

11. So much to lose for so little

9/16/2004

When the Bible talks about a man or woman, it does not beautify one's faults or exaggerate the success. It portrays the exact picture the Lord intended. That means that it shows all the faults, mistakes and shortcomings of individuals.

I am eternally grateful to the Lord for many things. One of the many things that I am very grateful is that He no longer writes the Scripture for people to see all of my faults, wrongdoings and stupid things I do, say and think. How would you like to have all the people through the generations to study, preach, make movies and write books about your life and how you handled each situation?

Other than the fall of the mankind by Adam and Eve at the beginning, no other sin had been known more than the sin of David and Bathsheba, even far more than Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky scandal.

Since David became the king of Israel until now, it was nothing but triumphs, but from this chapter David is going to taste his own bitter medicine that comes from his sin. This sin causes the enemies of God to blaspheme – until this day.

We study this dark episode not to throw stones or shake our heads at David. Rather, we come to humbly learn. The Holy Spirit recorded this incident to warn us of sin's destructive power - even in those who love the Lord. God admonishes us through the apostle Paul in 1 Cor.

1 Corinthians 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

If we don't learn from David's example, we, too, will fall.

A. SETTING HIMSELF UP FOR A FALL

2 Samuel 11:1 It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

The chapter 10 ended with unfinished business at Rabbah. The offending Ammonites are still in their city and Israelite army has returned to Jerusalem. Instead of going out into the battle and leading his troops, David finds himself comfortable and idle in his plush palace.

David is by now about fifty years old and has been king for about twenty years. He has welded Israel into a solid and powerful nation and distinguished himself as a mighty warrior, a gifted musician, a visionary man of God.

However, David's fall did not happen in the spur of a moment. We can trace his failure to three areas:

1) Polygamy and Lust

David may have been following the cultural norm for monarchs in his day, but by accumulating wives and concubines, he was violating God's higher standard.

Deuteronomy 17:17 Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.

Why did no one confront David about this sin? Perhaps they figured that his private life was his business. As long as the economy was expanding, the national defense was strong, and the country was healthy, what difference did his personal adulterous life make? Does it sound familiar? American people did the exactly same thing in 1996 by sending Bill Clinton back to the White House.

But this seemingly harmless offense dug a wicked root into David's life. As his harem grew, so did his lust. The more a person indulges the sexual appetite, the more it increases. For David, this meant that even a palaceful of women was not enough to keep his eyes from wandering.

The founder of Playboy Magazine Hugh Hefner once said, "I am the luckiest man in the world." The reason is that he gets to have all the Playboy magazine playmates. But he'd better know that if he doesn't repent, he will be the hottest guy in hell.

2) Vulnerability

David's military power had expanded his scope of power from the Euphrates River to the Red Sea over 60,000 square miles. No enemy could stand against his mighty military, for *"the Lord helped David wherever he went"*.

Our most difficult time is not when the things go hard. The difficult time makes our lives simple in survival and makes us to be completely reliant on God.

Success, however, can be deceptively dangerous, particularly when we credit ourselves for it and get a swollen head. Never are we more vulnerable to the temptations of pride, self-indulgence, and unaccountability than when we have it all, and David was no exception.

Pride happens when everything swings in our direction. Our greatest spiritual battle happen when we have too much time left in our hands due to luxury in our lives. Then we start to come up with ideas for our fleshly pleasure at the cost of our spiritual downfall.

3) Indulgence

When his troops marched off to war, David did not share the hardships of battle with them but remained at Jerusalem. Why did he stay behind? Maybe he felt that, after twenty years of trudging through battlefields, he deserved a rest. Besides, his soldiers were razor sharp lean and mean fighting machines and Joab was more than capable of commanding them alone.

Prov 6:10-11 A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to sleep - So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, And your need like an armed man.

Susceptibility to lust, vulnerability to pride, sloth and idleness. A dangerous combination – one that primed David for disaster.

There are four 'S's that destroy the men and women of God: Self, Sex, Silver and Sloth David had all four.

