

“YOU Are the Man!”

September 6, 2010

Psalm 103

1 Timothy 1:15-17

1 John 1:5-2:2

2 Samuel 12

**A Sermon preached by
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*“But the Lord was not pleased with David,
for David had done what was evil in the sight of the Lord!”
2 Samuel 11:37*

Or so we left our hero two weeks ago, mired up to his neck in the sewer of sinfulness and looking like anything BUT *“a man after God’s own heart.”* He had lusted after another man’s wife. He had committed adultery as he took Bathsheba for his own pleasure and satisfaction. And when she became pregnant, he had first connived to shift responsibility over to Bathsheba’s unsuspecting husband, Uriah...and then, when that plan failed, David successfully got rid of Uriah by assigning him to the front line of the fiercest battle where he was soon picked off by enemy snipers. In other words, for all intents and purposes, David had Uriah **MURDERED** under the guise of war, telling his general to place Uriah in the worst of the fighting and then to withdraw, *“so that Uriah may be killed.”* And then, after a suitable period of mourning, David proceeded to marry Uriah’s gorgeous young widow and take what had been another man’s wife as his own.

Compounding sin upon sin, David sunk to his lowest – all because he had let his passion take control of him when he saw a nude bather in the courtyard below. Oh, how far we have come since the idealistic little shepherd-boy, David, stood up to the great big giant Goliath that day on the battlefield many years before!

And so, last week’s scripture left us with that very damning statement which burned David to the core and left him to stew in the consequences of his own actions:

*“But the Lord was not pleased with David,
for David had done what was evil in the sight of the Lord!”
2 Samuel 11:37*

But that wasn’t the end of the story. Oh no! Not by a long shot! David may have **THOUGHT** he had gotten away with murder, but God was about to let him know otherwise. You see, God then sent the prophet Nathan to call on David at the king’s palace. But here’s what you need to know! Nathan didn’t go knocking on David’s door with fire in his eyes and his guns blazing. Nathan didn’t go in condemning David and ranting and raving about how sinful David had been. Oh no! Nathan simply held up before David the mirror of a parable so that David could see himself as God saw him. And in the process, he caught David in the web of his own condemnation.

Nathan, you see, simply began to tell David a story:

*“There once were two men who lived in the same town,” Nathan began.
“One of the men was rich...and one was poor. The rich man had many cattle and sheep,
while the poor man had only one lamb, which he loved dearly. He took care of the lamb
and loved it, and it grew up in his home with his children. He even got to the point he would let
the lamb eat off his own plate, drink out of his own cup, and hold it on his lap and let it sleep
at the foot of his bed. He **LOVED** that lamb and took care of it as he would one of his own
children. You get the picture, David?”*

David, of course, was on the edge of his seat, listening. As King, he was also judge and jury for all of Israel and I'm sure he thought Nathan was bringing him a problem he had encountered somewhere out in the realm...a situation that needed David's wise counsel to resolve. Knowing he had David right where he wanted him, Nathan continued:

"Well, one day, a visitor arrived at the rich man's house. And as was the custom whenever a visitor came to visit, the rich man wanted to serve him a feast. The only problem was, you see, the rich man didn't want to kill one of his own flock to feed the visitor. So instead, he sent his servants over to take the poor man's lamb which he promptly proceeded to slaughter, charcoal, and serve to his friends with a garnish of roasted potatoes, new peas, mint jelly."

And with that, David hit the roof. He said anybody who'd do such a cruel, callous thing as to steal a poor man's only lamb to feed a visitor when he had huge flocks of his own ought to be hog-tied and hose whipped and strung up for the buzzards to pick apart piece by piece so that he might die as slow and painful a death as possible. *"I swear by the living Lord, that man ought to DIE,"* David piously proclaimed. *"And at the very LEAST, he ought to be made to give back FOUR TIMES what the lamb was worth. Who is the greedy, thieving cad anyway?"* David demanded to know.

And that's when Nathan let him have it right between the eyes!

"YOU are the man, David! YOU are the one who has stolen another man's wife when you had eight wives of your own, not to mention all those other floosies you keep hidden away to satisfy your every desire. YOU are the one who had done this evil thing. How DARE you, David? How DARE you?!?!"

