

2 Samuel 11-12:25 • The Spiritual Snowball Effect

Introduction

Some people think that David merely “slipped up” and engaged in an extra-marital affair. But when we fully examine the biblical account of his conduct with Bathsheba and all that resulted, we have an example of someone that is not merely making a mistake, but engaging in an ever-increasing **lifestyle** of sin. Like a snowball that starts out small at the summit but gains momentum and size the longer it travels unchecked, sin breeds even more sin until that’s the measure of one’s entire life. David’s example is how sin leads to a complete falling away, followed by what it **really** takes to be properly restored.

¹Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem.

²Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king’s house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. ³So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, “Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?” ⁴David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house.

⁵The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, “I am pregnant.”

[Read v.1-5]

Q: What is immediately wrong with David?

A: He’s in the wrong place at the wrong time. He has stayed behind in Jerusalem instead of being with Joab battling the Ammonites where he actually belongs.

Point: *WE are the ones actually giving sin an opportunity when we dwell in the wrong places at the wrong times—the places where sin abounds.*

Q: Is the chance witness of Bathsheba in and of itself a sin?

A: No, it’s what David does with it. Instead of averting his eyes and thoughts, he dwells on her to the point of wanting more information about her. Lust begins with the eye and continues in one’s thoughts.

*I have made a covenant with my eyes;
How then could I gaze at a virgin?
Job 31:1*

Q: Why should David’s actions have stopped at the moment of inquiry?

A: Because the answer was that the woman was married. This should have been enough in and of itself, but for added emphasis it’s further noted she’s the wife of one of David’s elite soldiers, what is termed one of his “valiant men” in other passages. There is no provision in God’s Law for even the King of Israel to be able to engage in adultery. But David’s adultery will be with the wife of a close associate.

Point: *Once David allowed lust to take root, he lost all regard for others. He didn’t care about their marital status, the quality of their personal relationship, or the effects his actions would have on them. Sin led to breaking the second major point of the Law in every respect: Love your neighbor as yourself.*

Application:

- *What is the best way to prevent sin in the first place? [Don’t be in the wrong place, the place of overwhelming temptation.]*
- *What is one of the earliest warning signs that sin is attempting to gain entrance into our life? [Our gaze and thoughts are fixed on it, even trying to get more information about it.]*
- *Why is personal sin not just destructive to our personal relationship with God? What else does it destroy? [Our personal relationships with others.]*

⁶Then David sent to Joab, saying, “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” So Joab sent Uriah to David.

⁷When Uriah came to him, David asked concerning the welfare of Joab and the people and the state of the war. ⁸Then David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house, and wash your feet.” And Uriah went out of the king’s house, and a present from the king was sent out after him. ⁹But 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.

¹⁰Now when they told David, saying, “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?”

¹¹Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in temporary shelters, 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? By your life and the life of your soul, I will not do this thing.”

¹²Then David said to Uriah, “Stay here today also, and tomorrow I will let you go.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next.

¹³Now David called him, and he ate and drank before him, and he made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his bed with his lord’s servants, but he did not go down to his house.

¹⁴Now in the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. ¹⁵He had written in the letter, saying, “Place Uriah in the front line of the fiercest battle and withdraw from him, so that he may be struck down and die.”

[Read v.6-15]

Q: What do you suppose David’s original intention was regarding Bathsheba?

A: The implication in v.4 that “she had purified herself from her uncleanness” before returning home is that the chance for pregnancy had passed. So until she became pregnant—therefore the evidence of sin could not remain hidden—he apparently was going to let the indiscretion remain a secret.

Q: What is David’s first reaction when faced with the news of Bathsheba’s pregnancy, the public evidence of their sin?

A: Deception. He was willing to allow the child to be wrongly perceived as Uriah’s child, even to using Bathsheba to this end.

Q: What were the spiritual reminders to David in Uriah’s response in v.11?

