

# A Fall from Grace

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Good morning. I'm reading from 2 Samuel chapter 11, verses 1 to 17, and then verses 26 to 27. In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they ravished the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. 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. And David sent an enquire about the woman. And one said, is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Ureah the Hittite? So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. Now she had been purifying herself with her uncleanness. Then he returned to her house. Then she returned to her house, and the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, I am pregnant. So David sent word to

Joab, send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab was doing, how the people were doing, and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, go down to your house and wash your feet. And Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. When they told David, Uriah did not go down to his house, David said to Uriah, have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?

Uriah said to David, the ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. 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 this thing. Then David said to Uriah, Uriah, remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back. So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. And David invited him, and he ate in his presence and drank, so that he made him drunk.

And in the evening, he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but it did not go down to his house. In the morning, David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. In the letter he wrote, set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him that he may be struck down and die. And as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men. And the men of the city came out and fought with Joab, and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite also died.

[ 3 : 3 0 ] Verses 26 to verses 27. When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah, her husband, was dead, she lamented over her husband. And when the morning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

Chapter 12, verses 1 to 13, and then verses 24 to 25. 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 very many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing but one little yew lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drank from his cup and lie in his arms, and 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 or herd 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. Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserved 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 said the Lord, the God of Israel, I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul, and I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms, and gave you the house of Israel and

of Judah. And if that were too little, I would add to you as much more. Why have you despised the word of the Lord to do what is evil in his sight?

You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with a sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Amorites. 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 said 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 he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this son, for you did it secretly. But I will do this thing before all Israel and before the son. David said to Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said to David, the Lord also has put away your sin. You shall not die. Verses 24 to 25. Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and went into her and lay with her, and she brought a son. And he called his name Solomon. And the Lord loved him, and sent a message by Nathan the prophet. So he called his name Shadidiah, because of the Lord.

[ 6 : 43 ] This is the word of God. David. Great. Good morning again. It's, um, Kevin asked me to preach, um, I don't know, when he heard that we were coming over, and, um, and, you know, God had been convicting me, you know, we want to come and be a blessing and be an encouragement, um, as we come here. And, uh, he said, yeah, would you like to preach? I said, yeah, sure, I'd love to. And then he said, um, great, it's David and Bathsheba.

He didn't quite do it like that. But, um, but, um, but actually, I mean, one of the, um, one of the things that, Kevin's very brave, because he's not here. And so I could say anything I like right now. And then I'm, we're going to be off soon. So, um, so the elders have better, you know, leave, pick up the devastation afterwards, right? Um, let me just pray for us, actually, as we get into God's word.

Father, we want to be those who tremble at your word. We don't just hear it, but we want to be those who tremble and then do it, Lord. Father, in one sense, this, this, this topic today is, is heavy, Lord.

But actually, you're a God of so much grace. And I pray that you would just get honor and glory this morning. In Jesus' name. Amen. Um, so, so this is, uh, yeah, I mean, what a passage, right? Uh, what a passage. So, uh, I don't know, when was the first time that you realized your parents were flawed?

[ 8 : 53 ] Now, some of you may be really early. I, I remember, um, particularly, I can't remember how old I was, but my mom dropped me off at some activity. Um, and, um, and then afterwards, she was going to go and pick me up, except she forgot. And at that moment, all of my illusions about my parents' perfections were shattered. And this passage today is about the greatest king Israel had ever had.

He is, uh, King David is a godly man. He's a, he's a hero to thousands. He's the kind of guy that everyone would look up to and go, wow, he's the man. And this passage is about him doing the unthinkable. And it's a passage where I want to talk about the spiral of sin. I want to talk about how sin gets exposed and then judged and then how sin is confessed and then it's forgiven and redeemed.

Okay, so that's where, that's where we're going. But just follow through on your bulletin with me as we kind of go through this in the spiral of sin. It says, in the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle. Good kings led their army in battle after the winter time, when you can't go out, into, uh, to help protect and, uh, secure their people. David had been fighting battles constantly. He'd served faithfully, but this time David remained at Jerusalem. He was meant to go out, but he stayed in. Instead of serving the people, he was actually serving himself. And he sends his commander, Joab, and all the rest of the people to do the job. And perhaps he felt entitled. Perhaps he felt I just need a bit of me time. I deserve a break. But that's the step one of a little decision to indulge himself. And it starts a spiral. Because step two, what happens? It says, it happened late one afternoon. David arose from his couch. He was walking on the roof of the king's house and he saw from the roof a woman bathing and the woman was very beautiful. He's just had his afternoon nap.

