

Session 23 David's Sin: Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Sam. 11; Ps. 38)

I. A TURNING POINT IN THE LIFE OF DAVID

- A. 2 Samuel 11 is the turning point in David's life. He committed adultery with Bathsheba and then had her husband Uriah killed. Although he repented, there were devastating consequences for him, his family, and the entire nation. His sin and resulting judgment are the subject of the next ten chapters (2 Sam. 11-20). This story is a warning of judgment, but also a promise of love and hope.
- B. We have no pleasure in considering this sad season of David's life; however, we do it to benefit our spiritual life. We approach it with humility, looking to ourselves lest we also be tempted (Gal. 6:1), knowing that if we sin as David did, then we will also come under God's discipline as David did.
- C. David's story is more than a human story—it is a salvation story about the God who delights to intervene with grace and mercy. Remarkable forgiveness shines forth from David's story. His sin gave opportunity for the riches of God's grace to be openly manifested for the benefit of so many.

II. THE CONTEXT OF DAVID'S SIN: WAR AGAINST THE AMMONITES (2 SAM. 11:1)

- A. The context here is Israel's army resuming its military conflict with the Ammonites (11:1). The Ammonites retreated to the walls of their royal city Rabbah. Then Israel set a siege around Rabbah.
¹It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and...all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. (2 Sam. 11:1)
- B. *David remained:* David often led his men in battle. Had he been engaged in fighting the Lord's battle, he would not have been overcome in a battle against lust. AW Pink, "Many conquerors have been ruined by their carelessness after a victory, and many have been spiritually wounded after great successes against sin." If we get out of the battle, then we are more vulnerable to get into sin.

III. DAVID COMMITTED ADULTERY WITH BATHSHEBA (2 SAM. 11:2-5)

- A. David saw Bathsheba bathing and called her to his house (11:2-5). David's house was probably built on the highest point of the City of David. Thus from his rooftop he had a clear view of part of the city. He probably walked on the roof to enjoy a few evening breezes after a warm day.
²It happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold. ³So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" ⁴Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her...and she returned to her house. ⁵And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, "I am with child." (2 Sam. 11:2-5)
- B. *She came to him:* Why did she come? Was she naïve, intimidated, or desiring a relationship with David? Her motive is not clear, leading us to conclude that this story is mostly about David's sin.

- C. **Someone said:** When David inquired about Bathsheba he found out that she was the *daughter of Eliam*, one of David's "thirty mighty men" (23:34), the *granddaughter of Ahithophel*, one of his senior counselors (16:23; 23:34), and the *wife of Uriah*, one David's best soldiers, also one of "the thirty mighty men" (23:39). In this sin, David also betrayed three of his most valued leaders.
- ³⁴...*Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite...*³⁹*and Uriah the Hittite: thirty-seven in all. (2 Sam. 23:34, 39)*
- ²³*Now the advice of Ahithophel...was as if one had inquired at the oracle of God. (2 Sam. 16:23)*
- D. The law of Moses commanded the death penalty for adultery (Lev 20:10; Deut. 22:22). Therefore both David and Bathsheba were deserving of being put to death.
- ¹⁰*'The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death. (Lev. 20:10)*
- E. **Progression:** In the progression of David's sin he *saw* Bathsheba, then *inquired* about her to stir his curiosity, then *sent for her* so that they could spend time together, and then *he lay with her*.

IV. DAVID'S COVER UP: TO HAVE URIAH KILLED (2 SAM. 11:6-27)

- A. David put his cover-up plan into action (11:6-9). He ordered Uriah to return to Jerusalem to spend one night with his wife Bathsheba. Traveling forty miles to Jerusalem, Uriah was probably perplexed when David only asked him how Joab was and how the war was going (11:7).
- ⁶*Then David sent to Joab, saying, "Send me Uriah the Hittite."...*⁷*When Uriah had come to him, David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people were doing, and how the war prospered.*⁸*David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah departed from the king's house, and a gift of food from the king followed him.*⁹*But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house...and did not go down to his house. (2 Sam. 11:6-9)*
1. **Wash your feet:** is a euphemism for sexual intercourse. David's plan was for Uriah to spend a night at home with Bathsheba so that he would be seen as the father of the child.
 2. **Gift of food:** David sent food to Uriah's home to encourage an enjoyable evening together.
- B. For a second time, Uriah had dinner with David in the palace and refused to go home (11:10-13). He refused to go to the comfort of his house because of his commitment to the Lord (the ark) and to his fellow soldiers. David knew that alcohol would lower his inhibitions related to sexual activity.
- ¹⁰*So when they told David, saying, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Did you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?"*¹¹*And Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing."...*¹²*Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next.*¹³*Now when David called him, he ate and drank before him; and he made him drunk...but he did not go down to his house. (2 Sam. 11:10-13)*

