

Sin Has Consequences

The Life of David

By Chris Hand



Bible Text: 2 Samuel 15:1-37; Galatians 6:1-10
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Tonight's sermon, as we turn again in our evening series that I've been conducting here over the last few months in the life of David, and the title for our consideration tonight is this, "Sin Has Consequences." Sin had consequences. Well, we've been following the rather sad spectacle of David, this great man of faith behaving appallingly, the matter of Bathsheba and then the murder of Uriah the Hittite, and we have seen David at his worst. We saw him at his best, showed mercy towards Mephibosheth, we were struck there by how Christ-like he was in his behavior toward this man who had nothing, couldn't repay David with anything, and yet David showed abundant mercy to him. But then that same man capable of such acts of mercy was then acting in the most abominable way, carnal, filled with lust and lies, adultery, murder. Oh, what a sad, sad episode it was.

So we come tonight to the consequences for we're having actually to kind of compress here, we could look at each chapter, if you will, and follow the narrative, but this series would be going on a fair bit longer than, in a sense, I would ideally have planned. So we're compressing some details here and, in a sense, assuming some knowledge of some of the characters and the people and the events. We've come there, haven't we, to meet Absalom right in the middle of the narrative that we began at 2 Samuel 15, he who is one of the sons of David and yet is, as we see here, a man full of himself, of treason. Well, David had been warned by Nathan the prophet that as a result of his own sin and trying to hide his sin, that great grief would fall upon his family. He wouldn't die for his sin, God could have struck him dead there, there was no sacrifice to offer for the kinds of things that he had done. Nothing available. And David's repentant humbled heart, well, that showed actually something good about David, a real child of God despite what we had seen.

And yet for all the facts God forgave, there would be consequences. David would not escape and these consequences would work themselves out for the rest of his life really and he'd be remembering those consequences, the pain, the sadness, the losses for the rest of his life. And in many ways, his kingdom and much that we read about it, there were other good things that we'll be considering but in so many other ways this is a state of decline. Things are never the same again after David's great fall. Troubles follow from bad moral choices.

Sin has consequences. Sin leads to confusion and unhappiness to sorrow both for the person committing it and to those who are affected by it because there is no private sin in that way. God reads all our hearts but what we're doing will have an impact somewhere and some of the things we do in private will make us the kind of people that aren't going to be good for other people to be around. We note a few just minor issues, in a way, although they have their place of importance in the whole narrative and in the way that David's kingdom now is structured but because of his sin, there are various consequences so I'll just mention them in passing.

For instance, David has now given to Joab, his relative there, nephew indeed, a man who has shown himself to be very impetuous, quite violent, quite cruel, very unspiritual, but because David has brought Joab into the deceit that led to the murder of Uriah, Joab now has a hold on David. He now has got leverage, and thought Joab doesn't blackmail David and say, "Well, I could tell the people perhaps a fair bit more than is in the public domain," even though Nathan the prophet blew open the whole case and left David there exposed yet some of the finer detail was perhaps still concealed in God's mercy in that way. But Joab could tell a few stories and he could say, "Ah, well, I know what he did. It was appalling." So he has something of a hold on David.

So Absalom, well, if we'd read a few more chapters we'd find, yes, he does actually die, he dies at the hand of Joab and that's despite the fact that David said, "Please don't kill Absalom." The battle that follows on from Absalom's treason, but Joab now is doing things with complete impunity. He doesn't have to feel that he's obligated to David, his respect for David has diminished and he is now following his own mind, his own law.

But later on when this particular episode is past, Joab then actually doesn't go with God's appointed choice of successor for David, that is Solomon, instead Joab sides with another of David's children who sort of has declared himself king, Adonijah. So Joab is now more and more out of touch with David. He's gone rogue and this is really a bit of a grief and a problem that David, in a way, hadn't addressed in the past, he hadn't set boundaries in the past, Joab had gotten away with things and now because of what he knows about David, then David has got difficulty. He won't be able to control Joab. He's now out of control. That happens when you gift people things, when we are diminished before them morally, they get a hold on us and they can manipulate us then and we can end up in a position of weakness because of a previous weakness. That's when perhaps we have to repent and try and put that thing right and get that sort of person then off our back.

