

How the Mighty have Fallen

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, "She is 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. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then 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 David was told, "Uriah did not go home." So he asked Uriah, "Haven't you just come from a military campaign? Why didn't you go home?"

11 Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents,^[a] and my commander Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to 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 out in front 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.

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.

Just for a minute, I want you to think about what, at one time, you may be thought was unthinkable. What do I mean by that? Well, imagine year from now, you're standing in a courtroom, you've been convicted of a crime and now you're headed to prison for years. Your family and friends are in shock. It's like, "What happened? One moment you're sitting in church and the then next thing you know, you're going to prison?! How could that possibly happen? That's like, unthinkable, isn't it?

I don't know, is it? I mean, you know yourself better than anyone else does. If you're headed to prison a year from now, what crime do you think it would be for?

Maybe it starts with something as innocent as an occasional trip to the casino, or a little online betting. You hit on a few, which is thrilling, but you miss on far more—and the next thing you know your credit cards are maxed out, your home is in foreclosure, and you're being arrested for embezzling funds from your employer. Or maybe for you, it starts with a night out with the guys or the girls. You have a few drinks, and then a few more. You get behind the wheel, and on the way home you cross the center line and now you're going to prison for vehicular homicide. How did that happen?

Or maybe you're a little bored, looking for a little stimulation in your life, and so you start clicking on some websites. You're not hurting anybody. You tell yourself that you'd never act on any of your desires, and the next thing you know you're being arrested for soliciting a prostitute. How could that happen? How could people who love God and know his commands, still fall so deeply into sin? And what happens to them when they do? What happens when we are the ones who fall?

In our study of God's word today, we're going to seek to answer those questions. And we'll do it by turning our attention to the account of David's fall into sin. We'll use as our theme

the words which King David once spoke, namely,

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We'll see, I. How sin works.

And then, II. What God does about it.

Our text begins with these words, *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.* In other words, David was not where the King was supposed to be. Instead of leading God's army against the enemies of Israel, he's just hanging out at the palace. That was David's first mistake. Instead of investing his time in productive, God-pleasing activity, he's looking for something else to do. How's the old saying go? "Idle hands (and minds) are the devil's workshop."

Our text goes on. *One evening David got up from his bed and walked around the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful.* Now, don't get the wrong idea. It's not that this woman was some kind of exhibitionist. She's not out there on her rooftop. David is the one on the roof. And from his elevated vantage point he could undoubtedly see down into people's windows and into their inner courtyards. And what he saw he liked. And chances are, David didn't just catch a little glimpse. No, he looked. He watched. He fantasized. And then, he acted. Scripture tells us, *David sent someone to find out about her.* Now, there's nothing wrong with a little curiosity, is there? You know, "I just want to have a little conversation with her. I just wanted to see what kind of pictures she's posting. I just wanted to see what his bedroom looks like." You've maybe heard it said that "curiosity killed the cat."

Well, David's life, and in ours as well, curiosity in the hands of the Devil, kills more than cats.

And what does David's "enquiring mind" find out about the beautiful woman he laid eyes on? His servant tells him, *She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite*. In other words, David discovers two things about this woman. 1. She's married! In other words, she should be off limits to David, who is also married. And 2. She's married to Uriah, who happens to be one of David's most loyal soldiers, one of his inner circle. You would think that those two facts would have certainly put the stop sign up for David. But no. It's like David is determined to run over one stop sign after another.

Tell me, can you relate? Have you ever run over the stop signs in your life? Times when it's like you went out of your way to sin? Times when your conscience was screaming, "Don't go there. Don't do that!" Times when your family or friends are telling you, "What are you thinking?" And yet, blinded by lust or greed or anger or finally, stupidity, we say to them all, "Just shut up. I'm going to do what I want to do"—just like David did. In David's case, what did he do? Our text tells us, *David sent messengers to get Bathsheba. She came to him and he slept with her*. What started with a long look ended in adultery. See how the mighty have fallen.

Now I suspect, that at that moment, David was maybe thinking, "No big deal. A little one-night stand, a harmless hook-up." Not so fast, David. What does our inspired narrator tell us? *The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."* Boy, talk about three words that can either be an expression of great joy for a married couple who have been waiting years to conceive a child, or words that bring shame and fear for a couple not married to each other. Maybe you've experienced some of those same emotions—on either side of the coin.

The question is, how did King David react to those that news? Did David want to share the good news with his family and friends or did he do everything in his power to cover it up?

Well, you know the answer to that question. Rather than coming clean and simply acknowledging his sin to God and the people around him, David plans a cover up. Plan #1: Get Uriah home—quickly. Isn't that right? Our text tells us, *So David sent this word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite."* After David acts like he's all interested in finding out how the war was going, he encouraged Uriah to go home and spend some time with his wife. He even sends some gifts with Uriah. Maybe a bottle of wine or some chocolates, fully expecting that Bathsheba and Uriah would, well, you know....and everyone would assume that the child conceived in Bathsheba was Uriah's child. But David's plan didn't work. Why not? Because Uriah didn't go home to his wife. And when David grills him about it, what does Uriah say? Verse 11: *"The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my Lord's men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house and eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!"*

In Old Testament times, soldiers would often take a vow of chastity while they're at war, to show their devotion to the cause, their devotion to God, represented by the Ark of the Covenant, and their devotion to their fellow soldiers. Isn't it ironic that in this case Uriah is showing more devotion to God than David is. I mean, Uriah is a Hittite. David is the one who is supposed to be the spiritual leader of Israel.

