

## **The Story – David The King**

If we are going to cover the big stories in the bible, we certainly have to talk about David. Saul was the first king of Israel but David was the greatest king. David's story, found in the books of Samuel and 1 Chronicles, is one of the great adventure stories of the Old Testament. It is full of battles and political intrigue, adultery with murder and a coverup, assassinations, you name it, David's story has it. Then you can toss in the beautiful Psalms David wrote and compiled, that serve almost like the musical accompaniment to his life.

Let me give you a quick summary. We first hear of David as a young teenager tending his father's sheep, writing songs and playing the harp when Samuel calls him from the pasture and anoints him, telling him he will be Israel's next king. As a teenager David kills the Philistine giant Goliath and is then brought into King Saul's service as a commander making a name for himself as a military leader. Saul becomes increasingly threatened by David's military success and repeatedly tries to kill David. David runs for his life from Saul and his army. Eventually, David pulls together a band of mighty men, brave soldiers who would fight with him and for him. Of interest to our message today, one of those mighty men was a fellow named Uriah!

David alludes Saul and after Saul's death, David at 23 years of age is made king of Judah. By the time he is 30 years old he has unified all the tribes into one nation. He captures the city of Jerusalem and moves his capitol there, calling it the city of David. He fortifies the city and builds himself a palace. He runs the Philistines out of Israel, brings the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem with plans to build a temple to God and a place for the ark of the covenant. It's his son Solomon who actually builds the temple, but David prepares for the building by contributing vast sums of money and material. David leads military campaigns that expand Israel's territory, defeating the Moabites, the Edomites, Ammonites and the Arameans. He establishes civil and military administrations throughout the nation, rules with justice and with God's blessing a royal dynasty is established. It would be through David's lineage that all the kings of Israel would be born, including the Messiah who would be called the Son of David.

David had all of this incredible success on the national stage but his personal life, at least as a husband and father, was a mess. David has a daughter Tamar who was raped by David's son and her half brother Amnon. David's son Absalom who was Tamar's brother then killed Amnon. Absalom fled after the murder. Eventually he is brought back to Jerusalem but David refuses to even see him or speak to him, refusing to forgive him. Angry, Absalom gathers his

own army and attempts to take the kingdom from his father but David's chief of staff, Joab kills Absalom. David grieves his final years and finally at 70 years of age, after 40 years as king and with Solomon on the throne, David dies, old before his time. That's the story, but turn to 2 Samuel 11 and we are going to look at one of the darkest chapters in David's story.

**“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...But David remained in Jerusalem. 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 and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, ‘Isn't this Bathsheba...the wife of Uriah the Hittite?’ Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him and he slept with her...the woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, ‘I am pregnant.’” 2 Samuel 11:1-5**

It was at the time when kings go off to war but David the king wasn't where he should have been. He should have been with his men. Instead, he is in the wrong place at the wrong time and he makes the greatest mistake of his life. From the roof of his palace he sees this beautiful woman taking a bath. David already has multiple wives, but he sees this woman and sends someone to find out who she is. It turns out she is the wife of one of his mighty men. Uriah the Hittite was one of those men who had risked his life to stand with David when Saul was hunting him in the wilderness. David owes this man his life, and instead, while Uriah is fighting in David's army, David sleeps with his wife, committing adultery and gets her pregnant. In an attempt to cover-up his adultery, he sends word for Uriah to come home and report to David in the palace. He asks him how the war is going and then tells him, “Go home, spend some time with your wife before you go back.” Instead, Uriah sleeps in the guard house with the soldiers. When David heard about it, he asks why he didn't go home. Uriah says, “it wouldn't be right for me to go home and be with my wife when my men are sleeping in tents and in the open field, away from their families.” David sends word to Joab to send Uriah into the thick of battle and make sure he dies, which he does. Bathsheba mourns for her husband and then David brings her to the palace, marries her and she has a son. Sadly, the baby dies, but David and Bathsheba hope their cover up has worked. Maybe no one knows, however, the bible says **“The thing David had done displeased the Lord.”** You think? He broke half the commandments in the matter of a few days. The Lord knows. Be sure your sins will find you out!

Amazing isn't it? After all God had done for David, this man after God's own heart who had written in Psalm 40, "I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart." confessing his love and devotion to the Lord over and over, this chosen, anointed, shepherd king, is guilty of adultery and murder and treachery trying to cover his sins. How can this be? Let me point out a couple of things we learn from this. First of all,

**Anointing doesn't exempt you from temptation. Blessing won't keep you from sin. Obedience does that!** It doesn't matter how long you've been saved, how many years you've been attending church, it doesn't matter the gifts with which God has blessed you, if you stop obeying God, you are capable of anything! Any given day, temptation is there, opportunity is there, but what keeps you from sin is choosing to obey God. Temptation is there and opportunity to sin is there, but if you are a believer then the Holy Spirit is there as well, guiding you, strengthening you, warning you, but it still comes down to obedience. You have to choose to stay faithful and obedient to God!