1. The ark is synonymous with God’s Word, so there is a reminder to the higher calling of obedience to God’s Word above all else.
2. The reference to “Israel and Judah are staying in temporary shelters” is a reminder that the overall calling and work of God given to drive out all the enemies from Canaan has not yet been accomplished and, indeed, is still ongoing.
3. The inclusion that “Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field” is the specific application that the word and will of God is occurring as they speak, but at another place. It should have reminded David he was definitely in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Q: What was David’s reaction to Uriah’s message?

A: To attempt to get Uriah to ignore his own stance by getting him drunk, hoping that Uriah would lose control and go to Bathsheba after all.

Point: Sin gives birth to more sin. David didn’t hesitate to make every attempt to get Uriah to compromise his faith as long as it kept David’s sin hidden.

Q: After David’s first two failed attempts to deceive Uriah, to what does he finally resort?

A: Murder. If he can’t manipulate Uriah, he’ll remove him entirely.

Point: One of the indicators that we are embracing sin to the point that it is becoming a lifestyle is that we forget that God sees everything as we concentrate almost exclusively on hiding it from man’s eyes. If we can’t change the truth through deception, we attempt to remove others completely. Ironically, these are the exact tools of Satan himself, who first tries to deceive (symbolized by the serpent), and then engages in open persecution (symbolized by the dragon). To pursue righteousness is characterized in the Bible as being a “son of God”, whereas pursuing a lifestyle of sin as being a “son of Satan”.

¹⁶So it was as Joab kept watch on the city, that he put Uriah at the place where he knew there were valiant men. ¹⁷The men of the city went out and fought against Joab, and some of the people among David's servants fell; and Uriah the Hittite also died.

¹⁸Then Joab sent and reported to David all the events of the war. ¹⁹He charged the messenger, saying, "When you have finished telling all the events of the war to the king, ²⁰and if it happens that the king's wrath rises and he says to you, 'Why did you go so near to the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? ²¹Who struck down Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman throw an upper millstone on him from the wall so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?'—then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.'"

²²So the messenger departed and came and reported to David all that Joab had sent him to tell. ²³The messenger said to David, "The men prevailed against us and came out against us in the field, but we pressed them as far as the entrance of the gate. ²⁴Moreover, the archers shot at your servants from the wall; so some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is also dead."

²⁵Then David said to the messenger, "Thus you shall say to Joab, 'Do not let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another; make your battle against the city stronger and overthrow it'; and so encourage him."

²⁶Now when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. ²⁷When the time of mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house and she became his wife; then she bore him a son. But the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the LORD.

[Read v.16-25]

Q: David's original orders were for Joab to allow Uriah to die in battle. But was Uriah the only casualty?

A: No. It states "and some of the people among David's servants fell". It's a very difficult thing in the midst of this kind of ancient battle to achieve surgical accuracy and incur only a single, intended casualty at the hands of the enemy. Therefore, additional innocent lives were lost in the process.

Point: *The catastrophic effects of sin are rarely limited to just one person alone; they almost always incur innocent casualties.*

Q: Why do you suppose that Joab's initial coaching of the messenger in v.18-21 was so elaborate?

A: Probably because the actions taken during this battle were unusual and therefore noticeable to a lot of other people, the other soldiers especially. It was a kind of excuse or cover-up.

Point: *One of the earliest casualties in the course of a Believer's embrace of sin is the integrity of their witness. Others begin to sense the lack of credibility and ulterior motives.*

Q: The literal translation of David's response to Joab in v.25 is "Do not let this thing be evil in your sight". What is David trying to do?

A: He's trying to justify and further hide his actions, to cloak them in the guise of "stuff happens during times of war". It's an indication of David's commitment to cover this up at any cost.