"Now, this is what the Lord God of Israel says to you: I made you King of Israel and rescued you from Saul! I gave you this kingdom and these wives! I made you king over Israel and Judah. And if that had not been enough, I would have done TWICE as much. WHY, then, have you disobeyed my commands? WHY did you do this evil thing? You had Uriah killed in battle! You let the Ammonites kill him, and then you took his wife!"

Now, in every generation some of your descendants will die a violent death because of your actions. Your own family will bring you trouble and grief. Your wives will be taken from you and given to another man and what he does with them will be done in broad daylight. You sinned in secret, but I will make this happen in broad daylight for all to see. For I, the Lord God of Israel, have spoken!"

And suddenly, David, who had up until this point, been frantically trying to hide what had done, ESPECIALLY from the Lord, KNEW that the ruse was up. And just as surely as Uriah had felt the enemy arrows plunge into his heart, David now felt the sharp arrow of guilt plunge into his!

"I have sinned against the Lord," was all David could say as he fell on his knees and buried his face in his hands...his words barely audible through the sobs that were racking his body.

Now, what I see happening next was surely one of the hardest things Nathan ever had to do...even harder perhaps than confronting his friend with the harsh reality of his sinfulness. He simply let David wallow in the anguish of his guilt for what must have seemed like an eternity. He simply let the full impact of David's sinfulness sink in, without trying to immediately take away that guilt with some kind of cheap words of forgiveness and grace. He simply let David feel guilty...for only in truly feeling guilty would David ever be completely convicted with the full impact of what he had done.

But then again, you need to remember that Nathan was, as a prophet, God's voice on earth. And in that moment, for David, Nathan was also God embodied. And the pain he felt in convicting David in his sin, was, I have to believe, GOD'S pain.

So after allowing David to feel the full impact of his sinful actions, I then envision Nathan, with love in his eyes and compassion in his voice, gently lifting David's tear-stained face with his hands and saying to him:

“Though you deserve to die, David, you will NOT die. The Lord forgives you. But because you have shown contempt for the Lord by your sin, there will be consequences to pay...the first being the death of the child that is in Bathsheba’s womb.”

And then, after holding David’s face tightly in his hands for several more moments as he looked deeply into David’s eyes, Nathan turned and went home.

Now, the stories that are in the Bible are there, I’m convinced, because God wants us to LEARN from them. Just as much as God inspired the writers long ago to WRITE these stories, so also does God inspire us today to UNDERSTAND these stories. And the understanding God would have us gain from this story of Nathan’s confrontation of David and his sin is, I believe, threefold.

First of all, I think the story of Nathan’s confrontation of David’s sinfulness would have us understand that **SIN HAS CONSEQUENCES**. And if anyone tries to tell you otherwise, don’t listen to them...because it sure won’t be the Lord talking to you. The story of David and Bathsheba and Uriah and Nathan says very clearly to us that there is a PRICE TO BE PAID FOR SINFULNESS. And oftentimes, that price...those consequences...are long lasting, affecting not only OUR lives, but the lives of those we love for years and years to come. Which was precisely what happened to David. *“Because of your sin, David, the sword shall never depart from your house!”* Nathan told him. Meaning? There are CONSEQUENCES. There is a price to be paid. And as you read on in the David saga, you begin to find out what those consequences are – family turmoil and tragedy...rape and revenge...an out of control son...a son who betrays his father and drives that father from his throne. Surely David would experience the consequences of his sinfulness in the terrible grief of his own household.

And if you somehow think the same or similar consequences of sinful actions don’t happen in OUR households today, you’re simply trying to pull the wool over your own eyes. Sin is sin and consequences are consequences – whether it’s David committing them long ago...or our committing them today. The simple, basic truth is that **SIN HAS CONSEQUENCES**. And if you’re not ready to accept those consequences, then please, for heaven’s sake...for your OWN sake...for EVERYONE’S sake...think twice...three times...a THOUSAND times before you commit the sin. King David has been dead and in his grave for nearly three thousand years. But the message he offers us today is just powerful and true and modern and up-to-date as if he were standing before us right this very minute. Please DON’T try to find out for yourself. Simply take David’s word for it! There is HELL to pay for sin!

