

# David Sins

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[0:00] All right, well, we're continuing in the Life of David series. We've been looking at the story of David on Sunday nights, and we've come now to this very famous story, this story that is the low point of David's life, and that's the story of he and Bathsheba.

And there's a lot of text. We read a lot of text. We didn't even read the whole story. We left a little bit off at the end. It's very dense. There's so many details that we cannot talk about tonight, because we don't have the time to spend that we could on the fullness of all that's here.

But let's see three things that I think are really important. The first is the fallen king. The second is the faithful servant, and finally the Passover.

So first, let's look at the fallen king. The writer of the book of Samuel, which was originally actually one book. We split it into two just because of the way it was transmitted.

But in the book of Samuel, the one writer, he's been setting all of us up for this story actually for a few chapters now. And it's really clear to see the flow actually, even if you go back to first Samuel, you can see how it's been coming to this moment.

[1:12] Because in first Samuel, the contrast we constantly talked about when we were working through that section was the difference in David and Saul, and how God had chosen David and rejected Saul, and it comes all throughout the stories.

Saul is tall, and David is short. And Saul is a visible man of power, and David's not. And Saul is the people's choice, and David was the youngest of a family, and he was only God's choice, and nobody else.

So there's this constant antithesis, this constant balance between the power that people want to grab for, and then the man that God chose. And he's a commoner, and he's low, and he's small. And he's not the man that you would think would be the king. And that means that there's a principle that starts to shine through the story of Samuel, the book of Samuel, the story of David. And that's that in the Bible, ideally, God's king always comes to take on servant form.

That a true covenant king, the type of king that God wants to be on the throne for his people is going to be a man clothed in humility, and not really one that fits the power structures, the way the world understands power, and the way that the pagan peoples understand power.

[2:27] That true strength is actually humility for a king. And that shines through the entire narrative, and then you get to 2 Samuel, and right before 2 Samuel 11, there's 2 Samuel 10, and 9, 8, 7.

All the way back to 7. 7 to 10, they come before 11. That's basic math, and that's important, because when you go back to 7 to 10, you'll remember that when we looked at 2 Samuel 7, it was all about God coming down and making a covenant with David.

And David said, God said, David, I'm going to make your house eternal. There will always be one of your sons on the throne. And that, we said, was the great display of God's love for human beings and for David in particular, and the word that we latched onto that week that we looked at it was the word in Hebrew, *hesed*, God's unique covenant love for sinful people.

And in 2 Samuel 9, right after the covenant story, 2 Samuel 9, what Derek looked at last week, verses 1 to 3, we learned that David showed, quote, kindness, the word there, *hesed* to Mephibosheth.

And 2 Samuel 10, if you look at just the first couple verses, it says, David said, verse 2, I will deal loyally, and I don't know why they translate it like that, because it's *hesed*.

[3:52] I will deal with covenant love with Hanun, the son of Nahesh. You see, 2 Samuel 9 and 10, David turns and he looks like God.

God made the covenant, God said, this is my hessed, my covenant love for you, David. David, the next two stories turns around and says, well, let me pour that forth. Let me show my hessed, because I want to be like God.

I want to be the covenant king. I want to look like the God who made me covenant king. And so David displays covenant love, and then you flip the page, and you've got chapter 11.

And that means that chapter 11, the story of David and Bathsheba, is David's false story. The false stories are actually a consistent storyline that runs throughout the Bible.

Every time there's a covenant in the Bible, there's a false story pretty soon after it. And that is a mimic, in other words, of Genesis 1 to 3, when God comes and he makes a covenant with humanity, Adam and Eve, and then we've got Genesis 3, the false story.

[ 4 : 56 ] And that happens over and over again. Remember Noah, God comes and makes a covenant with Noah, and then all of a sudden Noah's nakedness is exposed. He falls.

And who else's nakedness was exposed? Adam and Eve. Genesis 3 all over again. And you come to Abraham, and Abraham gets a covenant, and he's told, you're going to be the great man, the man who's going to bring redemption to the world.

And Abraham goes and gives his wife, the woman who's going to bring forth hope to two pagan kings. He literally gives his wife to them.

