

David, Part 11 2-6-22

Lust & Death

One of the intriguing things to note about the Scripture is how the heroes of faith are never idealized. Unlike the heroes of other cultures, Biblical heroes are presented to us, not as supermen, but as fallen men. Their heroic deeds are recounted along with their basest acts. And these guys did some pretty low things in their time. We see them mighty in spirit and puny in the flesh. In the word, we read of Noah's drunkenness, of Abraham's lying, of Moses' anger, of Elijah's self-pity, of Peter's impulsiveness and faithlessness. All of this testifies that the book was written not to give us heroes but to show us our God as the only pure and righteous One. We believe the Bible is the book of God and one reason is that the people in it, even the ones who wrote it are painted up in print with their warts and blemishes still attached. Certainly, this is true with David the king, a man we know as well as anyone in Scripture. He was a great man, an example of a man of God, but...So many of us are described that way. "He's a fine man, but." That reality should keep us constantly longing for heaven where the buts are no more. But for now, I Kings 15:5 *David did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite.* And his wife Bathsheba. It is the case of Uriah and Bathsheba we are about to read II Samuel 11:1-27 *Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem.* ²*Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance.* ³*So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"* ⁴*David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house.* ⁵*The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, "I am pregnant."* ⁶*Then David sent to Joab, saying, "Send me Uriah the Hittite."* So Joab sent Uriah to David. ⁷*When Uriah came to him, David asked concerning the welfare of Joab and the people and the state of the war.* ⁸*Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house, and wash your feet."* And Uriah went out of the king's house, and a present from the king was sent out after him. ⁹*But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord,*

and did not go down to his house.¹⁰ Now when they told David, saying, “Uriah did not go down to his house,” David said to Uriah, “Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?”¹¹ Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in temporary shelters, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? By your life and the life of your soul, I will not do this thing.”¹² Then David said to Uriah, “Stay here today also, and tomorrow I will let you go.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next.¹³ Now David called him, and he ate and drank before him, and he made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his bed with his lord’s servants, but he did not go down to his house.¹⁴ Now in the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah.¹⁵ He had written in the letter, saying, “Place Uriah in the front line of the fiercest battle and withdraw from him, so that he may be struck down and die.”¹⁶ So it was as Joab kept watch on the city, that he put Uriah at the place where he knew there were valiant men.¹⁷ The men of the city went out and fought against Joab, and some of the people among David’s servants fell; and Uriah the Hittite also died.¹⁸ Then Joab sent and reported to David all the events of the war.¹⁹ He charged the messenger, saying, “When you have finished telling all the events of the war to the king,²⁰ and if it happens that the king’s wrath rises and he says to you, ‘Why did you go so near to the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall?’²¹ Who struck down Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman throw an upper millstone on him from the wall so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?’—then you shall say, ‘Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.’”²² So the messenger departed and came and reported to David all that Joab had sent him to tell.²³ The messenger said to David, “The men prevailed against us and came out against us in the field, but we pressed them as far as the entrance of the gate.²⁴ Moreover, the archers shot at your servants from the wall; so some of the king’s servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is also dead.”²⁵ Then David said to the messenger, “Thus you shall say to Joab, ‘Do not let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another; make your battle against the city stronger and overthrow it’; and so encourage him.”²⁶ Now when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.²⁷ When the time of mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house and she became his wife; then she bore him a son. But the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the Lord.

We hear a lot about sex and violence in the media. But is there really anything wrong with shows that have sex and violence? Isn't that a lot of what really goes on and makes a big difference in life? And should you put the entire Bible on film, or whatever they use these days, what would it be rated? Of course, reading about it and watching a play-by-play, or kiss by kiss account are very different things. But the most important thing we have to be alert to about the presentation of sin in the movies is how these activities are framed and portrayed. What is the slant given to sin in the story? Does it glorify or commend illicit sex and gratuitous violence? What is the perspective? You see the way our chapter ends, you see the slant taken in Scripture - by announcing the perspective of God upon David's behavior. The thing was evil in God's eyes. And what follows in II Samuel surely reveals that David's lust for Bathsheba qualified as a fatal attraction.

We will take two Sunday mornings to study the events surrounding the sin of David. I have arranged the material under six headings. We cover three today and three next week. It is really all one story and all one sermon so come back if you can. Next week we look at the results of the sin. Today we consider the sin itself.

First, notice with me what were the circumstances of David's sin. These acts were so out of character for David that we should wonder what brought them on, what led to this? Let's see what we can gather from the text. First off, we see from chapter 10 that God was continuing to give David military victories. We read there of how he defeated Syria and Ammon. Peace had come to Israel. Prosperity was the present lot of God's people. It was a high time for Israel, but this was part of the situation that led David to sin. He was prospering and prosperity provides its own set of temptations. When all is going well - watch out - spiritual disaster may be around the corner. There was a woman who attended the church of John Newton, the author of *Amazing Grace*, and one day after church she announced eagerly how she had come into a large inheritance. She expected, of course, for her pastor to rejoice with her but instead he responded by saying, "Well, thank you for sharing that with me. I will certainly be praying for you." Not exactly the response you would expect, but Newton saw rightly the dangers of prosperity. Now, hey, prosperity is great - if you are spiritually prepared. But many of us are not. We read stories routinely of how the mighty have fallen. Successful, famous people going bankrupt, landing in drug rehab, enduring painful divorces. Money, prestige, success will eat you alive when you face it without God.