Let me tell you something and you may find this disturbing, but the truth is the seed of this kind of evil and sin is lurking in or near each of us. We think "I wouldn't ever do anything so terrible. I'm not like that." But we are all capable of sin. The bible is full of the stories of God's people, people of faith like Abraham and Noah, Jacob and Moses and David who sinned and failed. Those seeds of disobedience and sin are hiding in us and we have to be on guard.

Back in Genesis, before Cain killed Abel God warned Cain, **"If you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."** **Genesis 4:7.** Temptation was there, opportunity was there, the seed of Cain's sin was there, but God told Cain he could make the right choice. You don't have to sin. You don't have to give into temptation. Cain had a choice. David had a choice. You have a choice. We must not let sin master us. John Owen, a 17<sup>th</sup> century theologian wrote, **"Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you."** ...**John Owen** (From his book *The Mortification of Sin*)

Tim Keller is a best selling author and pastor in New York City. He compares the seed of sin that lurks in us to an acorn that has the capacity to produce a mighty oak tree. We find it hard to believe a small acorn could produce such a large tree and Keller warns us we do the same thing with the sin that lurks in us. We think, "It doesn't look like much. It's not that big of a deal." We tolerate the little sins because we just don't think they can do much damage. We forget those sins are like acorns. Keller writes, "Look in your life. Do you see self pity?"

Resentment? Envy and jealousy? Pride or self-centeredness? Don't you know what those can become if they fall in the right soil and get watered properly?...Look for those seeds, see those things you're tolerating and squash them. It's a whole lot easier to squash an acorn than to bring down an oak tree. Deal with them now. You're putting up with fantasies, fantasies of revenge or sexual fantasies. You're putting up with jealousy or envy...you're putting up with all kinds of stuff which in the right circumstances can grow terrible things.”

Maybe the reason David was on that palace roof top was because he had seen Bathsheba before. His accidental viewing of her one evening perhaps brought him again and again to the rooftop. Perhaps that's why he didn't go to war that spring, he was hoping to catch another glimpse of Bathsheba. “Be killing sin or sin will be killing you.” David gave in to his lust, his sin. It's hard to believe he fell so far, so hard, so quickly, but sin was crouching near the door. The capacity for sin is in each of us so guard your heart and choose obedience!

David sinned and here is another thing we learn: **Sin has consequences and not even a king can escape.** The Lord sent the prophet Nathan to talk to David. Notice how Nathan handles this. At this time the king would also act as a judge so Nathan presents a case to David. A poor man had only one little lamb that he raised like a pet. The lamb lived in his house, slept with the kids. A rich man had all kinds of sheep and cattle but when a guest came to his house, instead of killing one of his own sheep to prepare for a meal, he took the pet lamb of the poor man, killed it and fed it to his guest. David said according to the law this man must pay four times over what the lamb was worth because he did such a cruel thing. But the bible says David was so enraged by the injustice of this, perhaps because in his own heart he is feeling guilty over his own sin, that he says, “As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die.” “Who is this man” and Nathan says to David, “You are the man!”

Nathan then explains what David already knows. “David, God had given you everything and if that wasn't enough, all you had to do was ask and God would have given you more but you despised the word of the Lord. You took another man's wife and then, to cover your sin you took his life.” God (and Nathan) didn't let David off the hook. “You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.” There was no justifying the murder with “actually he was killed in battle.” God knew the truth and so did Nathan. You killed Uriah! You are a murderer and an adulterer.

I want you to notice something about how Nathan handled this. He could have barged into David's room and said, “You know what you did you big fat sinner. You despised the word

of God and now you are going to pay!” Instead, he tells the story of the poor man with the lamb. Why? Allow me to quote from Tim Keller again to give you an answer. “If there is ever any hope of persuasion, God goes for conviction and conversion over condemnation. God never denounces somebody in such a way that it sets up the person being denounced for failure. It’s very easy to condemn someone in such a way that you just raise their defense mechanisms up so high there is no way they will ever repent. It glorifies God to tell the truth about sin, but it glorifies God more if the person you are telling the truth to repents. And if you condemn a person in such a way that it makes it impossible for the person to repent, you’re self-righteous. You’re not on God’s side and not a vehicle for the shrewd grace of God. Because after all, it does say in John 3:17... ‘For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but to save it.’” ...Tim Keller

That’s what Nathan was doing. That was the path he was taking, believing that God wanted to convict and convert David, not condemn him. I read those words from Tim Keller this week and thought about so many posts on Facebook from Christians that seem to rejoice in condemning sin and outing the sinners. But are we speaking the truth in a way that will bring friends to repentance? Think about it.