Beside that, the affections of the people. David is now damaged goods. As a result of this dreadful fall, the people now look at him maybe a little differently and certainly enough of them to make Absalom's rebellion really gain momentum. But here when you read what he's like, how could they fall for him? He is such an arrogant, self-centered man, flattering. It is so obvious, isn't it, except it wasn't obvious. The people loved him and they were able then to get off the ground this rebellion.

So David was damaged goods and Absalom could stand out much better, he's promising everybody justice, he'll sort their case out for them, he'll do it quickly, this sort of great

queue of people there trying to get David's attention or bring their case to him. So Absalom is promising there like a politician, if you will, "Oh, if I'm in power." So is the way of the leader of the opposition can always sort of look pretty good, "Oh, if I was in power there wouldn't be this trouble, you know." And so Absalom is playing to that kind of gallery.

But David being diminished in the eyes of many, they don't quite look at him now as strong as before, and they might look at his piety as hypocrisy. It's dreadful, isn't it, when because of our sin in the eyes of other people, they look upon our true religious observances, our love for God, and just dismiss it, "That's just hypocrisy. It doesn't amount to anything. Look what kind of people they are." And that can be a very very sad situation there.

So all of that is something of a byproduct of David's sin. He's left himself much much weaker. Oh, don't we notice this, that as the nature of David's transgressions, so that is how God is going to pay out the same currency back to him. So my first heading: it is a moral universe. It is a moral universe. That is there in Galatians 6 as well as we see it being played out here in this chapter and other chapters that are part of that judgment that is upon David because of his sin. Galatians 6 says, "Do not be deceived," in verse 7, "God is not mocked." God is not mocked. David mocked God. He thought that he could get away with his sin. He thought he could be above the law, that he could kind of switch off from being a man of God and that somehow God wouldn't see, and that's where David got a shock when Nathan came. What does it say? "For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life."

What happens? You sow to the flesh and you will of the flesh reap corruption. The come-back, the fall-out will not be good. It will leave you damaged. Your conscience being corrupted and rotted within, it will leave you perhaps prone to all manner of inner disturbance and unhappiness and grief and anguish, sickness perhaps on occasion because you have been sowing to the flesh and therefore reaping corruption, what is coming back, what is happening. And in the way that God here deals with David and I fancy people in the world still to this day, then it mirrors so much of the nature of the sin that God is judging, that if here is David, there has been adultery, there has been deceit, there has been murder, well, that is how God will here judge David's household. Those things will now crop up. Those things will come back and will strike David, will bring his family low and they will be the same things that he, himself, has committed. The moral universe and there is no such thing as consequence-free adultery, consequence-free deceit, consequence-free hatred or murder, these things will be judged. God will not be mocked. What is sown, that will be reaped.

So here now is David forgiven but as these judgments unfold and they run over several chapters just how these things come to pass, he has much to reflect upon. And I imagine within there is further repentance and more has to be confessed, more has to be acknowledged, more tears, more weeping, more acknowledgment of those things that were in his heart, taking courage, of course, from the mercy of God, and we'll see more of

that in a moment. But while he had had favor restored to him but now that favor will not mean a trouble-free crown, it's going to mean that now God's favor will be in the grace that he gives to David to be able to manage the consequences of his sin.

Well, we see here in this moral universe that God has created that David had committed polygamy. He had several wives, and we read there in the passage, 10 concubines beside whom he leaves back in Jerusalem, and what unhappiness that aspect of immorality that in that time the men, even good men, and there's David, a man after God's own heart, and yet in this aspect of his behavior not to be commended, and it led to the difficulties it led to of children, half-brothers, half-sisters, and the fall-out among them and troubles about the succession. And he showed very little clarity of leadership as a father. There were deficiencies and perhaps just borne out of his polygamy, that he didn't have moral authority, he didn't have the necessary headship amongst those children because of the jealousies, the squabbling, and perhaps them looking at David and seeing really what amounted there to his immorality, that he had lost some respect in their eyes, that they were off the leash, they, themselves, felt at liberty to express their own sexual immorality.