And you know who else gave his wife to an evil king? Adam, in the Garden of Eden. He let her die under the temptation of Satan. And you see, every time there's a covenant, there's a false story that follows after that.

And this is David's false story, and it's got many layers. And I just want to show you two of them in this first point. And this is our longer point, and then we'll have two very brief points, points two and three.

[ 5 : 57 ] There's lots of layers to the sin here, because sin is complex. And that's one of the underlying ideas of the passage. It's deep. Sin goes all the way down. And so let me show you two things here.

The first is actually in the very first few verses of chapter 11, verses two to five. And it's all about the verbs. Okay. And you see, David is laying on his couch on his roof of the palace, and he sees Bathsheba on another roof, bathing.

And the verbs, it says, are he sees her, and then it said that he thought she was beautiful, but actually the Hebrew word there is the word good.

It says literally he saw that she was good. And then it says, so he took her. And these are the same three verbs in order that show up in Genesis chapter three, when it says Eve saw and she said it was good, quote, the text translated, a delight to the eyes, literally good to the eyes, the exact same phrase that David says of Bathsheba.

And so Eve took and she gave to Adam and he took. And there's the exact same three verbs in order that appear here as David sees that she is good for the taking and so he takes.

[ 7 : 22 ] And this is what Walter Bruggeman, one famous Old Testament commentator says, the action is quick, the verbs rush as the passion of David rushed. The royal deed of self-indulgence does not take long.

The action is so stark. There's no conversation. There's no hint of caring or affection or love.

There's only lust. David does not call her by name.

He doesn't speak to her. At the end of the encounter, she is only, quote, verse five, the woman. But the telling verb is that he took.

And Bruggeman notes that it reminds us of when a certain someone took and ate at the very beginning of human history. And you see, what this is trying to say is David, David is just like Adam. And God came and made a covenant with Adam and God came and made a covenant with Noah and Abraham and Moses and David and every single one of them did the same thing. They saw what was evil and they called it good and they took and they ate of it.

[ 8 : 26 ] And that's exactly how the text talks to us here. You see, at the end, we're told in verse five that she is, quote, the woman. And Nathan comes in the very next chapter and says, and you are the man.

And that's exactly the same thing that God says to Adam and Eve. You are the man. You are the woman. Man and woman from the very beginning of time, it's the same story. And so the point that the writer is trying to subtly help us to see through those hints, because in Israelite, a Hebrew

reader would have seen these things.

They would have connected the dots back to Genesis three very easily in their own time. And the covetousness that begins this sin pattern, the lust, the adultery, and what I think is also rape here. All of it is set by the writer in a context. And that context is David is the failed covenant king. He looked like God's hewed and now he looks like Adam in the garden.

He's failed just like Adam did all over again. There's no hope in David. He's a failed covenant king. And this is highlighted especially in verse one.

[ 9 : 38 ] In verse one it says, this is the time when kings go out to battle. Kings go out to war. That's springtime. That's the normal time when wars would be raged in the ancient Near East. The best time to go out and fight.

And then the very next verse, David is laying on his couch on his roof. So in the season that kings go out to war, where's David? He's laying on the couch. And you see what it's saying?

It's saying, David, the real, the sin, the contextual sin that underlies the whole pattern of sins here is abdication.

It's the failure of being the king. It's the failure of what a true covenant king should really look like. It's trying to scream at us, you should be hoping and longing for a different king than what this king is, King David here.

And the Israelites knew it. The Israelites knew that actually at the very beginning of time, Adam was called to be king, but he was God's royal steward of creation, and that part of his kingship was to guard and to protect his wife, Eve.

[ 10 : 42 ] And here we've got a story all over again where passivity is the great issue that the man called to be king. The man called to guard and to protect God's true woman, who is all Israel, has now the man who's laying on his couch on the roof in the time of war.

He's failed covenant kingship and it's produced a situation where there's a whole string of sins that follow on, he's failed his office. Now the second layer of the sin, to just highlight it a little more, and we'll come back in just a moment to the murder of Uriah and the other men.

