

November 6, 2016
Sunday Morning Service
Series: *The Life of David*
Community Baptist Church
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THE THING DISPLEASED THE LORD 2 Samuel 11:1-27

Now we come to the part of David's story that many consider to be the most difficult to accept, to understand, to fit with the rest of the truth we know about David. What a disaster this was. This story shocks us in light of all the information about David leading up to it.

Chapter seven recorded the amazing covenant God made with David in which He promised to bless him and to set one of his relatives on the eternal throne of Israel. Too bad God didn't know that David was going to mess up before He committed Himself in that covenant. God did know. David responded to God's promise with sincere and humble worship.

Next we read in chapter eight a list of David's successes as he subjugated the perennial enemies, gained victory over potential enemies throughout the region, and virtually settled some areas of the Promised Land that God's people had failed to do for a couple of centuries. Chapter ten continued the history of how God blessed David as he subjugated the very powerful nations of Ammon and Syria.

Sandwiched between these two accounts of David gaining more and more power is the story of David's beneficence toward Mephibosheth, his friend Jonathan's son. It appears that the king was kind and considerate even while he was destroying enemies and gaining great power.

But there is one other trait about David that we cannot miss because it keeps showing up in the story of his life. In Deuteronomy seventeen, God gave some guidelines for His people when it came time from them to have a king. One of those guidelines warned that

the king of God's people should not gather a harem to himself like the pagan neighboring kings did. David ignored that rule.

It is significant that we read about David's growing success in 2 Samuel 3:1, *There was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. And David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul became weaker and weaker (2 Samuel 3:1)*. And the next thing we read about is a list of David's many wives (3:2-5).

The same thing occurred in 5:10 where we read, *And David became greater and greater, for the LORD, the God of hosts, was with him (2 Samuel 5:10)*. And again in verse 12, *And David knew that the LORD had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel (2 Samuel 5:12)*. Immediately after this reminder of David's ever-increasing power, we read, *"And David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, after he came from Hebron, and more sons and daughters were born to David" (v.13)*.

As David increased in power and authority, his penchant for women went unchecked. Because this was a clear breaching of God's law, the practice was going to catch up with David at some point. Chapter eleven and the story of Bathsheba is the point where his weakness was exploited. On one hand, it is the tragic story about humanity's faithlessness and undependability and the sad, painful consequences that come with it. On the other hand, the complete story is a story about God's faithfulness, love, mercy, and justice. Our God is such a wonderful God—especially when He responds to our demonstrations of the weaknesses of inbred sin.

How the "Thing" Began (vv.1-5).

The disaster of the ages began when God's servant dropped his guard (vv.1-2). The army was at battle in Rabbah and David remained in Jerusalem. *In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem (v.1)*.

We know from the information in chapter ten that in the previous fall David had fought off the challenges of the Ammonites.

Now it was spring and time to finish the job of subduing this pesky enemy. The text almost leads us to believe that the spring of the year was when kings set out to battle each other. Maybe that was the case. It would have been a practical response. The bad weather of winter was over, making sleeping outside more tolerable. Grass and crops would be growing to provide sustenance for the soldiers and animals. Spring would be a good time to go to battle to retrieve the land or cities the army took last year.

This was not the first time we read about David staying at home while the army went to battle (10:1). He had stayed back in Jerusalem in the fall when the battle against the Ammonites was engaged. But this time while David was at home in the palace he saw a beautiful woman. *It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful (v.2).*

It was such a simple thing. "He saw a woman." That happens all the time, right? That is the same thing that happened to the men in Egypt when Abraham showed up with Sarah. *When Abraham and Sarah went to Egypt, the Egyptian men saw that Sarah was very beautiful and all kinds of trouble started (Genesis 12:14).* This is the same thing that kept happening to Samson and he always seemed to deal with it poorly. He saw a woman in Timnah and said, "I want her" (Judges 14:1). Samson also saw a prostitute in Gaza and went to her (Judges 16:1).