That, of course, is what happens here in the way in which in the beginning of this judgment and how God is paying back in same currency that David paid out in his own sin, that one of David's sons Amnon rapes his half-sister Tamar, and that rape, that sexual immorality, the horror and the ugliness of that, and how the young woman in that comes out actually with great honor, but not Amnon. He comes out there as a very, very horrible, ugly young man in his moral nature. And as a result of that, well, Absalom, who is brother, full brother to Tamar, then takes vengeance upon Amnon and does it in such a way that he deceives David, his father, and fools David into allowing Amnon to go to some sheep shearing that Absalom is saying he's inviting him to, but it really is just a cover for their murdering Amnon to avenge the loss of honor, the horrible rape of his sister, Tamar.

And there is David who deceived Uriah with a letter to take back to the front line, which had within it the very instructions from David to Joab, the commander of the army, to have Uriah positioned in the heat of the battle and then to be left and withdraw back so that he will die. That Uriah carried that letter in good faith and here is David now sort of in good faith but allowing his son Amnon to go to his death. Everyone sees there is some poetic justice, of course, death itself when he allowed Uriah to die and he's just actually unwittingly signed the death warrant for his own son with this. He's been deceived just as he deceived Uriah, and he has now suffered loss just as Uriah lost his life and those who loved him would have mourned his passing away. David then has wrecked a family in what he did to Uriah and Bathsheba, and now it is his own family that is being wrecked, putting in those kinds of terms.

So we just remind ourselves here of a warning and it's as simple as this: do not sin. Do not. Do not do it. Do not countenance it. Do not think, "I suppose I could do this." Or, "I guess if I did this there would be no consequences, would there?" There will be. There will be consequences. And even if, as David might have thought in some measure that he

had "got away with it," but yet as we saw before his conscience was troubled. He was not a happy man and his joy was sapped away and his sense of closeness to God, well, obviously it had gone because he had offended God grievously and God had withdrawn blessing from David. David was on his own just going through this agony of his conscience, the roaring within, and that will be what you or I would find for our sin. It wouldn't make us happy. Dear friend, it wouldn't, and if it did, well, that speaks very ill of our conscience, that tells us we've hardened it and that's a dreadful state beyond to get into.

No, sin always has consequences and, dear friends, do not even think to do it. Don't offend against God. David had everything and the Lord said, "As of all that you had, I would have given you even more and yet you despised the gifts of all that I'd done for you and your family and did this evil thing." Friends, don't offend against God, all the more really now we're this side of Calvary, aren't we, this side of the cross. David still beheld these things, he was a prophet and he could see the day of Christ's coming but it wasn't there yet. Now it has come, oh, this was more than any even the prophets there who were inquiring about these things to have seen what finally was seen and to be able to regard what the Savior did on the cross. And that's our possession, that's our possession, that's how sin is to be judged. It's a terrible thing. It required the death of the Son of God.

So as Christians to think, "Well, perhaps we can get away with this," well, we shouldn't even begin to think of it. Look what sin does, it requires the death of the Son of God and he went through all that pain and all that agony so that our sins could be atoned for. Can we then sin happily? Can we then set aside the law of God to somehow suit our own purposes? No, our conscience will be in turmoil. If we are true believers it will be in turmoil. We will be like David, we'll be in turmoil, anguish, sleeplessness. Dear friends, do not even think to do it. It will bring havoc into your own soul, it will bring havoc into the lives of others too. Sin affects other people, it causes them grief, causes them unhappiness.

So David's polygamy, well, that was the kind of sinful attitude that was the ongoing problem and that erupted there in his lust for Bathsheba and, friends, whatever may be some of our deep sinful attitudes, pride, covetousness, lust, fear, grievances, unbelief, then we have to be on the case all the time morning, noon and night, not suffering those things just to carry on, not tolerating them but looking on them as great enemies that we are pitted against and it's a battle to the death with our sin. And we look to God to give us the strength to win those battles daily for there is no benefit, none at all, in sin. Even if it might promise some benefit, even the passing pleasures of sin are temporary and leave a bad bad taste in the end.