But the real key to understand what's going on in this passage is when Nathan comes to David in chapter 12. And the reason we know it's the key is because it says that this is what the Lord said to say to David.

And so when Nathan speaks, it's the Lord's mouth. And so this is what the Lord, how the Lord interprets the sin. It's through this parable. Now when Nathan comes to David, it looks like a parable at first, almost like you're supposed to take all the characters and map them out onto the situation. You've got the rich man and the poor man, the Ulam and the traveler. But if you try to do that, it doesn't actually really work very well. And one of the reasons for that is because this isn't technically a parable.

[ 12 : 01 ] Instead what it is is a judicial case. And the reason for this is because David is the king in the ancient Near East. And as a king in the ancient Near East, you are also the judge.

So all the cases, we see this all across the Bible. When there's a case, a prophet or a middle man in the kingdom comes and brings it to the king.

And the king has to be the judge. He has to decide what's going to happen. We see this in the Solomon story in just a few chapters later on down the road in First Kings.

And that's what's happening here. David, Nathan is bringing a case to David. David literally thinks that he's sitting on the judicial seat trying a case that had really happened in his kingdom.

It's not a parable. It's a case study. And so this is the details of the case. And it says this, the traveler has come for the feast and there's a rich man and a poor man.

[ 13 : 01 ] And when a traveler comes into a city, the wealthiest man in the ancient world is expected to show that traveler hospitality. And so the rich man in this situation is being coerced essentially by custom and tradition that he must host the traveler.

And so when it comes time to host the traveler, the rich man will not lose his possessions. So the rich man says, look, if I'm going to have to host a banquet and be hospitalized with this guy, I'm not using my stuff for this.

I'm not using my, he doesn't want to give himself or his possessions. And so he goes to this poor man and he takes away what we're called as the poor man's beloved.

And it's a little bit of Ulam and it's not just a Ulam, it's a female Ulam, we're told. And it's so important to him that the poor man calls it his daughter.

So he calls this little lamb like his own daughter, but the rich man takes this man's daughter and slaughters her because he's not willing to give his own self away.

[ 14 : 10 ] He's not willing to give his possessions away. And you see what it's saying, it's saying that the rich man is selfish and power hungry. And he breaks the back of the poor.

And the key, the key in all of it is that the poor man's little daughter, this lamb, she stands not just for Bathsheba, she stands actually here for all of Israel.

And it's saying that in other words, the sin underneath all the sins, underneath the covetousness, lust, rape, murder, and multiple homicide is that David is selfish and power hungry and has essentially abdicated his office, that he doesn't look like a true king.

And the reason that we know that this little Ulam stands in for all of Israel is because Bathsheba stands in for all of Israel. You see the name Bathsheba, Bath in Hebrew means daughter, and Sheba in Hebrew means oath or covenant.

It's another word for covenant. And you see Bathsheba's name is daughter of the covenant. And so God is coming and saying, David, you're like a rich man that went to a poor man and you slaughtered the daughter of the covenant.

[ 15 : 31 ] Who is that? And God is saying, it's my people. You've abdicated. When you raped Bathsheba and you murdered my men, it's like you killed the entirety of Israel in your power hunger.

And the point here is that David now has become a pagan king. It's all topsy-turvy. He was called to be the covenant king. Now he's the pagan king. And he's got an idolatry of power.

He looks like the kings of the nations. He'll sleep with who he wants to, he'll kill who he wants to. He's completely upside down. And God says, God is saying in this parable, this case, that a true king, a true king, a true rich man would protect, not abuse the daughter, the daughters of my people.

That's what God is saying. And that means that the sin that undergirds all this is pride, selfishness, and idolatry of power and the abuse of kingship.

Now the final proof, before we move on to two very brief points, it's this, Joab's letter, David, remember, sends Uriah with his own death certificate to Joab.

[ 16 : 44 ] And Joab actually changes the game plan. He realizes that if I just pull the men back off the front line, that all these men are going to know that there was a plan to kill Uriah, and David's going to get caught.

