



## **Do You Really Know the King?**

### **A Study in Samuel**

*David and The Sending*

*2 Samuel 11:1-1-27*

*Preached by Rev. Craig T. Smith*

*on Sunday, October 9th, 2022*

### **Don't Hit Send**

One of my friends from college told me a story about how he lost one of his jobs because of an email that got away from him. He had grown increasingly frustrated with his boss and with the department in which he worked. To deal with his frustration, he would often write out an email to vent and then he would delete the email before he would put anything in the address line.

It was his own silent protest that helped him process through his job. Until the day that he got distracted and accidentally sent the email to someone in his department accidentally. That co-worker forwarded the email that blistered their shared supervisor and his competency. That supervisor then called him in and ended my friend's frustration with his job. He fired him on the spot.

My friend's story was a sobering reminder of the power of the send button. Let's look at an Old Testament version of that send button in the account of David and Bathsheba and Uriah in 2 Samuel 11 this morning. (read text)

### **That Took a Turn**

This text is characterized by the multiple uses of the word "send." David *sends* someone to find out more about Bathsheba. She is the daughter of a prominent man named Eliam. Eliam had likely been with David since the dark days of running from Saul. He was one of David's mighty men. She was the granddaughter of Ahithophel, one of David's key advisors. And more significantly, she is the wife of Uriah the Hittite, another of David's mighty warriors. In fact, the Dead Sea Scrolls provide information that Uriah was Joab's armor-bearer.

David once again *sends* someone to fetch Bathsheba and bring her to the palace.

While the detail is mercifully brief, we realize that David sends for her and sleeps with her. No extra information. Just this cold account of David's crime and sin.

The use of the word "take" is interesting. It recalls what the wise old judge and prophet Samuel said in his warning about what a king would do. Samuel said that kings are "takers." (1 Sam. 8:11-18). They will take your sons and your daughters, the best of your fields and vineyards, a tenth of your grain, your menservants and maidservants, and a tenth of your flocks and the king will make all of them their own. David has done that. He has taken the sons of the men and sent them off to war. And now he has taken the daughter of Eliam.

The man who was content to wait and be handed the entire kingdom now will seize a wife by force.<sup>1</sup> The Bible tells us further information about Bathsheba, foreshadowing what is about to happen. She had purified herself from uncleanness. This lets us know that she was not pregnant before her encounter with David. And since Uriah is off at the battlefield, he cannot be the father.

Next, we see the word "send" occur again. However, this time it is not David who sends. Bathsheba sends David a simple, direct, two-word message: "I'm pregnant." Up to this point, David has been dealing with and exercising power and it has been shown in the word, "sending." And now in this new usage of the word, David must face the power of his own sin. And David will try to answer this power with even more "sending."

### **The Plan**

Three more times in verse 6 we read the word "send." All three reflect the power and authority of David being used to cover up his own sin. He *sends* an order to Joab, who has the military power to *send* Uriah back to Jerusalem. David tries deceit and subterfuge here. It's all about sneakiness. He *sends* in order to control and this time to conceal.

Uriah brings a report. David asks about the welfare of the troops, but we know what he's up to. Concern for the troops is not the primary issue. David's concern lies with his sin. He suggests in the Hebrew that Uriah go home and "wash his feet." An interesting euphemism, one that has not stood the test of time.

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<sup>1</sup> David M. Gunn, "David and the Gift of the Kingdom," *Semeia* 3 (1975): 14-45.

Growing up, I had my favorite Sunday school teacher in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades who was a modest, reserved attorney. Mr. Culver was highly intelligent but talking to juniors and seniors about their romantic endeavors made him truly uncomfortable. The most advice he could ever muster was when he would exhort us in just above a whisper, “Guys, just don’t crawl into the back seat.” Had he said, “Guys, don’t go washing your feet,” I’m not sure we would’ve picked up what he was laying down.

Well, despite cultural differences between then and now, Uriah understood what David meant. David first greases the skids with lots of booze. Then, he encourages a drunken Uriah to go refresh himself at home. This would mean a night at home in which Uriah would spend the night with his wife, creating the possibility later on that Uriah could be Bathsheba’s “baby daddy.”

David grossly underestimated Uriah’s character. There was a reason Joab selected Uriah as his armor bearer. He was a man of quality on the battlefield and character off of it. Uriah disregards the king’s recommendation. He mentions the ark – representing God; Joab his master; and his lord’s men, his fellow soldiers.