It's a moral universe. Do not sin. Repent. Ask God for help to resist temptation. Second heading: God is merciful. God is merciful. Here is David and what a sadness it is to recount these things. We could have read various chapters besides in 2 Samuel that recount the way in which all the narrative is just detailing losses, the sadnesses that come. Here is David having to move out of the city quick, having to leave behind the throne.

Absalom, well, he realizes that that young man would put him to death, would kill his own father, that he now knows what's in his heart and they've got to be going, they've got to leave now. It is all so so sad and yet there is mercy for David, even for him who is suffering the judgments of God in that.

Friends, we may be living still with the effects of bad choices, bad decisions in the past, we may be still having to work through events that led to difficulty and splits from people, whatever it might be there, but God is merciful and he's with David. He's with each of us too in some of those sad things that we carry from the past and grieve our hearts and cause us anguish perhaps to this day, and yet God gives grace, gives help, gives hope actually to people in these very situations. And David as he so often, it's life events and the Psalms arise out of those life events, and something of what he was feeling at the time perhaps of his flight from Jerusalem, having to go into the wilderness, out and away and they're now fugitives and there's Absalom there who has got Ahitophel, this counselor who is so cunning and so wise, but David has Hushai and he's sent him there and Zadok and Abiathar, the priests there, they're staying in Jerusalem, there's hope there, we'll come to them in a moment.

But David perhaps taking Psalm 41 and 4 to 9 are a reflection of these times. "I said, 'LORD, be merciful to me; Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You.' 5 enemies speak evil of me: 'When will he die, and his name perish?' And if he comes to see me, he speaks lies; His heart gathers iniquity to itself; When he goes out, he tells it. All who hate me whisper together against me; Against me they devise my hurt. 'An evil disease,' they say, 'clings to him. And now that he lies down, he will rise up no more.' Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me." Has David realized once trusted counselors like Ahitophel but now they're against him, those enemies that were there and they've gathered iniquity and they're looking for David to die. His prayer is, "Lord, be merciful to me. Heal my soul for I have sinned against You." Going back, still remembering those things and acknowledging, saying, "Well, it was nothing, all forgotten," well, no, it's still there. It was done but there is still mercy.

Whatever we've done, whatever as Christians we've done, dear friends, there is a God of mercy. There is a God of mercy and here is David at what must be one of the lowest points in his whole life in his spiritual walk certainly as king and he is crying out to God in that anguish. Psalm 69 and 5 to 12, "O God, You know my foolishness; And my sins are not hidden from You. Let not those who wait for You, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed because of me; Let not those who seek You be confounded because of me, O God of Israel. Because for Your sake I have borne reproach; Shame has covered my face. I have become a stranger to my brothers, And an alien to my mother's children; Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me. When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, That became my reproach. I also made sackcloth my garment; I became a byword to them. Those who sit in the gate speak against me, And I am the song of the drunkards."

Well, there's something there, isn't there, of Christ's experience that's going to follow because our Lord himself committed any foolishness but some of the reproaches and all

that David is now feeling were his to feel in the future. We feel David's shame at how he has undermined his credibility in the eyes of others, "That people who waited on God may be ashamed because of me," and all that may be spoken of David and his hypocrisy, "Let not those who seek You be confounded because of me, O God of Israel." And he cries out in that experience to his God and knowing God, "God, You know my foolishness and my sins are not hidden from You." Sure, that is the fact. God saw him, sent Nathan to him. But that same God who sees and knows all is the God who sees and knows all now for David in this time where God's judgment is bearing down upon him very very heavily. And yet there's mercy to be sought, God of kindness who is there to meet him.

Well, we could have looked at some of those enemies who emerge at this time. Shimei, a man who is cursing him, calling him a bloodthirsty man. A man who comes from the tribe of Saul, Benjamin, the tribe of Benjamin. Saul, the former king, what was he here as a bit of a Saul loyalist and feeling David took the crown wrongly and there was murder and intrigue around it, "And now David, you're getting your comeuppance." Well, those are the words of Shimei, painful they were to hear, that David as now in this state of humiliation fleeing for his life, his crown, as it were, in ruins, his throne gone from before him.

