February 4/5, 2017

You Are the Man

Courage to Lead Series

2 Samuel 12:1-25

Pastor Bryan Clark

I have no doubt when you get to the end of your life and you look back, you will discover that what defined the pathway of your life, what really set the trajectory of your life, was not whether or not you've blown it. It will not be whether or not you have sinned. That's part of everyone's story. But what will determine the trajectory of your life is how you choose to respond in that moment when your sin is exposed. That's what we want to talk about this morning. If you have a Bible, turn with us to 2 Samuel, Chapter 12. Last we saw David, he had committed adultery. In order to cover up his sin he had Uriah the Hittite put to death. Bathsheba is pregnant; David takes Bathsheba in as his own wife. For all practical purposes, it looks as if David has gotten away with it. David has used his power and position in an abusive way, but it looks like he's made it work...except the last line in chapter 11: *But what David did was evil in the sight of the Lord*. We left the story with that ominous note.

One of the key words in chapter 11 was the word "*send*", used repetitively in chapter 11 and it carries the idea of David with his position and power, used it, abused it, sent for Bathsheba, sent to Joab, sent Uriah—basically abused his power in order to accomplish what he wanted. In chapter 12 God does a little sending of His own:

> **Then 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.**
> > **"The rich man had a great many flocks and herds.**
> > **"But 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.**
> > **"Now 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."**
>
> **Then 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. He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion."**
>
> (*NASB, 2 Samuel 12:1-6)

So God sends Nathan the prophet, and Nathan tells a story that he knows David's shepherding heart will identify with. It wasn't unusual for the king to settle matters of injustice in the kingdom; it's likely David thought this was just another one of those occasions. So Nathan tells a story and David erupts with anger. As a matter of fact, the text says David's anger **burned greatly**, so much so he declares that this man **deserves to die.** We would say that's a bit of an overreaction. In the law this

was not a capital offense. What was required in the law was a *fourfold restitution* which is what he ends up landing on, but to go clear to the point of saying that this man deserves to be put to death was a little bit much. But that's interesting to think about because this is a very common response when people are unwilling to deal with their own sin, their own unrighteousness, they often tend to compensate by overreacting and pointing the finger at the injustices of everyone else. So think about this: we live in a culture where we have lost our moral compass, where we're unwilling to deal with our own sinful behaviors, but we also live in a culture full of anger, with people pointing fingers at everyone else's injustices. It's a way of saying, "I still am a righteous person, even though I myself don't choose to live that way." That's basically exactly what David is doing. Then the moment of truth:

> **Nathan 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. I 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! Why 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. 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 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. Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.'" Then 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. However, 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." So Nathan went to his house.** (Vs. 7-15a)

So when David is angry about the behavior of the rich man, Nathan points his bony finger in the nose of David and says, "**You are the man**!" Nathan then speaks for God and God says to David, "David, I did all this for you: I anointed you to be king, I made you great, I delivered you from Saul, I gave you Saul's family, I gave you Israel and Judah, I gave you everything you wanted, and if you would have wanted more, I would have given you more." One can only imagine what could have been if David hadn't made these disastrous choices. But because David chose to despise the Word of the Lord and chose to make a mockery of the God who made him great, there would be severe consequences within the family of God! David tried to do this in secret; the consequences would be very public.

Then comes that moment when we're waiting to see how will David react? Will David be another Saul? There was a moment in Saul's life, in 1 Samuel chapter 15, when Samuel pointed his bony finger in the nose of Saul and, "Saul, you have sinned," and Saul followed with excuses, with rationalizations, with half-truths. He was sorry but he was never truly broken over his sin. David responded in a dramatically different way. For most of David's life he's lived his life as a man of character and a man of integrity and courage. A man of kindness and compassion, he has truly been a man after God's own heart, and in this moment when his sin is exposed, he responds with godly character by simply saying, "**I have sinned against the Lord**." There is a true brokenness, a confession of sin. Confession means to agree with God, and in this moment David is fully agreeing with God. No excuses, no rationalizations, no damage control, just simply brokenness. God clearly

sees it that way and responds through Nathan the prophet that David's sins are forgiven. He will not die. What David did was a capital offense: both adultery and murder were capital offenses under the law. He deserved to die, and one wonders if David didn't think that's what was coming. What he received was the grace and mercy of God. He will not die. However, there are consequences to sin.

