

I & II Samuel

“Terrible Sin, Amazing Grace”

II Samuel 11 - 12"

I'm going to be reading II Samuel 11:2-5 and chapter 12: 1 - 15. God's word, not the whole, but a large portion of the passage describing David's sin with Bathsheba. This is God's word. II Samuel 11:2...

It happened late one afternoon when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing. And the woman was very beautiful. David sent and inquired about the woman, and one said, is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of a lion, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? So David sent messengers and took her. But she came to him, and he lay with her. Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness. Then she returned to her house, and the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, I am pregnant. 2:12:1 And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, there were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had many flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing but one little u. Lamb which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup, and lie in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock were heard to prepare for the guests who had come to him. But he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled. His anger burned against the man. And he said to Nathan, as the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. Nathan said to David, you are the man. Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, I anointed you king over Israel. I delivered you out of the hand of Saul, and I gave you your master's house, your master's wives, into your arms, and gave you the house of Israel and the house of Judah. If this were too little, I would have added to you as much more. Why have you despise the word of the Lord to do what is evil in his sight? You've struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the ammonites. 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. Thus says the Lord, behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house, and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor. And you shall live with your wives in the sight of the sun. For you did this secretly, and I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun. David said to Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said to David, the Lord has put away your sin. You shall not die nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child was born to you shall die. Then Nathan went to his house.

Let's pray. Lord, we know this story and yet it is always astonishing and I pray that we would take it to heart one more time, that we might know your grace and the weight of sin, and how your grace overcomes it. Yet we bear the fruits, we suffer the fruits and enjoy the fruits of your sacrifice.

Both we pray in Jesus name, Amen. And you may be seated.

I overheard a conversation once it went like this. Do you mean to say a woman said, well, I could kill someone on purpose and still be forgiven? And the other woman at the table said, if you genuinely repented, yes. To deny that, then it became poorly understood that these are two Christians talking. If you deny that, you deny the gospel.

Christ died for all of our sins, not the safe ones, understandable ones, minor ones, all of our sins. Not the socially acceptable sins. All of our sins. No believer earns their salvation by works. Neither does any believer gain the right to retain their salvation by their works, including the work of avoiding major sins. They spoke on. But it was an interesting conversation.

And then I think the woman was absolutely correct. The second woman. And of course, it illustrates what happens in the story with David and Bathsheba. You know the story, but I'm going to remind you that it actually covers chapters ten, 11 and 12 of second Samuel. Chapter ten describes the beginning of the events as it happened. David had for some period of time, a treaty of peace with the King of the ammonites, King of the ammonites died, and David sent a couple of his emissaries or ambassadors to comfort the son, and when the ambassadors came, instead of receiving them as they were intended, as comforters and friends, the friends or counselors of the new king

said, David's not interested in comforting you. He has sent these ambassadors despite the land. And to overtake our country you need to respond with force. And so they shaved the men's beard on one side and cut their clothes in half and sent them away. Now, this is a way of humiliating, I might call it a symbolic execution of David's ambassadors and David understood it as something akin to an act of war.

And they understood. Is it an act of war? And so they gathered up and paid for thousands of troops to come to their side in anticipation of a battle between themselves. And David and David fought for a little while. And then in chapter 11, verse one, you probably know the line if you know your Bible well, in chapter 11, verse one, it says at the time when kings go off to war to finish the battle, David sent Joab.

When kings go off to war, David sent Joab. And then we have David waking up from his couch in the middle of the afternoon and looking around at women. We know from these events, these facts, this report, that David had somehow begun to stray, stray from God's path, God's way. He had lost his way. He's the King of Israel.

He's the shepherd of Israel. When he became the king of the whole land, the people said, you have Shepherd of Israel, your shepherd, our leader. We've depended on you for years, even when Saul was our king. And now he's not shepherding any longer at all. He's on the roof. He's looking around. He sees a beautiful woman. We don't know anything about Bathsheba.

This is not her story. Not at least at this moment. We don't know if she was extraordinarily naive or whether she was trying to get the king's attention. We simply don't know. But we do know that David saw her and desired her and sent for her and took her, and she came, and she conceived a child, the word.

Who is this woman? Answered, this is the wife of one of the captains of your army, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. The Hittite is someone from a distant land. Hittites were not Israelites. There's no part of Israel called hit where the Hittites come. This is a distant land. This is someone who came to David to serve with him.