While Joab is busy in laying siege to Ammonites' Rabbah, satan is doing the exact same thing to David.

B. THE OPPORTUNITY No. 1 TO REPENT

2 Samuel 11:2 Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold.

Seeing the woman, he stops. He lingers. A glance becomes a gaze, a gaze stretches into a stare, a stare dissolves into a leer. He loses all awareness of who he is or the danger that lies ahead. As the dense cloud of his aroused passion closes in around him, all he knows is the present. Everything else is forgotten – his family, his kingdom, even his God. Nothing matter to David at this point. He wanted Bathsheba at any cost including his sweet intimate relationship with God.

David should have turned around and came back into his bedroom. It was his first opportunity to repent and walk away from the temptation. But he chose not to.

Galatians 5:16 rings true.

Galatians 5:16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Any immodesty on Bathsheba's part did not excuse David's sin, but she was still responsible for her wrong. We must not be an occasion for sin in others, even in how we dress. Ladies, please check your appearance to see if you are causing fellow male believers to stumble with your revealing clothing.

1 Timothy 2:9 in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing,

Christians - men, especially - must learn to never let their eyes rest on alluring images except for what "belongs" to them in marriage. It wasn't so much that David wanted Bathsheba. It was that he could not be satisfied with what God gave him. David and Solomon show us that if one woman isn't enough, 1000 women aren't enough.

Bathsheba's great beauty made the sight very tempting. But the real strength of temptation often does not lie in the quality of the tempting object, but in the state of heart and mind of the one being tempted. For example, Joseph was more severely tempted to commit sexual immorality than David was here, but he fled that temptation.

David looked at Bathsheba and said "beauty" but God saw this as "ugly." The pleasures of sin deceive us like the bait hides the hook. We must call it what God calls it - SIN. We want to say, "affair" but God says "adultery." We want to say, "love" but God says "lust." We want to say "sexy" but God says "sin." We want to say, "romantic" but God says "ruin." We want to say, "new found destiny" but God says "destruction."

C. THE OPPORTUNITY No. 2 TO REPENT

2 Samuel 11:3 So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"

When a Jewish person introduces someone, it is a common for that person to say, "This is Jacob, the son of Isaac and Abraham," revealing the father and grandfather's name. But this soft footed servant chose to include the woman's husband's name as a warning to David, as if to say, "Bathsheba is taken. She is off limit, King David."

David's conscience is so seared that his servant's warning about Bathsheba being married to one of the king's elite warriors doesn't even crack it. This was his second opportunity to heed a warning from God through David's servant.

At the moment like this, God is quite unreal to us, he loses all reality, and only desire for the creature is real. The only reality is the devil. Satan does not here fill us with hatred of God, but with forgetfulness of God.

D. THE OPPORTUNITY No. 3 TO REPENT

2 Samuel 11:4-5 Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house. 5 And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, "I am with child."

David ignored every warning and way of escape God set before him.

David had so much to lose for so little. To him, it was a fling, a one-night stand, a fulfilled middle-aged fantasy. He didn't expect anything after that and he didn't want anything. The fact he ignored was that every action brings reward or consequence. In this case, the consequence was so big that he had to pay with the lives of his children and his soldiers and everlasting mockeries by men against the name of God.

If someone had told David as a young man that he would one day commit adultery, father an illegitimate child, and murder an innocent man, he would have exclaimed, "Never!" Yet it happened. Don't think that you and I are above David. I have witnessed so Calvary Chapel pastors falling like flies for last fourteen years.

Again, David could have said to God, "Please forgive me," but he'd rather cover up his sin than dealing with it. He passed up another opportunity to repent.

E. THE OPPORTUNITY No. 4 TO REPENT

2 Samuel 11:6-11 Then David sent to Joab, saying, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. 7 When Uriah had come to him, David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people were doing, and how the war prospered. 8 And David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah departed from the king's house, and a gift of food from the king followed him. 9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. 10 So when they told David, saying, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Did you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?" 11 And Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing."

