

David: Developing a Heart for God Pt.7,

A Contrite Heart - 2 Sam.11-12

Sermon Of 2021-02-14

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[read through **slides 1-7**, sound on]

[**slide 8, blank**] In 2005, Rogers Cadenhead achieved brief notoriety for registering the domain name benedictxvi.com

several weeks before the name was chosen by the former Pope Benedict XVI.

Rogers jokingly said he would give the domain name to the Vatican in exchange for a mitre [the popes ceremonial head dress],

a free stay at the Vatican hotel, and “complete absolution of his sins, no questions asked, for the third week of March 1987.”

I wonder what happened that week?

Have you ever had a week like that, or even several weeks like that, when you needed complete absolution, complete pardon or forgiveness, of your sins?

Have you ever had a week when words that come out of your mouth that cut people down –

angry, bitter, sarcastic words that wounded somebody deep in their heart?

Have you ever had a week when you had an arrogant, judgmental spirit inside of you?

Have you ever had a week when you were caught up in a web of deception

when there's been such a long series of lies told that you hardly know what truth is anymore?

The Bible calls this stuff sin, and sin is a serious thing. Sin is the most destructive force that has ever entered this world.

This morning we're going to see how sin played out in the life of David.

Ironically enough, although David is called a man after God's own heart, the story we're going to look at today, with which we conclude our series,

is perhaps the most famous story of David's life next to Goliath.

[slide 9] This is the story of David and Bathsheba. It's found in 2 Sam. 11.

In this story David commits adultery with Bathsheba and tries to cover it up in a web of deceit and ends up murdering her husband.

[slide 10] As I read this story the question I ask myself is, "How could David do this?"

David has loved God his whole life. When he was a little boy taking care of the sheep, he experienced God's shepherding care for him.

When he was a teenager he defied the giant Goliath in the name of God Almighty and God delivered Goliath into his hands.

He so submitted his life to God that he spared Saul's life when he could have easily killed him and taken his rightful place on the throne.

He so loved God that when the ark of the Covenant, which represented the presence of God, went to Jerusalem, he danced before the LORD with all his might.

He expressed his love for God by writing out psalm after psalm after psalm.

David is a man after God's own heart, as the Bible tells us in 1 Sam. 13.14 and Ac. 13.22.

Yet, in this episode of his life, he is guilty of lust, coveting, deceit, adultery, and murder.

"How could David do this?" Maybe it will help us to understand if we turn the question around.

"Who in this room is so much more spiritual than David that what happened to him could not happen to you?"

Being a godly person does not make you immune from temptation or incapable of sinning.

I think this story brings us to a hard truth that we don't like to face or talk about a lot,

and that is, that every one of us is fallen and we all wrestle with that fallenness - all of us.

The problem is we can tend to underestimate our fallenness. That's why Paul says to the Christians living in Corinth in 1 Cor. 10.12,

"If you think you're standing firm [in your faith] be careful that you don't fall."

Or, as Eugene Peterson so aptly paraphrases it in the Message,

"Don't be so naïve and self-confident. You're not exempt [from sin]. You could fall flat on your face as easily as anyone else."

That's what happens to David.

His story is a story repeated with variations over and over throughout the centuries.

And it's not difficult to find ourselves in this story.

The precise details of our sin may not correspond exactly to David's, but the presence and recurrence of sin does.

So this morning we're going to walk through 4 crossroads David faces in this episode of his life, the same crossroads you and I face when wrestling with sin.

[What then, is the 1st crossroad you face when wrestling with sin?]

[slide 11] 1st, you feel restless.

David felt restless. After two decades on the throne, David has distinguished himself as a mighty warrior,

a gifted musician, a discerning statesman, and a much-loved king.

His country is prospering. No defeats on the battlefield. No blemishes on his administration.

Max Lucado tells us, "David is at an all-time high. He stands at the highest point in his life,

in the highest position in the kingdom, at the highest place in the city - the palace overlooking Jerusalem."

Look at v.1 of 2 Sam. 11: "In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army.

They destroyed the Ammonites, and besieged Rab-baw'. But David remained in Jerusalem."