This is an outsider. This is a Gentile who came and he's a captain. And he said, it doesn't bother me. It doesn't deter me. I'll take her. We want to ask questions like, how could David do this? How could he take the wife of another man, let alone the wife of one of his captains in the armies, all fighting when he's not?

Now, people have debated this for a long time, but one of the answers that people have given for centuries in the church is that once someone begins to indulge their appetites, a little, it becomes easier and easier and easier to indulge your appetites more. So David is lazy. He's sleeping in the middle of the afternoon. He's not doing his job.

He does have multiple wives by now, until he's learned, shall we say, to indulge his appetites in that manner. And it seems that he has come to think of himself as a king, like other king who takes what he wants and can have many wives if he wishes he desired her. It was a royal custom in the ancient world that if a king wants someone, he takes someone.

And so, as James says in chapter one, desire, when left unchecked, ultimately leads to death. It doesn't seem that Bathsheba stayed very long, but she did conceive a child, and the word came back to David. And we know that in Israel this was a shameful thing. And in fact, according to the law, not that it would be imposed on the King most likely, but according to the law, the punishment for this sin, this known sin of adultery, would be execution, death.

The death penalty came. And so David decided to conceal the matter. He thought it was pretty simple to do, so all he had to do was recall Uriah from the battle. This is in the rest of chapter 11. Just recall him. He's a captain. He can consult or pretend to consult. Have a nice time, say, now go home and be with your wife and voila!

Everything will be fine. People will consider that the child belongs to Uriah, but Uriah wasn't that kind of a guy. When he talked to David, David said, now go home. And Uriah said, the ark of Israel and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, camped in the open fields. This is chapter 11, verse 11. How could I go to my house and eat and drink and lie with my wife, my wife?

As surely as you live, I will do no such thing. I cannot take my wife and sleep in my own comfortable bed while my men are out in tents. Now we don't know what Uriah knew. We're tempted to think that Uriah knew what was happening. He was saying to David, I'm going to be no part of your cover up.

Maybe somebody told him what had occurred. But there's no the text doesn't say that. Commentators ask the question, could he have known, is this what he was doing? But it looks straightforward. He's just saying, my men are suffering. I'm going to suffer my men are separate from their homes, their beds, their wives, their families. And I'm not going to go either.

And so he refused to go to his wife, to his home. This upset David, but he thought, well, I know what I can do. I can invite him back the next day and I'll get him drunk. What he did, and then he'll go home. But he still slept outside the king's home. So David, David has scheme and it was foiled by Uriah's innocence and dedication.

Uriah, whether he meant to or not, was rebuking David for his sin, laying about his house, sleeping in the middle of the afternoon, taking whomever he wished. You know, it's interesting to me that David, when he was younger, was running from Saul and trusting the Lord at every turn, and had a chance to kill Saul, who was trying to kill him and wouldn't lift up his hand against the Lord's anointed, a man who was trying to kill him.

And now he kills a completely innocent man. You say, wait a second, we don't get to that. Okay, here's how we get to it. Uriah once, twice had a chance to go home, and David said, okay, he's not going home. I've got to do something. And so he sent Uriah back to the battle with a letter, a sealed letter to Joab and the captain of his army.

There was a lot of tension between Joab and David at times, and Joab received an order job was a brave man, but not a man of great principle. And the order said, Put Uriah in the front lines, and then pull back, so that in the battle against the ammonites a number of people be killed in the front lines, and Uriah will be one of them.

And then I can take the wife. Now, of course, what we've done here is move from killing one man to killing several men and implicating other people in that murder. It doesn't quite go that way. Joab was willing to do it because Joab probably wanted to have some hold on David, but it didn't work that way. The battle went back and forth.

The ammonites were stronger than expected, pushed against the Israelites. The Israelites countered and got too close to the city wall of the ammonites. The ammonite archers shot down from the wall and killed a number of people, among whom was Uriah. And then Joab, in a sort of a cold, calculating way, said, okay, David's not going to be happy to a messenger.

You the report of the battle. David's not going to be happy that our troops got so close to the wall, and he's going to rebuke you, and he's gonna be upset with me for carelessness in a counterattack. But if he explodes, which he probably will, then just say to him, oh, and by the way, Uriah the Hittite was killed.

