

2 Samuel 11
October 8, 2023

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: What causes Christians to fall into sin? [Let people engage]

Transition: Sin is real, and it's something we face countless times every day. If you are a Christian, then you have experienced the salvation that comes with faith in Jesus, but the struggle with sin will remain a part of your life until you die or Jesus returns. What sets the sin of the Christ follower apart from the sin of the non-Christian is the hope of victory that is ours in Christ. From today's discussion, we will see (3) TRUTHS that help us understand how Christians fall into sin: 1. ***Distance from God*** 2. ***Giving into temptations*** 3. ***And scheming to protect our righteousness and cover our shame.*** Even though David is considered one of the heroes of our faith, his life gives us a picture of how Christians fall. Let's begin.

BOOK:

David and Bathsheba

11 In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.

² One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, ³ and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" ⁴ Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (She had purified herself from her uncleanness.) Then (when she was purified of uncleanness) she went back home. ⁵ The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

⁶ So David sent this word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent him to David. ⁷ When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. ⁸ Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. ⁹ But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house.

¹⁰ When David was told, "Uriah did not go home," he asked him, "Haven't you just come from a distance? Why didn't you go home?"

¹¹ Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my master Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open fields. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and lie with my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!"

¹² Then David said to him, "Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. ¹³ At David's invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master's servants; he did not go home.

¹⁴ In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. ¹⁵ In it he wrote, “Put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die.”

¹⁶ So while Joab had the city under siege, he put Uriah at a place where he knew the strongest defenders were. ¹⁷ When the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of the men in David’s army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died.

¹⁸ Joab sent David a full account of the battle. ¹⁹ He instructed the messenger: “When you have finished giving the king this account of the battle, ²⁰ the king’s anger may flare up, and he may ask you, ‘Why did you get so close to the city to fight? Didn’t you know they would shoot arrows from the wall?’ ²¹ Who killed Abimelech son of Jerub-Besheth (Gideon)? Didn’t a woman throw an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you get so close to the wall?’ If he asks you this, then say to him, ‘Also, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.’”

²² The messenger set out, and when he arrived, he told David everything Joab had sent him to say. ²³ The messenger said to David, “The men overpowered us and came out against us in the open, but we drove them back to the entrance to the city gate. ²⁴ Then the archers shot arrows at your servants from the wall, and some of the king’s men died. Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.”

²⁵ David told the messenger, “Say this to Joab: ‘Don’t let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another. Press the attack against the city and destroy it.’ Say this to encourage Joab.”

²⁶ When Uriah’s wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. ²⁷ After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

God is always watching. God sees whatever we do. Christians, especially men, must learn to never let their eyes (or their mind) rest on alluring images. David’s failure to control his lusts led to adultery with Bathsheba. The solution to lust is not to fight but to flee. If we don’t flee, we will fall.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (2 Sam 11). Victor Books.

The Bible honestly records the sins of God's people, but never in such a way that sin is made acceptable. Unlike many so-called "true-to-life" books today, the Bible states the facts and draws out the lessons, but allows nothing for the imagination to dwell on. There are some things "it is a shame to speak of" (Eph. 5:12), and the events in this chapter must be studied with a Spirit-directed mind and heart, "considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1).

I. David and Bathsheba (11:1–4)

It was not a passionate youth who deliberately walked into this sin, but a man of God who had now reached middle age. It is easy to see how David got into this sin: (1) he was self-confident, after enjoying victories and prosperity; (2) he was disobedient, staying home when he should have been on the battlefield; (3) he was idle, lying in bed in the evening; (4) he was self-indulgent, giving freedom to his desires when he should have been disciplining himself; and (5) he was careless, allowing his eyes to wander and yielding to the "lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes" (1 John 2:16). The Christian soldier must never lay aside the armor (Eph. 6:10ff).

James 1:13–15 perfectly describes David's case: (1) his desires were activated by the sight, and he failed to curb them; (2) desire conceived the sin in his imagination; (3) his will surrendered and this led to sin; (4) his actions led to death. He did not "watch and pray" as Matt. 26:41 commands; nor did he deal decisively with his "wandering eye" (Matt. 5:29 and 18:9).