Point: *Look at all the other people that David has involved in his sin. It was not just limited to he and Bathsheba alone, but involved the messengers he sent to fetch her, those in his court that aided every step of the cover-up, Joab, and soldiers on the front lines to include innocent victims that died along with Uriah.*

Application: *How does sin expand beyond affecting just you personally? Have you ever engaged in sin that eventually had unintended effects on others? Where was your concern for **THEIR** spiritual welfare?*

[Read v.26-27]

Q: How was this David's final cover-up?

A: He first provided the opportunity for things to **APPEAR** proper by allowing the time of mourning, and then he married Bathsheba so the child would not appear to be born out of wedlock. He used these established institutions to complete the work of his deception.

Point: *David's actions are a picture of someone that embraces a lifestyle of sin, not someone that merely makes a mistake. Every sin that goes uncorrected gives birth to a greater life of sin.*

¹Then the LORD sent Nathan to David.
And he came to him and said,

“There were two men in one city, the
one rich and the other poor.

²The rich man had a great many flocks
and herds.

³But the poor man had nothing except
one little ewe lamb

Which he bought and nourished;
And it grew up together with him and
his children.

It would eat of his bread and drink of
his cup and lie in his bosom,

And was like a daughter to him.

⁴Now a traveler came to the rich man,
And he was unwilling to take from his
own flock or his own herd,

To prepare for the wayfarer who had
come to him;

Rather he took the poor man’s ewe
lamb and prepared it for the man
who had come to him.”

⁵Then David’s anger burned greatly
against the man, and he said to Nathan,
“As the LORD lives, surely the man who
has done this deserves to die. ⁶He must
make restitution for the lamb fourfold,
because he did this thing and had no
compassion.”

⁷Nathan then said to David, “You are
the 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. ⁸I 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
many more things like these! ⁹Why have
you despised the word 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
have killed him with the sword of the
sons of Ammon.

[Read v.12:1-6]

Q: Why do you suppose Nathan communicates a parable rather than plainly confronting David with the truth of his actions?

A: David has been engaged for at least a year in keeping this a secret, deceiving everyone as to what has actually taken place. He has probably arrived at that strange place of denial in coming to believe he is justified in what he’s done. He needs to be spiritually “jarred” since he is so practiced in justifying sin that he’s largely self-deceived.

Q: What is the lesson we can apply here when attempting to confront others concerning sin?

A: We may need to use examples that will re-establish a measure of truth so that they will be able to size up and recognize their own situation. One of the side-effects of working so hard to deceive others is that one’s own self often becomes deceived as well, or at least the lie is repeated so often that it becomes the natural, first response if confronted.

Q: Why is David’s pronouncement of a death sentence both wrong in and of itself as well as an indication that his own conscience is not 100% dead to the truth of the situation?

A: The Law does not warrant a death sentence for such thievery. His overreaction is not uncommon for someone that has even the smallest, residual conscience reminder that they have sinned. They often express it by being overly outraged at another’s indiscretions.

Q: What is ironic about David’s pronouncement, “He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold”? How will this become a reality?

A: David will come to lose four sons: The son born of Bathsheba, Ammon, Adonijah, and Absalom.

[Read v.7-9]

Q: How would you summarize God’s message to David in v.7-8?

A: David had been given everything by God, even to the point of having far more than he actually needed. But he pursued something that was neither authorized by God, nor actually in need of.

Q: How does God summarize David’s behavior in v.9?

A: “...you have despised the word of the LORD”. David’s every act of sin and deception was an act of disobedience to God’s Word. [Note: Like David, we are without excuse when we engage in sin, because His Word has provided the ground rules in advance.]

Q: What is implied in the phrase, “by doing evil in His sight?”

A: David’s self-deception was that something hidden from men would remain hidden from God. It wasn’t.

Q: In the final analysis, how is God characterizing David’s sin?

A: David thinks he’s covering up his sin against others, but in reality he is sinning against God Himself. David will convey this himself in Psalm 51, the Psalm written specifically concerning this event.

[Continued on the next page.]

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.

Psalm 51:3-4

[Read v.10-15a]

¹⁰Now 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.’

