

Walk Through The Bible

*The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;
8The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;
9The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.
10More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
11Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.
(Psalm 19:7-11. NKJV)*

*25But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.
(James 1:25. NKJV)*

Legends Of The Fall
September 23rd, 2012
2 Samuel 11
Rev. Paul Carter

Introduction:

Open your Bibles this morning to 2 Samuel 11. This is the story of David and Bathsheba. We've been reading this story and observing the consequences as they worked out in David's life over the last week. We need to read this story because we are so inclined to think that the Old Testament is a bunch of moralistic tales about the heroes of the faith that we are supposed to be imitating. The way we tend to do Sunday School in the Evangelical church exacerbates this. We did this story for family devotions last week and it was quite disturbing for our kids. My son Max was actually a little angry. He said: "But isn't King David the good guy? Isn't he the guy who killed Goliath and who danced before the ark and didn't the Walk Through The Bible guy say: Saul no heart, David WHOLE HEART and Solomon half heart? David is the whole heart guy!" Max was convinced that David was the good guy because we never tell this story down in Sunday School. Bathsheba bathing naked on the rooftop never quite makes it onto the flannel graph board and maybe that's a good thing, but however we tell it, this story needs to be told. Because the story of the Old Testament is not the story of good guys and bad guys, it is the story of bad guys who need Jesus and David was one of those guys. Let me read to you all of chapter

11, dividing as we go and we'll talk together about sin, about consequence and finally in chapter 12 we'll talk about grace. Hear the Word of the Lord:

¹It 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.

What We Learn About Sin:

1. Sin is nearest to hand when duty and calling have been set aside

In the spring of the year when kings go out to battle – DAVID SENT JOAB. Joab is not the king, DAVID IS THE KING. David had been given the task – BY GOD – of completing the conquest and possession of the land. David was the warrior upon whom the favour of the Lord rested. But David stayed home. David took a break. David went on vacation. David had some me time. How many of you know from personal experience that in the Christian life if you are not swimming upstream you are floating backwards toward disaster? Following God is something you do against constant headwinds and if you think you can take a break you are a fool. If you think you can stop doing devotions over the summer – you are a fool. If you think that you can go to the cottage for the summer and not go to church and sit under God's Word and worship in community, you are a fool. That's when the devil comes for you! Do you remember the old saying: "Idle hands are the devil's playground"? Why did our grandparents say that? Because they read the Bible! They knew that sin is nearest to hand when duty and calling are set aside. When you stop doing what God tells you to do, then the devil steps in with some ideas of his own about how to spend your time.

²Then 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.

2. All sin is original sin

Every sin story sounds a lot like the original sin story. Eve saw that the fruit was good and able to make wise and she began to wonder why God would limit her access to this delightful fruit. She began to feel like there simply wasn't enough good food in Eden. She began to think herself able to make her own moral choices. And so she took and she ate. All sin follows the same stupid pattern. We get distracted by something we see. Look at that! A tasty fruit or a naked

lady! We look and if we're stupid, which we are, then we linger and we look some more. Then we become discontent with what we had. David had multiple wives waiting for him downstairs and some of them we know were beautiful. Abigail was beautiful, we were told that, Michal seemed kind of nasty I'll grant you, but Abigail was beautiful and charming. Go downstairs son! Enjoy the good tree God has given you! But all of a sudden Abigail seemed plain and boring. Bathsheba seemed interesting and new. Distraction, discontent, desire and self deception. Its the same old road to stupid.

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

3. The march toward sin passes through multiple and obvious warnings

Someone actually said to him: "Hey David, I'm pretty sure that is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam – i.e. the granddaughter of your Prime Minister Ahithophel and the wife of one of your generals. You may want to look away now." This messenger is pretty bold. He takes his life into his own hands to warn David off and still David goes forward. Bathsheba also tries to warn David off, we see that in verse 4 where it says that she had just finished her time of purification. Why is that little detail shared? It means that Bathsheba told David that she had just finished her period, that's why she was bathing in the first place and that means that if she gets pregnant she will not be able to claim that this child belongs to her husband. David knew he was taking a HUGE risk – there were multiple warnings and still he went on.

⁴Then 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. ⁵And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, "I am with child."