Now some of this gets confusing, especially as it relates to the old covenant and us today in the new covenant. It's important to remember that in the new covenant, our sins have been paid for by Jesus on the cross. God does not punish us for our sin. It's not punitive. The sins have already been paid for by Jesus. God, as a loving heavenly father, disciplines and corrects us to get us back on track. Romans 8 says: *There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus*, but the arrangement was different under the old covenant in multiple ways. This is also David the king: it's a unique story; David has a unique position of power and influence and so there are consequences and there is punishment but the line between those gets pretty fuzzy. Clearly, though, David is told a punishment for his sin is that the baby will die. David represented the God of Israel and God had done amazing things to put David in a position of power and influence. David had called the nation back to God. Even the pagan nations now realized that the God of the Hebrews is the one, true God. But in a series of bad decisions, David had despised the name of God; he'd caused the pagan nations to blaspheme the God of the Hebrews, and God could not just passively sit by and act as if he approved of David's behavior. Somehow, some way, he must send a message that what David did was evil in His sight, and to do that, the child must die.

Now this does not mean every time a child dies, it's because of the sin of the parents. That would just be terrible theology. It's absolutely not true. We all know really bad people that have healthy babies and we know really good people whose babies die. We live in a fallen world where there is pain and suffering and there are always questions we can't answer. But in this specific case, we know exactly because God speaks through Nathan the prophet and that *is* the consequence of his sin.

It's important to remember two things. One is: David was forgiven. David was broken before God and God forgave him his sins. We will need to remind ourselves of that many times in the weeks to come because the pain in David's life is only beginning. And with that comes a second reminder: that just because God forgives our sin doesn't mean God pushes a “clear” button and all the consequences of our sin are removed. It simply doesn't work that way.

We live in a culture that has so dismissed the concept of sin, so diminished the holiness of God, and so inflated our view of ourselves and this desperate need to feel good, that it creates a dangerous recipe. The recipe is that we minimize sin and we think because God is gracious and forgiving that when we sin God forgives us—no harm, no foul, no big deal—and we fail to recognize that **sin is evil in the sight of the Lord**. Last week in chapter 11, talking about David's sin, there is nowhere in chapter 11 where the forgiveness of God is mentioned. I had at least a dozen people say quickly, "But David was forgiven." There is this tension we don't really want to think about sin and its consequences. We immediately jump to God's forgiveness as if that makes everything okay, and what we're going to find out is there will be severe and lasting consequences to David as a forgiven man. It's critically important to understand: when we minimize sin, we put ourselves in a position to repeat it over and over and over again. I can sin tonight, get forgiveness in the morning, no big deal; let's move on. That is a recipe that guarantees you're going to devastate your life. If you're really going to get this, you have to realize sin is evil in the sight of the Lord. It is devastating; there are real and lasting consequences. We should not minimize sin in our lives.

The word confession means *to agree with God* and when we agree with God that this is evil in Your sight, with that is an implication: "Then it must stop!" There are times in life when we need to have the courage to put a stake in the ground and say with conviction, "What I am doing is evil in the eyes of the Lord and it must stop now!" The concept of repentance is, "I choose to go another way; it ends and it ends now!" It's critically important to understand that. When we minimize sin, it's fairly easy to measure in our lives. We can measure it by the fact that we just keep committing the same sin over and over and over again. It creates a cycle: sin, confess, sin, confess, sin, confess. It's obvious there is no real brokenness and there is no real confession. We're not taking sin seriously. To understand the devastating consequences of sin is to put a stake in the ground and say, "I need to be done with it," and travel the path of life.