And others too because that's what happens, isn't it? When you're down, people sense a moment to exploit you. And Mephibosheth, you recall back to him, and Ziba, servant who was to look after and be the steward over his estate, appears now to David with two donkeys and a saddle with good food for David and for his men. And Ziba, well, we think here tells a lie and says when David asks, "Well, where is your master?" That's Mephibosheth, and Ziba says, "Oh, he stayed behind in Jerusalem because he thinks at last the throne is coming back to Benjamin and this is now my moment to become perhaps king in place of David." Absolute lie. Mephibosheth was absolutely loyal to David and Ziba sees the moment here to catch David offguard and he gets a ruling from David, the wrong thing to do making a snap judgment like this, but David does in favor of Ziba, and only later does he realize just how hasty he had been.

But here it is, when we are in difficulty, enemies appear, people are there exploiting the moment trying to catch us when we're down, trying to catch us when we are a bit offguard. But if that is so, then something more important is also so, this is the time when friends emerge. This is the time when friends emerge and that is the mercy of God as well. That is the mercy of God. He sends people or people that are there, displays some incredible loyalty or some faithfulness that is astounding and uncalled for, and if really when the sort of bare facts of the situation, they might well have wished to be anywhere else but with here David in his state of humiliation, possibly facing death at the hands of his son Absalom.

We read of that man, Ittai, who comes from the company of Philistines and the enemies of Israel in the usual way but he isn't and he's come to appreciate that God is with David, God is with the people of Israel. And he is there with other company of men, he's in charge of them. David seeing him ready to cross over the brook Kidron and go out into

the wilderness fleeing from Absalom, gives him the choice to stay behind. "You have only come yesterday," he says, "you're really, you're new here, nobody would expect you to have to be loyal to me in this." But Ittai will hear none of it. "Wherever you're going, David, I'm going whether in life or in death. We are inseparable." David then concedes and invites Ittai to stay with him, to go ahead he and his men.

What loyalty here. What incredible demonstration by somebody. We think, don't we, of our Lord's words, how he would say that the Gentiles showed more interest, more thankfulness than the people that were of the household of the Jews. Astonishing. "Is there nobody except this foreigner to be found who will give me thanks?" The one of the 10 lepers that returned. Or the Centurion who had such faith that he didn't require the Lord Jesus to actually come into his house to heal his servant who was sick. Not found such faith, not even in the house of Israel.

Here it was that now Ittai shows more faith than the calling that David has, the anointed of God, that when given a chance here and nobody would think any the less of him if he stayed, he's only a newcomer here from a different race indeed, why would he be so loyal? Nobody would expect it of him and yet that's what he shows and David is mightily impressed with this show of affection and loyalty not only to David himself but what David stands for and that throne that God have given to him. This man could see the promises of God even in David's weakened state. Those promises were not suspended.

Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, come and they're going to bring the ark and David says, "No, go back. That is the place and hopefully one day, God pleases, I'll be restored to worship there in person. That belongs there. Keep that there and work for me there." And he knows these men, they're good men and they'll be loyal men, they'll be helpful, spiritual men. They will remain true to David and David can have confidence in them.

Or his friend, Hushai, who comes in torn clothes and dust on his head, so grieved at what is happening to David, and wanting to go with David, wanting to go into the wilderness but he is not in the kind of prime of life and David says, "My friend, you'll be a burden to me. I'll be having to sort of help you along and look out for you when we have to be fleet of foot. We need to be nimble here. We're having to hide and go in caves. No, stay and be of use to me in Jerusalem." And Hushai, it's a very dangerous undertaking, isn't it, and wonder at the morality of it all another day but he's willing to risk his neck, let's put it there, to see a very positive thing in that. He's willing to risk his neck and that must have encouraged David that he had such friends who now emerged and shown their support for him, their sympathy for him in this time even though God's brought this judgment upon David. He looked beyond that and they can see that still this man is the Lord's anointed. They want to show encouragement and support.