And so instead he sends Uriah with a group of men up to siege a castle wall. And anybody who does that on the front line is going to be the first to die. And so actually it's not just Uriah that dies, but a whole host of Israel's men that die.

It's multiple homicide. Many murders happen at David's hand here. And Joab sends a letter back, and in the letter we learn that David's policy was to never risk the lives of men needlessly.

And David responds by saying, it's okay. Tell Joab, look, it's war. It happens. People die. Don't worry about it. Somebody's got to siege the wall.

Somebody's got to die. And do you see the irony in the point? It's this that true kingship, true covenant kingship, is when the king would give his life and his stuff to save and to protect the many.

[ 18 : 01 ] And David has become a man where the many will give their lives to protect the one. And it's completely topsy turvy.

The covenant king has become a pagan king. Everything's been flipped on its head. And the Bible is screaming here, I think, God's people, God's people need a king who would give himself for them and not them for himself.

Now a brief application about that, about this. David, this man, this is the man who had hesed love, who had covenant love.

And this is the man who wrote most of the Psalms. And this is the man who meant what he wrote in the Psalms. And that is a call to each of us tonight to realize the power of sin.

And we learn here that sin can get ahold of you. And it can take pride and selfishness and turn it into covetousness, lust, rape, murder.

[ 19 : 13 ] And if you come to a passage like this tonight and you say, look, this shocks me, how could David, the writer of all the Psalms, and the man of hesed love in the previous chapters, become this man?

And look, let me just gently say that all of us need to hear this. If that's you, if you're saying, you know, this is shocking to me, then that's a modern, that's a modern way of thinking.

It's a way of saying there are 99% good people in the world and 1% really bad people. And those people do the rapes and the murders and everybody else are basically okay.

And the Bible comes and says, no, no, no. And if anything, the 20th century has shown us that civilized, well-educated people can pour the most blood of anybody.

And Alexander Solzhenitsyn in his great three volume, the Gulag Archipelago, he said it in the introduction so well that the fallacy of the modern mind is to say this, it can't happen here, it can't happen to me.

[ 20 : 16 ] And that's what they said in the Jim Crow South and in Nazi Germany and all of their places in the Gulags before they happen. And the Bible comes and it says, yes, the Bible comes and says, the Bible's coming tonight and saying, listen to John Owen, the great English Puritan.

And this is what John Owen says, to put it in a brief, kill your sin before it kills you. And that's the application, kill your sin and face it and destroy the, ask yourself tonight, what are the little sins in my life that I tolerate?

Because it's much easier to put out a campfire than it is to put out a forest fire. And the second very quick thing, simply this, we need Nathan's. We need Nathan's in our lives.

We need, you know, I think there's a call here for every single one of us to be a Nathan, to somebody else and to search for a Nathan. A person that will come to you and tell you, you've got to put this out before it gets any worse.

We've got to have that spiritual friend in our lives. All right, second and very, very briefly, the faithful servant. There's another way to read this passage and that's to look at it through the lens of all the little ironies.

[ 21 : 28 ] And there's a ton of them. And I can't mention them all now, but one of them that usually is not touched on is in verse four. It says that when David took Bathsheba, that she was in the time of her uncleanness.

This is ritual cleansing after her menstrual cycle. And that's part of, that's mentioned for a very specific reason. It's mentioned to point out an irony. And the irony is that Bathsheba is ritually, ceremonially unclean before the temple, before the law.

But David, David is the one who's morally unclean. You see, it's pointing out a little irony. There's 10 of these throughout the passage that do it like that. But let me point out to you what I think is the one that is most important.

And it's in verse 11. And that's when David brings Uriah to himself and tries his best to get Uriah to go home to lay with his wife.

And this is what Uriah says in verse 11. He says, the ark in Israel and Judah dwell in booths, and my Lord, Joab and the servants of my Lord are camping in the open field.

[ 22 : 34 ] Shall I then go to my house to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live and as your soul lives, I will not. And you see, the great irony of the passage is Uriah is the servant of David, and David is the sovereign.

And did you hear how he talked to David? He said, David, I swear by your life, I will not obey you. And Uriah knew it was up.