He looks out, sees a beautiful woman, and the glance becomes a gaze. And the gaze grips his heart.

[ 11 : 25 ] And do you know it's when you're off guard? It's that late at night and the clickbait comes on your screen with a suggestive picture. And you go, I'll only look briefly. And the look becomes a click, becomes a gaze. And soon sin's tentacles are choking your heart. That's step two.

Engulge yourself. A glance, a gaze. It grips your heart. Step three. David uses his power as king to send for her to serve his own desires. And he actually knows exactly what he's doing. That's the thing. He knows that Bathsheba is married to one of his most loyal soldiers, Uriah. He knows she's actually the granddaughter of his most trusted advisor, Ahithophel. And she's cleansing herself. That means she's ritually purifying herself after a period since he's being a good Jew. And yet he's coming to defile her. It's not her issue. It's his issue.

But what he's doing is using his power to serve himself. And if you take the picture from, do you remember Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden? The fruit, it looked desirable. And they took it and ate. And what he does, the same. And he sleeps with her. She gets pregnant. And then imagine David's reaction to the WhatsApp message that he gets. She's pregnant.

Because, you know, the law said that the penalty for adultery was death. And when he realizes the stakes are high, he could get exposed. He comes clean and tells everyone what he's done. No, he doesn't.

Step four. You see, it starts with a little step. And then comes to a gaze and it grips his heart. And then finally he acts on it. And then there's the cover-up. Step four. And he calls for Uriah off the battlefield where he should be. And he has this kind of fake concern for him. How's everything going? Oh, it must be hard for you. Go home. Have a break. Serve yourself. Sleep with your wife.

[ 13 : 37 ] But Uriah, who is a Gentile, a Hittite, is more faithful to God and to his people than David is. And he doesn't go home. And in the morning, David goes, plan foiled. Okay, why? And he says this. He says, the ark and Israel dwell in booths, are in tents. They don't have a home to stay in. How can I go and just indulge myself at this moment? Who do you think he's more concerned about? Is he more concerned about himself? No, he's more concerned about the people and the soldiers that he's with.

Do you see how it's working? Step one, indulge yourself. Step two, his heart gets gripped. Step three, he acts on it. Step four, the cover-up. Step five, he then tries to force the issue.

Another plan. Let's get him drunk. And now David, godly man, becomes the tempter, trying to draw a faithful person into his own self-serving sin. But Uriah, unlike David, he says no. He resists it. And so then David goes to step six. No other way around it. He's got to destroy him. He orders him killed. And Uriah takes his own death warrant with him to the front lines. And he makes his own commander kill his own man. And Uriah has been an amazingly loyal servant. What a great reward. What a great king that David is sacrificing his own men to save his own life. And I think you've seen from a man who actually, just a couple of chapters earlier, he was really caring for Mephibosheth. He's a man of compassion. He cares for people. But now where has he got to? He's got to completely indifferent to people's value. Because when he hears of the loss of soldiers and Uriah, his response should have been, why did this happen? But his response is, oh, don't let the matter displease you. It's fine. Don't worry. It happens. People die.

[ 15 : 49 ] And David's final cover-up is he marries Bathsheba, which actually, according to the law, was very honorable. Because you were meant to, because of the vulnerability of widows in the time, to marry one of his best troops was to provide and protect and give the honor of children. It looked noble. It looked great. And he thought he got away with it. But man looks on the outside and God looks on the heart. That's pretty lousy, isn't it? Pretty lousy. Do you know, Hitler forced one of his generals, Rommel, to take poison and then faked sadness in front of Rommel's wife at his funeral.

But that's Hitler, right? This is King David. A man after God's own heart. And you know, I'm reading this and I'm going, man, this is challenging. I'm a pastor. And let me just clarify for a second. I don't go around committing adultery and murdering husbands. Okay, I've got many sins. That's not one of them at the moment. But I can see the spiral, can't you? I can get caught in that spiral. And I could see, if I just allow that to go far enough, how you could go anywhere. You know, letting those angry thoughts towards my wife just fester. Letting that, why is it always me who have to do it? Just dwell there long enough. Or that gaze lingering on that image. And the self-serving parasite of sin can eat the best of us alive from the inside out. That's scary, isn't it? That's scary. And maybe, I don't know what it is for you. I've got plenty of my issues. Maybe for some of you it is porn. And maybe you think you're doing a good cover-up. But do you know that, that will twist you. It will twist your view of others. It will twist and objectify other people made in the image of God.