We sinners, all of us, have built our own web of excuses and justifications around us. I can tell you why my sin is justified, why it’s probably okay. When you come in with guns blazing, in most cases I’m going to take cover under my blanket of excuses and the last thing I’m going to do is stand up while you are firing at me and admit my guilt. Holster the condemnation for a moment and try speaking the truth to me in love. Point me to God’s mercy, that’s what Nathan did first, reminding David of the blessings of God, then he told David of God’s judgment.

Thank God for Nathan! Thank God he had the courage to speak the truth to David, in love. Thank God he didn’t just post something clever on facebook but he went privately to David and spoke face to face. We need friends like Nathan. We need to be a friend like Nathan!

Nathan was a friend that spoke graciously to David, but he didn’t deny the truth or the consequences. The Lord spoke specifically of three things: “Now the sword will never depart from your house because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah to be your own.” David saw one son kill another. Three of his sons died violent deaths. “Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you.” His son Absalom when he tried to

take the throne from David made a public display of sleeping with his father's wives. "The son born to you will die." The baby born to Bathsheba died after a week long illness. God is merciful, but our choices, our sins, our actions have consequences and not even a king is exempt.

Nathan spoke of God's judgment on David's sin, but he also spoke of God's mercy. Consider, **Sin has consequences but we are not without hope.** Look at David's response. The bible says, **"Then David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord.' Nathan replied, 'The Lord has taken away your sin.'" 2 Samuel 12:13**

I am blown away by that statement. "The Lord has taken away your sin." How could that be? Think again of the gravity of David's sin. His willful disobedience to God. Nathan told David that by his actions he had "despised the word of the Lord." Yet the Lord took away David's sin. God forgave him. How? Why? Because David repented of his sins. It was a one sentence admission of guilt, "I have sinned against the Lord" but the repentance went much deeper than that.

David didn't argue with Nathan. He didn't try to justify, minimize or defend his actions. David repented from the depth of his being. The bible tells us that after Nathan left, and notice the way the Scripture words this -- "the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David" became ill. David fasted and prayed for the next seven days as the baby lay ill. It may have been during those seven days of soul searching and prayer that David penned these words found in the 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm, **"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge." Psalm 51:1-4** David didn't blame God for the consequences he was now having to face. He knew God was "proved right when he spoke and justified when he judged David." Yet David also knew he could rely upon the mercy of God so he humbly prayed, **"Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God and renew a steadfast spirit within me....Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation...Save me from bloodguilt, O God."** In other words, "forgive me for spilling innocent blood, like that of Uriah and the men who died in an unnecessary battle in order to cover my sin." That's the cry of repentance from the heart of David and God's response was to hear his cry and forgive his sins. How amazing is God's mercy and grace to David and to us!

God forgave and blessed David and Bathsheba with another son whom they named Solomon. It was Solomon who would follow David as king and who would build the first great temple in Jerusalem. They named him Solomon but Nathan the prophet called him Jedidiah which means “loved by the Lord.” How God loves us, even though we fail. David’s story reminds us, if we repent and turn to God with our whole heart, he will forgive.

I want you to see something. Picture David in his palace in Jerusalem as Nathan confronts him. “You are the man” and David, knowing and admitting his guilt says essentially “I have sinned against the Lord and I deserve to die.” The bible says all of us have sinned and the soul that sins must die. We are all guilty, just like David. Can you picture yourself there in that same room, in David’s palace in Jerusalem as Nathan looks at you and at me and says, “You are the man, you are the woman. You are guilty. You’ve sinned.” And like David, there is no place to hide and we admit our guilt. “I have sinned against the Lord and I deserve to die.” Then hear Nathan’s words to David and to us as he says, “You are not going to die.” Why? Because **“The Lord has taken away your sin.”** How? Let me show you how.

Fast forward a thousand years to the same place. Jerusalem. This time, not the palace of the King but the royal palace of the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate. Instead of Nathan’s “You are the man” we hear Pilate say, “Behold the man” and we look to see Jesus standing there. No one steps up to tell this man “you are not going to die.” In fact, it was for this very reason Jesus had come to this hour, in order to die – to die in our place on the cross, bearing our sins and David’s sins in his own flesh so that when we repent, like David, we can receive forgiveness. He died for us so we could live for him!

**David bore the consequences of his sins, but he was not without forgiveness and not without hope.** Guess what? The good news is, **Neither are you!** I don’t know what you’ve done, but I doubt it’s any worse than what David did. If he could repent of his sins and find forgiveness, you can too. It’s time for you to surrender your heart and life to Christ. It’s time to repent of your sins and ask Jesus to forgive you. You don’t have to die without God, without hope, without forgiveness. Acknowledge your sins, ask Jesus to forgive you and watch the difference he will make in your life. He will forgive, he will renew a right spirit within you.

From “you are the man”, acknowledging our guilt, to “behold the man”, the Savior who takes away our sin. David prayed in Psalm 51, “Cleanse me and I will be clean, wash me and I will be whiter than snow.” Let him make you clean and whole today!

