

The Journey of the Heart: David and Uriah

Dr. Dave Neale

A bit of a look ahead so you can see where we are going as we come to the final weeks of this series. This week we consider David's moral awakening and repentance over the Uriah and Bathsheba affair. Next week (Aug 8) we will look at the aftermath of the affair with the trouble that arises in David's house by the rebellion of this beloved son Absalom.

On the 15th we look at Solomon's ascent to the throne in David's last days. In that message I will return to the life of Bathsheba and her son Solomon and explore what it means that the heir to David, the Messiah, comes through the line of Solomon. Jimmy will conclude the series with the story of Solomon consecrating his new temple on Aug 22.

In the remainder of the year, prior to Advent in late Nov. we will go back to the NT lectionary readings: the Gospel of Mark, James and maybe some Hebrews.

Today I am going to:

- Give you some context on the Uriah/Bathsheba affair in David's life
- Talk about the parable of *The Parable of the Poor Man's Lamb*
- What David's repentance means for us?

Context

Have you ever noticed that those in positions of great prominence and power often come to be known, not for the great things they did, but for their failures? People's lives can become defined by a grandiose moral failure.¹

David's life was ever to be known for his moral failure in the Uriah and Bathsheba affair. You will recall that after a lengthy period of subduing all of Israel's enemies, a tremendous period of success as king (2 Sam 8, David's victories), then comes this event. He is about 45, half-way through his reign. This really is the proto-typical mid-life crisis for which middle age men are so well known.

The reason I say David was known for this is because when the New Testament begins with the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah it says that ...***David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah*** (Matt 1:6b). Just six verses into the NT! They knew. Jesus knew his lineage. More about that in my message on Aug 15 when we talk about Bathsheba and Solomon.

Uriah. He is the righteous man of this story. When called from the field of battle by David he declines every accommodation of home-life and sleeps on the porch of David's house. He is simply above reproach in his conduct and it makes the story so poignant. David the sinner and Uriah the righteous. Uriah said:

...The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths... 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 do such a thing. (2 Sam 11:11). He is an innocent man who dies because of the sins of others.

Months later, after Uriah had been killed and David had brought Bathsheba into his house as one of his wives, the prophet Nathan pays David a visit and tells him this story which Marti read for us this morning.²

¹ Peter Nygard for example. Kennedy averted nuclear war in the Cuban missile crisis but we remember his relationship with Marilyn Monroe. Nixon of course is remembered for his sins. Clinton was actually a very good American president but we think only of Monica Lewinsky. Martin Luther King, the 20th century man I most admire, was well known for his extra-marital relationships.

² From a web search on "parables in the OT":

Of Balaam - Concerning the Moabites and Israelites.

Mount Pisgab

[Num 23:24](#)

Jotham - Trees making a king.

Mount Gerizim

[Jdg 9:7-15](#)

In the Text

The Parable of the Poor Man's Lamb. It is lovely story not only for its great pathos, depth of feeling, but because there are only a dozen or so parables in the Old Testament. So it really stands out to us as we are reading along in the narrative. In Hebrew it is called a *mashal*, in Greek *parabolē*, in English parable. It is a short, pithy story with a moral. Basically a metaphor, or a comparison of one thing to another.

[insert slide on *mashal*, *parabolē* and parable]

The parable was the favourite teaching device of Jesus (there are at least 30 parables in his teaching). Jeremiah said, "We stand right before Jesus when we are reading his parables."

I think we find the essence of this David story in this parable. By taking from others, especially the weak, to benefit ourselves, we sin. And this is the principle that is embodied in the Second Table of the Law, those last six commandments that deal with human relations.

When David heard the parable of Nathan the prophet:

Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." (2 Sam 12:5-6)

This is the beginning of David's awakening to his awareness of his sin. I have been talking about self-delusion as one of the characteristics of sin – that we deceive ourselves when it comes to our own misconduct. He has a blind spot. But now he awakens.