[ 17 : 54 ] It will kill a healthy sex life, let me tell you. And the passage is a warning to us. Don't toy, even with the step one of the thought of sin. Don't play with it. Don't mess with it. And if that's you, come into the light with a brother or sister. Because there is freedom when you do that. Before it eats you alive. The spiral of sin. It's serious. Take it seriously. Secondly, the sin gets exposed.

And it says here, the thing that David had done displeased the Lord. God isn't fooled by the cover-ups. And God sends his prophet, Nathan, and his word to him. And do you remember, if you know previously, Nathan had been sent by God to David to give him a message to tell him, your kingdom is going to last forever. That's a great message, isn't it? Now just imagine when God says go and give him this message. Like how do you rebuke somebody who's got the power to put you to death. The stakes are super high for him. And Nathan knows that sometimes, and any of you who are husbands know, sometimes the best way to talk to someone about an issue is not to just go straight direct. Be a little tactful. And he knows that stories are able to persuade us often more than intellectual arguments. Do you know that? And so what he does, he tells this little parable about a rich man stealing a poor man's sheep to save himself. Well, we don't, I don't know how many sheep you've stolen recently, but that's probably not our issue. So let me just tweak it a little bit. I may modernize it a little.

It's like if there was a boy, let's call him Fred. He's not good looking. Have you got, there he is. He's not very intelligent. He's got low career prospects, but he's very kind. And he always puts other people before himself, but no girl is ever interested in him. Can't even, ah, oh, there's no mercy at all. Okay, this is, this is for you guys, this passage, okay? And, but then one day a beautiful girl comes along in McDonald's and she sees beneath the surface to his kind heart, they fall in love, they get engaged. And then an attractive tycoon son, there she is. Let's call her angel. And then an attractive tycoon son, Ricky. Here we go. He's a playboy. Comes into McDonald's, sees the girl, promises her a new life, takes her out for dinner at the most expensive restaurants, buys her luxury goods and brands, and she goes with him. Breaks off the engagement, becomes pregnant with him. Fred is devastated. He collapses in depression and dark thoughts. Ricky soon gets bored of the girl, dumps her, tells her to get an abortion and moves on to the next girl.

Well, that's what sin is like. That's what selfishness is like. It uses people. It destroys people. And that's why God says, I get angry at it. And David is a man after God's heart. And what he does, he angrily pronounces God's judgment. He says, as the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die. How many of you find it easier to get angry at everybody else's sin rather than your own? One person. That's great. Okay. Thank you for being honest. Okay. Okay. Everyone else of you, you're covering up. Okay. But what's he just done? He's just pronounced his own death sentence.

And Nathan replies, you're the man. Can you imagine that silence? That's actually every one of us. Every porn user, every adulterer, every self-serving individual.

[ 22 : 13 ] Anyone not self-serving? Right? You see, when sin grips your heart, you won't change until you see the ugliness of sin unmasked. And you despise it. And you go, man, how could I do that?

And you see, he goes on, sin is not just being naughty. It's actually personal towards God. God says, I've been so good to you. I anointed you, king. I delivered you from Saul. I gave you everything you have. And if that hadn't been enough, I would have given you more because I'm not stingy.

I'm a God who loves to give and loves to give and loves to give. You can't out give me. But what have you done to my generosity? You've struck down Uriah. You took from him. You killed him. You despised my word. Anyone feel a bit uncomfortable? Right. You know, I came for some encouragement this morning. Thank you.

It gets worse, though. Let me tell you. It's going to get worse before it gets better. Because as he exposes the sin, he says it leads to judgment. Because he says you reap what you sow.

[ 23 : 32 ] You sow death to Uriah. Death is going to come into your family, into your son. You sow dishonor to Uriah's wife. You'll reap your own wives being dishonored. And the thing here is, even if you're a Christian and we know about the forgiveness, I'm going to talk about Christ's forgiveness. But actually, he wants to say, don't play with sin and think you can just get forgiven. Because sin always has consequences. It's not trivial. And you're going to see this played out. I think, Neil, you're preaching the next couple of weeks. You're going to see how it gets played out in the life of his family. You know, when I was younger, many of you know this, I made some poor choices. I

didn't listen to a whole load of people who were trying to help me. I thought I knew better. And I actually ended up having a breakdown. And even to this day, I still struggle with some of the fruit of that, like concentration, all kinds of things.

