

David | The Once and Future King

The Sender

Second Samuel CH 11-12.1A

11.21.21

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.

Then the LORD sent Nathan to David.

Some years ago my wife, Missy, was involved in a little fender-bender, car crash, right in front of our house. The other driver was about 18 years old and he was driving his father's brand-new truck... taking it for its maiden voyage around the neighborhood.

It was a very minor accident...but there was a bit of damage to the father's truck... The young man was enraged and shouting and cursing and sputtering and on the verge of a stroke...and Missy said, "Can I say something? I'm older than you are and I can tell you that there's a good possibility you'll be in a wreck someday in which someone is really injured...and you MAY want to save some of that emotion for THAT day." (The young man calmed down).

There are some phrases so emotionally charged that you should only use them maybe once per decade, e.g. "How DARE you?" and the phrase "Who do you think you are?" (Parents use it with kids sometimes). "Who do you think you are?"

It can be an aggressive and hostile question... and I plan to ask it today of the human protagonist (hero) in our study but also to YOU – who do you think YOU are? I really don't MEAN it in an ugly way; I simply want us to think of how we identify ourselves... What IS your self-image? How do you think of yourself (I could ALSO ask, "how often do you think of yourself" – another time!) but WHAT is your identity?

At the root of David's infamous failure is the question of self-concept, self-image: how does he think of himself in relation to others and in relation to God? "David, who do you think you are?"

As we analyze David's sin (how'd you like someone to analyze YOUR sin?) to sort out this moral collapse let's look at three issues: **1) A THEOLOGICAL issue**

2) A PSYCHOLOGICAL issue

3) A POLITICAL issue

By a FAITH-issue, I mean, as an article of faith, as a tenet or doctrine of Christianity, how are we to get a grip on what David did? In other words, "I thought that believing in God – as Christians DO and as David did – I thought that made you a better person... What DOES the Bible teach about Christians and sin?"

And the basic answer here is that Christians do sin in this life. People who are justified and counted righteous in the sight of God are capable of sin... AND if this story is a paradigm or pattern for

understanding the believer's life... it looks like it's possible for real believers to sin in really big and horrible ways... destructive, criminal ways.

Now, someone may wonder, "Well, isn't this a B.C. case... and aren't we better now that that Christ has come and the Holy Spirit helps us?"

Well, going back at least to the time of Martin Luther in the 1500s, Christian thinkers used a Latin phrase to summarize this teaching, "simul iustus et peccator" that the Christian is justified by what Jesus Christ did for us – God counts us righteous even while we are simultaneously sinful.

One glaring proof of this is that the Letters of the Apostles contain commands... i.e. if believing in Jesus makes you good and we no longer sin, then why do we have to be told, "do not hate one another...don't steal...don't be sexually immoral... don't gossip... be generous... forgive one another ...love one another..."

Apparently, it's NOT automatic for people who are forgiven by God and counted righteous...it's not a reflex that they should suddenly obey God without even being told... Apparently, we have to be told/reminded. The frequency of the commands implies the possibility of the sins – hatred, murder, lying, adultery, greed etc.

Christians are capable of committing them all. And YET none of this is to say that we MAY sin, that we have permission to sin – it's never right to sin. And David's story and the New Testament commands are all a vivid illustration of this theological truth, that though it's never good to sin, still Christians ...sin.

That David was a believer is beyond dispute. That David sinned is not a question – but, maybe we should ask, "How sinful can a true believer BE?"

And we could show that David repeatedly breaks all the Ten Commandments in these scenes. He's not only responsible for Uriah's death but for other soldiers' deaths as well... It's a multi-aggravation, compound, premeditated sin.

And that brings us to the PSYCHOLOGICAL issue – the mystifying motives at work here. Why did this man who "had it all" just throw it all away so recklessly? AND why do people, in general and real believers...why has this been repeated millions of times? Why do people sin and then try to cover it up making the results so much worse (self-destruction)?

Robert Alter (86), the renowned Hebraist, from UC Berkley; he's pointed out the repeated use of a Hebrew word in this episode – twelve times starting in the first verse and ending in the last, the word translated into English as "send" or "sent" (12x).

In the season when kings go out to war to patrol their borders and keep their citizens safe, David stayed at the palace and instead "SENT" Joab and with him "all Israel."

Then David “SENT” and inquired about a young woman (grand-daughter of one of his most trusted advisors, Ahithophel). Then David “SENT” messengers and TOOK her.

Then, a little reversal: the young woman “SENT” and told David she was pregnant... It’s as if God (the Lord and Giver of Life) is saying, “David, Mr. Big-Stuff, you send people here and there at your whim...but Mr. Big-Stuff, who do you think you are?!”

“You’re NOT the sender... I AM THE SENDER!” And so in two displays of stunning irony, God shows that HE and NOT DAVID is in control – 1) God SENDS a baby and 2) CH 12, v. 1: “Then the LORD SENT Nathan to David” – God shows up to rescue David by sending His WORD by the Prophet.

If you trace out this passage, you’ll find David pulling all the strings, moving people like pawns on a chess-board like the Rich Man (Luke 16) in Hades who said, “Father Abraham SEND Lazarus to me – I’m thirsty!” (24)

“Rich Man – who do you think you are and David, WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?”

For that reason, I think we’re safe to say that the writer, by repeating this word (12x) is pointing to the David’s motives, it’s an identity issue, it’s arrogance. And when in CH 12, David’s pastor (Nathan) helps David to face his sin, this is the gist of Nathan’s sermon: David has forgotten who he is IN RELATION to God: “Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'It is I who anointed you king over Israel...'” (12.7) David, who do you think you ARE?