Did you see what the text tells us? A drunken Uriah is more pious than a sober David. Deuteronomy 23:9-11 tells us that soldiers on active duty were required to abstain from sexual activity. Uriah won’t go to sleep with his wife. He won’t sin against God’s word. He won’t dishonor his commanders. He won’t disrespect his fellow warriors by doing that. And he won’t unknowingly bail David out. He won’t even go home. Uriah stays at the steps of the palace. He won’t even put himself in a compromising position by being in the physical presence with his own wife.

David takes one look and uses his position to send out for his sinful pleasures. David is in command and control of Bathsheba. David is in command and control of Joab. David is in command and control of Uriah. Sadly, the only person that David is unable to control is David.

### **Murder, He Wrote**

When David’s attempt to manipulate Uriah fails, his actions turn darkly sinister. He is not done *sending*. He writes out Uriah’s death warrant and will “*send*” it to Joab by Uriah himself.

Just as David had *sent* and *taken* Bathsheba (11:4), as he had *sent* and *retrieved* Uriah from the battlefield (11:6), now David *sends* and *kills* Uriah.

This is a drastic step, but David is running out of time. Pregnancy has a set period to work within. He doesn't have time for slow playing some half measure. If he is to convince people that Bathsheba's pregnancy resulted from her marriage to David, Uriah has to die now. This order will cost Joab his closest soldier. It could cost Israel in the battle of Rabbah. It also trivializes the deaths of other soldiers who are casualties of this cover-up.

The same man who grieved deeply over the deaths of his enemies Saul and Abner will send one of his best and apparently long-serving soldiers off to die. It's conducted without much remorse. David tells Joab, "the sword devours all alike." This is roughly similar to "such is the soldier's sad fate" or "well, we all gotta go sometime." David has become hardened about his sin and guilt. The man who grieved altering Saul's robe just shipped a man off to die.

And then, one last *sending* occurs as David then "sent and brought" Bathsheba to the palace. He has succeeded in manipulating all around him and has managed to cover his sin with Bathsheba. I'm sure that David was convinced that this was the end of it. And if the text ended after the first part of v. 27, we might agree. However, the final sentence reveals something else entirely.

What seems like the end of the story of a person's sin in human eyes is really only the beginning of the struggle from God's perspective. A divine element is injected into this story. And that sentence will reverberate throughout chapter 12 like a bomb. "However, the Lord considered what David had done to be evil." David may be done but God is not. This evil must be dealt with. Sin must be confronted. It must be dealt with.

### **A Shocking Account**

If only the account of King David had ended after 2 Samuel 10. But no, here it sits. The Bible is careful to include the entire, ugly account. It is embarrassing. God's man, this best and greatest king, proven to be as flawed as we are. From this point on, David's story becomes troubled.

David's troubles are not based on outside forces, surprising life experiences or sneak attacks from enemies.

No, David's troubles stem from his own foolishness, his own selfishness. The Bible is careful to include these types of stories. All of the heroes, outside of Jesus, are flawed. Most other history books, most other religions' "sacred texts" don't include accounts like David and Bathsheba. Here we have the "man after God's own heart" plotting, scheming, lusting, committing adultery, and murdering. And the Bible includes it.

There is something God wants us to understand, to identify with in texts like these. We see here in David the trajectory of sin. David breaks three of the Ten here: "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife." "You shall not commit adultery." "You shall not murder." We realize how to track sin from the initial tempting perception of David's looking from the rooftop to the covetousness of the taking and then to the deception and transgression against and death of Uriah. It is just like we learned in Genesis 3:1-7 and see again in James 1:14-15.

We see here also the abuse of power in the attempt to control our lives in order to conceal our sin. That is revealed through the key word, "send."

We also see how easy it is to accumulate sins. Have you ever been shopping for groceries when you are hungry? You will make decisions based on cravings and longing rather than discipline and your better judgment. When sin is left unatoned, they just pile up. Sin set a series of consequences in motion.

Next week we will explore more fully God's concept of repentance, restoration, and forgiveness when we spend time with David and Nathan the prophet. But this morning, let's pause here and deal with the corrosive power of our sin. It is devastating. And it is almost instantly regrettable.

Have you ever accidentally sent a text that you didn't want to send? Or sent an email to someone you didn't intend? Or post some update on social media that was born from emotion rather than intellect? Have you ever pushed the send button and it was the absolute wrong thing to do?