That'll shut him up. And so the report goes back. And the messenger was supposed to say, that didn't quite. He said, you know, the battle pushed back and forth and the archers shot Uriah. And David said. Don't feel bad. The sword devours one as well as another. And so we see not only adultery and murder, but now a callousness to the death of his own people.

So far, David has sunk. And what we have here is the way in which sin kind of multiplies, starts with the desire for someone to just be lazy, and then laziness and self-indulgence lead to lust, and lust leads to abuse of someone else. I can take them into my into my hair. so he must have been thinking.

And then I've got to cover it up. And then I kill. Then I kill again. And. And that I don't really care about the consequences. It is interesting that this is the way it goes. Sin breeds more sin. Troubled means breeds more trouble. This is a very high level. I'm going to go down way down to a simpler level, a much less egregious example, but something as simple as gossip in the church, which is a sin, can become gossip and slander and gossip and slander can become division and anger and hatred, and the church can be devoured with something that starts with something as simple as gossip, which we all think is no big deal.

Or in a school the student is disrespectful to the teacher and then the teacher doesn't exercise control and another student is disrespectful. Another student is disrespectful, and soon there's a whole cadre of students are disrespectful, and then the whole class is out of order and the teacher quits. It happens. Sin breeds more sin. Well, David did marry Bathsheba, at least after Uriah died and their son was born, and things seem to be over.

It took almost a year till we find out what happened next. But David wrote Psalm 32 about the interlude. He said this in Psalm 32, verses three and four. While he was quiet about his sin, he says, when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long for day and night your hand was heavy upon me.

My strength was dried up as by the heat of the summer, and the Lord seemed far off. It was miserable. And then in chapter 12, verse one, it says in one of the Bible's great understatement

and second, Samuel's for them. The thing that David had done displeased the Lord. Well, I guess, and so it tells a parable. It tells a parable through the prophet Nathan.

And I read it to you about two men, one rich, one poor, one has vast herds, one has one little u lamb, which was like a pet to him, which was a phenomenon in that culture at times. Sometimes a lamb was turned into a pet. When hearing the story about this rich man who won't spare any of the thousands of sheep or hundreds of sheep that he has and kills, takes and kills this poor man's one, you lamb.

David hears the story. He's so upset it could be translated. His anger burn, he said, as surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die, and he must pay for that lamb fourfold, which I love, because it shows at least he has a strong sense of justice left. And he says, listen, the guy who did this kill him first and then make him pay.

You so angry. He's irrational. And then Nathan points the bony, prophetic finger at him and says, you are the man. And so David did. He had multiple wives. Uriah had one. He took that one wife. David is condemned himself now the prophet of God has condemned them as well. And we're familiar with that part. I want to make sure we hear the rest of it.

I read it to you, but God says, listen, if you had wanted more wives, more wealth, more pleasure, whatever it is, you'd want it. If you'd asked for more, I would have given you more if it were two little. I made you king over Israel. But if that weren't enough, I would have added much more verses 8 to 10.

So why despise the word of the Lord and done what is evil in his sight? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword. You took his wife. You've killed him with the sword of the ammonites. The fact that someone else did it doesn't make it different. You arranged his death, therefore the sword will never depart from your house.

I'm going to talk about that in a minute first. But please hear it. First of all, just a word about the punishment. You were violent and so the sword will not depart from your house. Your crime is one of violence, and so violence will enter your house. And if you know the rest of the story of Samuel verses chapters 13 to 20, it strife and death and mis misdeeds and malfeasance of every kind, you will face the consequences, and the consequences will be measured to the crime.

Your own, your own wives, one of his daughters suffering rape, wives being taken by other men, as you have done so, will be done to you. The Punisher will fit the crime. And David then says something in chapter 12, verse 13, I tried to read it to you to to make it clear there's actually just two words in the Hebrew in the, in the English translations is I have sinned against the Lord, but the Hebrew language has work compound words.

And so we actually have just two words I have sinned. That's one word in the Hebrew against the Lord is one word. I sinned, one word against God, one word. It's a simple and clear and condensed as can possibly be. And it is, I will say, the perfect confession, matched to a terrible sin. Because you please notice what isn't there.