A principle we learned as children comes to bear here. "Oh be careful little eyes what you see." We cannot avoid seeing many things in life, but we can and must avoid thinking about what we inadvertently see. That is why Jesus taught, *"But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart."* (Matthew 5:28). For a man to see a beautiful woman is not a sin. For the man to think lustful thoughts about the woman is always sin.

The problem is that it is so easy to look with desire because God made the female attractive to the male. A man being attracted to a woman's physical appearance is very normal. Ask David. He ran into a problem with it. He saw a woman and was naturally attracted to the woman. More than that, he saw a beautiful woman. This was an even

greater attraction. In the Hebrew text, the subject is first which emphasized how beautiful Bathsheba was. Worse, David saw the beautiful woman bathing. Immediately, natural covetousness rose up in David's heart and he thought, "I need to have her."

According to human nature, the way God created man, it would have been difficult for David to turn away at that point. Difficult or not, for his own safety, the health of his family, the health of the nation, David needed to "Put on his running shoes, Mate." He needed to do the Joseph thing and escape the scene. This sin begins in the mind and ends in the body with destruction. Because this is such an everyday, perennial problem for God's men, we need to learn how to stop it in the mind. There are women in the world—that's pretty clear. There are some beautiful women in the world—that's obvious. But God never intended for His servants to have all those women.

Therefore, we must never stop to look and think "I wonder if I could . . . ?" The question, "If I could," is a major symptom of the sin that makes us think more highly of ourselves than we should. In other words, that kind of thinking exhibits our pride. Call it what it is. That is essentially the problem that drives men to become addicted to pornography. It is like a Solmonic complex in which the viewer imagines that in some way he owns the woman whose picture he is viewing.

That is what David was struggling with. When we were introduced to David when Samuel anointed him to be king we learned, *He was dark and handsome, with beautiful eyes (1 Samuel 16:12 NLT).* In Bathsheba he had met his match. And since David was in the habit of adding other beautiful women to his harem, he had no defense against doing the same with Bathsheba.

As a result, we read with sadness that God's servant stepped over God's boundary (vv.3-5). David took Uriah's wife. *And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house.(vv.3-4).*

The king used his authority to send a messenger to find out who the woman was who lived at house number such-and-such on such-and-such a street. Notice that the servant did not simply identify the

beautiful woman as Bathsheba. Wisely, in an effort to dissuade David from what he was about to do, the servant identified the beautiful woman as Eliam's daughter. That might imply, "Surely you don't want to violate a man's daughter! How would you feel if she was your daughter?" As Eliam's daughter her father was one of David's 37 mighty men (best warriors) (2 Samuel 23:34).

This also meant that Bathsheba was the granddaughter of Ahithophel. He was one of David's most trusted advisors (2 Samuel 23:34). His advice was like the word of the LORD. We will call this to mind when we see in a few weeks that Ahithophel sided with Absalom in his rebellion against David.

The servant also, and most importantly, identified Bathsheba as Uriah's wife. That information should have ended David's pursuit immediately. She belonged to someone else. Uriah the Hittite is listed as the last of David's 37 mighty men (2 Samuel 23:39). Maybe he was listed last to call attention to David's sin.

In spite of the important information that the servant had shared with David, he *took her*. The king, rejecting all common sense and all attempts to turn him aside, sent his messenger with authority and *took* the beautiful woman. Just like he took six other wives as well as concubines (1 Chron. 3:1-9). So what difference was one more since he had the authority to do it? This one already belonged to someone. David took her, satisfied his lust with her, and sent her on her way.

The parenthetical information is very important. We read, (*Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness (v.4b)*). Bathsheba had been observing the common practice of purification that lasted seven days after her monthly cycle. The statement simply points out in explicit and everyday terms that Bathsheba was at that point in her cycle when it was most likely for her to get pregnant. It must strike us that this whole event from beginning to end is outside the realm of normal human relationships. In so many ways this scenario gives evidence of the supernatural.