He knew a lot more than we, I think we think he knows here. And he said, David, I don't care who you are. The ark of God, the sacrament of God's presence is an exile.

I will not go feast. And the great irony of the passage is that Uriah, Uriah looks, well, he looks like a covenant king.

David looks like a pagan Uriah. It looks like what David should be. And it's even more because if you think back to 2 Samuel 7, you might remember, David says to God, God, I'm going to build a house for you, a palace, a temple for you.

[ 23 : 38 ] And God says, no, you won't. And God says, the reason that you cannot build a temple for me, the reason I've never asked anybody to build a temple for me is he says, my people have always been in exile.

Remember this line? They've always been out in tents. And God says, I will not dwell in a palace while my people are living in tents. And we learn there that God's covenant love means God's covenant presence, where God says, look, if my people are poor, I'm poor, I'm with them.

And what does Uriah say to David? David says, the ark of the covenants in a tent, David, God is in exile with the people. And the people are in exile and you want me to go feast?

And you see, the great irony is that's hested love. It's like Uriah understands the covenant love of God, the covenant presence of God. I won't do it while God's ark.

The presence of God is not even in Jerusalem. And look, there's a third level to the irony and this is the end of it. If you notice throughout the passage, Uriah is not just named Uriah.

[ 24 : 48 ] What is he called? Uriah the Hittite. And what is a Hittite? A Hittite is one of the nations that Joshua was sent to destroy.

Uriah is a part of one of the peoples, the pagan peoples that are idolaters in the land. And he, you see that, it's saying, David, the covenant king of Israel who God has said, your son will sit him out there forever.

He looks like a pagan. And this man who comes from pagans looks like the covenant king. He's the true servant. He's the true example.

And the passage is saying not only the people of God need a king who would give himself for the many and not the many for himself.

And the people of God need the type of king that says, even if it costs me my life, I will not disobey.

[ 25 : 50 ] Even if the ark of God is in the wilderness, I'm going to the ark. He carried his own letter to the front line. He knew. He knew that David was up to something.

He knew David was about to kill him, I think. And he said, David, I don't care if you're the king, you can kill me, but I'm not disobeying. And that's the nature of true kingship.

Now thirdly and finally, and also very briefly, the very end of this passage, and we can only touch on it. There's so much here and we would need several sermons to unpack chapter 12.

So, point three is the Passover and at the very end of this passage, after all of this, God comes to punish David and we learn that God goes for forgiveness.

And if there's one thing that is scandalous in this passage to the Israelite reader, I think it's actually this chapter, more than even the heinous sins of David.

[ 26 : 50 ] And that's because every single person who would have read this in the ancient world knew very well that the law says adultery and murder are capital crimes.

And that goes from the top of the ladder all the way to the bottom in Israel's law. And so when we come to chapter 12, we expect one thing and that's David has to die.

He has to be punished unto death. And that's the great scandal of the passage that after adultery and murder and multiple murders, he should die and he doesn't.

And David even says, you know, Nathan, the rich man, he needs to die. He needs a four-fold punishment. And if you look closely through the text, you can see that God actually gives David a four-fold curse, but he does not die.

Now I just want to close by only touching on this. And that's to say, it almost strikes our sense of justice to say, how could God let him live after all this?

[ 27 : 56 ] And there's a tension in the Old Testament that follows this, and that's when God forgives, God is maximally glorified. And we see it all over the Old Testament.

He loves to forgive. And at the same time, the tension is that when God forgives, it's never costless, because there's no such thing as costless forgiveness.

Costless forgiveness is oxymoronic. It doesn't work because it would not be justice. That justice always demands punishment. And so God loves to forgive all across the Old Testament radically, but that forgiveness is not costless.

It's costly. And every single person, even modern people who don't have a notion of justice that requires punishment for all sins, look, when you forgive somebody, if somebody sins against you and sins against you grievously, and you decide to forgive them, you know, it's never costless. Forgiveness never just is this thing where, okay, it's fine. What happens to the sin whenever you forgive somebody of something they've done to you? You eat it.