> **Then the LORD struck the child that Uriah's widow bore to David, so that he was *very* sick. David therefore inquired of God for the child; and David fasted and went and lay all night on the ground. The 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. Then 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!" But 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." So David arose from the ground, washed, anointed *himself,* and changed his clothes; and he came into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he came to his own house, and when he requested, they set food before him and he ate. Then 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." He 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.' But 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."** (Vs. 15b-23)

So, just as Nathan predicted, the child is sick and David is devastated—devastated because he loves his son, devastated because he knows this is his fault. For seven days he is inconsolable. He won't eat; he won't get up off the ground; he begs God to change His mind, so much so that on the seventh day when the child dies, the servants are afraid to tell him for fear he might do himself harm. But David sees them whispering, figures it out, asks if the child has died, and they tell him, "Yes, the child is dead." But then David's response confuses them. He gets up, cleans up, goes and worships the Lord, goes home and eats food. The servants are so confused, they ask him, "We don't understand you. We don't understand how you're behaving." David explains—and this reflects both David's brokenness, and it reflects his high view of God. David's true character serves him well in these moments. David explains that for seven days while the child was alive, he knows in his heart that God is gracious and merciful, and it is possible that God could choose to have mercy on him once again and spare the child. So for seven days that's what he agonizes over, that's what he asks God for. But when the child dies, David realizes it is not to be. But in this moment there's no bitterness; there's no anger; he's not playing the victim; he's not playing like this is so unfair. He knows exactly why this happened and he knows it was his fault. What God has done is necessary and it's just, and David knows it. So David gets up; he cleans up; he worships God for being a fair

and just God, and goes home and he eats. He is comforted by the reality that the child is not lost forever. But one day, because of God, he will go and he will join the child again.

Now there is discussion about what David meant exactly by that statement of *going to the child*. Because the Hebrew word for the *grave* is the same Hebrew word *for life after death*, it's only the context that gives clarity as to what is meant. Some only go so far as to say that David was acknowledging the child went to the grave, and David, too, one day will go to the grave. I would suggest to you that interpretation makes no sense whatsoever. There's no question David is explaining why he has responded the way he has responded. If all he's saying is the child went to the grave and he'll end up there too, there's no hope in there; there's no reason to respond as he's responded. What he's saying is—the basis of how he's responded is—there is still reason for hope. David had a clear view of the afterlife; many of his Psalms reflect that. He believes God has taken the child home, and he's comforted by the reality that he will join the child there. He also states that he is not going to a place; he's going to a person. "I will join him there," which is a relational statement. The relationship will be restored. I think it's very clear David is saying that God in His justice did this, but one day I will join the child, and he has no doubt about that. So this has been a difficult part of the David story. David has sinned; it has brought great consequences. David is just beginning a long painful journey of consequences. But in the midst of it all, David is graciously and mercifully forgiven. At this point in the story, we have a sense that we understand it. God has been good and gracious but God has also been just—that God must act to defend his reputation with the nations. So we find ourselves saddened, but we also find ourselves with a certain sense of acceptance. This all seems right and just. That's what makes the next two verses so confusing.

> **Then 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 and sent *word* through Nathan the prophet, and he named him Jedidiah for the LORD'S sake.** (Vs. 24-25)

I read those two verses and I find something deep within me saying, "I'm sorry...What?...I'm sorry, What??" This just feels so wrong!" This just seems contrary to our sensibilities of what's right and wrong. I don't understand this. As a matter of fact, I find myself deeply offended. If I was God, I would have clearly made a rule: "This woman never should have been your wife; you murdered to get her; you cannot ever touch her again. You have multiple wives; you have multiple sons; this one is off limits!" But that's not what happens. The audacity of David to once again have relations with this woman who shouldn't have been his wife—even when Nathan was identifying David's sin, part of it was, "You took her to be your wife," —so he should not have been able to touch her again. But he does, and God blesses her with a son. And then we're told: Of all things, it is Solomon who will be especially loved by God. The name Jedidiah means *beloved of the Lord*. He will be declared to be the next king of Israel, and David and Bathsheba will be the couple through whom the seed of the Messiah flows. Now just imagine if you're one of David's other wives; just imagine if you're one of David's other sons; just imagine if you're part of Uriah's family or Bathsheba's family—this seems so wrong! This is so contrary to our sensibilities. Everything within me says, "This should not be! It's deeply offensive! As a matter of fact, I just find this part of the story utterly scandalous!"