And there are others too and we could have read in another chapter further on, another older man called Barzillai who brings again practical help, food and supplies for David, and refreshes him. He's a deeply deeply spiritual man. David in his time of need, in his time of weakness, is strengthened by these people, by friends, and these are friends, aren't they, there born for times of adversity.

So God sends people, sends encouragement, sends unexpected encouragement, people at distance who may get in touch and tell us, "We've been praying for you." Or people who just feel that they want to give you a word of encouragement, don't know anything about what's going on behind the scenes or what grieves and troubles each of us may be having to bear, but yet the Lord in his mercy often will send friends. Of course, the Lord in his mercy restores the throne to David and we could have read of the battle and how Absalom dies in that battle and how then David is able to go back to Jerusalem, go back to the palace, go back to worship and the ark being there. The throne is restored though we suggest for David personally never the same again. He's going to suffer other rebellions. He's going to have further difficulties there in terms of his family. But the Lord is actually showing mercy not just to David in restoring him to the throne, but to us all. We're all of us part of something bigger than we'll ever know and though we may make dreadful mistakes and have judgments that we are living with and troubles that we never quite shake off perhaps until our dying day, and yet in the midst of it, here David, of course, plays a very significant role because the Lord has promised that, "From your family, David, there's going to come a greater King." One day the Lord Jesus Christ. "And your throne, therefore, is going to be preserved. There is going to be punishment for those who disobey but that throne will be preserved and this covenant, this promise I make will surely be fulfilled." Probably not there, we're not carrying the promise of the Messiah but needing to be maintained to see that fulfilled.

But even for us, God may be preserving us and keeping us because there's still something yet to be done, an influence to be had in our children or grandchildren, some word that we're yet to say maybe, some moment that will arise when we will have an influence, leave a legacy that will live on. Or perhaps have a significance that you couldn't have dreamt of, nor could I, and God is being merciful to us sometimes at our older age and sometimes when, as I mentioned here as with David, when we're bearing something of the consequence of sin. But nevertheless, God in his mercy is looking beyond us to other generations, to other people, and he might be using us in the here and the now in some small way. We may not even realize the significance of it at the time but which is going to have an influence and an effect for future generations.

Here is David and the Lord is looking beyond David, looking beyond David's sin, looking beyond the judgment that God has brought upon his servant because he's still focused, putting it like that, on the day when from David's line will be born in the city of David in Bethlehem that Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. That's not going to be derailed. That's not going to be stopped. That's not going to be hindered because of David's sin. No, indeed, the sins of his children and grandchildren following him. No, God will have mercy on us actually, to be faithful to his promise to us that we would have a Savior, that there would be one champion to come from heaven, one who would have our interests close to his heart, would suffer everything, all things, all the ignorant speech of men, their wickedness, cruelty, violence, and would suffer beyond this, the wrath of God for our sakes.

God was going to have mercy on us and his mercy to David was tied up with that mercy that he would have upon us, of course, not only us but all of those that our Savior came to die for. Always a big picture, isn't there, with God? Always something more, something beyond, and we are here and we seek his will and try to obey him, fail, he helps us, he gives us grace and we find mercy coping with the consequences of sin, whatever it might be. But beyond it who knows what plans the Lord has, plans he has for us, more cause that we are, how we might influence a future generation. One day this building may be full, who knows? But it's for us, isn't it, to be faithful and to trust in that mercy and to believe that he can have for this cause here a long-term future, great prospect that he in his good time will fulfill.

Well, we'll close there and, God willing, two weeks' time it will be, return to David's life and see some final lessons that we can learn before we turn to another subject.

SIN HAS CONSEQUENCES

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: 2 Samuel 15.

These passages in the Bible are a gripping narrative. There are so many details and so many lessons to be learnt but we are confining ourselves to some of the bigger aspects. So many things stem from bad moral choices. Sin always has consequences, and those consequences can last for our whole life.