He says that the man who has done such a vile thing shall repay "four-fold" what he has taken from the poor man. When David says the man must restore four-fold what he took from the poor man it is an expression of the extreme nature of the offence and the extreme requirement of repentance, normally one only restores what was taken plus 1/5th.³

Does anyone know where else this is found in the Bible, only one other place?⁴

Samson – Strong bringing forth sweetness.

Timnath

[Jdg 14:14](#)

Nathan – Poor man's ewe lamb.

Jerusalem

[2Sa 12:1-4](#)

Woman of Tekoah – Two brothers striving.

Jerusalem

[2Sa 14:1](#)

The Smitten Prophet – The escaped prisoner.

Near Samaria

[1Ki 20:35-40](#)

Jehoash, King of Israel – The thistle and cedar.

Jerusalem

[2Ki 14:9](#)

Isaiah – Vineyard yielding wild grapes.

Jerusalem

[Isa 5:1-6](#)

Ezekiel – Lion's whelps.

Babylon

[Eze 19:2-9](#)

The boiling pot.

Babylon

[Eze 24:3-5](#)

The great eagles and the wine.

Babylon

[Eze 17:3-10](#)

³ In the Old Testament, harming others is understood primarily in terms of property. If you harm my property you must restore that property and a 1/5th to what was taken or destroyed, either intentionally or unintentionally. This is the key feature of repentance in the OT (see Leviticus 6 and Numbers 5).

⁴ *Zacchaeus in Luke 19*.

In the part of the story that we did not read this morning, Nathan says, ***You are the Man! ...by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord...*** (2 Sam 12:7, 14). Because he ***...had no pity.***

As a consequence

- ***Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house...*** (vs 10) This refers to David's life-long wars against Israel's neighbors.
- ***I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house...*** (vs 11) This refers to the usurpation of his throne by his oldest son Absalom (see chapter 15).
- ***I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.*** (vss 11-12) This refers to Absalom's public humiliation of his father by going in to his wives in a tent on a roof, ***...in the sight of all Israel*** (2 Sam 16:20-23).

In a one spare sentence David repents and is forgiven.

David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan said to David, "Now the Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die. (2 Sam 12:13)

But David pays the consequences of his sin for the rest of his life.

From the Text

David's life was changed in a moment of extreme grace. His life was defined from that day forward (25 years!) by God's gracious forgiveness. Did the consequences of his actions disappear? No. But the sin disappeared... ***put away...*** as vs 13 says. Today we experience this through Jesus Christ, amplified by the perfection of God's plan in sending the Messiah for our sake. It's not a different forgiveness, it is a perfected forgiveness.

In Psalm 51 we see David's heart after he realizes his sin and is awakened to this grace:

***Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and 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 in me a willing spirit.***

So in his journey of the heart David goes from his initial state of being a man who knows and loves God's own heart and mind when he is called from the sheepfold, to a man who loses his way in life, to a man forgiven and whose life was forever changed into a *forgiven life*. He prays, at 45 years of age, give me that clean heart again.

How is this grace possible? Because God made a covenant with Israel and in a covenant renewal led by Moses after the 40 years of wandering...

I am making this covenant, sworn by an oath, not only with you who stand here with us today before the Lord our God, but also with those who are not here with us today. (Deut 29:14)

And even though you may fall, the Lord will restore you in grace... ***so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live*** (Deut 30:6). This is the Good News!

Here is the take-away this morning, it is brief and simple.

We can live the forgiven life from this day forward. Our sin, any sin, is "put away" if we come to God with repentant and humble hearts. The forgiven life is the only life worth living really.

It doesn't mean we get to think... ***We are safe even though we go our own stubborn ways...*** (Deut 29:19). It doesn't mean we get to break God's law. It means we can experience the changed life of one who is free from the guilt and mistakes of the past. It is liberty. ***So if the Son sets you free you will be free indeed*** (John 8:36). This is the forgiven life.

If David could get his life back how much more can we? And we can get our life with God back. No matter what our age or our sin or what ravages of life we have endured – we can always get back to the garden. We can always be redeemed. There is always a second chance.

When little Zacchaeus, that life-long sinner in the NT, the tax-collector, hosted Jesus in his home as the Lord was about to enter Jerusalem, he said ***...if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much!*** (Luke 19:8).

Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."