

I Have Sinned Against the Lord  
2 Samuel 12:1-25  
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## Introduction

A number of years ago, an atheist group published a tract exposing the depravity of various Bible heroes. They pointed out that Abraham was a coward who was willing to sacrifice the honor of his wife to save his own life, and then asked, "What kind of God would befriend so dishonorable a man?" Another example was Jacob who lied and cheated his way through life – what kind of God would call himself the "God of Jacob"? Moses was a murderer, yet God handed him the Ten Commandments. David was the worst of all: a king who seduced a woman in his kingdom then had her husband killed to cover it up. What kind of God would praise this man as one after His own heart? That's a pretty devastating case they make, isn't it? It's all true, those things happened and God used those sinful, unholy men as leaders of His people. How can we worship and serve a God who stoops that low? The implication of the tract was that we should find a God who honors better people, ones who really know how to live mature, purposeful, honorable lives.

But I think the tract backfires at that point because I have to believe there were a number of people who read it and thought, "Wow, if God could forgive and still use those guys whose lives were trainwrecks at times, maybe there's hope for someone like me." What a glorious truth those atheists accidentally pointed out – that God's love and grace can exist for someone who doesn't deserve it. God saves the wicked and depraved, the unloved and unloving, the angry, the selfish, and the abusive. People like you and me. In today's text, we're going to see King David at his absolute lowest point when God lays him bare with accusations that are true. He will be corrected and disciplined, with punishment that will stay with him for the rest of his life for the wicked deeds that he did. But in the midst of all that will be grace, every human's one true hope.

If you weren't here last week, this week's text is connected to last week's, which told the disturbing story of David taking another man's wife, Bathsheba, into his bed. When she became pregnant, David tried to have her husband, Uriah, return from the war and spend a night with her so that the baby could be assumed to be his. But when he refused, David had his military commanders arrange their battle strategy in a way that Uriah was killed, after which Bathsheba became David's newest wife. David pushed the incident to the back of his mind and went on with life until he was visited by the prophet Nathan. In the first four verses we hear a story of

### **I. Injustice in the Kingdom (vv. 1-4)**

*<sup>1</sup> And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. <sup>2</sup> The rich man had very many flocks and herds, <sup>3</sup> but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. <sup>4</sup> Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."*

Chapter 11 had ended with these words: "*But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.*" Chapter 12 begins with what the Lord did about His displeasure: He sent Nathan with a message. This is at least six months after last week's events, maybe a year later, because the child that Bathsheba was pregnant with has already been born. You might ask, "Why didn't God intervene

before David had ruined a marriage and killed a man?” And you’ll get no definitive answer, except that God intervenes when He chooses, and we have no right to question or demand otherwise. He is under no obligation to intervene anytime or anywhere and is free to let humans hurt and kill each other until the end of time. It’s only grace and mercy that bring Him to step in and extend His hand of restraint to limit that. And Paul warns us in Galatians 6:7: “*Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.*” It may take weeks, it may take years or decades, you will reap what you sow.

A prophet speaks God’s word to people, which is the opposite of a priest, who represents the people to God. When a prophet speaks, it is as though God Himself was speaking. People call Nathan’s story a parable, but it’s not – he presented it as an actual case that he has overheard and brought to the king. It’s disguised enough to keep David from having a clue that it’s really about him. The poor man and his lamb, of course, stand in for Uriah and Bathsheba. And David is the rich man who had many sheep of his own but decided to take the poor man’s sheep. The one detail that Nathan’s story left out is that the rich man had his friends kill the poor man. In the story, the lamb was sacrificed, but Uriah was actually the one who paid with his life. But perhaps that detail would have clued David in too closely.