[ 29 : 09 ] You swallow it, and it burns as it goes down. It's like a little death inside of your stomach. And then you forgive them, but a death has occurred. And you've swallowed that death and taken that punishment onto yourself, and you're going to hold it, and it hurts, and it breaks you, but then you extend forgiveness.

And that's because sin always costs something. Now Eugene Peterson points out about this passage, he says that this passage, when Nathan comes to accuse David, is like the inverse of another passage in the Bible.

And that's when Pilate brings Jesus Christ before his courtroom. You just think about it. Nathan comes to the king who is now the judge, and this King, David, is sitting in the judge's seat. And Nathan says, I know you're the judge, but you're the guilty. You should be sitting in the dock, not on the judge's bench.

And in the New Testament, the king, who is the true judge of history, comes and stands before a pagan judge.

[ 30 : 27 ] And the pagan judge says, what did Nathan say? He said, you're the man, and what does Pilate say? He says, behold, the man.

And Jesus sits on the dock, the man who deserves to be the judge, who is the king. He sits in the dock, accused while innocent.

David sits in the judge's seat, guilty, and he's the man. And look, it's all upside down. History is upside down, just like David's kingship is upside down.

And you can ask, how could God come here and do this and forgive this man? And the answer is that the son, David's great son, Jesus Christ, the true judge and king, he stood before Pontius Pilate, accused while innocent, and he swallowed in his death his grandfathers covenant, covetousness, lust, rape, and murder.

He swallowed it. He went to the cross and he ate it. And he did it all for David. And David is passed over here because of his own son's death.

[ 31 : 46 ] And that kind of forgiveness for sins that are that grievous, you can be forgiven and are forgiven in Jesus Christ by the very same gospel that can save David from that.

And Jesus Christ, you see, is the king we didn't deserve who eats the justice that we did deserve. And let me just close by saying two things in just a couple sentences.

And one is this, Peter in Acts chapter two comes and says to the world, you crucified him. And Peter wasn't just talking to the people that really nailed him.

Peter comes and says, all of you, if you can hear me in all of history, you crucified him. And you know, the reason David is saved is because of the gospel and because he repented.

And Peter comes and says that true faith and repentance gets very personal. It comes and says, I actually recognize that I put him on the cross.

[ 33 : 01 ] That's true repentance is that existential. It's to say, my sins put him there. And David had to say, my sins are going to put him there.

The grandson that he knew was coming, but he didn't know how. That's the nature of true repentance. And exactly what happened to David here is what can happen to us.

And that's that David gets up and he puts on new clothes and he enters into the presence of God. He puts on a new robe of righteousness and he goes and stands before the presence of God, the one whom he should have died before, and then he eats a meal.

And it sounds a lot like the New Testament. You put on a robe of righteousness, you come into the presence of God and he breaks bread with you. And that's the power of repentance. And lastly, and the last word is this, just listen to the power of Christ's cross here.

Listen, whatever you've done in your life, whatever you've done in your life, David was worse.

[ 34 : 07 ] It's probably not like this. And you've got to see in that how far God will go to forgive you. And I'll just give the Westminster Confession the last word.

This is a paraphrase from our confession. And this is what it says, every sin, even so small, deserves judgment. But there is no sin so great that it can bring ultimate judgment upon those who truly repent.

There's no sin so great that can bring ultimate judgment upon you if you repent. And so that's an invitation to kneel before the cross of Christ.

Let's pray. And we ask that you would help us to see that when Nathan says you are the man, that that's me and that's us.

And so we cast our covetousness and our lust and our greed and our anger. And you say, Lord, that wanting to kill our brothers and sisters in the heart is equal to killing.

[ 35 : 15 ] It's great sin. We take it all and we put it before your feet, Christ. And we give thanks that Jesus, you died for those sins. And so we know that because you deserve to live, you rose from the dead and that those sins have been buried forever, cast as far as the east is from the west.

We ask tonight, Lord, that you would help us to lean in and believe and that we would know the personal cost of death to the Son of God, that it was truly for me, for us, for David, that we could say

that in our hearts tonight.  
We pray for that spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.