Those last five words change everything. "But David remained in Jerusalem." He should be with his men in battle. But he isn't.

Kings went off to war in the spring of the year just like the Blue Jays go off to Florida for spring training every year.

But this year David stays home. We're not told why.

But if we read between the lines he's now about 50 years old. He's been king for 20 years.

Maybe he's been riding high for too long. Maybe things are going so well that he has neglected his spiritual life.

I say that because God is never mentioned in the first half of this story.

You know how it is - when things are going well, we can tend to forget about God and neglect our spiritual life.

Perhaps, because of neglecting his spiritual life, David has become restless, looking for something to fill the void that neglect creates.

He wants more out of life but can't quite put his finger on what it is he wants.

His restlessness puts himself in a dangerous position making him vulnerable to sin.

Look at v.2: "One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing."

David looks and likes what he sees. He doesn't stop to figure out why he's at this crossroad; why he's restless.

How about you? Are you at this crossroad in your life? You're not sure why, but you find yourself feeling restless.

If that's the case, then like David, you're in a dangerous position, vulnerable to sins deadly allure.

Restlessness leads to the 2nd crossroad you face when wrestling with sin.

[slide 12] 2nd, you ignore the warnings.

David ignored the warnings.

David can't sleep, v.2, so he gets up out of bed and decides to take a walk around on the roof of the palace. He sees a woman bathing.

She is drop-dead gorgeous! So, v.3, "David *sent* someone to find out about her."

Now you might want to circle that word '*sent*'. Eugene Peterson says it's a key word in this story. It's used a lot by David.

David *sent* someone to find out about this woman. He's making plans.

By the way, some people wonder if Bathsheba is to blame for David's sin by bathing in a place so clearly visible to the king's palace.

But there's nothing in the story to indict her in any way.

Perhaps David is thinking to himself, "Maybe she can alleviate my feelings of restlessness."

Still in v.3, "[David's] servant reports back to him, "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of El-ee-awm' and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"

Can you hear a warning tone in this servants' words? He not only gives her name, but her marital status and the name of her husband.

Why tell David she's married if not to warn him. And why give the husbands name unless David knows him?

Perhaps this servant knows what David's up to and hopes to dissuade the king from pursuing this course of action any further.

"Isn't this Bathsheba," he says, "the daughter of El-ee-awm'? Isn't this the wife of Uriah, one of your most honoured soldiers who's off fighting a war for you?"

David, this is somebody's wife. Take heed. Be cautious."

When you come to a traffic light, there are generally three colors. Two of the colors are very straightforward. Red means stop and green means go.

Then there's yellow. Yellow is the colour of caution. But it's interesting to watch how people respond when they see a yellow light.

Some people will hit the breaks and try to stop. Others hit the accelerator and go right on through.

David is given a yellow light; a caution light; a warning light. "Isn't this Bathsheba, wife of Uriah?"

You'd think if David was spiritually alert to the dangers of this crossroad he's fast approaching, he would have stopped right in his tracks –

"Oh she's Uriah's wife; Uriah, one of my most trusted soldiers. I'd better think about what I'm doing."

But thinking is the last thing David wants to do. He sees the warning light but instead of stopping he just hits the accelerator.

He ignores the warning and goes right on through this crossroad.

Maybe you're not just restless. Maybe a specific temptation has taken shape in your mind. You haven't crossed any lines yet, but you're about to.

Will you stop and think about what the consequences will be if you ignore the warnings?

Ask yourself, "Will it wound my prayer life, my worship? Will it leave me full of feelings of guilt?"

Will ignoring the warning damage or even destroy my life and the lives of those closest to me?

Will it pass on a legacy that will damage the lives of my children?"

David doesn't stop to ask any of those kinds of questions. The warning light goes off - this is Uriah's wife - and he ignores it and goes right on by.

V.4: "David *sent* messengers to get her." There's that word '*sent*' again. This time he's not sending for information. He's sending for Bathsheba.

Notice how the verbs in this story rush by as fast as David's passion can take him.

He sees her, he wants her, he inquires about her, he takes her, v.4, he sleeps with her, and then sends her home.