Because actually, sin does affect you. It does. And that spiral of sin, and when sin gets exposed, and then sin gets judged, it leads you to a place where you've got to go, okay, have I got your attention?

Because then it comes to sin confessed. You know, just last week, I was in, one of our ladies runs a toddler group. And they were coming, they came up the stairs to where I was trying to work in our church hall. And they were desperately looking for something in kind of a bit of a panic. And they said, we're looking for this toy garage that somebody has taken. And suddenly I realized I had borrowed it about three days earlier for Etienne to play with, and I'd forgotten to give it back. And do you know what I said? I said, yes, sorry, Etienne borrowed it.

Now that's half true. The borrowing part was true. Just the person wasn't. But you see, when you get exposed, you fear being judged, don't you? And we always want to substitute for that. Someone to blame, someone to defend ourselves. Do you remember when King Saul gets confronted by Samuel for sinning by keeping Amalekite wealth for himself when he's told to destroy it? He defends himself. He goes, I did obey God. Half truth. And then he blames you. It was my troops who made me do it. But when David gets exposed here, do you see what he does? He doesn't make any excuses. He doesn't justify it. He says, I've sinned against the Lord. Full stop. I've sinned against the Lord. Wow. That's pretty bold, isn't that? You see, that's not a cheap confession. That's a confession from someone who's been cut to the heart by God's word. And he's repentant. And he goes, I want to come into the light.

I want to be clean. How do you get to that place where if you've just been cut open, instead of running and hiding and defending yourself, you actually come clean? How do you get to that place? You see, sometimes I talk to my son about sin and our need for Jesus. And I'll say something like, do you ever do bad things? And there's silence. And he gets a bit restless and the curtains suddenly look very, very interesting at that point. And then I say, does Elodie, your sister, ever do bad things? And he's like, yes. Like, very happy to admit that. And then he, then I say, does mummy ever do bad things? And he's like, okay, where's this going? And he's like, yes. Does daddy ever do bad things? And he's like, yes. And we know sin is not just doing bad things, but, and then I go, does Etienne ever do bad things? And he goes, yeah.

[ 27 : 47 ] How does he get to that? Why does he finally get to that place where he's willing to admit to? It's because he feels safe now to do so. He understands that they're sinners. How many of you like being criticized? Okay, there are no hands. That's probably honest. Don't we all fear being judged and shamed and exposed? Many of us, our parents pointed out to us everything that was wrong more than everything that was right, didn't they? For some of us. So that's why we put up so many defenses and we create our shields and our substitutes to justify ourselves because we don't feel safe. And we project that onto God and we don't feel safe. Do you know in the US there's some studies that showed that three quarters of all Christians think that God is critical, disappointed, distant, or angry with them? How much honest repentance do you think is going on there? Not a lot. But you know in Psalm 51, which is David's prayer of confession, read it afterwards. It's incredible. And I'm only going to give you two verses.

But he starts with this. He says, Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy. Blot out my transgressions. I know my sin before me. But then he goes, Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight. Now do you see how safe David feels to admit his sin? There's no groveling. There's no excuses. Why? Because he knows that the very character of the one who has exposed him is the one who is abundantly merciful, is the one who is abundantly full of steadfast, unflinching, unwavering, committed love for you that is so passionate.

That's why he wants to expose you to bring you into the light. Because he wants to find freedom there. Because don't you know when you can come clean to someone and there's restoration? Wow, it's so much less tiring, isn't it, than hiding? Because he wants you to experience that today, afresh. You know, I remember in a job that I had, I got called into the boss's office at one point, and I knew that I'd messed up really big time. And people were unhappy with what I'd done, the team was imploding, and I went in expecting to just be kind of torn apart.

Anyone ever had those kind of, those meetings? And so I was kind of thinking of all my strategies, you know, your defense strategies of excuses. And I get in there, and the first thing he goes to me is something like, Chris, I want you to know I so value you.

[ 30 : 34 ] Thanks for all you've been doing. I'm so glad to have you on the team. And do you know what happened to my defenses? They just melted. And I was able to hear what he wanted to say to me.

And we chatted about the situation, I saw the things that needed to change. Because grace makes you safe to the place where you can come honestly and find healing.

And repentance is not just about confessing sin, it's about pursuing change in your life. And you'll only do that if you know that God is so safe and God is so gracious to you, that it's the place of freedom.