It doesn't take X-ray vision to see through David's false kindness toward Uriah with his hypocrisy and deception. He doesn't care about the war or the soldier. He only cares about getting Uriah home to his wife to cover up his sin. However, the king doesn't count on the strength of this man's character and integrity.

Instead of going home to Bathsheba's waiting arms, Uriah sleeps alongside David's servants at the palace door.

David, the commander-in-chief, is rebuked by the integrity of a soldier – a man who is completely committed to the nation, to his king, and to the Lord. Uriah was not even a native born Jewish, he was a Hittite - a foreigner.

Again, David blew his fourth opportunity to repent from his sin.

2 Samuel 11:12-13 Then David said to Uriah, "Wait here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. 13 Now when David called him, he ate and drank before him; and he made him drunk. And at evening he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

As a last attempt at getting Uriah to go home to his wife, David wines and dines him until he is drunk. But even in a drunken state, Uriah displays more self-control than David. He refuses to go home.

F. THE ULTIMATE COVER-UP

2 Samuel 11:14-25 In the morning it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. 15 And he wrote in the letter, saying, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die." 16 So it was, while Joab besieged the city, that he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew there were valiant men. 17 Then the men of the city came out and fought with Joab. And some of the people of the servants of David fell; and Uriah the Hittite died also. 18 Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war, 19 and charged the messenger, saying, "When you have finished telling the matters of the war to the king, 20 if it happens that the king's wrath rises, and he says to you: 'Why did you approach so near to the city when you fought? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall?' 21 Who struck Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Was it not a woman who cast a piece of a millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you go near the wall?'--then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.' " 22 So the messenger went, and came and told David all that Joab had sent by him. 23 And the messenger said to David, "Surely the men prevailed against us and came out to us in the field; then we drove them back as far as the entrance of the gate. 24 The archers shot from the wall at your servants; and some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also." 25 Then David said to the messenger, "Thus you shall say to Joab: 'Do not let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another. Strengthen your attack against the city, and overthrow it.' So encourage him."

Panic-stricken, David escalates his plan to the next level: murder. By Uriah's own hand, he sends Joab a message to put Uriah on the front lines of battle and abandon him where he will surely be killed. This time, the scheme works. Not only does Uriah die, but other soldiers die as well. Their blood is on David's hand also indirectly.

In my opinion, this is the worst part of David's sin. He could care less about his own soldiers' lives. This is inexcusable. The Word of God records what David did. God did not cover it up. David is guilty as charged.

G. THE FINAL STEP IN HIS SCHEME

2 Samuel 11:26-27 When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. 27 And when her mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

David must have sighed with relief, thinking he got away with murder, literally. However, God sees it differently. With that sobering statement of God's justice, this dark chapter in David's life comes to a close. A string of tragedy will start soon.

David's sin illustrates that godliness does not automatically protect us from temptation. In fact, temptations may increase the longer we walk with God. His sin also shows us that we are never too old to sin. As long as our flesh is alive within us, we have the potential of committing the worst kinds of evil.

Let's not think that God winks at our sins, because He loves us so much. Yes He does love us, but He is a just and holy God. David did not get by with his sin. Up to this point in his life David has had many triumphs, but from now on, to his dying day, he will have trouble.

Whether David's secret sin was known in Jerusalem or not, his sin and our secret sins are open before God. Someone has put it this way, "Secret sin on earth is open scandal in heaven." God knows all about what we do.

H. APPLICATIONS

1) We need to establish boundaries that keep us out of compromising situation.

In our church, we will not have opposite sex counseling alone. If we must do, it will not be on-going counseling, it will be done in the place where people can see through a window. I'd prefer same sex counseling.

James 4:7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

2) We must not wait until we're tempted to weigh the consequences our actions. Let's consider the consequences ahead of time.

3) We must have someone we trust to hold us accountable.

Pr 27:17 As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

4) We need to cultivate healthy pursuits that keep our thoughts on things that are honorable and pure and good.

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things.

5) Most importantly, cling to the Lord in daily dependence through His Word.

Ps 119:11 Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!