

FATHERHOOD – Part Nine
THE CHARACTER OF DAVID
Sermon 9/15/19

There are times in our Christian walk when we have a sense of having “arrived”, of being in a place so much better than we have been in before that we feel we could never be tempted. We are so centered on God, that we live in a place where His love and His grace overwhelm and fill us with peace. We truly believe we are in a state of mind where nothing can intrude or take us away from His presence. The Bible warns us against times like these when it says, *“Let him who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall”* (1 Corinthians 10:12).

We’re going to look at the life of David today and the influence he had on his sons next week. But here is the overarching theme. It was David’s thinking that he stood tall and could do no wrong that caused division and strife in his family line. If he had taken heed and not fallen into temptation so easily, his sons and daughters would not have suffered the effects of his sin.

Two instances in the early life of David are key to understanding his true character, which was often hidden from those who knew him. The first occurred at the tender age of fourteen when God sent his prophet Samuel to anoint David as the next King of Israel. Though Saul still reigned, God had rejected him and sought after someone whom He viewed as “a man after his own heart”. That man was David. The second happened somewhere between the age of fifteen and nineteen when David slew the giant Goliath. It is here we will pick up the story.

As the eighth and youngest son of his father Jesse, David was responsible for tending his father’s sheep. One day his father asked him to bring food to his three older brothers who were out fighting a war; so David left his sheep in the care of another and went to the place of battle. While there David heard Goliath taunt the army of Israel and said, *“Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should taunt the armies of the living God?”* David’s oldest brother Eliab was angry when he heard what David had said and spoke harshly to him.

1 SAMUEL 17:28-29

“Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your insolence and the wickedness of your heart; for you have come down on order to see the battle.” But David said, “What have I done now?” Was it not just a question?”

Eliab makes an unfounded accusation against David - of coming to the battle under false pretenses and abandoning his responsibilities in order to do so. It appears from David’s response that this was a frequent occurrence.

Eliab may have lashed out at his younger brother out of embarrassment and humiliation. The army of the Philistines had taunted the army of Israel. Each day, for 40 days, their champion Goliath asked for someone to challenge him. But no one stepped forward. Instead the entire Israelite army fled from his presence. Now here comes his brother David saying, in essence, “something needs to be done to silence this heathen, and I am just the one to do it.”

It’s humiliating enough to be mocked by Goliath with no response from Saul, but it becomes even more so to Eliab when questioned by his younger brother about the inactivity of the army. The other soldiers were encouraged by David’s words, thinking there may finally be a solution to

their dilemma. They reported what David had said to King Saul. When David appeared before Saul, he stated with great boldness,

1 SAMUEL 17:32-33; 36

“Let no man’s heart fail on account of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.” (But) Saul said to David, “You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him! For you are but a youth, while he has been a warrior from his youth.”... And David said, “The Lord has delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” And Saul said to David, “Go, and may the Lord be with you.”

David was not afraid to confront evil. He was used to standing up against things more powerful than him. Confident of victory, David marched out to confront Goliath.

The Scriptures say, *“When (Goliath) the Philistine looked and saw David, he despised him; for he was but a youth, and ruddy, with a handsome appearance.”* David did not have the hardened look of a seasoned warrior. He was a fresh-faced youth, probably with rosy cheeks. This “ant” of a boy was an insult to the great Goliath. He expected a challenger worthy of his greatness and stature. Instead they sent a boy to do a man’s job. But just as David had run toward the lion and the bear and rescued the lambs from their mouths, so David ran toward Goliath. That day, what the entire army of Israel ran from, David ran towards. Using just a sling, a stone, and Goliath’s own sword, David single-handedly rescued the army of Israel from the Philistines.

In David we see these two attributes. In his physical appearance he was strong, healthy, and handsome. In his personality and mannerisms, he was inquisitive and fearless; something which his brothers belittled but which impressed King Saul who eventually enlisted David into his service. Even in his youth there was something inherent in David that others did not see which God would eventually use to bring peace to the land of Israel.

During the many years David served under him, Saul had a love/hate relationship with David. Initially David was asked to play his harp for Saul who was tormented with evil spirits. Then, as David matured and his leadership abilities manifested themselves, Saul put him in charge of his army. But Saul soon grew jealous of David’s wartime victories. Threatened by God’s blessing upon David’s life, Saul eventually sought to kill him. After being warned by the King’s son Jonathan, David’s closet friend, he escaped and hid from Saul in the wilderness for many years.