But something happens that's not part of David's plan. V.5: "Bathsheba conceived and *sent* word to David, saying, 'I am pregnant.'"

There's that word '*sent*' again, only this time David is the 'sendee' not the 'sender'. He hasn't counted on this.

This always happens with sin. Sin always sets in motion spiritually destructive forces that you cannot control no matter how in control you think you are.

It may be external forces, like a pregnancy. It may be internal forces like the loss of integrity, the loss of character, or the loss of innocence.

But sin will set into motion destructive forces that you cannot control.

And this leads us to the 3rd crossroad you face when wrestling with sin.

[slide 13] 3rd, you choose how to respond.

How do you respond after you've sinned and the consequences start to unfold?

David could have confessed to God, to Bathsheba, to Uriah, and to his people, what he has done, repent, and try to set things right.

But he doesn't. He chooses to respond differently; he goes down a darker road.

He chooses to respond by launching 'operation cover-up'. Look at v.6, and notice this word '*sent*' is now being used all over the place.

"So David *sent* this word to Joab: '*Send* me Uriah, the Hittite.' And Joab *sent* him to David.

When Uriah came to him, v.7, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going.

Then David says to Uriah, v.8, "Go down to your house and wash your feet."

That phrase sounds strange to us, but implied in his words are 'go have sexual relations with your wife'

which, as v.11 shows, Uriah clearly understands.

"So Uriah left the palace," v.8, "and a gift from the king was *sent* after him."

David thinks he's back in control. "Once Uriah sleeps with Bathsheba it will appear that the child will be his, not mine."

The only problem is, David's plan doesn't work.

Look at v.9: "But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house."

"When David's spies told him, 'Uriah did not go into his home,' he asks Uriah, 'why not?'

Uriah says to David in v.11, my paraphrase, 'How can I go to my house to eat and drink and lie with my wife

when all my buddies are on the battlefield camped in the open fields? I just can't do such a thing!'"

David is desperate for operation cover-up to succeed. So he puts plan 'B' into operation. You can almost hear the frantic tone in his voice now.

"David says to him," v.12, "Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will *send* you back."

I wonder if Uriah suspects anything. David's request does seem a little strange.

But like a good soldier, Uriah obeys his king and, in v.13, "At David's invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David got him drunk.

But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master's servants; he did not go home [to sleep with his wife]."

"Dag nabit!" says David. [that's swearing in Hebrew]. Operation cover-up isn't working. What'll I do now?"

Plan 'C', v.14: "In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, his military chief of staff, and *sent* it with Uriah."

"In it he wrote, 'Put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so that he will be struck down and die.'"

It's chilling how easily David's cover-up operation shifts from deception to calculated, cold-blooded murder.

And he's willing to draw in his military chief of staff as an accessory to the crime.

Once the fighting's over, v.18ff, Joab *sends* a messenger back to tell David Uriah has died.

David exhales slowly in relief. Never mind how many others died in the battle. The one thing he wanted to happen happened.

David *sends* a callous and cynical response back to Joab, v.25: "Don't let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another."

The NIV softens that opening phrase “don’t let this upset you.”

The Hebrew literally translates it as, ‘Do not let what happened be evil in your eyes.’

In other words David is saying, “Killing Uriah need not be seen as an evil act. It’s just an unfortunate casualty of war.”

This is the same man who sang love songs to God and prayed ardent prayers to God and defeated Goliath in God’s name.

How does David choose to respond to his sin? David commits himself to a strategy of cover-up.

As the Scottish poet, Sir Walter Scott says, “Oh what tangled webs we weave when first we practice to deceive.”

We know all too well how trying to deceive or cover up our sin can involve us in an ever-growing web of deceit that compounds our original act.

Well, David is almost finished. He thinks he’s just about got his sin all covered up.

V.27: After the time of mourning was over, David *sent* for Bathsheba once more and has her brought to the palace, and he marries her.

“I’ve done it,” says David to himself. “I’ve gotten away with it. Nobody will ever find out; no one will ever know.”

Really? Look at the last sentence in v.27: “But the thing David has done displeased the Lord.”