He doesn't say anything more. He doesn't say, I was tired, I was lonely, I was just on the phone with the king of Egypt, and he was telling me about all his wives. He doesn't say, if you knew how wretched my four preexisting wives were. He doesn't say anything except I have sinned against the Lord. No excuses, no commentary.

No. Yes, I did it. But yes, I did it. But someone made me do it, he simply confesses. And in 14, Nathan speaks in the Hebrew three words the Lord is word, one has taken away his word. Two your sin is word. Three two words plus three words as stark and as simple. No preconditions. It does not say, if you will demonstrate your sorrow by doing the following things.

It does not say Hail Mary's, gifts to the church. It says the Lord is taking away your sin. In Psalm 32, David describes it. He says, I then I acknowledge my sin to you. My bones are wasting away. When I didn't confess than I did confess. He says, I acknowledge my sin too. You did not cover my iniquity.

I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and you forgave my sin. Period. Now of course, this leads us to communion. This is how our sins are forgiven. In the Old Testament, prophet said it by the word, by God's mere word. But we understand that in real life it happened by the body and the blood of Christ, by the death of Christ.

And it covers the worst possible sin. I mean, if you think of the sin, you could it could not possibly get worse. The sin is public. The sin is deliberate. It is callous. It is premeditated, both the adultery and the taking of life. It's as bad as it gets. He directly harmed many people. It wasn't conceived of in the mind and never executed.

He did it. It was a sin against knowledge. He had no pressure. He was. It was absolutely nothing that ameliorates his action. It's as bad as it gets. And it violated all ten commandments because it began with coveting and ends with putting his own pleasure ahead of worshiping God. If you wonder, did he do it on the Sabbath?

The answer is it took him a year to repent every Sabbath. That he didn't repent was a day in which he violated the Sabbath day. He committed every sin with no excuse, and he's forgiven. It's hard to take it in. I had a conversation one time with a man. I've, greatly reduced my notes on this. Who had a really difficult father who treated him very badly in a lot of ways.

And, the father died and the son talked to his mother about it, and his mother basically said, you know, your dad treated you really badly, but you have what you have to understand. Is your

dad a really hard life? He was more or less abandoned by his own parents and put in a boarding school. His father was actually violent to him at boarding school.

He fell in with the wrong crowd and became an alcoholic. He was an alcoholic the rest of his life. The alcohol led to depression. Very capable man, but he kept on losing his jobs because of his alcohol and depression. He got married during one of his dark periods, and his wife committed suicide. I mean, come on, your dad had a horrible life.

You've got to forgive him, the mother said. And the son said, excuse me, but the fact you had a hard life did not give him a right to beat me and abandon me. I do not have to forgive him. There is no reason to forgive him. And the mother kept pressing. You owe him forgiveness because, because, because. And the man said, there's no because.

There's no excuse for what my father did to me. And so he was at an impasse. And eventually I got involved in the situation. And I said, look, you're both right and you're both wrong. Your father had a very difficult life. You should be merciful to your father, and you're also. That's to the mother, the son. It's true.

There is a difficult life, does not give you the right to do whatever you wish. Your children. What you're both struggling over is the almost incomprehensible rawness of grace. Mom, you do not have to. You don't have to say the words you. You owe your father forgiveness because he had a hard life. No one else forgiveness, anybody. It's a raw gift.

And, son, you're right. Your father is not exonerated by what he did. But the fact that he's not exonerated doesn't mean that you as a Christian, are free from the obligation to forgive him. As Christ forgave you. Both the mother and the son could not wrap their arms around this idea that grace is all but incomprehensible. What Christ did first defies all logic.

Because whatever you want to say about Davidson, our sin against God is sorry, just as bad because we don't have a real reason for our sins, and we're not offending Uriah and sheep, but we're offending the Almighty God who gave us life and breath and everything. It's an astonishing grace. And yet one more thing needs to be said, and that thing that needs to be said before return to communion may seem like I'm undermining what I just declared.

I'm not. The Bible makes it very clear that you can be absolutely forgiven for your sin, and still bear the consequences of your sin in this life. So some years ago, maybe 15 years ago, someone got mad at me about something and started slandering me. He started accusing me of doing things I had not done at all, and a few people eventually came to him and said, you know, you're slandering Dan, you're cute, you're upset.

But he didn't do what you say he did. And eventually the man came to me and said, Dan, I've been slandering you for the last couple of years, and I'm coming here to ask you to forgive me.