During this time David had ample opportunities to kill Saul but he refused to do so. One time, while hunting David in the wilderness, Saul went into a cave to relieve himself. Unbeknownst to Saul, this was the very cave where David and his men were hiding. Though he had already been anointed by Samuel as Israel’s next king, David did not take advantage of the situation and kill Saul. David honored the Lord and the position the Lord had created for Saul. Even when David crept into Saul’s camp and stood above him as he slept, he refused his men’s advice to kill Saul saying,

1 SAMUEL 26:9-11

“Who can stretch out his hand against the Lord’s anointed and be without guilt?...As the Lord lives, surely the Lord will strike him, or his day will come that he dies, or he will go down into

battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed."

David had no intention of taking the throne by force. His faith and respect for God's law would not allow it. He waited patiently and respectfully for God to bring about that which he had promised to him. As David had predicted, Saul and his sons eventually died in battle on Mount Gilboa, leaving the position of King available to David. According to 2 Samuel 5:4 David was thirty years old when he became king. This was sixteen long years after Samuel had anointed David as king.

We have very few David's today, few in the political world willing to wait for God's timing to bring about that which He has promised. Those eager for power want it now and are willing to bring down the current ruler in order to obtain that which they so desire. That is not what David did. He waited patiently for God to fulfill His promise to him. Once again this reveals the heart of David - a man who regarded the Lord's timing above his own ambitions.

What we see from the life of David is a man of integrity, compassion, faith, and trust. We also see a man of deep loyalty, one who befriended the king's son and remained loyal to him even when his life was in danger by doing so. He remained loyal even after his friend's death by taking in his son and seating him at his own table. This is the point at which David felt he was standing tall but should have taken heed lest he fall. For he was also a man with many flaws; tempted as much as any man but because of his position of authority able to sin more intently. I'm speaking of course of his sin with Bathsheba.

One spring, while his troops went out to war, David stayed behind in Jerusalem. In the evening he arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of his palace. From this vantage point he saw a young woman bathing on her own roof. The Scriptures say,

2 SAMUEL 11:2-5

"The woman was very beautiful in appearance. So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, 'Is this not Bathsheba...the wife of Uriah the Hittite?' David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her...and the woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, 'I am pregnant'."

Nothing unusual about becoming pregnant after having sex; nothing unusual about David having sex with many women for he had multiple wives as well as concubines. But David was known as a man after God's own heart whose songs reflected his love for and commitment to God; and he had just willfully committed adultery, a sin punishable by death. And this sin is about to become public knowledge. What can he do? How can he keep his sin hidden? How can he look as if he is still standing when he has fallen so hard? What would people think if they knew that the man after God's own heart had sinned so grievously?

After much contemplation David decides to bring Bathsheba's husband Uriah home from the front lines. Hoping he will go home to Bathsheba, David gets him drunk and encourages him to go home and sleep with his wife. But Uriah refuses to allow himself a privilege which his fellow soldiers could not enjoy and spends the night with David's servants. He does not go home to his wife. Though David gets Uriah drunk a second time, Uriah still does not go home. Frustrated with his inability to get Uriah to sleep with his own wife in order to cover over their sin, David

then resorts to murder. He orders Joab to place Uriah at the heat of the battle and withdraw from him. As a result, Uriah was killed.

After the time of mourning for Uriah was over, David sent for Bathsheba, and she became his wife. He thought he was safe now. Even though she was with child, he did not think people would suspect the child was David's nor that he was responsible for the death of Uriah.

David had done all he could to keep his transgressions hidden, but the things he had done were considered evil in the sight of the Lord. So, God sent his prophet Nathan to confront David. Using a parable of two men in a city, one rich and one poor, Nathan lays out a story of how the rich man stole the only lamb the poor man had, even though he had many of his own. David was incensed that something like that would occur and his anger burned greatly against the man. So he said to Nathan, *"The man who has done this deserves to die. He must make restitution fourfold because he did this thing and had no compassion."* It was at this point that Nathan said,

2 SAMUEL 12:7-9

"You are that man! Thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul. I also gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your care. And I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added to you may more things like these! Why have you despised the words of the Lord by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon."