There's a spiral of sin. When it gets exposed and there is judgment, don't take it lightly. But in confession, there is a place of safety that God wants to bring you, and then sin is forgiven and redeemed.

And here's the final point. Because Nathan says, The Lord also has put away your sin. You shall not die. I bet he was glad to hear that.

[ 31 : 51 ] But think about that. After all he's done, adultery, cover-up, murder, you're forgiven. One sentence. Really? Nothing else.

You're forgiven. That's it. What? Your porn habit. You're forgiven. Your anger. You're forgiven. Your critical spirit. You're forgiven.

But you go, I've done it so many times. I know. But it's so bad. I can't have done this. Don't you think I know? God, my mercy is big enough for you. Because we have one who knows exactly what it is to be a substitute for us.

Because you see, the wages of sin are death. David substituted Uriah for his own deserving death. His own newborn son will die.

Seems harsh, doesn't it? Why did he have to die? Shouldn't David die? Now perhaps, given the rest of David's family history, that was mercy to him. But when we go, that's not fair.

[ 33 : 01 ] Sin isn't fair, you know. But you know, grace isn't fair either. When you take communion, I don't know if we're taking communion today or not. We are.

Great. When you take communion, when you think about Jesus' death for you, which is where the story leads, do you ever go, wow, that's not fair.

That should have been me. That should have been me. Because Christ is the ultimate substitute. You try and put it on everybody else, but Christ says, I've taken it all on me so that you don't have to put it anyone else.

You don't even have to put all that guilt on yourself because I've taken it all for you. You're free. The chains are gone. Not because it's fair, but because God is rich. He is abundant in love.

He is abundant in mercy. And do you know what I've realized just recently? I've realized I've been quite critical recently.

[ 34 : 09 ] And what that's told me is something. I've lost sight, first of the seriousness of my own sin, but also secondly, abundance of God's mercy. Because how can I be critical all the time when I have a God who has paid the price for me?

Let it cause you to wonder. And if forgiveness wasn't enough, the end of the passage goes, then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, went in and lay with her, and she bore a son, and she had his name Solomon, which comes from the word shalom, peace.

And the Lord loved him, and sent a message by Nathan the prophet. So he called his name Jedidiah, meaning beloved of the Lord, because of the Lord. But she is pregnant again, and Nathan sends another message.

Do you think David was at peace when he clicked on that WhatsApp? What's he going to say this time? And the message comes, David, don't screw it up again. No, it doesn't.

It says, this son is beloved of the Lord. Beloved. Do you see how big his mercy and his grace is?

[ 35 : 24 ] On the scale of sins, David is right up there with the worst. But when God forgives, he doesn't just put the incident behind him and move on. No, he actually works redemption through the very darkest places in your life.

He can bring the greatest light, because Solomon's going to become the wisest king ever, the one who builds God's temple, the one who threw in the promises that God had given to David for the

kingdom are going to flow all the way to Christ.

And David, who thought he'd screwed it all up, realized that God hasn't finished with him yet. Isn't that amazing? And those of us who believe this, do you know that's not just David's story, that's our story too.

That's my story. Do you know, through my breakdown, God has used that to be able to speak to many others about God's grace. I've been in that place where regret has tried to master me. And say, God can't use you. Look at all that you have done and how you've affected others. But you know, that's a lie. Because his mercy, as we sang before, his mercy is more.

[ 36 : 34 ] You take whatever you've done, his mercy is more. His mercy is more. That's why I can stand it today. Not because I've got everything right, but because I've got an amazing Savior.

Sin is serious. Don't toy with it. God will expose it. Come into the light. But his mercies are new every morning. And that includes this morning, right now, wherever you are, whatever you've done, whatever you're hiding, his mercy is more.

Let me pray. Father, I pray that even as we even as we stand before a God who none of us should be able to stand before, and yet what a miracle.

We're in the safest place in the whole planet because of Christ, because of your grace. I pray for those of us who right this morning, there are things that we're running from you with.

There are places where we're toying with thoughts, toying with decisions, toying with putting things ahead of you. Father, I pray, God, would you arrest them to this morning? Would you convict people this morning?

[ 38 : 15 ] Would you show them that's not a kitten, that's a tiger that will kill them, Lord? Show them the ugliness of sin, I pray. But then show them even in greater technicolor, Lord, the glory of your grace, that Jesus is a better promise, a better offer, more grace, more mercy than we'll get from anyone else on this planet.

And you're the place that we can run to today. Thank you for who you are. In Jesus' name. Amen.