It seems obvious that Satan sifted David like Jesus warned Peter Satan wanted to sift him (Luke 22:31). Satan did a splendid job of blinding David to reality and of making him dull to God's work in his life. This kind of thing is still not only possible, but actually happens. Wise servants of the Lord heed His warnings. Peter warned, *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around*

like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). Paul warned us to, *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil (Ephesians 6:11)*.

David was not sober-minded, he did not have on the spiritual armor, and he sure didn't plan on the consequences. *And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant" (v.5)*. Maybe it was few days or a few weeks later that David received news that Bathsheba was pregnant. The possibility of pregnancy was a good deterrent to lustful activity for past generations. In our generation with many methods for preventing pregnancy and the cultural acceptance of abortion to end a pregnancy, sinful humanity has attempted to remove all consequences of immorality. But in God's world, a few moments of pleasure can result in a lifetime of regret. The simple statement, "I am pregnant," has changed the entire course of many lives.

Attempt to Cover the "Thing" (vv.6-13).

In light of the wonderfully tragic news, God's servant hatched a plan (vv.6-8). David exercised his authority fraudulently. *So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab was doing and how the people were doing and how the war was going (vv.6-7)*. David needed to be resourceful, and being a wise warrior that was no problem for him. He would bring Uriah home, give him opportunity to spend a night with his wife, and when it became obvious to everyone that Bathsheba was pregnant, everyone would naturally assume it was Uriah's baby. So Uriah made the 40 mile journey from Rabbah which is modern Amman, Jordan to discover why the king sent for him.

When he arrived, David offered a benefit fraudulently. *Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." And Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king (v.8)*. Everyone knew that David was kind and generous. This was the king who in the past had given out gifts to the people around Ziklag from the spoil taken from the Amalikites. He had given gifts to the people when he and they rejoiced when they brought the ark to Jerusalem. He had recently lavished great benefit

on Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, and Ziba, Saul's servant. We would expect him to do something nice for Uriah, right?

David did his best to create a diversion. But the victim of God's servant didn't take the bait (vv.9-13). Plan "A" failed (vv.9-11). Instead of going home to his wife, as the king invited him to do, Uriah acted like a faithful servant. *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. When they told David, "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?"* (vv.9-10). David had invited Uriah to go home and sleep with his wife like he had (same word). Uriah disobeyed and instead slept where the king's servants slept. That certainly threw a wrench into the works. Now David was concerned because his plan wasn't working.

It is evident that Uriah was loyal, but is it possible that he suspected the truth? *Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths, 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? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing"* (v.11). Uriah's response to David's question is evidence of intense loyalty. We might speculate that Uriah suspected something because of the king's odd invitation. Nevertheless, Uriah affirmed that he was loyal to God's presence (the ark). He was loyal to his fellow soldiers who were on the field of battle (dwelling in booths). He was loyal to his "lord" the king.

David would have to concoct another plan. He did, and plan "B" failed also (vv.12-13). It wasn't because God's servant didn't try. *Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back."* So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next (v.12). Uriah obeyed his king to a point and remained in Jerusalem. But he refused to be with his wife. Maybe this too was by divine appointment.

As a result, God's servant fell deeper into sin. *And David invited him, and he ate in his presence and drank, so that he made him drunk. And in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house* (v.13). David had acted like Samson and fulfilled his lust. He will act like Saul and send orders to kill his faithful servant. Here he acted like the wicked

people in Israel just before God sent the enemy to destroy their homes and cities and take them into exile. In that setting, God's messengers condemned this kind of life saying, *"Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink – you pour out your wrath and make them drunk!"* (Habakkuk 2:15a).

The Tragic End of the "Thing" (vv.14-27).