It’s not clear from the story whether God gave this story to Nathan or Nathan made it up himself, trying to figure out the best approach to convicting David. It’s a brilliant story that worked exactly how it was meant to work. Dale Davis comments that, “instead of sitting down and calling David a filthy womanizer and a cruel murderer (Nathan) began with, ‘Sir, I want to tell you about a situation...’ He so suckered the king into the case that David judged himself... Nathan’s sword was within an inch of David’s conscience before David knew that Nathan had a sword.”<sup>1</sup> The next ten verses put the spotlight on David’s sin and move onto the

## **II. Punishment of the King (vv. 5-14)**

*<sup>5</sup> Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, <sup>6</sup> and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." <sup>7</sup> Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. <sup>8</sup> And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. <sup>9</sup> Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. <sup>10</sup> Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' <sup>11</sup> Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. <sup>12</sup> For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.'" <sup>13</sup> David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die."*

Growing up, David was a shepherd. He knew what it was like to care for sheep. I think between his sentimental memories, his guilty conscience, and just being incensed at the selfishness of the rich man in the story that his first reaction was to explode in anger and pull out the death penalty for the guy. He backed off that a little bit and said, “well, he’ll have to pay him back fourfold.” With David’s emotional reaction and insistence on justice, Nathan knew he had him right where he wanted him!

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<sup>1</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *2 Samuel: Out of Every Adversity* (England: Christian Focus, 2013), p. 151.

David condemned the sin before he even knew that it was HIS sin. Nathan had the greatest sermon application in history: "*Atta ha ish*" is the Hebrew. It means "You are the man."<sup>2</sup>

Each one of us can be like David when he was listening to Nathan tell his opening story: we nod our heads as we listen to a sermon, get emotionally involved in what it's saying, and then begin to think about how other people are guilty of that. "That was so convicting, some people in this church really needed to hear that" or "That message was so good, my wife needs to change." Until the Spirit of God stops us dead in our tracks and says, "You are the man" or "You are the woman." You are the one whose sin needs pointing out, you are guilty and in need of repentance. Gospel conviction is not about someone else, it's about you and how you are alienated from God by your sin. We need to be a lot more concerned about killing our own sin than pointing out and correcting other people.<sup>3</sup>

Nathan then launched into God's prosecution of David, a rebuke that listed all the ways that He had blessed him: I anointed you king, kept you safe from Saul's attempts on your life, I gave you the palace and the kingdom, and I was willing to give you even more. David's sin against Uriah – taking his wife and then killing him – was even more grievous set against that backdrop of God's grace and favor. What was David's biggest sin? In Hebrew, it's the word *bazah*, which means "to despise" or "to treat with contempt."<sup>4</sup> God accused David of *bazah* three times: verse 9 he despised My word, verse 10 he despised Me, and verse 14 he utterly scorned Me. Yes, he sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah, and everyone connected to them, but it started with his disregard for God, treating his Lord with contempt and scorn. That's the "sin under the sin," it's where the real problem is, it's how David can say later to God, "*Against You, You only, have I sinned*" (Psalm 51:4). If you really think about it, every sin starts there. If we treated God rightly, both fearing Him and living in absolute thankfulness for His love and blessings, we would never sin against Him. But we scorn him and then convince ourselves that our sin is fine to commit.

We may be tempted to see David marrying Bathsheba as doing the right thing, as providing for her when she was widowed and bringing her into his house before she delivered the baby. But God included that in his reasons for punishing David – "*because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.*" So, then we hear the punishment: "*I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun.*" All of this will be fulfilled, and in a more grievous way than the reader or David might have expected; and we will read all about the fallout from this, how it wrecked David's family in chapters 13-20. In fact, David's own punishment for the scenario of the sheep-stealer – that he repay his sin fourfold – will come true in his own life, as four of his own sons will die before all is said and done. Stay tuned!

The last punishment mentioned by Nathan would be the first one enacted: the child born from this adultery would die. David himself would be spared from death, but the child would not be:

### **III. Death of a Son, Birth of the Future King (vv. 15-25)**

*<sup>15</sup> Then Nathan went to his house. And the Lord afflicted the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick. <sup>16</sup> David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. <sup>17</sup> And the elders of his house stood beside him, to raise him from the ground, but he would not, nor did he eat food with them. <sup>18</sup> On the seventh day the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, "Behold, while the child*

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Ray Cortese's sermon "David & Bathsheba" from 10/27/13, found at sevenrivers.org.

<sup>3</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, *Leap Over a Wall* (New York: HarperOne, 1997), p. 185.