4. Sin cannot be hidden – especially by God's children

Adam and Eve tried to hide behind fig leaves but it didn't work. The Bible seems to say again and again that the children of God are incapable of hiding sin. They think they can – they think they can bury it in the backyard but the ground always vomits it up. Sin seeks its own exposure. The devil always lies and tries to tell you that no one will know, that you are smart enough to keep this a secret but that's a lie – the devil himself means to expose you and that itself would be

problematic but far worse than that – GOD MEANS TO EXPOSE YOU. No one in the universe is helping you hide your sin. You are fighting against nature, the devil and GOD ALMIGHTY and you will lose. Sin will be exposed. Sin comes to light especially for the people of God.

Listen to me friends, if you are sinning right now in some way – perhaps your cheating on your taxes and you think no one will find out, maybe you're watching porn after your wife goes to bed, maybe you're cheating on your husband with a colleague at work – whatever you are doing let me make you a promise. It will come out. If you are a child of God it will come out soon and it will come out in spectacular fashion. The only hope you have is to confess it yourself. If you confess it and repent God will be gracious but if you persist and deny, he will expose you and you will suffer ruin. God's children are never permitted to bury their sin.

⁶Then David sent to Joab, *saying*, “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” And Joab sent Uriah to David. ⁷When Uriah had come to him, David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people were doing, and how the war prospered. ⁸And 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. ⁹But 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. ¹⁰So 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?”

¹¹And 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.”

¹²Then 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. ¹³Now 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.

¹⁴In the morning it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent *it* by the hand of Uriah. ¹⁵And 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.” ¹⁶So it was, while Joab besieged the city, that he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew there *were* valiant men. ¹⁷Then 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.

¹⁸Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war, ¹⁹and charged the messenger, saying, “When you have finished telling the matters of the war to the king, ²⁰if 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?’ ²¹Who struck Abimelech the son of ²²Jerubbesheth? 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.’”

²²So the messenger went, and came and told David all that Joab had sent by him. ²³And 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. ²⁴The 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.”

²⁵Then 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.”

²⁶When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.

5. Sin multiplies

There is never one sin. Think of how many of the 10 commandments David broke in this story. We played this game at family devotions – think about it, how many of the 10 commandments did David break in these 26 verses? He broke the 10th commandment – he coveted his neighbour’s wife. He broke the 7th commandment – he committed adultery. He broke the 9th commandment in bearing false testimony against his neighbour – he lied to Uriah and tried to pawn off his love child on a man with far more honour than he. He broke the 6th commandment when he had Uriah murdered. And he broke the third commandment when he blasphemed the name of God. That’s a lot of sin for one story, but that’s how sin works. One sin invites another sin and another until you are so deep into it that there is no way out. Sin is ruthless. It promises you pleasure – but it never tells you the cost. It gives you 10 minutes of ecstasy and in return it takes everything. Sin makes us fools of us all.

²⁷And 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. (2 Samuel 11:1-27. NKJV)

Lastly we notice that:

6. Sin ultimately puts us in conflict with God

David knew that he was in conflict with Uriah, David knew that he was going to be in conflict with Ahithophel and he knew that he was creating conflict with Joab but David thought he could manage that and what he seems to have forgotten is that all sin puts us in conflict with Almighty God. The thing that David did displeased the Lord. Uriah can be killed, Ahithophel can be fired, Joab can be placated but it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. God is always the most wronged party. He is father to every victim and he is Sovereign over the universe. And God begins to move to bring David back into alignment and with that we begin to meet the issue of consequence.

What We Learn About Consequence:

These consequences are scattered across the subsequent pages of 2 Samuel but we’ll trace out as many as time permits. The first two consequences we meet at the conclusion of Nathan’s speech in chapter 12:

because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *who is* born to you shall surely die.” (2 Samuel 12:14. NKJV)

1. God is blasphemed

2. David’s child dies

Both of these are serious and tragic consequences, though we tend more naturally to register the latter than the former. We tend not to understand the seriousness of demoting God in the eyes of people. We tend to forget that what many people know of God comes fairly or unfairly from watching us. We tend to forget that what people think about God has an impact on their eternal souls. We tend to forget that there are worse things than physical death; and when we cause people to demote God, to discount God or to disbelieve God we do far worse than kill them, we consign them to an eternity of darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The universe was designed with God at the centre in the same way that our solar system was designed with the sun at the centre. The sun is the force of gravity that keeps all the planets in their proper orbit. Earth, Saturn and Jupiter all have different orbits and even slightly different shapes to their orbit but the reason they don’t crash into each other is because all their orbits have the same centre of gravity. But if any of those planets take a different centre, the solar system becomes a minefield and a war zone and ultimately the planets will collide into each other and eventually they will collide with and be consumed by the sun. That is what happens to people when we de-god God in their lives. We set them on a collision course with other people but ultimately we set them on a collision course with the FACT of God and the GRAVITY of God and the consuming HOLINESS of God. That is why what David did had such tremendous consequences because in the eyes of so many David represented God and when David did what David did he degodded God in many people’s hearts and he set them on a collision course of ruin. It is an awful thing to blaspheme the name of God and the consequences of so doing reach so much further than we can ever see.