¹¹“Thus says the LORD, ‘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. ¹²Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.’”

¹³Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.”

And Nathan said to David, “The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die. ¹⁴However, 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.” ¹⁵So Nathan went to his house.

Then the LORD struck the child that Uriah's widow bore to David, so that he was very sick. ¹⁶David therefore inquired of God for the child; and David fasted and went and lay all night on the ground. ¹⁷The 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.

¹⁸Then it happened on the seventh day that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, “Behold, while the child was still alive, we spoke to him and he did not listen to our voice. How then can we tell him that the child is dead, since he might do himself harm!”

¹⁹But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David perceived that the child was dead; so David said to his servants, “Is the child dead?”

And they said, “He is dead.”

²⁰So David arose from the ground, washed, anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he came into the house of the LORD and worshipped. Then he came to his own house, and when he requested, they set food before him and he ate.

Q: David achieves reconciliation with God and forgiveness for his sins—but does that make everything “OK”?

A: There will still be consequences because of sin.

Application: Do we sometimes seek forgiveness because what we really want is to avoid the consequences of sin? How well do you recognize that the process of salvation may involve some kind of restitution, or that sin may have an effect even after we've fully been restored to God?

Q: What appears to be one of the greatest, unintended consequences of David's sin, aside from the death of his son?

A: “...by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme.” (v.14) To the list of all the unintended, peripheral victims of David's sins is the enemy, who are able to use this ammunition in their spiritual attacks on the One True God.

Application: Do you ever consider all of the others that may be/are being affected by your actions? How well do you consider the effect it has as a witness for Christ? What might this indicate about the integrity of your personal walk?

[Read v.15b-23]

Q: How might David's actions be contrasted to the normal response anticipated when one is confronted with sin?

A: Rather than run away, blame someone else, or continue even deeper into deception, David runs **TO** the Lord.

Point: The quickest path to restoration is to the foot of the cross. The best way to deal with sin and its lingering effects is immersion in the presence of Christ so that a lifestyle of sin can be replaced by a lifestyle of righteousness.

Q: What is David's example to us in v.20 of how to respond to the inevitable consequences of our sin?

A: Washing, anointing, and changing clothes are all biblical symbols of removing every last stain of sin so as to come before the Lord spiritually pure. He is forsaking the lifestyle of sin for that of righteousness. Although there have been severe repercussions for his choices, David comes before God to worship Him. The biblical definition of “worship” is to plainly and openly acknowledge God for Who He is as Sovereign and King over every person, thing, and situation. David is taking the exact opposite actions that led to his downfall.

Application:

- How have you dealt with sin in the past? How does it compare to David?
- What might be missing that you still need to address?

²¹Then his servants said to him, “What is this thing that you have done? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept; but when the child died, you arose and ate food.”

²²He said, “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.’ ²³But now 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.”

²⁴Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her; and she gave birth to a son, and he named him Solomon.

Now the LORD loved him ²⁵and sent word through Nathan the prophet, and he named him Jedidiah for the LORD’S sake.

[Read v.24-25]

Q: Why do you suppose that David did not immediately go to comfort Bathsheba?

A: Without proper, personal reconciliation to God, he would have probably been of little help and may have made things even worse. His regained strength in the Lord was needed to reconcile David’s personal relationships.

Application: *Can you heal a personal relationship without having reconciled your relationship with God? Do you recognize that as your relationship with Christ goes, so goes the quality of personal relationships?*

Q: What is telling about the names for their new child?

A: “Solomon” probably means “peaceful”, a reflection of how David and Bathsheba felt after surviving the previous turmoil. But “Jedidiah” means “beloved of the Lord”—and especially as it was a name given by God—expresses the depth and totality of God’s grace, love, and forgiveness. It’s a contrast of how the humans felt to God’s greater mercy for the whole of the situation. The humans were glad it was over, but God in His grace multiplied His love for them.