It happens all the time. Not too long ago I received a text from someone who should not have sent it to me. They were clearly displeased with me, and I think meant to send it to someone else about me. To be fair, after reading the text, I would've been fine had they just said all that behind my back because it would've been solely in God's hands,

and he does an excellent job of dealing with someone else's folly. It made me thankful to God for his graciousness to me during all those moments when I hit the "send" button of sin.

That's a powerful button, the send button. Once you hit send you can't really undo that. It is out there. Whatever the message or the posting, whatever the update may be, it is out there. Oh sure, you could try to delete it, but someone saw it. You can attempt to deny writing it, claiming to have been hacked. You can even attempt to take it back. But once it has been sent, it's been sent. You can't undo what was done. The toothpaste won't go back into the tube. No "takesies backsies." Some consequences can be mitigated. But you did what you did, and you've sent what you've sent.

Have you ever seen the "undo typing" button on your word processing toolbar? It allows you to go back and restore something that has been deleted? Well, the enemy would love for you to continue to go back and restore those feelings, restore that failure, relive that guilt and shame, over and over and over. As long as we live, we will always hold some hidden record of our shame and it is always easily accessible. It's a few mental or emotional clicks away.

David's sinful "sending" reminds us of some uneasy truths about ourselves. The insight the text provides is not limited to just seeing the inside of David's life. It allows us to see clearly into our own as well. We are reminded that "all of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory." (Romans 3:23) We are also reminded in Scripture that "no temptation has seized you except that which is common" to everyone. (1 Corinthians 10:13) We will all sin and we will all sin in the same ways, more or less.

Everyone has fallen short of God's perfect standard. We all were enemies of God. And yet, the Bible tells us this: "For it, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life." (Romans 5:10)

Yes, you and I hit the "send button of sin" but let me tell you about God's delete button. Human forgiveness is conditional. God's forgiveness is perfect. The Bible tells us that because of the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we can be born again. There is a fresh, new story of our life to be written.

All that had come before was wiped away and now we are brand new. Has

sin destroyed the story of your life? Go to Jesus, the Author of life and allow Him to write you a new one.

Listen to what the Bible says about this briefly and let this form your understanding about how God can view your sins:

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

“As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.” (Psalm 103:12)

“He will again have compassion on us; he will vanquish our iniquities. You will cast out all our sins into the depths of the sea.” (Micah 7:19)

“I – I sweep away your transgressions for my own sake and remember your sins no more.” (Isaiah 43:25)

This is how God will treat your confession and repentance. He will forgive you and cleans you of ALL of your sins. He will then remove your sins from you as far as the east is from the west. Infinitely removed. He has cast our sins into a place that we have no further access to. And God completely forgets them. That is what forgiveness looks like. Confession and repentance leads to a place where God removes our sins from us and never remembers them.

God keeps the covenant he made with David. Despite all of this mess. Despite all of the troubles here and throughout the remainder of David's life. God still moves and works. The same is true for us. Because of Jesus, God will still move and work in our lives. But he will account for our sins. He will confront them. He will sort them out and deal with them if left unatoned. So, why not just turn to Him today. Stop allowing them to pile up while you try to continue to control your sins. Those sin piles are like 30 four years old in children's church: unmanageable except through God's forgiveness and redemption.

So, stop hitting the send button of sin and allow Jesus to delete your sins and author a new story.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT:**

Tell us about a text or a social media update that you regret sending? Why did you think it was okay in the first place to send or post?

Why do you think the Bible clarifies that this was a time in which kings went off to war with their armies? Besides setting the context (springtime after the rainy season but before planting of crops so young men were available without any obligations so they could go off to war), what does Scripture allude to here concerning David's location and obligation?

David was a man after God's own heart. Uriah is referred to as being a Hittite seven times in 2 Samuel 11. Uriah's name is a Hebrew name – as evidenced by the final syllable of *Yah* which was a reference to the Lord. It is very possible that Uriah's ancestors were Hittites, foreign born, and that he at some point converted to belief in Yahweh. Describe the contrast between these two men in this chapter.

Can you describe a time when you or someone you know allowed sin to sort of stack up, unatoned, while control and concealment was attempted? How did that go for those involved?

Have you ever considered these other Scriptures concerning God's work in forgiving sins and cleansing unrighteousness? Of those few verses Pastor Craig shared, which one(s) resonate most deeply for you?

How often do you find yourselves revisiting the feelings of guilt, shame, and embarrassment of your sins? What does Scripture say about that?