Because God wanted to limit the consequences of his name being blasphemed, the Bible says that he caused David’s child to die. God knew that if David’s house were allowed to prosper by this sin than the holiness of God would be further discounted in the eyes of men and women. People would say: “Not only did the so called Man of God sin, but God blessed his sin and prospered his

house by it! Either God is not good or God is not powerful or God is not there.” So God made it clear that his people cannot be blessed in their sin. God acted to preserve his name and his GRAVITY in the minds of men and women. When we sin as God’s people and make ourselves the enemy of God’s Name God will act to preserve his gravity among the nations. Have you noticed that? The more you represent God publicly the less likely it is that you will ever be allowed to sin in secret and prosper in it. Every pastor who’s tried it has been horribly exposed. God, the devil and CNN all work together to make sure everybody knows that you didn’t get away with it – exposing the sin of God’s servants is the only cause in the universe that brings God, the devil and CNN onto the same team. You will not get away with it; you will not prosper in it. Consequence and justice will be visited upon you if you attempt to hide it or bury it or deny it. You never want to get between God and the honour of his Name.

3. David lost his moral authority in the home

It wasn’t just one son that died because of David’s sin. As the story unfolds chaos and sin began to consume David’s home. Because of his embarrassment and failure with respect to Bathsheba David felt that he could not rebuke and punish his son Amnon for similar offenses. Amnon raped his half-sister Tamar and David did nothing. Amnon’s brother Absalom learned some bad habits from dad as well and he committed murder – he killed his brother Amnon for the rape of his sister Tamar and still David did nothing because they learned rape and murder from their father. Two sons dead, one daughter raped and one son a murderer and soon to be a supplanter. The butcher’s bill for David’s sin was greater than he ever imagined.

4. David lost credibility with his senior advisors

We saw right off the bat in chapter 11 that David was losing credibility with his Army Chief Of Staff. David had suggested a plan to Joab to get rid of Uriah, a plan that was galactically stupid – everyone would know that David ordered Uriah’s death if a whole platoon of soldiers pulled back in tight formation leaving Uriah exposed to enemy fire – that was a panic plan and Joab spots it right away. Joab executes a better, though more costly plan. He sends a troop under Uriah’s command to a close assault on the city walls where he knows there are archers. Many men fall, not just Uriah, and therefore Uriah’s death is masked in the bloodshed. Joab though, annoyed and irritated by David’s undisciplined action and the toll it is taking on his own army sends

David a coded rebuke. We miss it because we don't read our Bibles as often as we used to. He says:

²¹Who struck Abimelech the son of ⁴Jerubbesheth? Was it not a woman who cast a piece of a millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? (2 Samuel 11:21. NKJV)

Do you remember that story? We read it a while ago now. Abimelech attacked a city with a tower and he got too close to the tower and a woman in the top of the tower dropped a rock on his head and almost killed him. Abimelech didn't want to be known as the fool who got killed by a woman with a rock so he called one of his soldiers to kill him with a spear. Joab is telling David that he got a little too close to the wall and he has been killed by a woman. "You are acting like a fool David and you are about to go down in infamy like Abimelech. Get your head out of your butt and start acting like a king."

In chapter 16 we see David losing control of his Prime Minister. Ahithophel the grandfather of Bathsheba and David's Sr. Advisor begins to advise Absalom in the civil war – he betrays David and tells Absalom to rape his father's concubines in order to supplant him as king. The man who sleeps with the wives of the King is the King – or so Ahithophel's revenge fuelled advice goes. David never meant to hurt those women but in the end, they paid for his sin; how many wives in this room know that story very well?

5. David's ability to govern suffered serious injury

When you lose credibility with your senior leaders and your own house falls into ruin it becomes extremely difficult to govern other people. This is the reason that pastors and elders who get caught having extra-marital affairs generally have to leave their ministries – sometimes forever. It isn't that adultery is the unforgiveable sin, it is that there are certain sins whose consequences are so far reaching and the effect of which is so personally devastating that you simply no longer possess the credibility necessary to govern people. It's a credibility issue. This is not about forgiveness – God forgave David, we're going to talk about that in just a minute – but the consequences went on unabated. Forgiveness and consequence are two different things. God wipes out our record in heaven but he does not re-wire the moral universe on earth to eliminate natural and predictable consequences. David did not lose his kingdom, he died as king many

years later, but he did lose effectiveness as a leader – he lost credibility and it cost him a civil war and many long years of political turmoil.