If there's something within you that feels that, you're just beginning to get a sense of the scandalous nature of grace. The story has never been about David's ability to perform. It's never been about anyone's ability to perform. It has always been about this amazing, unpredictable, scandalous grace of God! When you go to Matthew chapter 1 and read the genealogy of the Christ, right there listed

in the genealogy is that the seed flowed through David and Bathsheba. But Matthew, rather than sweeping this story under the carpet, actually states in Matthew chapter 1: *Bathsheba, who had been the wife of Uriah the Hittite*. Rather than sweeping it under the carpet, he throws it open for all to see the scandalous nature of the grace of God—because that's always what the story has been about. It has not been about David as the perfect king; it's not been about Solomon as the perfect king; it's a story of a series of failures of one king after another until finally the ultimate king arrives, who would be God in the flesh, who would be the Messiah promised to set people free from their sins. It is the Christ who would die on a cross and shed His blood in atonement for sin in order to offer salvation freely to everyone who has sinned and offended a holy God!

About the time I am just so deeply offended by this story of David and Bathsheba and Solomon, I remember before I get too self-righteous and before I get too offended, let me not forget that is MY story. Ephesians says: *I was dead in my sin. I had declared myself to be an enemy of God, and I was rightly destined for eternal punishment with no hope. But God, in His grace and mercy, gave up His son to make a way of salvation, that He might offer salvation freely as a gift of His grace. But not only would He offer me the forgiveness of my sin, He would actually make me His child. He would seat me with Christ in the heavenlies and He would make me a masterpiece of His grace, so absolutely magnificent that when He holds me up in the heavenlies, the angels will gasp at the wonder of what I have become—all on the basis of God's amazing, scandalous grace!*

What God has done for us is absolutely scandalous. It is a story that seems too good to be true. Because of that, many will never turn to Christ for salvation. They think it's just too good to be true. But it is true and that is what He did for you and me—this amazing scandalous grace that makes us right as sinners in the presence of a holy God!

David is a forgiven man but the consequences of his sin will be real and they will be painful, and we will see more of that next week. As we close this text this morning, a couple of things to remember: Number one: sin is evil in the sight of the Lord! We should not minimize it; we should not presume upon grace as if somehow sin doesn't really bother God. Confession of sin is to agree with God and to agree with God implies that I put a stake in the ground and I am done with this. How I choose to respond when my sin is exposed will ultimately be what defines the trajectory of my life. Second of all: we celebrate this amazing scandalous grace of God that has offered us this salvation freely as a gift, but we are reminded that we will never experience the true, amazing freedom of God's grace, we will never really experience the depth of the forgiveness of God until we are willing to get serious about our sin, until we are willing in brokenness to acknowledge, "I have sinned before the Lord," because it's only when we are serious about our sin that we really understand the true scandalous nature of grace.

Psalms 32 and 51 are the two psalms that David wrote out of this experience and they communicate the depth of the brokenness of David over his sin, but they also communicate that because of his brokenness, David experienced the depth of the grace and the forgiveness of God.