David could have defeated this temptation (for it is not a sin to be tempted) by recalling God's Word (Ex. 20:14), or by considering that Bathsheba was a man's daughter and a man's wife (v. 3). In fact, she was married to one of the bravest soldiers in David's army (23:39), and she was also the granddaughter of Ahithophel, who later rebelled against David and sided with Absalom (23:34 and chaps. 16–17). David had many wives already, and God would have given him more (12:8). It is too bad that the record of this godly man was marred forever by "the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (1 Kings 15:5). Of course, we must admit that the woman shared in the guilt, but David, being the king, surely is more to blame.

II. David and Uriah (11:5–27)

"When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin!" warns James 1:15 (NKJV). How true these words are in David's experience. Instead of calling on the Lord and confessing his sin, the king sent for the husband and tried to trick him into going home. This, of course, might have covered the sin. But Uriah was a better man than his king, and he refused to go home! Compare David's self-indulgence in vv. 1–2 with Uriah's discipline in v. 11. Then, his first plan having failed, David tried a new scheme and made the man drunk. But even under the influence of wine, Uriah was a more disciplined man than sober David!

Sin was still growing: David decided to have the man murdered and then to take his wife. Joab was more than willing to cooperate, since this would give him opportunity later to take advantage of the king. Uriah carried his own death warrant to the battlefield that day. The plan worked and the brave soldier was killed in battle. David "put on a front" and waited until the

week of mourning was over; then he married the widow. Some in the court may have thought highly of David for comforting Bathsheba in this way, but the Lord thought otherwise.

Merrill, E. H. (1985). 2 Samuel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 1, pp. 467-468) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

A. *David's adultery (chap. 11)*

11:1. Though the Arameans no longer came to their aid, **the Ammonites** stubbornly maintained their hostile posture toward Israel. In the context of David's ongoing problems with these inveterate foes occurred the turning point of his reign.

In the spring, after the latter rains were over and it was customary to resume military activity, **David** ordered **Joab** to launch an invasion of **Rabbah**, the capital of Ammon. Though **kings** usually led their armies personally, **David**, for reasons not related, **remained in Jerusalem**.

11:2–3. **One evening**, restless on **his bed ... David** arose, went to a rooftop **of the palace**, and from there happened to observe **Bathsheba ... the wife of** his neighbor **Uriah**. She was **bathing** out in the open. One may not fault **David** for perhaps seeking the cooler breezes of the late afternoon, but Bathsheba, knowing the proximity of her courtyard to the palace, probably harbored ulterior designs toward the king. Yet David's submission to her charms is inexcusable, for the deliberate steps he followed to bring her to the palace required more than enough time for him to resist the initial, impulsive temptation (cf. James 1:14–15).

11:4–5. Having discovered her identity, he **sent for her** at once and, assured of her ritual purity (cf. Lev. 12:2–5; 15:19–28), had intercourse with her. The bathing itself may have been for the purpose of ritual purification and would therefore not only advertise Bathsheba's charms but would serve as a notice to the king that she was available to him. In due time she found that she was **pregnant** by the king and, undoubtedly in great distress, informed him of her condition.

11:6–13. The crisis brought by the pregnancy required some kind of suitable resolution, so **David** determined to "legitimize" the impending birth by bringing **Uriah** back from the Ammonite campaign, thus making it possible for him to enjoy the intimacies of marriage. But the subterfuge did not work, for though **David** resorted to two schemes (vv. 8, 13) to induce **Uriah to go home** and be with his **wife**, the noble **Hittite** refused. (Though the Hittite Empire had ended by 1200 B.C., pockets of ethnic Hittites continued to exist in Syria and even Israel. **Uriah** was from one of these.) Why should he, he argued, be allowed the comforts of home and a conjugal visit while his friends in combat were deprived of them? Even after **David** plied him with wine, Uriah's sense of loyalty to his comrades prevailed over his desire for his wife.

11:14–21. In utter frustration **David wrote** a memo **to Joab** commanding that **Uriah**, when he returned to **the front line**, be abandoned to the enemy by an unexpected Israelite withdrawal. Ironically **Uriah** was the bearer of his own tidings of doom. This plan succeeded; **Uriah** was surrounded and slain. Ordinarily **David** would have been upset by the news of casualties. He would have wondered at Israel's indiscretion in fighting under Rabbah's **wall**, a blunder which had cost **Abimelech, son of** Gideon, his life long ago (Jud. 9:50–54). So **Joab** instructed the courier who bore the news to inform the king specifically that **Uriah** also had died. This he knew would mollify David's anguish.