- C. David ordered the death of Uriah (11:14-15). David had to choose between getting caught in adultery and ordering the death of an innocent soldier. We are shocked to see this side of David. This was surely one of the longest and most terrible nights in David's life. Uriah carried an official state letter that was sealed with the royal signet ring to ensure that its contents were confidential.
- ¹⁴In the morning it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. ¹⁵And he wrote in the letter, saying, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die." (2 Sam. 11:14-15)*
- D. Joab executed David's evil plan to kill Uriah (11:16-21). Surely this plan perplexed Joab. Once Israel's army surrounded the city, direct attacks against the city walls would not have been needed. Typically armies waited until the people in a city surrendered because of lack of food and water.
- ¹⁶...while Joab besieged the city, that he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew there were valiant men...¹⁷Some of the people of the servants of David fell; and Uriah the Hittite died also. (2 Sam. 11:16-17)*
- E. David married Bathsheba after giving her time to mourn the death of her husband (11:26-27). His plan seemed to work in the eyes of men, but the Lord was displeased.
- ²⁶When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. ²⁷And when her mourning was over, David...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 Sam. 11:26-27)*

V. PSALM 38: DAVID'S ANGUISH AND PRAYER FOR MERCY

- A. There is no occasion in David's life that more clearly fits the prayer in Psalm 38 than the time of his greatest sin as described in 2 Samuel 11. He asked that God not publicly rebuke him or chasten him with difficult circumstances, so he probably prayed this *before* receiving the rebuke and chastening in 2 Samuel 12. He was already being pierced in his heart and pressed down by God's hand (38:2)
- ¹O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your wrath, nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure! ²For Your arrows pierce me deeply, and Your hand presses me down. (Ps. 38:1-2)*
- B. David was in anguish emotionally and felt sick physically because of his sin (38:3-10).
- ⁴For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. ⁵My wounds are foul and festering because of my foolishness. ⁶I am troubled...I go mourning all the day long. ⁷For my loins are full of inflammation, and there is no soundness in my flesh. ⁸I am feeble and severely broken; I groan because of the turmoil of my heart... (Ps. 38:4-8)*
- C. David's loved ones stood aloof from him as they saw signs of the scandal he caused (38:11-12). Undoubtedly many whispers about David's scandal circulated among the court and his wives. We can only imagine how the court whispered about David sending for Bathsheba and then the news of her pregnancy, followed by Uriah coming from the battlefield to have dinner twice with the king, and then his unnecessary death that came as a result of Joab ordering him to the city walls. The very perceptive Ahithophel was probably offended at what happened to his granddaughter Bathsheba.
- ¹¹My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague, and my relatives stand afar off. ¹²Those who...seek my hurt speak of destruction, and plan deception all the day... (Ps. 38:11-12)*

VI. THE PROGRESSION TO TEMPTATION AND LUST (JAS. 1:14-15)

- A. James identified six stages to temptation and lust.

¹⁴*Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. ¹⁵When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. (Jas. 1:14-15)*

- B. **Stage #1 Being drawn away:** Lustful desire is stirred in the *imagination*. Satan wants the fleeting thoughts of lust to become sustained thoughts (fantasy). There is a big difference between a momentary wrong thought and being drawn away or captured by it. This difference has been likened to the difference between a bird *flying over* someone's head and a bird *building a nest* on it.
- C. **Stage #2 Being enticed with lust:** This occurs when one is *entrenched* in lustful fantasy.
- D. **Stage #3 Lustful desire is conceived:** This happens when one makes a *decision* to walk out sinful actions. James used the analogy of a baby in its mother's womb. The decision to act out lust causes sinful behavior to become "alive." As a child is alive at conception, yet is not seen by others, so a newly conceived act of sin can be "alive" in a believer, yet still unseen by others. David made two premeditated sinful decisions—he sent for Bathsheba (11:4) and ordered Uriah's death (11:14).
- E. **Stage #4 Lustful desire gives birth to sin:** This happens when one *acts out* lustful desires. At the time of birth, a baby comes forth so that its features can be seen clearly. So also, when lust gives birth to action, the specific features of that lust are then openly manifested. When we act out in sin, we give Satan a legal door of entry into our lives that he might work in a far greater way.
- F. **Stage #5: Sin becomes full-grown:** This occurs as people become *addicted* to various lusts. Without repentance, lust does not stop with one act, but it "grows" (Eph. 4:22) until it is full-grown. Full-grown sin is less and less satisfying as one continues to engage in it. Thus the craving for a specific sin increases while the satisfaction in it decreases. Demons are much more involved at this stage.
- ²²*...concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts... (Eph. 4:22)*
- G. **Stage #6 Sin brings forth death:** The *consequence* of sin is always death, which includes various types of loss, shame, and pain. We only have two choices: we *die voluntarily* to sin's lustful lure by choosing to walk in righteousness, which has a great reward, or we *die involuntarily* because we yield to sin and reap its death-producing consequences (Ps. 19:11; Mt. 16:24-27; Jn. 12:24)
- ²³*For the wages [payment] of sin is death [loss, pain and shame]. (Rom. 6:23)*
- H. We can sow to the Spirit and walk in victory over the giants that we face, or we can sow to the flesh be defeated by them. Two names connected with David are Goliath and Bathsheba. Both are associated with testing and conquest. He conquered Goliath, but then was conquered by his lust.
- ⁷*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*
⁸*For he who sows to his flesh will...reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will...reap life. (Gal. 6:7-8)*