And I said, I forgive you, and I want you to undo the slander. I want you to tell the people that you lied to about me that it was a lie.

And he said to me, but you forgave me. I said, yeah, I forgave you, but I also want my reputation back. You've been lying about me for two years, and you should go to the people you lied to and tell them it was a lie. Are you saying that's a condition? No. I've forgiven you. But I do want you to tell the truth.

He couldn't get it. And so this illustration came to me. I said, let's just imagine for a moment that you stole my car. Okay, I'll imagine that. And I see you driving around in my car about six months from now. And I say to you, Joe, that wasn't his name. Joe. That's my car. And Joe says, you know what?

You're right. It is. would you like it? Would you like me to ask for forgiveness? Would you forgive me for stealing your car? I would forgive you for stealing my car. And I would like my car back. I'd like my car back. I forgive you and undo. Now, what God said to David is you're forgiven. You're going to bear the consequences.

We celebrate God's grace. David's son died. David's house did endure the miseries that God said it would. So I want you to understand that God's grace is unfathomably deep. He forgives us forever for the sake of Christ and Christ alone. There is no reason. There is no reason for God to forgive. There's no extenuating circumstances we can plead upon.

We can't say, but you owe me forgiveness. There is nothing but the raw love and grace of God. And it's also true. We need to take heed that when we sin, there are consequences, even if we're forgiven. Simply, God set up the world. If a child deceives his or her parents by lying, the parents will last for proof.

When they speak, a father who yells and screams at his children and is violent toward his children, can ask his children for forgiveness and get it. And the children may still say, you know, we're going to keep our distance. They have a right to do that. A church leader may greatly sin and be forgiven, not return to church leadership because of the nature of his sins.

So we have to hold two truths together. Great sin is met by great grace. There is no reason, no cause within us. We don't deserve forgiveness. We don't earn it. We don't do anything to prove it is sheer raw grace. I have sinned against the Lord. The Lord has taken away your sin. The basis is nothing in us, but in Christ alone. And yet also take heed. Take heed because sin does have consequences in this life. But beyond that, let's go back to Jesus.

Let's stand, confess our sin, ask him to forgive and turn to him as just presented in the New Testament in the cross. Would you stand, please? And we will confess our sins together and prepare for communion.

There is a confession of sin in your bulletin. How many of you have a bulletin? Seven people. All right. If you have a bulletin, share it with somebody near you. There we are. Let's confess our sins together. Friends, even if you've not sinned even vaguely like David. We need to ask God to forgive. Let's use these words together.

Almighty and merciful father, you pour your benefits upon us. Forgive the UN thankfulness with which we have requited your goodness. We have remained before you with dead and senseless hearts. UN kindled with love of your gentle and enduring goodness. Turn us, O merciful father, and so shall we be turned. Make us with our whole heart to hunger and thirst after you, and with all our longing to desire you. Amen.

Now, what I want to do is just say another word about God's grace. As we prepare in song for a couple of minutes and our elders will prepare the table, remind you one more time that the work of Christ is the basis for our standing before God.

We may never sin like David did. We may commit the smallest of sins of self-indulgence and the tiny bit of gossip here and there, and even that can separate us from God and from his ways. His grace, his love. Whether your sin is great or small, there is one remedy for it, and that is the shed blood and broken body of Christ, which is now presented to us.

This is our hope. And whatever the status of your soul today, whatever the nature of your need of grace perceived or perhaps only dimly perceived at the moment, there is one thing and only thing we say, I have sinned against the Lord, and through the table and through our songs we say to ourselves what God has said to us, the Lord has taken away our sin through Christ. Through Christ alone, received by faith. Received by faith. Trusting him and him alone to make us right with God both now and forever. If you are a little bit unsure about whether you're a sinner or not, I assure you that you are, and that it would be good for you to repent even if you don't know what you need to repent of. Spend some time repenting. And if you, on the other hand, are. In danger of being deluded by the depth of your sin, or wondering if God will really forgive you, I ask you to know this, that Christ gave himself to take that doubt away. Jesus gave himself entirely to us so that we can have entire peace with him.

Let's pray for a moment.

Lord, we do consecrate these elements in this time of singing and praying and receiving to your name and to your gospel, and with glad hearts for all that you've done for us on the cross and in the resurrection.

Amen.