Again, the NIV softens this phrase and obscures the parallel with the previous statement of David’s in v.25.

In v.25 David urges Joab not to let Uriah’s murder be seen as being evil in his eyes.

And here in v.27 the Hebrew literally translates as, “the thing David has done is evil in the sight of the Lord.”

David’s perception of reality is that what he has done is not evil, but that doesn’t square with God’s perception at all.

“Do not let this thing be seen as evil in your eyes” says David to Joab. “But the thing David has done is evil in the sight of the Lord.”

David may have been arrogant enough to think that he is morally unaccountable to anyone.

But there is one who sees everything with absolute moral clarity, and who will not be duped by the cleverest of cover-ups, and that is the LORD, our God.

That brings us to the 4th crossroad you face when wrestling with sin.

[slide 14] 4th, you will be held accountable.

Thus far God has been absent from the story. He has not been spoken to or spoken of until the last word of the last verse in c.11.

But now God is silent no more. David is called to account for his sins.

2 Sam. 12.1: “The Lord *sent* Nathan to David.” And here we see that word ‘*sent*’ one more time.

It’s the last time you’ll see it in this story. But now it’s the Lord that *sends*. David is no longer in control.

Nathan is a prophet in David’s royal court. He knows what David has done.

Rather than confront him outright about his sin he relates a story of a poor man with one sheep.

David once shepherded sheep. So he will connect instantly with this story in 12.1ff.

“There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle,

but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb that he had bought.

He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.

Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him.

Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man, [killed it], and prepared it for the one who had come to him.”

David’s response is immediate and right on target. V.5: “David burned with anger against the man – he was furious –

and said to Nathan, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, the one who did this deserves to die!’

He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity – no mercy.”

David is righteously indignant. How often is David’s reaction a lot like our own?

We can so easily be righteously indignant about the sins of others and forget about our own.

That’s what David does. Nathan then looks David in the eye and says in v.7, “You are the man! [This is your sin David].”

Picture this scene. All the colour drains from David’s face. He slumps back in his chair. Sweat beads on his forehead. He makes no response.

He has nothing to say. But God has a lot to say through his prophet. V.7ff,

“I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms.

I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more!

Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own.”

Through Nathan, God holds David accountable for his sins.

God’s words reflect hurt and bewilderment. “Why David, why would you do such a thing? Why didn’t you come to me? Why didn’t you talk to me?”

Then in v.13 David says, “I have sinned against the Lord.” I am the man. I will own up to my sin.

David’s confession is the first step towards repentance, toward turning away from the patterns of fallenness and brokenness that sin brings.

[slide 15, blank] Maybe, like David, you’ve heard stories and thought about the fallenness of other people.

But today you’re aware of the fallenness in your own life.

Will you do what David does? Will you say, “I am the man. I am the woman. That’s my sin?”

I want to give you a few moments as time for confession between you and God as you stand at your own crossroad.

God is waiting for you right now to come to him in humility and brokenness and say, ‘God, I’m the man. I’m the woman,’ whatever the sin is.

As we do that, I'm going to read Ps. 51. Why Ps. 51? In some ancient manuscripts of 2 Sam. 12

a gap was left by the copyists in the text following David's confession of sin in v.13.

This was done to give the opportunity for the reading of Ps. 51;

a psalm of David's written when Nathan came to David after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

I'd ask you to close your eyes and hear well these words of confession.

Let David's contrite heart express the desire of your heart today.

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone into Bathsheba.

51 Have mercy on me,^[a] O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.

²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!

³For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.

⁴Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgment.

⁵Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.

⁶Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

⁷Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

⁸Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

- ⁹ Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
- ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right^[b] spirit within me.
- ¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
- ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.
- ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
- ¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.
- ¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
- ¹⁶ For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;
you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.
- ¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Now you need to hear well what Nathan says to David after David's confession. Look at 1 Sam. 12.13b, "The Lord has taken away your sin."

God does with David's sin what he will do with yours and mine – he will take it away.

"As far as the east is from the west," writes David in Ps. 103.12, "so far has he removed our transgression, our sins, from us."

He will do the same for you and for me.

Sing: O For A Heart 729 / 91 [Lloyd].