<sup>4</sup> Davis, p. 154.

*was yet alive, we spoke to him, and he did not listen to us. How then can we say to him the child is dead? He may do himself some harm.”<sup>19</sup> But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David understood that the child was dead. And David said to his servants, “Is the child dead?” They said, “He is dead.”<sup>20</sup> Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. He then went to his own house. And when he asked, they set food before him, and he ate.<sup>21</sup> Then his servants said to him, “What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive; but when the child died, you arose and ate food.”<sup>22</sup> He said, “While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, ‘Who knows whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?’<sup>23</sup> But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.”<sup>24</sup> Then David comforted his wife, Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her, and she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. And the Lord loved him<sup>25</sup> and sent a message by Nathan the prophet. So he called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord.*

David fasted, lay on the ground all night, and pleaded with God to save the life of his child. Was he showing unbelief because he had heard God pronounce the child’s death and should have believed it would happen no matter what? No, David knew that his God is a God of grace, and that He might have changed course. He did not presume on grace, but knew that it was a possibility, for who knows what the God of all grace might do in the midst of our sins and messes? But after the child died, David accepted the work of God’s hand, and saw the next child, Solomon or Jedidiah, as God’s grace to them; Jedidiah means “beloved of God.” Most of us don’t see that twist in the story coming – that the heir to the throne whom the line of the Messiah would go through was born to Bathsheba. David had other sons already and plenty of other wives to bear him the royal heir. But God chose this child born to this couple that He has just punished; He was not rewarding them for sin, but showing them grace after discipline.

Now, I want to caution you against seeing the Lord’s punishment when someone miscarries or loses a baby. We have a definite explanation from the Lord that He took the baby from David and Bathsheba here, but that does not mean that we can apply that to anyone else’s situation. There is often a searching for answers or for someone to blame when a tragedy like that happens, even for believers. And sometimes believers want to know if God is punishing them. But the world is fallen and broken, our bodies are fragile, and not every baby conceived will safely make it to birth. Let us mourn, be comforted that God knows all things and loves our children more than we do. Let us long to be reunited in heaven, as David said, *“I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.”*

## **Conclusion**

As we reflect on this whole passage, the first two questions that we should ask ourselves are connected to the very first verse with Nathan going to confront David:

1 – When others point out sin in my life, do I hear them out and repent and change? Or do I become defensive, angry, or self-justifying?

2 - Am I willing to confront people when I’m called to be in the role of a Nathan?

Some people love to confront other people about their sins; most of us don’t. While none of us are prophets of God like Nathan and given direct instructions from God to speak to others, we still carry a responsibility as believers, as brothers and sisters in Christ:

Galatians 6:1-2 – *“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. <sup>2</sup> Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”*

Matthew 18:15 – *“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.”*

We love our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ when we lovingly, gently point to sin in their lives that hurts them. And we need to be able to receive that kind of correction and feedback from others. I can think of lots of times in my adult life when people pulled me aside and said some version of, “Uh, this is a problem, you need to stop doing this.” And of course, my first thought was usually, “Butt out, dude,” or “Oh, really, are you so perfect that you can just sit around worrying about everyone else’s faults?” But then (usually/hopefully) I catch myself and remember that this person loves me and loves God, and this might be exactly what I need to hear – that Proverbs 27:6 - *“faithful are the wounds of a friend.”* Chuck Swindoll suggests that ignoring or attacking someone who lovingly points out issues in your life is like having the warning light in your car go off, and rather than getting it looked at and repaired, you take out a hammer and smash the warning light.<sup>5</sup>

Thankfully, David was so convicted that he uttered six simple but profound words in verse 13: *“I have sinned against the Lord.”* What’s the first step in any addiction recovery program? The person has to own up that they have a problem. If there’s no understanding or acknowledgement of sin, a person is never going to get better.<sup>6</sup> We need to be able to start with the words from Taylor Swift’s latest song: “It’s me, hi, I’m the problem, it’s me.” David’s longer confession and plea to God for forgiveness and restoration is found in Psalm 51 (*turn there*) that has this inscription: *“A Psalm of David when Nathan the Prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.”* There’s a PCA pastor named Joe Novenson, who said, “If I were to ask you, ‘What is David’s greatest victory?’ you would probably say taking down Goliath. (But) Psalm 51 is his greatest victory, given to him by God, on the turf of his heart, over his sin and his past.”<sup>7</sup> (*let’s read through verse 17*)

