

## **2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a**

When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. When the mourning was over, David sent and 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, and the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meagre fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveller to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him." Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the LORD: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun." David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."

## **I Would Have Given You Much More** - August 1, 2021

*2 Samuel 11:26-12:15*

"I have sinned against the Lord." So said a contrite King David when confronted publicly by the prophet Nathan. After the death of an innocent man, the rape of that man's innocent wife, and the conceiving of an unwanted child, David finally speaks aloud the sin that had been burning in his heart. Why is it so hard to confess our sin? Why is it so hard to admit our errors? Sadly, when it comes to leaders and telling lies, all of us can recall various presidents of the United States telling lies. Some are significant, some are small. Some are done for "national security" reasons and are intended to save lives. Other lies have and continue to cause great damage. The problem is that most of our presidents, unlike King David, refuse to acknowledge their lies and sins. I have seldom heard the words, "I was wrong" escape the lips of our leaders.

Friends, all politics, all business, and all personal relationships are filled with stories of people refusing to acknowledge their sins. During our worship, we have a special place every week to make confession before God, each other, and ourselves. The prayer is ritualized. It is pre-written, and some people don't like to read it because they believe that certain portions do not apply to them. We even print the Words of Assurance. Sometimes I think we might be making a mistake in that we create the false idea that if we sin, all we have to do is say, "I'm sorry" and everything is OK again.

Certainly in the case of David, everything was not OK again even after he confessed. The biblical narrative goes on to say that the baby born to Bathsheba after David raped her died. God told David that because of his sin, his family would dissolve into chaos and there will be civil war in Israel. David himself watched it happen during his lifetime. In short, while David's sin could be forgiven and his personal relationship with God restored, the evil that his sin created would persist long after.

Friends, nobody can escape the consequences of sin. Every sin has its own punishment already built in. There is no doubt that David knew he had done wrong. The words of Psalm 32 describe his feelings well. Verses three and four say, "Before I confessed my sins, my bones felt limp, and I groaned all day long. Night and day your hand weighed heavily on me, and my strength was gone as in the summer heat."

The unending sequence of evading responsibility for our own actions, of getting others to cover up for us, of denying our involvement never turns out well. Consider the various victims whose lives were changed forever as a result of what David did to the wife of Uriah.

Now, it can be difficult to classify people as either greater or lesser victims of sin. Sin is sin. Nevertheless, we certainly need to count Uriah as one of the greatest. Here is a good soldier, an immigrant, not even an Israelite, being faithful to his duties as a soldier, being faithful to his comrades at the front-line, blindly following the orders of a general whom he trusted and the king he served. Here was a man who did absolutely no wrong yet lost his wife and his life for no reason.

Bathsheba was a victim. Some people try to place blame on her wondering why she was bathing on the roof in the full view of the king. Obviously, some say, she wanted to be seduced. I say shame on those who try to blame her for what happened. Nothing has changed much in 3000 years, has it? Women are always at fault, according to too many men. In all likelihood, she was bathing at dusk and bathing on the roof because many people slept on the roofs of their houses during the summer. To the average resident of Jerusalem, the roof was a more private place than inside the house. Showing off for the king was the last consideration that she had for taking a bath. As a woman, as the subject of the king, she had no choice but to go when she was summoned. The idea that anyone would believe her if she said she was raped would probably not even have crossed her mind. Kings are kings, after all, and poor women simply did what they said, just or not. Bathsheba not only had to live with the humiliation of being raped by the king, she undoubtedly knew that David had her husband killed and the greatest tragedy of all is that the child that she gave birth to eventually died.

Joab was a victim. Now, you might question why Joab, David's field general who arranged the death of Uriah might be considered a victim. However, many of us have played the role of Joab in our lives. In other words, we've been asked to cover up for friends, family, and employers. We have been asked and have done distasteful things that have hurt people for the sake of friends and bosses. Many of us have had to wrestle with whether to confront a friend who is doing wrong, fight the system, or even quit a job. Usually, we just go along with whatever because it is easier. We never know Joab's true feelings in the matter. We don't know if he was bothered or not by his king's request to arrange for a good soldier to be killed. We do know that throughout the reign of King David, Joab did everything David requested without question. In fact, he was so loyal to David that when King Solomon took over the throne of Israel, one of his first acts was to have Joab killed. So many of us like to use the excuse, "Well, everybody else was doing it so I did not want to rock the boat." Are we victims? Are we fools? Are we sinners? The answer is unequivocally yes.