The second message this portion of the David story would offer us today, I think, is this: Though sin certainly has its consequences, **THERE IS FORGIVENESS**. When we RECOGNIZE our sinfulness...when we ADMIT our wrongdoing...when we CONFESS the error of our ways, God WILL forgive us. Which is precisely what the prophet Nathan said to David. *“The Lord forgives you, David. You will not die.”*

Now, you want to know how consistent God is? A thousand years AFTER David...one THOUSAND years later...the Evangelist John echoed the very SAME message from the Lord:

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But...BUT...if we CONFESS our sin, God will keep his promise and do what is right! God will FORGIVE our sin and purify us from our wrongdoing.” (1 Jn. 1:9)

Plain and simple, **THERE IS FORGIVENESS FOR OUR SIN WHEN WE CONFESS THAT SIN BEFORE THE LORD**. David’s sin, regardless of its costliness, was not sufficient for God to give up on him. On the contrary, God loved David all the more! How much MORE then will God forgive and love us because of our faith in Jesus Christ, God’s son, our Lord and Savior, who, the scriptures tell us, *“came into the world to SAVE sinners!”* (1 Tim. 2:15)

Now, does that mean that God’s forgiveness takes away the CONSEQUENCES of our sin? Well, David’s story tells us otherwise.

Though David recognized and confessed his sin...and though the Prophet Nathan assured David of God’s forgiveness...David STILL had to live with the CONSEQUENCES of his actions. Right after assuring David of God’s forgiveness, he immediately goes on to tell him:

“...BUT because you have shown contempt for the Lord by the sinful things you have done, the child in Bathsheba’s womb will die.”

In other words, though there IS forgiveness, there are STILL consequences. Forgiveness...YES! Removal of consequences...NO!

And finally, the third lesson I see coming out of the story of Nathan’s confrontation of David’s sinfulness is this: **OUR GOD CAN BRING GOOD EVEN OUT OF THE WORST OF OUR SINS.** Pure and simple, our sinfulness...our doing evil in the sight of God...our messing up and failing to walk in the way of the Lord...no matter HOW BAD it is...can NEVER undo God’s will and way in the world. It may give God a temporary setback, perhaps. But it can NEVER defeat God’s intention for good.

Let me show you what I mean with the story of David. Yes, David sinned by lusting after Bathsheba. Yes, he committed adultery by taking another man’s wife as his own when he already had eight other wives and countless concubines to satisfy even his greatest desires. Yes, he lied and deceived and manipulated poor, unsuspecting Uriah and then, when his deceit and conniving didn’t work, he had him killed under the guise of war. Yes, David did ALL of things...and more. And HORRIBLE consequences came from it all: death...rape...murder...rebellion and disarray for not only the house of David, but for the entire nation of Israel for many years to come. AHH! But look what ELSE came of it all...all because God REFUSED to let David’s sinfulness defeat God’s will and God’s way in the world.

After David and Bathsheba’s first child died, David comforted his wife and slept with her. And she became pregnant again. Only THIS time, God BLESSED their union and Bathsheba bore David a child...a son...whom David named Solomon. And as the scriptures tell us:

“The Lord loved the boy and commanded the prophet Nathan to name the boy Jedidiah, which in Hebrew means ‘Beloved of the Lord’ because the Lord loved him.” 1 Sam. 12:24-25

And, if you remember your Bible stories from your childhood, you will remember that Solomon was wise and good and ruled Israel with the same king of love for the Lord that had been so much a part of his father, David.

But of even GREATER significance, you see, was Solomon’s grandson...David’s GREAT grandson many generations down the line...the child who would be born nearly a THOUSAND years after David in the little village of Bethlehem...all because he was of the house and lineage of David.

In spite of David’s sin in this whole sordid chapter of his life, God was able to bring the greatest good ever offered to God’s good creation: Christ Jesus, our Lord...who was and is and shall ALWAYS be nothing less than God’s gracious response to even our GREATEST sin. And in him there is FORGIVENESS...and there is LIFE – not only for David long ago...but for you and me today...EVEN when we are at our worst...EVEN when we too, like David, stumble and sin and fall far short of the glory of God. EVEN THEN...though there are consequences to pay...there IS forgiveness...and there is LIFE – life ABUNDANT in THIS life...and life ETERNAL in the life to come. So thanks be to God who gives US the victory through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

To Him be ALL glory, honor, majesty and power, both now and forever more! Amen!

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