So, David had prosperity. Secondly, he had power. By this time, he was the established king of a mighty nation. And you know what they say? Power corrupts.

But, there is another danger in power in that it provides opportunity to sin. I mean, there are a lot of sins you might commit, if you could, if you just had the ability or the opportunity. David had it. He was the king. What he said went and nobody was going to question him. Nobody was going to show up three years later with a sexual harassment suit against him. He could do what he wanted and get away with it. That means a whole lot more temptation. I thank God I can't have whatever I want. Can you imagine? Whatever he laid his eyes on he could have. I remember realizing in college, as I fought the fight for moral purity, what a blessing it was to be ordinary looking and plain. I knew a guy who was a football player and looked like a male model and this Christian brother had women calling him up asking for dates when that wasn't done. There are some powers you and I are better off without. Be thankful God has restrained you through your own weakness, your own inability to fulfill the lusts of the flesh. David did not have these restraints. He had both prosperity and power and these two gave great strength to his temptation.

So, prosperity and power are the setting for our story but there is more here to learn about the circumstances of David's sin. *1 It happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem.* That is, David had been so successful that he just sent the second string out to fight. He stayed home - a sign that he was getting too self-assured. *2a When evening came David arose from his bed.* Well, well, well. What does that tell you? It sounds like David is being lazy. It sounds like David's siesta ran overtime. "When evening came" - now this probably means late afternoon, it was still light enough outside to see the sights of the city. But we still get a picture of David being slothful, lazing around while he sent Joab off to run the war. This was his first mistake. Before he committed adultery, he committed sloth. Now, we don't take sloth very seriously. We joke about it, but God says it is sin. And, do you see what sloth can lead to? When you are lazy you have indulged the flesh unto excessive rest and when you indulge the flesh in one area you make it easier to indulge in another. You establish a body over mind principle. Have you made that mistake? David had already decided to let his passions rule in reference to rest and now he's ready to do the same in reference to another appetite. That's one problem of laziness. The other is that by laziness you grow spiritually dull. David was not doing well spiritually. He was in prime condition to get stung by Satan. When you let your spirit get dry, when your soul is not watered by the good word

of God, then it's ready to catch fire and burn. Proverbs 6 tells us that a man of sloth, a lazy bones, is headed for poverty, and that's a poverty of soul as much as an empty bank account.

So, there are some very practical principles to be derived from this. One is to stay active, doing good. David got slack. But if you do what you ought to be doing, in a positive sense, then you will have less time or energy to sin. Does that make sense? I mean, there is a sense in which you can be too busy to sin. And that's good. If you are out of work, or, for some reason, find yourself with gobs of time - beware! Those are dangerous times. What do we know about idle hands and idle minds? Uh-huh, they are the devil's workshop. It's the young persons who just hang out that invariably get into trouble. Get those kids engaged with something good. And you do the same. Stay occupied with good and you'll miss out on a lot of temptation.

Another very important lesson to derive from David's story is to never let up. You know what I mean by "let up"? You drop your defenses, you relax a bit. Letting up leads to defeat. I've learned this well in sports because in competition there is always the temptation to let up - to not push yourself quite as hard and the two dangerous times are when you are either way ahead or way behind your opponent. When you are getting smashed you get discouraged and want to quit. When you're ahead you get cocky and start to coast. I think that's where David was. Watch out! The contest isn't over till it's over. And your spiritual battle isn't over till you are in glory. I used to be a San Diego Charger's fan. The Chargers, in the early 80s, had the league's best offense and worst defense, a combination made for some interesting games. Often the Chargers would get behind and the announcer would say, "You can never be too far ahead of Dan Fouts and the Chargers." And I say to you, you can never be too far ahead of the devil. You can't stop your spiritual disciplines because the game's not over till it's over and Satan is not going to quit on you. He prowls about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour and that lion waits for you to let up, to get slack, to start coasting and then he pounces like he did with Brother David. Beware of letting down your guard. Perseverance is critical and the price of freedom is eternal vigilance.

All that is to show how David was ready for a fall. But, despite the circumstances leading up to it, there still was that sinful choice made by David. So, we turn from looking at the circumstances of the sin to the commission of the sin. *2-4 Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the*

woman was very beautiful in appearance.³ So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"⁴ David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house. There you have it. The actual sin began in verse 2 when he saw the woman. The seeing was not the problem, but this was more than a passing glance. As Martin Luther put it, you can't stop a bird from landing on your head, but you can stop it from building a nest there. David's head was getting very nesty. He lusted after this woman. Rather than turning and fleeing temptation he went on to look and consider the possibilities. In verse 3 he learns her husband is away. Desire meets opportunity and in verse 4 they merge into sin.