Lastly, and in conclusion, let's talk about grace.

What We Learn About Grace:

As hard as this story is to read and as truthful as this story is about sin and consequence, in the end this story is about grace. The grace of God is all over these pages. We see it first in 2 Samuel 12:1:

¹Then the LORD sent Nathan to David. (NKJV)

1. God sent Nathan

God did not let David remain in his sin. He sent confrontation, he sent rebuke, he sent truth. That is a grace; that is a gift because sin stinks and the longer you are left in it the more of your soul it takes. God opened David's eyes and gave him the gift of repentance. Do you remember the story of the Prodigal Son? The younger son was a selfish, lustful, prideful jerk and he went to his father and asked for his share of the inheritance so that he could party it up and live large. His father gave him the money and the son went off and threw it all away on parties and loose living. He found himself face down in the gutter feeding slop to pigs and wishing he could eat it. But the best line in the story is verse 17:

¹⁷“**But when he came to himself** (Luke 15:17. NKJV)

When he had sunk deep enough into the pit of hell God opened his eyes so that he could see his own sin and stupidity and he could go home. Have you ever known that grace? I have. David has. Repentance is a gift. If you don't know that then you've never had it.

God gave David grace in the rebuke and eye opening confrontation with Nathan the prophet and David confessed his sin and God forgave him. 2 Samuel 12:13 says:

“The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. (NKJV)

2. God forgave David's sin

Can you remember what that feels like? Can you remember how incredibly good it feels to hear God whisper into your broken soul: "I forgive you"? Can you remember that? There is freedom in that place and joy unspeakable.

- ¹¹ For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;
¹² As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.
¹³ As a father pities *his* children,
So the LORD pities those who fear Him.
¹⁴ For He knows our frame;
He remembers that we *are* dust. (Psalm 103:11-14. NKJV)

Those are good words. Words of grace.

3. God saved David's son

David's baby was born sick and it got sicker and then finally he died. David arose from his face where he had been fasting and crying out to God, he got dressed and he went into the temple and he WORSHIPPED. He worshipped because God was good and his little baby was now in the presence of his Creator and he was at peace. When people asked why David worshipped though the child was dead he replied:

"While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell *whether* ^fthe LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' ²³But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." (2 Samuel 12:22-23. NKJV)

He's in a better place and he is with a better father. The chastisement of God is never the last word. There is always joy in the morning and that is grace. Fourthly and lastly:

4. God reaffirmed his promise to David

Back in 2 Samuel 7, back before David and Bathsheba and this whole ugly mess, God had made David a promise about salvation. He had said:

¹²“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. (2 Samuel 7:12-14. NKJV)

God had promised David that the longed for Messiah would come from his body. One of his seed; one of his descendents would build the Eternal House of God; one of his descendents would be God’s own Son. That’s a big promise – that is THE PROMISE in the Old Testament and David wonders now, on the other side of Bathsheba and Uriah, on the other side of adultery and murder if God has changed his mind. David wonders whether the anger of God because of his sin will cancel out God’s promises concerning Messiah. 2 Samuel 12:24 says this:

²⁴Then David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in to her and lay with her. So she bore a son, and he ^fcalled his name Solomon. **Now the LORD loved him,** ²⁵and He sent *word* by the hand of Nathan the prophet: So ^fhe called his name ^fJedidiah, because of the LORD.

Do you see what God is saying? He is saying that there is no sin greater than the promise of God. That is the point of this story my friends. David is not the good guy; David is just one more bad guy who needs Jesus and JESUS WILL COME! He will come and he will pay for all of our sins, even adultery and murder – he will pay for them in his body on the cross. The promise of God for salvation is STRONGER THAN THE SIN OF MEN! To those of us who live on the other side of that promise it is no less powerful. There is no sin in your life that is stronger than the promise of God to save in Jesus Christ. Not murder. Not adultery. Not blasphemy, not anything. This story tells the truth about sin, it tells the truth about consequence but the last word is given to grace. God’s grace in Jesus Christ is greater than all our sin and in that grace he makes all things new. Jody will you come and lead us in an appropriate response?