But just because David's first plan doesn't work, doesn't mean he doesn't have another plan. Plan #2: Get Uriah drunk. Right? A little alcohol, or maybe a lot of alcohol, will lower Uriah's inhibitions and send him running into the arms of his beautiful bride. But again, it doesn't work. Even under the influence, Uriah shows more integrity than David did. He ends up sleeping on a mat with David's servants.

So now David is desperate. And in the end, David does something that I expect, at one

time, he would have considered to be unthinkable. David signs Uriah's death sentence. He basically hires a hitman to kill his good friend and loyal soldier. He has Joab put Uriah on the front lines where the fighting was the fiercest and then pulls back and leaves Uriah and his fellow soldiers like sitting ducks, easy targets for the archers perched on the city walls. And when David learns that Uriah the Hittite has been killed in battle what does David say to the messenger who brought the bad news? "*Don't let this bother you; the sword devours one as well as the other*" (2 Samuel 11:25). As in, "Oh well, such is life," and undoubtedly thinking to himself, "Finally, this mess has been cleaned up. No one will know the difference." Think again, David. For what are the final words of our text? *But the thing David had done displeased the Lord.*

Boy, those are some ominous words, aren't they? I wonder how many times those words could be applied to our lives. Times when we thought we'd gotten away with something. Times when it looked like we'd suffered no consequences for our sins. But you see, that idea, that we can get away with sin—that's a fallacy. The idea that a person can sin with impunity, or that there's no consequences for sinning against God, that's the devil's lie.

And you know something? Deep in our heart of hearts, we know that's a lie. In fact, David knew that too. David knew that his sin had consequences. His conscience told him as much. The guilt of his sin was eating him alive. We know that because in Psalm 32, King David writes, very likely regarding this time in his life, these words, *When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night the Lord's hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer (Ps. 32:3-4).*

My friends, maybe you know that feeling. That sick feeling of shame and regret and fear and hopelessness that comes from doing what you said you would never do. What you thought

you were incapable of doing. And now you've done it. You've done the unthinkable. And you're wondering, "Now what do I do?"

My friends, if you know that feeling...Actually, it's not a matter of if, it's a matter of when. When you know what it's like to be weighed down by the guilt of your sins, when you find yourself asking, "What do I do with a mess I've made of things?" then please do what King David did. Yes, King David. For in Psalm 32 immediately after describing the internal anguish that his sins were causing him, what does David say? *Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." (Psalm 32:5)*

Now, if you know the story of David, you know that that acknowledgment of sin didn't exactly come easily for David. It took God sending the prophet Nathan to David to tell a story about a rich man who stole from the arms of a poor man his precious little ewe lamb to get David to see, in the words of the prophet, "You are the man!" Only then did David say what he should have said at the very beginning, I mean when he first took that second look at Bathsheba, that's when he should have said what he finally did say to the prophet, namely, *"I have sinned against the Lord." (2 Samuel 12:13)*. Oh the pain and heartache and bloodshed that would have been avoided if David would have acknowledged his sin at the very beginning. You see, all sin, no matter how harmless it may appear to be, no matter how private it may appear to be—all sin, if left unconfessed unrepented, doesn't just go away. Instead, it snowballs. It creates bigger and bigger problems. Yes, sometimes problems we can see—like in a divorce court or in a prison sentence. But other times problems we can't see. Problems in here, with the pangs of guilt and worthlessness and fear.

Tell me, is there a cure for the problems created by sin in and around us? Yes, there is. In fact, there's only one solution. And it's...Jesus. I mean, there are no other heroes. King David

was about as good as a human can get. He is the only person that the Bible calls “a man after God’s own heart.” And yet even he was an adulterer and a murderer. No, if we want relief from the pain of a guilty conscience, if we're tired of trying to cover up the messes we've made, then there's only one thing we can do, and it's simply this: Give your sins to Jesus.

What does the Bible say? *A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. (Psalm 51:17)* It's almost a whole different kind of unthinkable, isn't it? That a holy God, who hates sin, would in turn say, “Give me your sins. I’ll take them all. I’ve covered them all with my blood. It is finished! You are forgiven.” Man, that’s God’s grace!

Is it any wonder that after King David fell as far as he did, and yet in the end still heard the prophet say, “David, the Lord is taken away your sin”—is it any wonder that that King David wrote these words? *Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one who sinned the Lord does not count against them. (Psalm 32:1-2)*

My friends, does the account of David's fall serve as a warning to us about not taking sin lightly, and not trying to cover it up and not thinking that we could never fall? Yes, it does. But far more important, this account shows us the depth of God's undeserved love for sinners like you and me. I mean, if God could say to David, who fell as far as he did—and who sins are as publicly as he did (I mean, we’re still reading about them today!)—if God could say to him, “David, your sins are forgiven,” then you can be sure that he will say the same thing to you. In fact, he already has. And he always will. Even when our sins are big, God's grace is always bigger. Believe it—and thank Jesus for it. Amen.