

How could he have done something so stupid? So wrong? It is so uncharacteristic of him! He is such a great guy! How could he do something so terrible? It is hard to believe!

Friends, have you ever had those thoughts about someone? Has someone ever had those thoughts about you? Well, I have had those thoughts on more than one occasion. And it is never fun! However, there are important lessons to be learned in very painful situations.

Friends, today our journey through 2 Samuel brings us to chapter 11, where King David does something stupid, wrong and terrible. If you have your Bible, please turn there (page 262).

In chapters 8-10, we saw how, by God's grace, David had become a good and merciful king, whom the Lord used to bring peace and prosperity to the land. He seems to be fulfilling the role of God's anointed one, the messianic king.

However, things are about to come crashing down for David. Yet, even in this tragic account, the Lord has important lessons for us. Let's pause and pray we would hear and heed what the Lord has to say to us through this portion of His Word today.

2 Samuel 11:1 – In the spring when kings march out to war, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah, but David remained in Jerusalem.

This may be part of the reason why David ends up in big trouble. The author implies David is becoming too comfortable, even maybe a little lazy. If he would have been out leading his troops, perhaps none of what follows would have happened.

2 Samuel 11:2-3 – One evening David got up from his bed and strolled around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing – a very beautiful woman. So David sent someone to inquire about her, and he said, “Isn't this Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam and wife of Uriah the Hethite?”

Lust is filling David's heart, but he knows this woman is the wife of one of his military officers.

2 Samuel 11:4 – David sent messengers to get her, and when she came to him, he slept with her. Now she had just been purifying herself from her uncleanness. Afterward, she returned home.

On the surface, this is a consensual encounter. However, David probably did not tell his servants why he was sending for Bathsheba, and she might not have realized what was going on until she was in his bedroom. David is the king, and this is very much a power relationship. Bathsheba may not have felt saying “no” was really an option.

The note about “purifying herself” refers to her menstrual cycle, making it clear Bathsheba was not pregnant before she slept with David. However, now...

2 Samuel 11:5 – The woman conceived and sent word to inform David: “I am pregnant.”

This is not the news David wanted to hear. Maybe you wonder what the big deal is. David is the king. He can do whatever he wants, right? Well, not if he is going to be a godly king.

The rules the Lord expected David to follow were pretty liberal. He was allowed multiple wives and concubines. However, there was to be no adultery. Having a sexual relationship with another man's wife was clearly forbidden.

Bathsheba's pregnancy means people will start asking questions. How did she get pregnant when her husband has been off on the battlefield? Who is the immoral man responsible for fathering this child?

David decides the best thing to do is make people think the baby is Uriah's (Bathsheba's husband). David sends an order to Joab, his top general, to send Uriah to the palace. He comes, and after some conversation intended to keep Uriah from becoming suspicious, David says:

2 Samuel 11:8b – “Go down to your house and wash your feet.”

In other words, “Go home and relax. Spend a night with your wife.” That doesn’t happen.

2 Samuel 11:9 – But Uriah slept at the door of the palace with all his master’s servants; he did not go down to his house.

Multiple witnesses know Uriah did not sleep with Bathsheba that night. The next day.....

2 Samuel 11:10b-11 – David questioned Uriah, “Haven’t you just come from a journey? Why didn’t you go home?” Uriah answered David, “The ark, Israel, and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my master Joab and his soldiers are camping in the open field. How can I enter my house to eat and drink and sleep with my wife? As surely as you live and by your life, I will not do this!”

The bottom line is that Uriah feels he should make the same sacrifices others are making. He is too good of a soldier, too faithful to his country and his king to sleep with his wife at this time.

David invites Uriah to dine with him that evening and gets him drunk. But even then Uriah does not go home and doesn’t sleep with Bathsheba. David’s plans to cover up his affair are failing. So, he decides to take things up a notch. Or really down to an even lower level.

As Uriah returns to the company of troops, David sends a letter, an obviously sealed letter, which Uriah is to give to General Joab. It reads:

2 Samuel 11:15b – Put Uriah at the front of the fiercest fighting, then withdraw from him so that he is struck down and dies.

Yes, you heard that correctly. To the list of David’s sins which included adultery and deception, we can add conspiracy to commit murder. We learned previously in 2 Samuel that Joab was a good general, but not really a godly or moral man. Thus, he follows David’s orders, probably without hesitation.

2 Samuel 11:16 – When Joab was besieging the city, he put Uriah in the place where he knew

the best enemy soldiers were. Then the men of the city came out and attacked Joab, and some of the men from David’s soldiers fell in battle; Uriah the Hethite also died.

David is now responsible for the death of the husband of the woman with whom he had an affair.

David then apparently tries to cover up his role in killing Uriah. Joab sends a messenger back to David with a report of the battle. Perhaps all straightforward, but I think it was pre-arranged. When David hears the report, he plans to pretend he is angry about the military strategy Joab follows because it results in some of his men getting killed. The part of the report that really matters is the fate of Uriah. When the messenger reports to David, he gives details of the battle and concludes:

2 Samuel 11:24b – “Some of the king’s servants died. Your servant Uriah the Hethite is also dead.”

At this point, David does not even pretend to be angry or that upset.