Just a few matters to note before we come to the main theme, but Joab now has great influence and power over David. As a result of his being made privy to David's desire to murder Uriah, David is now in a weak position before his nephew. Likewise, David's efforts to follow the Lord will now be unconvincing to a number of people. They will say that he is a hypocrite and that he is no longer to be taken seriously. But the judgment of God against David's sin, as spoken by the prophet Nathan, find their exact fulfillment in the rest of David's life. He will experience in his own family sexual immorality, murder, and betrayal.

1. It is a moral universe.

We live in a moral universe. The Lord has created it so. We are not able to sin consequence-free. There will be unhappy outcomes for us that will eventually catch up with us. We cannot deceive or harm people and expect there to be no divine chastisement. God is not mocked. What we sow is what we will reap.

As in David's experience, the Lord will sometimes pay us back in exactly the same currency as we have paid out others. David is assured of the Lord's forgiveness so that he will not die spiritually but we he will have to suffer consequences. By repentance we are able to be restored to the Lord's favour but that does not mean that there are no negative outcomes. But the Lord will be there to give us grace to deal with those outcomes of our sin.

We must observe here, in the context of Old Testament practice, the evils of polygamy. David, in common with many of the godly men in the Old Testament, was still out-of-control in the way he went about satisfying his sexual desires. This wretched and besetting sin was reproduced in his son, Amnon, when he raped his half-sister, Tamar.

When this sin is running rampant in the soul, then there is often alongside it the practice of deceit. David tries to his adultery as he tries to encourage Uriah, when home from

military duty, to go and sleep with his wife, so that the child Bathsheba is expecting, can then be plausibly explained away as belonging to Uriah, the actual husband. David also shamefully deceives Uriah in to taking a letter to Joab which is actually David's instruction to Joab to have Uriah killed in battle. Later David is going to suffer from a deception carried out on himself when Absalom persuades him to allow Amnon to come to a feast where Absalom is planning to kill him.

And, likewise, as David conspired to have Uriah murdered, David will suffer the same outcome when Absalom will not only kill Amnon, but will then go on to try to murder his father, David, as well. David's own sins are thus played out in his own family and bring great grief to his soul.

It is a warning to us. Sin cannot be committed consequence-free. God is a moral God and it is a moral universe that we inhabit. God will bring judgment upon us and use whatever means He sees fit. So we are well advised not to sin. It brings great havoc to our own consciences and disables us from being able to act with clarity. It brings havoc into the lives of others. We do well to deal strongly with ourselves and our sinful attitudes. David's polygamy, and the lust that drove it, created huge troubles for him. Pride, unbelief, covetousness, and idolatry unchecked will do the same to us. There is only one correct course of action – repent.

2. God is merciful.

Yet, despite the enormity of David's crimes, the Lord is still with him. God does not abandon him and out of this period of David's life arise some of the Psalms that he wrote. The injury done to him by enemies when he was laid low comes out in Psalm 41:4-9 and Psalm 69:5-12. Examples of enemies would include Shimei, who curses him, and Ziba, who deceives him.

The mercy of God, however, is clearly seen in the fact that the Lord also brings friends to the fore whose help and support are so valuable to David in his time of need. We learn of Ittai, who is not a native-born Israelite, but who is more loyal than many of those who were native to the country. There are the priests, Abiathar and Zadok, who are true to the service of God and do not join the conspiracy against the Lord's anointed. We meet Hushai who risks his life in the service of the king by going and offering his services to Absalom so that he could advise him in such a way as would lead to his defeat. There is also Barzillai, who brings refreshment to David and his men and whose friendship is so appreciated. We learn from this that the Lord is able to bring forward friends who will be a help to us in adversity, even if that adversity is occasioned by our sin.

It is also the mercy of the Lord to David that his throne is restored to him and that Absalom's rebellion is not successful. In this regard the Lord was showing mercy to us all, looking beyond David to our need of a Saviour who should arise from David's line. The Lord was faithful to His promise to David, despite David's personal failure and

unfaithfulness to the Lord. Even in our sin, God is working to ensure that there will be good that can be brought forth from it, even though we as individuals will have to bear the consequences of that sin personally.