*1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. 6 Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. 9 Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. 11 Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. 13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. 14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. 15 O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. 16 For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.*

Those are the words of a penitent sinner who wants to be restored to his God. What did David base his confession and the assurance that God would forgive him on? The fact that he had done more good things in his life that should balance out these sins? Or trying to bargain with God or make a deal? No, David appeals to God on the basis of God’s abundant mercy. That’s all he can set his hope on. And the major theme of the Psalm is David yearning to be clean – “wash me,” “cleanse me” “purge me” “deliver me,” I want to be justified and blameless, give me a clean spirit, renew my spirit, restore my joy. All of those things come from David’s acknowledging his sin, being broken and contrite about the evil in his heart. And God would accept his confession and restore him.

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<sup>5</sup> Charles Swindoll, *David: A Man of Passion & Destiny* (Dallas: Word, 1997), p. 198.

<sup>6</sup> Adapted from Ray Cortese’s sermon “David & Nathan” preached on 11/3/13, found at [sevenrivers.org](http://sevenrivers.org).

<sup>7</sup> David Felker’s sermon “A Ministry of Truth” preached on 9/16/18, found at [fpcjackson.org](http://fpcjackson.org).

Repentance, confession, and forgiveness are so beautiful, but we can be so stubborn, can't we? We would rather hide our sins, shrink from coming clean for fear either that God will be angry with us or that other people will think poorly of us. But that's not healthy, sin eats away at us. David tells us how miserable he was when he was in an unconfessed state in Psalm 32:3-5:

*"When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the iniquity of my sin."*

Walk into the light, friends, come into freedom! If you've never repented of your sins to God, there is joy and freedom on the other side of that! Those who are in a covenant relationship with God know that the Lord has removed our guilt, obliterated our record of sin, and washed us clean. 1 John 1:9 – *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* Westminster Confession Chapter 15.4 says that, "As there is no sin so small but it deserves damnation; so there is no sin so great that it can bring damnation upon those who truly repent." Whether you've committed adultery or just lusted after someone in your heart, you need to repent. Whether you've murdered someone or just been angry enough to curse them in your heart, you need to repent. There is forgiveness for the notorious, public sin as well as the inner, private sin. Steven Nicoletti, a pastor in Washington state, said this:

*"In sending Nathan to David, God also tells you that whatever you have done, God is not finished with you. Whatever your sins, however heinous, God still comes to you, and he offers forgiveness. You may refuse it. You may deny it. But it will be because you choose to reject it, not because he will not offer it. Do you have sins that you think exclude you from God's grace – that make you think God is no longer reaching out to you? Let God's actions towards David stand as a rebuke to that idea. God reached out to David after all he had done. And God is reaching out to you even now. You need to turn to him in repentance and lay hold of the grace he offers."*<sup>8</sup>

David's son died in his place in this story. David should have died, but God allowed him to live and forgave his sin. But a death occurred to pay the penalty that the sin required. This is a foreshadowing, a picture of where the hope for you and me is when we sin and deserve God's punishment and justice: David's Son died for us. David's greater Son, Jesus, died so that all of God's people would have their sins forgiven. Forgiveness is not cheap, God cannot just overlook our sin. Blood must be shed to atone for sin, and the penalty of sin is death. So, we all are condemned for our record of sins - if we die with them still counted against us, we will pay for them by being separated for eternity from God. But God has provided someone who died in our place, someone who was sinless and did not need to die for His own sins. God nailed our sins to the cross, we are holy in His sight because of Jesus' work on our behalf.

→ Lord's Supper

Benediction - Revelation 1:5b-6 – *"To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."*

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<sup>8</sup> Steven Nicoletti's sermon "Adultery and Advent" preached on 12/6/20, found at [faithtacoma.org](http://faithtacoma.org).