2 Samuel 11:25a – David told the messenger, “Say this to Joab: ‘Don’t let this matter upset you because the sword devours all alike.’” (*In other words, if you fight a battle, there will be casualties. Soldiers know the risk. And, of course, we all die eventually. It is not a big deal that Uriah has been killed.*)

He concluded:

2 Samuel 11:25b – “Intensify your fight against the city and demolish it. Encourage him.”

I think that David means, “Tell Joab he did a good job.”

2 Samuel 11:26 – When Uriah’s wife heard that her husband Uriah had died, she mourned for him.

I don’t see any indication she was part of the plot. She knows David is the father of her child, but I don’t think she was happy about her husband’s death. Then:

2 Samuel 11:27 – When the time of mourning ended, David had her brought to his house. She became his wife and bore him a son.

Now, we don't know the exact timetable, but obviously a few weeks elapsed between the sexual encounter with David and Bathsheba's realization she was pregnant. Then there was probably at least a couple of weeks before Uriah was killed. Bathsheba probably mourns her husband for a week, and then David marries her.

Someone paying attention would likely realize Bathsheba had become pregnant before she and David were married and would realize, as David feared, that Uriah was not the father. However, because Uriah was dead, most people saw nothing scandalous about their king marrying a widow of a loyal military officer. Many likely admired David for what he did.

2 Samuel 11:27b – However, the LORD considered what David had done to be evil.

Which part of what he did? All of it. The adultery, the deception, the murder – it was all evil in the sight of the Lord. And friends, that means it was truly, objectively evil. Even if David was able to convince himself what he had done was okay and even if most people thought it was okay, it was evil.

And folks, that is the #1 lesson I want to point out in our text today. When God says something is evil, it is.

I find the recent history of sexual ethics or morality in American culture very interesting. In 2004, according to a Pew Survey, 61% of Americans opposed allowing same-sex marriage and 31% were in favor.

This year's Pew Survey found the exact opposite numbers, with 61% favoring same-sex marriage and 31% opposed. That is a huge shift in just fifteen years.

However, attitudes concerning adultery have not changed. Surveys find about 80% of Americans saying it is wrong for a married person to be involved in a sexual relationship with someone other than his/her spouse. That really has not changed over the past fifty years. That is interesting.

In Lawrence vs. Texas (2003), the U.S. Supreme Court said government cannot prohibit sexual relationships between consenting adults. That case involved homosexual relationships, but it also made laws against adultery obsolete.

So, most believe no one has a right to judge the sexual behavior of consenting adults. Whatever people do in the privacy of their bedroom is up to them, but they don't approve of adultery. Or sometimes, it's that they are pretty much okay with adultery, as long as it is not their spouse or partner doing it.

Recently, however, the American Psychiatric Association, the main group of professional psychiatrists, is working on normalizing "polyamory," which means being involved in a sexual relationship with more than one person. They call it "consensual non-monogamy." That would include adultery and even polygamy.

The belief of many psychiatrists is that people involved in these relationships face too much social stigmatization and need more "support and inclusion." From their perspective, assuming the affair was consensual, there was nothing wrong with Bathsheba sleeping with David. If the folks back then would have realized that, there would be no need for David to deceive and plot Uriah's death.

I have heard a few stories of an individual feeling guilty about an extramarital affair being told by their counselor, "Don't feel guilty. Is this new relationship making you happy? If so, it is a good thing."

Yet, folks, when God says something is evil, it is!

That is my point: **The primary reason adultery is wrong is because God says it is.**

We may point to other reasons why we think it is wrong, yet twenty years from now psychiatrists may have convinced many that adultery is no big deal. But God will still consider it evil.

One of the things I learned when the Marriage Amendment failed, when the majority of Minnesota voters rejected having the state constitution define marriage as a relationship between one man and one woman, is that most

arguments against same-sex marriage didn't carry a lot of weight. They were not persuasive.

The only argument that could not be refuted was this: Marriage should be between a man and woman because that is what the Bible teaches. That is what God considers good.

"But, Pastor Dan, that is kind of naïve. There are a lot of people out there who don't believe the Bible. If you tell them same-sex marriage is wrong 'because the Bible says so,' they will laugh."

I know. That's why my goal is to tell people the good news that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead to show us He is the eternal Son of God. The Triune God described in the Bible is the true and living God, and He speaks to us through the Bible.

When God considers something good, it is good – no matter what others may say. And when He considers something evil, it is evil – no matter what others may say.

Yes, we live in a time of moral confusion and chaos. However, I don't believe there is a solution for that apart from the Lord. Only when people are willing to listen to what He has revealed in His Word, will our moral foundation be restored. Any attempt to define morality without God is, I believe, a dead end.

Okay, what are other lessons we learn from the story of David and Bathsheba?

