

I want to begin by thanking Coty Pinckney for permission to use his material tonight.

## Introduction

3000 years ago the political leader of a powerful country committed adultery and murder; an accuser then stood before him and confronted him with his sin.

## Sin Always Deceives

2 Samuel 11:1-4 give us the first of four insights into the nature of sin, four principles that we would do well to remember:

1 In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem. 2 One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful. 3 David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" 4 Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (She had purified herself from her uncleanness.) Then she went back home.

David should have been fighting with his army; instead he sent his men out into battle while he remained in the comfort of Jerusalem. We learn at the end of chapter 12 that David evidently intended to let Joab do the difficult work of breaking down the defences of the city, and then arrive just in time to take the city himself.

One night David is on the roof of his palace when he notices a woman undressing, and then bathing. He notices her great beauty. The Hebrew literally reads, 'She was of good appearance -- exceedingly.'

Now, remember, David already has multiple wives; if he simply wanted to engage in sexual relations, he had several women to choose from.

He makes inquiries about her, one more beautiful woman for the harem but she is married and her husband is one of David's most loyal men, Uriah.

David now has a choice; either to commit adultery, explicitly breaking one of the Ten Commandments, and betraying one of his best friends -- or to control himself. David chooses adultery.

David himself has written "I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8). Yet David violates that very law, explicitly, knowingly. Why?

Here we come to the first principle: **Sin always deceives**. Sin always promises something it cannot deliver. When we hear these promises, we are tempted to give in, to accept the deception and justify our action. David must have done that; he knew he was doing wrong, but he tried to justify himself, perhaps by saying

"It's only one night -- I can go back to delighting in God's law tomorrow;" or,

"She's willing -- we're just consenting adults;" or,

"No one is hurt by this; Uriah will never know; Indeed, no one will ever know;" or,

"Think of all I've done for this country; surely I deserve this one little fling!"

So many have such temptations? Satan is the deceiver, and a liar. Satan presents the way to enjoyment, the way to fulfilment; when really it is the way to death and destruction. Satan persuades us that engaging in sin will fulfil our desires, but sin gives satisfaction only to our least important desires, and then only briefly, leaving us dying for true love, for true joy, and for true peace. Sin always deceives.

## **Sin Always Destroys**

David and Bathsheba have their fling, and she returns home. Weeks pass. David doesn't see her again, and thinks it's all over. He probably thinks he is delighting in God's law again.

Then one day, maybe four weeks after the event, he receives a message: "David, I'm pregnant." Now, Uriah has been away from Jerusalem for months. Soon Bathsheba's adultery will be evident to all. According to the law, she should then be stoned, along with her accomplice (Lev 20:10).

David tries to think quickly: "Let's see, one month has passed. It's not too unusual for children to be born four weeks early. If I can just get Uriah home, he and Bathsheba will have sexual relations. While she may seem to be a bit big for the number of months she's been pregnant, it's not that unusual."

So David has Joab send Uriah home.

7 When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. 8 Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. 9 But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house. 10 When David was told, "Uriah did not go home," he asked him, "Haven't you just come from a distance? Why didn't you go home?" 11 Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my master Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open fields. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and lie with my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!"

Uriah's statement must have cut David to the quick. Uriah has not seen his wife for months, but will not even visit her. All the army of the living God is undergoing hardship in the field; Uriah knows that is his place, that is where he belongs. He is fully loyal, fully devoted to Joab and David and to the God of Israel (even though he is not an Israelite by birth). What a contrast to David, who should have been out in the field with that army, but instead chose to indulge his sensual appetites, and to do that not with his own wives, but with the wife of this most loyal subordinate.

David proceeds to get him drunk that evening, hoping that this will overcome his loyalty, and that he will then sleep with Bathsheba. But even a drunk Uriah shows considerably more restraint than a sober David; Uriah does not go home. He sleeps on a mat at the palace with David's servants.

So David has to come up with Plan B, and a monstrous plan it is:

14 In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. 15 In it he wrote, "Put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die."

David has Uriah carry instructions for his own execution -- because he trusts him! He knows this loyal servant will never think of opening the letter. This is murder, plain and simple.

Joab carries out David's orders, with a twist. This plan seems too obvious; won't the whole army see that Joab ordered Uriah to be left on his own? How can he tell those soldiers who serve Uriah to desert him? So instead he has Uriah lead a suicide charge; a number of men die, including this faithful old friend. Joab sends a messenger to notify David, who responds cynically (verse 25):

25 David told the messenger, "Say this to Joab: 'Don't let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another. Press the attack against the city and destroy it.' Say this to encourage Joab."

What started as a one night stand, as a consensual relationship between two people, has led to destruction and death. And the destruction and death are far from over, as we will see.

This is the second principle: **Sin always destroys**. Sin destroys our relationships to man and God, sin destroys what is best in us, and sin destroys whatever we love most. One sin is always wrong, in part because we never stop with one sin.

Don't listen to anyone who tries to tell you that there is a sin that hurts no one. Sin always destroys.