It is one thing to be in command of your own kingdom and to pass judgment on a violator of the law as king. But it is quite another, as king, to be confronted with your own sin when you have tried so hard to cover everything up. If Nathan the prophet knows not only his adultery but also his murder of Uriah, then surely God has seen everything as well. David now stands totally exposed with nothing left to hide. It must have been a terrible moment for him but one of great relief as well. We know this from one of the psalms he wrote.

PSALM 32:3-5

"When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord'; and You forgave the guilt of my sin."

David had kept quiet about his sin and his body was wasting away within him. But when the opportunity to confess presented itself, as painful and humiliating as it must have been, David took advantage of that vulnerability and confessed his sin wholeheartedly and simply by saying, *"I have sinned against the Lord"*. The Lord heard the cry of his heart, but David's sins had consequences. And that's when Nathan delivered the remainder of his message from the Lord.

2 SAMUEL 12:10-14

"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. Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes and give them to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. Indeed, you did it secretly,

but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun...And Nathan said to David, "The Lord has taken away your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die."

After the child of Bathsheba and David was born, he became very sick. Even though David knew the Lord had said the child would die, his response was to pray for the life of his child.

2 SAMUEL 12:17

"(David) fasted and wept and lay all night on the ground. The elders of his household stood beside him in order to raise him up from the ground, but he was unwilling and would not eat food with them."

This happened over the course of six days. On the seventh day the child died as God had said he would. The servants of David were afraid to tell him because if he acted so strange while the child was alive what would he do now that the child was dead? They were afraid he might do himself harm. But by their whispers David perceived the child was dead; so he arose from the ground, washed, anointed himself, changed his clothes, came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped.

He then returned to his own house and ate the food that was set before him. When asked by his servants why the sudden turn of events, David answered,

2 SAMUEL 12:22-23

"While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows, the Lord may be gracious to me, that the child may live.' But now that he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me."

David's response reveals much about his character and his faith. David was intimately aware of the mercy of the Lord. His life of hope in God had propelled him into being victorious over Israel's enemies and eventually into being king over all Israel. Even a moment of indiscretion with its terrible consequences was not enough to dissuade David from going to the Lord and seeking God's mercy for the life of his child. He knew that when he sinned, there were consequences; but there was also forgiveness. David, a truly repentant man, accepted both from the Lord.

No man who has sinned so greatly and retains the burden of his sin can do this. Only a man who knows he has been forgiven and cleansed, even of the most heinous crime, can go to God and seek after His undeserved mercy. Once Nathan declared that the Lord had taken away David's sin, David fully received that grace. Walking out of the shadow of his hidden sin David entered the light of God's forgiveness and mercy. Yes, there would be consequences for David's sin starting with the death of his child and continuing down throughout his life as we shall see more clearly next week.

But David was no longer burdened with the weight of His sin. God had removed his sin as far as the east is from the west. David's relationship with His God had been restored, refreshed and renewed. David could now accept his consequences from the Lord because he had fully experienced God's goodness and grace. It was David's sin which had resulted in the Lord's punishment. But it was also David's contrite heart which resulted in the Lord's forgiveness.

Though David knew the mercy of the Lord prior to Bathsheba, after Bathsheba he fully understood the holiness of God and how his sin affected his relationship with his God. From this point on David would never take God's forgiveness for granted. He now understood fully that even though he was a man with a heart after God he was also a man who was prone to sin; He learned that though we sin against people it is God whom we ultimately offend. And so it is to Him we come for cleansing. It is to Him we come for forgiveness. It is to Him we come for the blotting out of our transgressions. And, even as we experience the consequences of our sin, it is to Him we come for the strength to pass through the dark shadows which appear in the valleys of death that lie before us.

David wrote a Psalm which summarized his experience when Nathan revealed his sin with Uriah and Bathsheba. Here is what he wrote.

PSALM 51

***“Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge.*”**

***“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom. Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, let the bone which You have broken rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins and blot out my iniquities.*”**

***“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit, Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You.*”**

“Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness; O Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise. For you do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. A broken spirit and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.”

We are not biblical heroes. None of us here have slayed giants or been heads of a nation's army. We may have never committed adultery or murder either. But we, like David, do have the propensity to sin. And we, like David, can think we are standing firm when we are just one temptation away from falling. If you have fallen, if you have tried to hide your sin and kept quiet about it, take a lesson from the life of David. Confess your sin and find relief from the torment of hidden faults. By doing so, you too can find the forgiveness and cleansing which God provides. God despises sin, but He welcomes all who come to Him with a broken spirit and a contrite heart. These are things which He does not despise.

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