#2 There are many reasons we fall into sin.

David ends up in this huge mess because sexual sin leads to a cover-up which leads to murder and other efforts to deceive.

Some Bible teachers focus on the lust of the eyes and note all David had to do was turn away and stop looking when he saw Bathsheba, and everything would have been okay. They often note how dangerous porn is because it feeds that lust. There is certainly truth in that.

Other teachers point out the danger of idleness. They are correct that from the perspective of the author, David's problems start when he chooses to just hang around in the palace rather than go out and lead the troops. Indeed, being busy doing the

things God has called us to do often helps us avoid a variety of temptations. The fact is, many different paths lead to sin.

James 1:14-15a – But each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desires. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin.

The problem is that each of us have those evil desires that can entice us into adultery, deceit and many, many other sins.

Friends, I am convinced that the only way to resist those temptations is by realizing that obedience to the Lord ultimately brings more happiness than disobeying him.

David thought his liaison with Bathsheba would make him happy, but he was very mistaken.

"But, Pastor Dan, people don't usually weigh the pros and cons before they decide to sin or not."

No, they don't. Many times, our sinful choices are very impulsive. But, that is my point. It is usually not logic or careful consideration of options that lead us to sin. We impulsively, or instinctively, decide our happiness is best served by a sexual affair, deceiving others or countless other sins. When we think that way, we are mistaken. Yet, it is the conclusion we have reached, no matter how hastily.

The key to avoiding sin is to stay close to the Lord and allow His Word and Spirit to continually remind us that our ultimate joy is found in Him. That is not something David was doing that night as he walked around on the roof of the palace. That is, also, likely not something we are doing whenever we choose to disobey the Lord.

The #3 lesson we learn from David is that all of us, any of us, are capable of falling into serious sin.

David was a godly man. He is called in 1 Samuel 13, a "man after God's own heart." He wrote at least 73 of the 150 psalms or songs found in the Bible. He was God's anointed king, messiah with a small case "m." As king, he ruled over what is still considered the golden age for Israel. **Yet, in our text, he is guilty of adultery, deception and murder. He kills one of his military**

commanders, a very honorable man, just to protect his reputation. Uriah has no idea David intends him any harm. **It is a horrible crime. Yet, it is what the very godly David did.** And, folks, I think we are capable of doing horrible things as well.

A few years ago, I was in a Wednesday night Bible Study – some of you were there too – when a good friend who no longer attends CBC made this confession:

“I was driving down First Avenue in Hibbing when this young man started crossing the road in front of me. It was the fellow who had been harassing my daughter and making life miserable for both her and me. I really wanted to step on the gas and hit that guy. I almost did. But, by God’s grace, I didn’t.”

Right now, I want to address those of you who are thinking, “I would never be tempted to step on the gas to try to hit another person.”

Well, you may truthfully be able to say, “I have not been tempted to do that.....yet.” It’s very difficult to know how we might be tempted in a situation we have never faced.

However, even if you are never tempted to physically harm another person, we each will face temptations to do, say or think things which are dishonoring to God and are horrible sins.

Tim Keller, referencing Jesus’ parable of the Prodigal Son, notes we may be tempted either by the younger brother type of sins – things like sexual immorality, drunkenness, hitting other people with our car, etc. or by the older brother type of sins – pride, jealousy, bitterness, etc.

To be frank, if you don’t think you are really tempted to sin in a serious way, it may mean you are blind to that temptation and very vulnerable to it. We should all heed the warning of the Apostle Paul:

1 Corinthians 10:12 – If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall.

Friend, no matter how long you have been a Christian, no matter how much you love the Lord, like David you are capable of falling into serious

sin. It is only by God’s grace and only by staying close to the Lord Jesus that you do not.

Friends, I think all of us, like John Newton, should be able to say: “Yes, I am a great sinner, but Jesus is a far greater Savior.”

Next week, we will look at how David experienced God’s forgiveness for the horrible things he had done. But today, I want to remind you of two essential truths as we close.

#1 If you are not a believer in Jesus, but realize you have done, said or thought some terrible things, there is free and full forgiveness for you if you turn to Jesus Christ and trust in Him as your Savior and Lord.

If you are not sure what that means, and whether you are really doing that, please talk to me or Pastor Mark after the worship service.

#2 If you are a believer in Jesus but realize that you, too, have done, said or thought some pretty terrible things, I remind you that Jesus has already paid the penalty for those sins on the cross. You will never have to pay that penalty.

However, those sins can bring a lot of guilt and shame to your life, but there is good news for you as well. The Apostle John promises:

1 John 1:9 – “If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

In other words, if we acknowledge and turn from our sin, God promises to not only forgive us, but to remove all that guilt and shame. What a wonderful promise!

Friends, the reality is that no matter who we are, what we have done, or how many times we have done it, it is the Lord Jesus, and Him alone, that will take care of our sin problem.

Let’s celebrate as we close with this wonderful song: “All I Have Is Christ!”