How about the baby, was the baby a victim? Of course, but such is the consequence of sin, is it not? In every sin, the innocent are hurt. People can die because of what we do. It is popular these days to excuse many behaviors as "victimless crimes" because nobody supposedly gets hurt. I'm

not going to give specific examples: you could fill in the blanks with your own favorite allegedly victimless crime. The point is, none of us can really predict what crimes are victimless or not. We do not know whom we will be hurting by our sins in advance. When we turn our backs on God, we do not know into whose eyes we will be looking. We cannot predict the chain of events that will happen when we ignore God's law. Certainly, when David was with Bathsheba in the royal bedroom, he had no idea what was going to happen. Even when his cover-up plan failed because Uriah refused to be with his wife, it did not take long for David to decide to have his faithful soldier killed. Still, David did not imagine the national consequences of what he was doing. We're reminded several places in scripture that the sins of the fathers are visited on the sons even to the 4th generation. This is not God's doing, but our own. I believe every one us can recall sins of our parents, grandparents, and generations before that we ourselves are still paying for.

Obviously, the nation was a victim. This was the first major sin King David committed against God. Suddenly, the man who found great favor with God had sinned against his very God. He would never have the same the credibility and respectability again. Indeed, because David proved he could be just like any other tyrannical ruler, Israel became very much like every other nation. Certainly, after Vietnam and Watergate, and the previous administration, Americans can never look on our government the same way. After David's sin, Israel could never be the same. Whoever thought that an evening of sex could destroy so much?

And yes, even David was a victim. He was a victim not in the sense that he was an innocent man on whom evil was poured out unjustly. Indeed, David suffered evil and he was very much guilty of doing evil. He does not deserve our sympathy. Nevertheless, any of us can be David at any time.

David's sin, like all sin, was to confuse himself with God. As king he thought he had unlimited power to do as he pleased. He could have any woman he wanted, he could kill anyone he wanted. In him was the power of life and death, or so he thought. He was David, he was invincible, and he was king.

But while David was indeed king, he forgot he was also a human being. He forgot that as a human being nothing he possessed had come to him solely through his own efforts. As the prophet Nathan reminded him, everything he had came from the hand of God. He obviously forgot that he started life as a poor shepherd boy, the last-born. He forgot how often his predecessor Saul wanted to kill him. He forgot about all the military victories he won with God's help. He forgot about all his wives and concubines who were there because God allowed it. In short, David believed that his achievements were his own and power was for him to use at will.

In our wealthy society, it is too easy to look on our possessions, our nice clothes, our manicured lawns, our titles, and our status and believe we have these things strictly through our own efforts. We may even think we are entitled to such things as a sign of our intelligence, appearance, or family connections.

The truth is that we, like David, like every person, are entitled to nothing. Everything we have, including our health, our talents and abilities, and our possessions are what they are solely through the grace of God. They come to us undeservedly and they can depart from us with shocking suddenness. If your life is wrapped up in your possessions, talents, and health, you will be saddened and embittered when these things inevitably disappear. If your life is devoted to God, however, you will be free to explore the new directions God will send to replace whatever has left.

When God reminded David of everything he had done for him, God said that if the power, possessions, and privileges had not been enough, God would have given David more. Instead, David chose to be like god, seize a woman who was not his, and kill an innocent man for a crime he did not commit. Not satisfied with God's gifts, David took matters into his own hands, and made the world worse.

When will we realize that whenever we omit God from our lives, we will always make worse decisions, do things we will later regret, and cause innocent people to suffer? What is God not giving you that you think you deserve? How is the Lord disappointing you today? Are you sure that what you want is also what you need? Does anyone feel entitled to a pain free and suffering free existence? There is not one person in scripture that did not endure physical pain, mental pain, and other suffering in one form or another. Why do we think we're immune?

Only when David realized his sin and that he was not God could he receive forgiveness and begin to repair his shattered life as well as the lives of all those he hurt. Nevertheless, the damage had been done and the world would literally never be the same again. Was it really worth it?

Let us pray: Lord God, save us from ourselves. Too often, we confuse ourselves with you; we take matters into our own hands and do what we please. When things go wrong, we blame you instead of looking in the mirror. Help us remember that we depend on you; you do not depend on us. Help us question ourselves daily so that we can remember everything we do can harm or hurt others. Give us confidence that what you want for us is best, and following your way will make us happier than we can imagine. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.