In James 1 we find the anatomy of premeditated sin. 1:14 *Each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.* Now that's funny. I thought we are tempted to sin when we are pressured into it by social forces. But God says the root of temptation is found in our own lusts. 15 *Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.* As it happened for David, unbridled lust meets a moment of opportunity and the offspring is death. You can see this cycle again and again. Eve saw that the fruit was luscious and would make her like God. She lusted and then sinned and what followed? Spiritual death and devastation. In Joshua chapter 7 a man named Achan was found guilty of taking from Jericho things God said to destroy. Here is how Achan described his deed 7:20-21 *Achan answered Joshua, "Truly I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and this is what I did:²¹ when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath."* Then what happened to Achan? He died under a shower of stones. When sin is accomplished it brings forth death. That is the result. Is it any wonder that God says to us II Timothy 2:22a *Flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.* Don't give way to that lust. Don't toy with temptation. Run from it. James 1:15 *When lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.* Witness Eve, witness Achan, witness David and learn from their mistakes.

Alright, we have seen David's actual commission of sin. But the sinning isn't over. Point #3 is the continuation of the sin 5 *The woman conceived; and she sent*

and told David, and said, "I am pregnant." So, what does David do? Humble himself before God and Israel by confessing his sin? No, he did what most anyone would do. He started operation cover-up. He calls Uriah away from battle, figuring he will take opportunity to enjoy some time with his lovely wife. But no, Uriah had too much loyalty to his comrades 11 Uriah said to David, *"The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in temporary shelters, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? By your life and the life of your soul, I will not do this thing."* By this he heaps coals of fire on David's head. His integrity rebukes the king. David tries again by getting Uriah drunk and, when that fails, he slyly arranges Uriah's death by setting him up to be killed in battle. His adultery has mushroomed into murder, murder of a clean, sophisticated sort, but no less wicked. David had nothing against Uriah, it was just that only Uriah knew the coming baby was not his. It was done to cover up. God only knows how much of this goes in in the places of political power. Sin leads to sin, which leads to sin. David sought to wash away the stain of adultery by the shedding of innocent blood. Isn't that what goes on day after day in the abortion mills of our land? Innocent blood shed to cover the stain of sexual sin. In some way or another, we are all one with the king. Have you not lied, have you not hurt someone else to protect your own reputation?

You see, behind this awful sin of David you can find a perverted motivation that is common to man and yes, common to Christian people. What led David to this his worst sin, his greatest evil, was a desire to appear righteous. The desire to appear righteous and the desire to be righteous are very different things and result in very different choices. Often these two desires will push you in the same direction but, at times, they war. I hope you are conscious of this conflict in your soul. If not, meditate on what David is doing and why. He had an incredible desire to cover up his sin. He has a great zeal to appear righteous. He had this reputation as the godly king and he wanted to keep that reputation. The cover-up becomes the problem. We who go back to Nixon and Watergate remember that as the president's great folly. Nixon fought to keep his image of integrity and what ultimately overthrew him and David was the cover-up. Not the initial sin, but the cover-up.

David's problem here was that he had more concern to appear righteous and be thought righteous than to actually be righteous. He wanted to hide his sin, but could he? No, Adam couldn't. Achan couldn't. David couldn't. No one ever, ever gets away with sin for there is One from whom you cannot hide. 27c *But the*

thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the Lord. It is God's sight that really counts. You trying to appear righteous? God knows your game. And someone else is likely to find out too. If not soon, certainly at judgment where God says that what you did in secret will be shouted from the rooftop.

So, what do you do when you sin like this? The devil wants you to keep on in the cycle of sin and deceit, but God calls us to confess it. Get up, get back on the highway of holiness. One surprising obstacle for some people in doing this happens to be their church connections. We are a people of spiritual values. We are anti-sin. You know that very well and so what happens when you do some heavy-duty sin? You seek to keep it secret. You are hesitant to let your church friends know about your sin even when we need to know. You may feel free to tell the guy at the bar what you've done but not the folks at church. There you have a reputation to protect. Fred Smith says that, as he travels the country, he likes to ask people this question: "Suppose you were arrested on charges of soliciting for prostitution on Saturday night and your name appeared in Sunday morning's news. Would you go to church that day?" You know what most people say? They say, "No, I think I would let things settle down first." Smith says that is like someone who is in a car accident and is losing blood saying to the rescue team, "I really don't want to go to the hospital right now, why look at me. I am such a mess. Let me go home and change clothes and stop the bleeding, then I will make it down to the hospital." Brethren, the church is here to help sinners. Don't turn away from your family when you need them most. Yes, we are anti-sin, but we are pro-you. We operate in grace, with forgiveness and love. Don't turn away when you blow it. We're a fellowship of sinners, we'll understand and we will seek to help.

You see what happened to David. Afraid of being found out, he sinned more to cover up. He wove a web of deceit and caught himself in his own trap. The cycle or pattern of sin is like a downward spiral. You just sink deeper and deeper into sin and away from God, sinking, sinking until something happens and the hardened heart is broken. Then there is hope, precious hope by the grace of God. That is ahead for us next week in chapter 12 of II Samuel. What a great, great story it is. I hope you will be here as we look at David's great sin part two. Let's pray