God's servant resorted to murder (vv.14-17). His plan was a wicked scheme. *In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die"* (vv.14-15). Now it became obvious to Joab that for whatever reason David wanted Uriah dead. Why would the king desire to kill one of his best soldiers? So often sin leads to worse sin.

David put the plan in motion, and it appeared that his plan succeeded. *And as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men. And the men of the city came out and fought with Joab, and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite also died* (vv.16-17). What was the chance that Uriah would not retreat with the other soldiers when they fell back? Nevertheless, he died and David was now also guilty of murder.

Would David wash his hands of the whole matter and get back to being king? All is not well even if it appears it ended well (vv.18-27). Joab reported back that the plan succeeded (vv.18-21). For the general to send back a report about the battle would be expected. *Then Joab sent and told David all the news about the fighting. And he instructed the messenger, "When you have finished telling all the news about the fighting to the king, then, if the king's anger rises, and if he says to you, 'Why did you go so near the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? Who killed Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman cast an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?'"* (vv.18-21).

David had *sent* a messenger to get Bathsheba. David *sent* a messenger to get Uriah. Joab *sent* Uriah to the king. David *sent* Uriah

to his wife but he didn't go. David *sent* Uriah back to the battle with his death sentence in his hand. Joab *sent* news about Uriah's death to David. Finally, God will *send* his messenger Nathan to confront David. God always has the final word.

"Oh, and your servant is dead." Joab warned that if the king acted upset, *then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also''* (v.21b). There was really no need for Joab to prepare an argument for the way he conducted the battle since it was David's idea. All that mattered was that Uriah was dead. One soldier's death was not a big problem. Probably the messenger told the truth when he arrived. *So the messenger went and came and told David all that Joab had sent him to tell. The messenger said to David, "The men gained an advantage over us and came out against us in the field, but we drove them back to the entrance of the gate. Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall. Some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also"* (vv.22-24).

How did the king respond? David revealed a divided heart. He gave an insincere answer. *David said to the messenger, "Thus shall you say to Joab, 'Do not let this matter trouble you, for the sword devours now one and now another. Strengthen your attack against the city and overthrow it.' And encourage him"* (v.25). Indeed, David would learn in the most painful way in his own family that *the sword devours now one and now another*. And life goes on. Yes, but God who sees and knows all has the final word in these matters.

When it looked like the smoke had cleared, David took Bathsheba as his wife. *When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband. And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son* (vv.26-27). Yes, it was good for David to take responsibility to care for the woman whose husband he had murdered. It was good for him to be responsible for the child he conceived in her. But this was all a ruse.

But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD (v.27b). To conclude that David's actions displeased the LORD is a huge understatement. God's law reveals how God felt about these things. David demolished commandments numbers 6, 7, and 10 of the Big Ten. #10 *"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant,*

or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's" (Exodus 20:17). #7 *"You shall not commit adultery"* (Exodus 20:14). #6 *"You shall not murder"* (Exodus 20:13). How displeased was the LORD about David's breaches of His law? God's rule was, *"But if a man willfully attacks another to kill him by cunning, you shall take him from my altar, that he may die"* (Exodus 21:14). God said, *"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image"* (Genesis 9:6). He said, *"If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the evidence of witnesses. But no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness"* (Numbers 35:30). God said, *"If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death"* (Leviticus 20:10). According to God's law, David should have been executed on multiple charges and Bathsheba should have been executed along with him.

This whole story leaves us in an emotional/spiritual quagmire. Maybe it feels like a knot in the pit of our stomach. How can David be the man after God's own heart and do such things? We especially wonder this when we remember "being the man after God's heart" meant that God chose David to reveal the character of His heart. And as we read the next part of the story and learn how the displeased LORD responded, we become even more amazed. This part of David's life reminds us that human servants of the Lord are always subject to human frailty and failure. But we are also reminded that though we, like David, can be unfaithful to God, God is never unfaithful to His word and promises. While we might experience disappointment and regret toward God's servants, we must always rejoice that God is true and faithful.