> *Our Father, this morning we celebrate Your grace. God, it is scandalous. Everything within me feels like the story of David and Bathsheba and Solomon is just so wrong, yet it's a reminder of Your scandalous grace and that everything You have done for me as a sinner with no hope is equally scandalous. God, we'll never really understand the depth of Your grace until we are willing to get serious about our sin. God, may we, like David, come clean, repent of our sin, and, in brokenness, experience the grace and forgiveness that You alone can offer. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

(Psalm 32 Recited)

Oh, what joy for those
whose disobedience is forgiven,
whose sin is put out of sight!
Yes, what joy for those
whose record the LORD has cleared of guilt,
whose lives are lived in complete honesty!
When I refused to confess my sin,
my body wasted away,
and I groaned all day long.
Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me.
My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat.

Finally, I confessed all my sins to you
and stopped trying to hide my guilt.
I said to myself, "I will confess my rebellion to the LORD."
And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.

Therefore, let all the godly pray to you while there is still time,
that they may not drown in the floodwaters of judgment.
For you are my hiding place;
you protect me from trouble.
You surround me with songs of victory.

The LORD says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life.
I will advise you and watch over you.
Do not be like a senseless horse or mule
that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control."
Many sorrows come to the wicked,
but unfailing love surrounds those who trust the LORD.
So rejoice in the LORD and be glad, all you who obey him!
Shout for joy, all you whose hearts are pure! (*NLT, Psalm 32)

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE
Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1987, 1988,
The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Psalm quotation taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW LIVING TRANSLATION
Copyright ©1996, 2004, 2007, 2013, 2015
Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.,
Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Copyright 2017 – Bryan Clark. All rights reserved.

February 4/5, 2017

"You Are the Man!"

Courage to Lead

2 Samuel 12:1-25

Pastor Bryan Clark

Opening Discussion

1. What is our first instinct when our sin is exposed? Why is that?

2. What do you think is the difference between true brokenness and someone who is merely sorry? How can you tell the difference?

3. Does forgiveness by God mean no more consequences? Why or why not?

Bible Study

1. Quickly review David's sin from chapter 11. How does chapter 11 close?

2. Read II Samuel 12:1-6. What makes Nathan's story so effective? Why do you suppose David responded with such anger? What do you think was the relationship between David hiding his sin and his strong reaction to Nathan's story? Is it possible that we sometimes deal with our own shame and guilt by pointing the finger at the injustices of others?

3. Read II Samuel 12:7-15a. It's important to remember life in the Old Covenant was not the same as today in the New Covenant. It's also good to remember David was a powerful king enthroned by God. This text is not meant to teach the basic theology of what happens when we sin. Certainly the line between natural consequences of sin and God's punishment of David is blurred in this text. What we know for sure is that David did evil in the sight of the Lord and there will be serious consequences even though he is forgiven. The real moment of truth, the moment he separates himself from Saul, is verse 13 when David owns his sin. Compare that with Saul in I Samuel 15. What is the core difference between the two kings?

4. No one likes having his/her sin exposed. However, the real moment of truth is how we react when someone points a finger at us and says, "You are the man!" What are your options as that point and what are the consequences to each option?

5. Read II Samuel 12:15b-23. What do we learn about David and his faith in God in this part of the story? What about David's response indicates a man truly broken by his sin and not merely sorry?

6. Read Psalm 32 and 51 to capture more of David's brokenness over his sin. What in those Psalms are the marks of a broken man?

7. Read II Samuel 12:24, 25. Review all that David has done to God, Bathsheba, Uriah and his fellow soldiers and their families. What is your emotional reaction then to the news that God blesses the relationship with Bathsheba and honors them with a son who will be the next king and the line of the Messiah? Does it seem appropriate that Bathsheba shows up in the line of Christ recorded in Matthew 1? Why is Bathsheba specifically listed in Matthew as having been the "wife of Uriah the Hittite?" Why highlight that painful detail?

8. What do we learn about the scandalous nature of grace from this story?

9.

Application

1. What do we learn about sin from this story?

2. What do we learn about forgiveness from this story (and Psalms 32 and 51)?

3. What do we learn about grace from this story?

4. Is it really possible to experience the freedom of forgiveness and the wonder of God's amazing grace without true confession and repentance?

Copyright 2016 – Bryan Clark. All rights reserved.