David knew the truth of the One-Hundredth Psalm: “Know that the LORD Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; WE are HIS people and the sheep of His pasture.” (v.3)

But here, under the influence of all the things we WANT, like power and opportunity and recognition and wealth and comfort and position and “success, success, success” (Rolling Stones, “Shattered”) David forgets who he is and he seems to think that he made himself – the Almighty King who sends.

Now, IF this IS the root motive in David’s actions and MAYBE THĒ root motive in all sin, how can we tell if we might have this Psychological Issue at work in us?

What are the signs or symptoms of this arrogance as it appears in David and in others?

First, though, if you ARE an arrogant person, you’ll probably be the last to know. In the section we skipped (CHs 8-10) David is not only wildly successful in his wars but also capable of warmth and tenderness and love – he never thought of himself as arrogant; he was a shepherd! But arrogance is really a heart issue and it can go invisible/undetected until a crisis (like a strained relationship or a moral-failure) brings it to the surface... So again, IF I’m an arrogant person I probably won’t know it.

Now here are some signs OTHERS may have noticed, as David’s heart was growing arrogant – THREE signs:

- 1) How he relates to people (esp. those who serve)

- 2) The prominence of anger
- 3) The way he manages resources

First, notice how David “sends” people; he begins to use people like things or tools. People become disposable to David. He tells them to sin for him. He manipulates and controls them. He doesn't mind putting them out or inconveniencing them. They're not important to him like they don't even exist.

The way we treat a server in a restaurant or a pizza delivery person or anyone who's under your authority or subordinate to you, this MAY indicate how you're understanding and relying on the whole Christian message of grace OR if you're arrogant.

Second, when David weaves his plot to kill Uriah and he has others (e.g. Joab the General) carry out the plot, when it's DONE, Joab sends a messenger to tell David what happened. And Joab adds, “If the king get's angry...tell him Uriah has died...” and THIS tells us a few things like the fact that no one's surprised when David gets angry. David apparently gets angry a lot. It's often the case with highly successful people.

In the next chapter, Nathan tells David a story about a grossly inconsiderate man and it says, “David's anger burned greatly against the man...” (12:5)

Anger can be a sign that we have arrogant hearts. It can be a demanding tone we take with our kids or spouse. It can be impatience with a co-worker, a frustrated groan, annoyance, disappointment or just living in a low-level state of aggravation (frozen anger).

When things don't work like I think they should and I get irritated (like we THINK we're living in the Garden instead of East of Eden where we DO live) we should hear a little voice asking, “Who do you think you are?” Our arrogance is exposed.

Last, David squandered his resources – another possible symptom of arrogance. He squanders his time. It's battle season but he stays home; it's evening and he's still in bed. He misuses people and authority, the army, friendships. He sees even people as disposable in order to cover up his sin.

The way we spend our money, time and resources helps us to see, “Who do you think you are?” If we're tight-fisted and NOT radically generous it's usually a symptom of arrogance: “This is MY time, MY money, MY authority, MY palace, MY eyes, MY friends... My gifts and talents, MY body...”

David should have seen himself NOT a self-made man but a manager of God's resources (God's eyes, God's woman, God's soldiers, God's time...)

Our checkbook tells the story. Who do you think you are? Self-made and self-sufficient, arrogant or a recipient of undeserved blessing from God – in controlling and sending OR receiving and TRUSTING?

The last issue before us today (Theological, Psychological) and third, a Political issue. David is called the Lord's Anointed ("meshiach"). He's a lot better than Saul in many ways but even David, the model king, still falls so far short of what we need in a political leader.

Truth is: human government and political corruption will always disappoint us.

We're waiting for the Son of David to come and to take the throne and rule the world, as it needs to be ruled. He, Jesus Christ, never misused ANY of His Father's resources. He was never ticked off or annoyed in sinful anger. He never treated servants like TOOLS; in fact, He WAS a servant and He loved people who were low in the pecking order. He said, "The greatest among us is the one who serves!"

He often called people by name. He valued people and never treated them like things.

Probably the clearest picture of Jesus Christ in this sad story is NOT David. Remember Caiaphas, the high priest in Jesus Christ's day who said "it's fitting that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish." (John 11.50)

Well, David flipped that: "It's better that all my soldiers die, in fact ALL ISRAEL (11.1) die than for the king to perish... David "simple plan", his cover-up scheme to get Uriah to sleep with his wife so that Uriah would be thought the father of the child...David's cover-up plot got more and more deadly and complicated (always the case!) – It's not David who looks like Jesus Christ, the political Leader we need – it's URIAH.

Uriah is impeccably faithful to the Ark and the armies of Israel. Uriah was an outsider (Gentile, Hittite) Uriah carried his own instrument of death that was sent by David (Uriah was the messenger!) Uriah was betrayed by his brothers and Uriah gave his life in place of David's in this cover-up.

And there came a King, SENT from the Father, who also was spotless in His faithfulness...who carried the instrument of His death, a rough, wooden cross... the King who was SENT to do for us what we couldn't do for ourselves – who died to cover us; NOT a scheme or lie but an eternal covenant...the satisfaction of the justice I deserve fell on Jesus Christ, the True Uriah.

When we're believing that, not only are we covered and justified but we lose our arrogance. And when we see that as Uriah (I always imagine his final thoughts!) as Uriah's life was vindicated, when Uriah's name was included in the genealogy of Jesus Christ, "Bathsheba who had been the wife of Uriah" (Matthew 1.6) so Jesus Christ was vindicated by His resurrection - so that He is able to rule us and liberate ALL WHO BELIEVE HIM from our natural state of arrogance.

You know John 3:16, right? What about John 3:17? "For God did not SEND the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."