### **Sin is Always Discovered**

Uriah dies; Bathsheba mourns for him, and then moves into the palace as David's wife. She grows great with child -- and everyone in the palace was able to count. Everyone knew that Uriah had come home but never saw his wife -- remember, he slept with the other servants. So at least the palace insiders know exactly what happened. Behind the king's back, people are talking. But David pretends that this is a natural occurrence, that he is doing his old friend a favour by taking care of his widow. Bathsheba gives birth to a healthy boy and to David all seems well. It looks like he has got away with adultery and murder.

11:27 But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.

12:1 The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. 2 The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, 3 but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. 4 "Now a traveller came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveller who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him."

5 David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die! 6 He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."

7 Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. 8 I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. 9 Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. 10 Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.' 11 "This is what the LORD says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. 12 You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'"

Picture this scene: Nathan comes before David, one of the world's most powerful monarchs, to confront him with his sin. Nathan tells his parable; David seethes with anger, calling out, "The man who did this deserves to die!" Nathan looks him in the eye and says, "You are the man! You are the man!"

As Paul says in Romans 2:1 **You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.** David passed judgment -- and he condemned himself, for he was guilty of the same crime. David thought it was all arranged; he pretended that no one knew. Well, other people did know, but more importantly, God knew. God always knows. As the author of Hebrews puts it:

**Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.** (Heb 4:13)

This is our third principle: **Sin is always discovered.** In the long run, there are no secret sins.

Paul says:

**7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.** (Gal 6:7-8)

Satan tempts us to believe that no one will ever know, that we can hide our sin; Satan is so effective in this that many lie to themselves, thinking that their sins are known only to them, thinking that they have succeeded in covering their tracks. But God sees all; everything is laid bare before his eyes; God will not be mocked. Sin is always discovered.

### **Confessed Sin is Always Forgiven**

What is David's reaction? Does he try to justify himself? Does he attack his accuser, saying, "Hey, Nathan, that wasn't fair! I bet you made that whole story up!" Does he try to wriggle his way out, saying, "Well, yes, I'm responsible, but nothing I did was exactly illegal." Does he argue that Nathan shouldn't have brought up the matter, saying, "This is a private matter, and none of your business. Leave me alone! Let me deal with this among my wives and children!" No.

**13 Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. 14 But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt, the son born to you will die."**

No excuses. No attempt to mitigate the seriousness of the sin. Simply, **"I have sinned."** So Nathan replies immediately, "The Lord has taken away your sin." This is our fourth principle: Confessed sin is always forgiven.

But there must be a true confession! Had David made excuses, Nathan would not have proclaimed his forgiveness.

What is the nature of true confession? David elaborates on his confession in Psalm 51. We will note three characteristics of true confession brought out by this Psalm.

For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

**Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love (hesed); according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. 5 Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. 6 Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.**

7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.  
8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. 9 Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. 10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. 13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.  
14 Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. 15 O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. 16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.  
18 In your good pleasure make Zion prosper; build up the walls of Jerusalem. 19 Then there will be righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

(1) True confession addresses all those affected by the sin.

The first lesson is found in the notation that begins the Psalm: "For the director of music." David wrote this Psalm -- and then gave it to the director of music, for use in public worship! David admitted his guilt not only before Nathan, but also before the entire country. Why?

Because the entire nation of Israel was hurt by David's sin. When Nathan told David that the sword would never depart from his house, he was not just threatening. The first son born to Bathsheba will die, and in the future, one of David's sons Amnon will rape one of David's daughters (2 Sam 13:1-14); two sons, Absalom and Adonijah will die through their acts of rebellion; and Absalom will lie with David's wives on a rooftop where all can see (2 Sam 16:20).

But beyond this, the worship of God had suffered. Everyone in the palace knew what was going on -- what did this do for the morality of the young men in the palace? What lessons did they draw from their king's behaviour?

This was not a private matter between David and Bathsheba, or David and Uriah's relatives. The king sinned, and all Israel suffered. So David must confess before all Israel.

(2) True confession admits that punishment is justified

David says that God is justified when he judges. He admits "**I have sinned against the LORD.**" Because of a lack of **truth in the inner parts** Humility and contrition does not downplay sin or blame the other person, but admits that we deserve judgment.

(3) True confession depends on God's mercy alone.

David calls out for God to act in accordance with his unfailing love (hesed), in accordance with his great mercy. He calls out to God to cleanse him, to wash him, and then since the external washing is not sufficient to change his very heart, to create a new heart within him.

David deserved death for his sin. God forgave him; and David did not die on earth in punishment for adultery and murder.

But forgiveness did not and does not necessarily remove consequences. The judgment through Nathan states Israel and, in particular, David's family will suffer immensely from this sin.

## Conclusion

David was deceived by Satan's lies and gave in to his sexual impulses; sin always deceives. Sin always destroys, and what destruction we have seen! Sin is always discovered but confessed sin is always forgiven

King David engaged in murder. Yet we can hold up David as a model, because of David's true confession. **"I have sinned against the LORD."**

David publicly confessed to his sin, and made no attempt to justify himself.

What sin are we knowingly engaged in?

Are we loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our strength, and all our mind? Are we loving your neighbour as ourselves?

Remember; Sin always deceives; Sin always destroys; Sin is always discovered.

Let's ask God with David:

**23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Ps 139)**

When we come to God pleading for His hesed and mercy, for our sins, God never turns his ear away. God always listens.

Because confessed sin is always forgiven.