

David's Sins of Adultery and Murder

2 Samuel 11

2 Samuel 11 - *"It happened in the spring of the year, 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 people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. ² Then it 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. ³ So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" ⁴ Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house. ⁵ And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, "I am with child."*

⁶ Then David sent to Joab, saying, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. 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 And 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 with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. 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 Then David said to Uriah, "Wait here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart." So 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. And at evening he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

¹⁴ In the morning it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. ¹⁵ And 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." ¹⁶ So it was, while Joab besieged the city, that he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew there were valiant men. ¹⁷ Then the men of the city came out and fought with Joab. And some of the people of the servants of David fell; and Uriah the Hittite died also.

¹⁸ Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war, ¹⁹ and charged the messenger, saying, "When you have finished telling the matters of the war to the king, ²⁰ if it happens that the king's wrath rises, and he says to you: 'Why did you approach so near to the city when you fought? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall?' ²¹ Who struck Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Was it not a woman who cast a piece of a millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you go near the wall?'—then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.'"

22 So the messenger went, and came and told David all that Joab had sent by him. 23 And the messenger said to David, "Surely the men prevailed against us and came out to us in the field; then we drove them back as far as the entrance of the gate. 24 The archers shot from the wall at your servants; and some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also." 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. Strengthen your attack against the city, and overthrow it.' So encourage him."

26 When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. 27 And when her 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."

Background Notes

Although this is a very sad chapter in the Bible and in David's life, the fact that this negative story is included in the Bible actually supports the authenticity of the Bible! The Bible doesn't hide the faults of its heroes. Compare this with the literature of cultures from around the world, both ancient and modern. In those accounts, the sins of the folk heroes are glossed over - but not in the Bible! The Bible tells it like it is! The Bible records David's great acts of faith and valor, and it also records his great failures. The Bible doesn't cover up this terrible, sinful time in David's life.

In the tightly-knit hillside community of Jerusalem, when David could observe quite a few homes below when he stood on the rooftop of his palace, even without binoculars. His vista included what was going on in the open courtyards of the homes down the hillside, and on one particular night David noticed a beautiful woman bathing in the open courtyard of her home.

Some commentaries point out that Bathsheba should have been more careful in her bathing habits, knowing that she was in line of sight of the palace observation deck. Some have even suggested that Bathsheba purposely bathed where David could see her, because (as far as the biblical record goes) she certainly didn't resist his advances. We don't know about all these possible details, but we do know that David sinned. Adultery was punishable by death under the Mosaic Law, and it was only by God's grace that David was not put to death.

When Bathsheba disclosed that she was pregnant, David called Uriah back from the front lines of battle for some "rest and relaxation" in Jerusalem. David, of course, was trying to cover up his sin by making it appear that Bathsheba had become pregnant when Uriah was home on leave. Unfortunately for David's plans, Uriah refused to sleep in his own home. Do you think that Uriah knew what was going on? It's quite possible, because the royal court and palace servants must have known, and it would have been almost impossible to stop all the gossip and communication leaks. In any case, even when David made Uriah drunk, Uriah refused to go home and spend the night with his wife.

Doctrinal Points

1. Leisure misused gives opportunity to sin.

David had too much time on his hands, and that led to his downfall. Maybe David should have been out leading his troops in battle as he had in the past, but this time David stayed at home in Jerusalem. He must have had plenty to occupy his time with the details of running his kingdom, but it seems he had too much leisure time. It's often been said that "Satan has plenty of things for idle hands to do."

And the Bible says that there is pleasure in sin. Hebrews 11:12 mentions that it's possible "*to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin...*" David had time on his hands, and he was restless. He was vulnerable, and he fell into sin.

Notice David's downward steps: 1) He saw Bathsheba bathing. 2) He inquired about the beautiful woman. 3) He brought Bathsheba to the palace. 4) He committed adultery with her. David should have stopped at Step 1. He had the book of Job, and he should have known Job 31:1 - "*I have made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl.*" But David didn't stop at Step 1.

It all started with David having too much time on his hands, and too much leisure time gives opportunity to sin. We all enjoy leisure time, and we need some leisure time, but we must be warned. Leisure time becomes an opportune time to sin if we don't keep our guard up. 1 Corinthians 10:12 - "*...let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*" We need to stay busy in wholesome leisure activities, because leisure misused gives opportunity to sin.

2. Lust conceived gives birth to sin.

When David couldn't get Uriah to go home to sleep with his wife, David had to take further steps to cover up his sin. David's lust for Bathsheba not only conceived the sin of adultery, it conceived the sin of murder as well. This is exactly what James 1:15 says - "*...when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin.*" Think of all the sin that David's lack of self-control led to. He forced Joab to sin by getting him involved in the Uriah's murder. Think of all the other good men who were killed because David allowed bad military tactics in order to get Uriah killed (v17 & 24). David thought that he had successfully covered up his sin, and he married Bathsheba as quickly as possible to prevent further gossip. But Proverbs 28:13 says, "*He who covers his sins will not prosper...*" David's covered-up sin didn't escape the gaze of God.

Was this the same David who fought Goliath? Was this the same David who would not kill King Saul, the Lord's anointed? Was this the same David whose great desire was to build the Temple of the Lord? Yes - but when this same David didn't use self-control. He didn't check his lustful thoughts, it led to sin. Lust conceived gives birth to sin.

The Lord is able to help us with the problem of lust if we truly want to obey Him, and we ask Him for His help. For example, the Lord will provide us with the strength and will power to resist the pornographic and morally corrupting websites on the internet. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says that "*when you are tempted, He will also provide a way of escape so*

that you can stand up under it.” But we have to be ready and willing to take the “way of escape” He provides! Remember, lust conceived gives birth to sin.

Practical Application

Don’t neglect the “weightier matters” of the Law.

In Matthew 23:23, the Lord said to the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees, *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.”* The scribes and Pharisees were hypocrites. They scrupulously observed the “small” or surface matters of the Law, like carefully tithing even the spices used in their homes - but they were guilty of neglecting the more important matters of the Law: justice, mercy and faith!

David and Bathsheba were guilty of this same sin. Notice that Bathsheba carefully followed the Levitical laws of purification (v4). Notice that David carefully waited until the official time of mourning for Uriah was over before he married Bathsheba (v27). Their surface behavior was “godly,” but meanwhile they had committed adultery, and David had committed murder. They were guilty of neglecting the “weightier matters of the Law.”

What about us? Are we careful to obey the Lord in **every** area of our lives? Or are we hypocrites, like David and Bathsheba, or the scribes and Pharisees? For example, some Christians are careful to give thanks to the Lord for every meal (and that’s good!), but meanwhile they’re cheating in their business practices, or cheating on their income tax forms, or cheating in their marriages. Sadly, they may even go so far as to thank the Lord for the dinner they’re enjoying as part of an illicit affair.

Hear the words of the Lord in Matthew 23:23 - Don’t neglect the “weightier matters” of the Law!