face, God forgives us – we do not die spiritually. In His sight we are forgiven, cleansed and restored.

God promises us,

Come now, and let us reason together,
Says the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow; though they be
red like crimson, they shall be as wool..

Isaiah 1:18 KJV

You may want to know that while the latter part of his reign, as promised, was marked with family troubles and rebellions, David eventually came to the end of a long life as a dearly loved and respected king, and he is still to this day considered as one of Israel's greatest heroes.

So, don't let private sins consume you or derail your life. If you have never done so, turn to Jesus in faith, repent of your sin today, and get your life back on track with God.

Let's pray about this.