11:22–27. David's response to the news was predictable. He **told the messenger** to tell **Joab** that in circumstances such as war, life and death were matters of blind chance. His instruction

back to **Joab** was only that the siege of Rabbah be even more aggressive. Bathsheba soon learned of her husband's tragic death. **After the customary time of mourning**, she moved into the king's palace in time to bear their **son**. **The LORD** was **displeased**, however, and set events in motion that would trouble **David** till his death.

Mathews, K. A. (1998). *The Historical Books. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (pp. 125-127). Broadman & Holman Publishers.*

The sin of David and Bathsheba changes the tenor of the story from David's triumphs to his troubles. The following events tell the consequences of their sin as David's kingdom was rocked by moral and political problems.

David's Sin (11:1–27). Israel's war with Ammon was the background for David's sin against God. The author implied that David should have been at war rather than remaining behind. Perhaps his earlier successes gave him a sense of false security. The author's description of David's temptation is reminiscent of Achan's sin (Josh. 7): he saw her, inquired about her, and then he took her.

When Bathsheba learned of her pregnancy, David attempted to cover up his sin. He sent for her husband, Uriah the Hittite, who was in the field of battle. Uriah refused to go home to his wife, even at David's insistence. Uriah did not want to enjoy his wife and home when the ark and armies of God were on the battlefield.

In desperation David plotted with the aid of Joab to murder Uriah by exposing him to the Ammonites in battle. The plot succeeded, and David took Bathsheba as his wife. The sin, however, did not go unnoticed, for "the thing David had done displeased the LORD."

Tatum, S. L. (1972). *2 Samuel. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher's Bible Commentary (pp. 184-185). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.*

David's Sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:1–27)

The passage—David's immorality began with the temptation of the eye. From the roof of the king's palace, he saw Bathsheba bathing. She was very beautiful. It is not likely that his sin resulted from only one temptation. He probably entertained lustful thoughts from time to time. He may have gone to his roof on several occasions with the hope of satisfying his lustful curiosity. It could also be assumed that Bathsheba may have been aware of David's interest in her before he called for her to come over to the palace. The narrative in the Bible is necessarily brief. Much lengthy fiction has been written about this story.

David sent messengers to Bathsheba and invited her to come to his palace. Again it is not likely that she visited him only once. The adultery of David and Bathsheba resulted in her pregnancy. She sent word of her condition to David and he began to try to hide their sin.

His first attempt was to get Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, to return home and to appear to be the father of the baby. He sent for him from the battlefield. He inquired about the war with the Ammonites. He told him to go home to his wife. Uriah, either suspecting the problem, or trying to be fair with his men on the battlefield, would not go home. David then invited him to a feast and got him drunk. Still he would not go home to Bathsheba.

David then became a murderer. He sent a letter to Joab by Uriah himself, calling for his death to be arranged in battle. Uriah was to be placed in the hardest part of the fighting, and then the other men were to be withdrawn, leaving him to die. The deed was done. Word was sent to David of the death of Uriah. After a period of mourning, Bathsheba came to live with David in the palace. God was much displeased.

Truth for today.—We live in times of gross immorality. The stability of the institution of marriage is threatened on every hand. The sanctity of the unique relationship between husbands and wives is disregarded all too often.

Jesus spoke of the danger of the lust of the eyes. In Matthew 5:27–30 he called for purity of thought. Adultery, like other sin, begins with the entertainment of the idea in the mind. Jesus warned against the lustful look by saying, “... every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Sin almost never consists of one deed alone. One sin begets another. In an attempt to cover one sin, David committed almost all of the other sins. He set himself up as his own god. A woman became his idol. In the name of Jehovah he did the will of Satan. He dishonored motherhood and fatherhood. He murdered. He stole his neighbor’s wife. He became a liar of the worst sort. His coveting was of the basest kind. In offending in one point he had broken all of God’s law.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (2 Samuel 11). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.