

Second Samuel

Lesson 11

Can Someone's Sin Really Cause a Lifetime of Trouble for Others?

IV. David's Troubles (Chapters 11-24)

A. Bathsheba, David's Great Temptation (11:1-25)

1. David's Solitude in the Palace (11:1)

As chapter 11 opens, we enter the third topic area presented in Second Samuel – David's Troubles. Each of the three section overlaps, which is just the case as we pick up the story of Bathsheba, David's great temptation. We hear the reason for David's solitude in the palace in chapter 11, verse 1. *"Then 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."* The First Chronicles 20:1 verse says, *"In the spring of the year, when kings normally go out to war, Joab led the Israelite army in successful attacks against the land of the Ammonites."* All of David's men were off to war.

These first two verses give us the time during David's kingship for the spring war with the Ammonites. The battle against the Ammonites was not the war against Hanun covered in chapter 10. This battle was the first set of wars with the Philistines, Moab, Hadadezer, and Ammon covered in chapter 8 before Nahash became Ammon's king and a friend of David. This war occurred in David's eighth year as king. Solomon was born in David's tenth year as king. Bathsheba will be pregnant with Solomon for nine months. Previous to that, she will be pregnant for nine months with her first child that dies. When we back up eighteen months from Solomon's birth, David was about thirty-eight years old when he sin with Bathsheba. Bathsheba was David's great temptation. We will now hear about David's sin in the palace as Bathsheba catches David's eye and he schemes a plan.

2. David's Sin in the Palace (11:2-6)

The compiler writes in verse 2, *"Now 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. ³ So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, 'Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?'"* ⁴ *David 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. ⁵ The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, 'I am pregnant.'*

Could Bathsheba refuse the call to David's palace? We do not know. She went to David, and he took her in an adulterous act. We think about his whole passage occurring in one night, but it did not. Bathsheba left the palace and returned to her home provided by her husband – Uriah. Uriah had not been with her since he went to war with Joab. The weeks ran by and when it came time for Bathsheba's regular cycle of the month, it did not occur. Did she wonder? Did she wait another month just to be sure? Probably. We do not know how long she waited, but when she knew she was pregnant, she knew it had to be David's child because she had not been with her husband, who was off at war. Wars would go on from spring until the men would stop fighting and return to gather the harvests in late July and August. The adulterous act probably occurred in late March or early April after the planting season was over. David was probably told about the pregnancy at the beginning of May or June. David had sinned with Bathsheba. David had sinned against his friend, Uriah. Here we can ask the question, *"Can Someone's Sin Really Cause a Lifetime of Trouble for Others?"* David's sin had caused a lifetime of trouble for Bathsheba; her life had been forever changed.

3. David's Plan in the Palace (11:6-13)

With the notice from Bathsheba of her pregnancy, we hear of David's plan in the palace. He will send for Uriah to come home from the battle. Verse 6. *"Then David sent to Joab, saying, 'Send me Uriah the Hittite.'" So Joab sent Uriah to David.* ⁷*When Uriah came to him, David asked concerning the welfare of Joab and the people and the state of the war.* ⁸*Then 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.* ⁹*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.* ¹⁰*Now 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?'"* ¹¹*Uriah 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.'* ¹²*Then 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.* ¹³*Now 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."*

David must have breathed a sigh of relief as he sent Uriah out the palace door to spend time with his wife. But David did not plan on Uriah camping outside the palace doors instead of following David's suggestion.

4. David's Desperation in the Palace (11:14-21)

No doubt, David was desperate when he discovered Uriah outside his door. What would he do? In desperation to hide his sin, David sought to have Uriah killed. He had to hurry; the war would shut down soon and the men would return to harvest the grains from the fields. Here is what David did. Verse 14. *"Now in the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah."* ¹⁵*He 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.'" ¹⁶So it was as Joab kept watch on the city, that he put Uriah at the place where he knew there were valiant men.* ¹⁷*The 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.* ¹⁸*Then Joab sent and reported to David all the events of the war.* ¹⁹*He 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.'"*

The plan was set. It was complicated, yet it was not complicated. The whole thing about Abimelech and the mill stone was simply code words to let the messenger know it was safe to tell David that the plan had worked and Uriah was dead. Here we can ask the question again, *"Can Someone's Sin Really Cause a Lifetime of Trouble for Others?"* David's sin had caused a lifetime of trouble for Bathsheba and taken the life of Uriah. Everything had changed for this married Canaanite couple because of David's sinful indulgence.

5. David's Reception in the Palace (11:22-25)

Once Uriah was dead, Joab sent a messenger, and we hear of David's reception in the palace and the news. Verse 22. *"So the messenger departed and came and reported to David all that Joab had sent him to tell."* ²³*The 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."*

B. Bathsheba, David's Great Sin (11:26-27)

Uriah, David's friend, and warrior, was dead. We wonder who told Bathsheba. Was it David?

The compiler tells us what David did after the proper time of mourning was over for Bathsheba. David did the same thing he did a dozen or more years before with Abigail when Nabal died. Verse 26. *"Now when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. ²⁷ When 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."*

At this point in the story, David believes he is home free concerning his sin with Bathsheba. She is in the palace now. The king is going to take care of his faithful warrior's wife. What a great king! Hmm! No one will know the child was his. They will all think he was the son of Uriah. Had Joshua completed his task hundreds of years before, Uriah would never have been born, for he was a Canaanite. What does that make Bathsheba? She was the daughter of Eliam. She, too, was a Canaanite woman.

C. Nathan, David's Great Correction (12:1-31)

1. David's Rebuke (12:1-15a)

a) A Verdict for the King's Decision (12:1-4)

The Canaanite woman, Bathsheba, is now the wife of King David as chapter 12 opens. Uriah, her husband, is dead. Her mourning time is over. David has brought her across the street to his palace and taken her as a wife, pregnant with his child, conceived in adultery. David thought he was home free and no one would know. But he was wrong. Someone did know. Someone had access to him every moment of every day. The LORD. And the LORD had Nathan the prophet. We come in the Scripture to David's rebuke by Nathan. It will come in the form of a story, and Nathan is looking for an injunction for the king's decision. Chapter 12, verse 1. *"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. ² 'The rich man had a great many flocks and herds. ³ '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. ⁴ '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."*

Notice that Nathan did not go to David by his own decision; he was sent by the LORD. Notice that Nathan's story spoke of a rich man and a poor man. Notice also that the poor man had a lamb, a pet, cherished by his whole family. Notice also that the rich man took advantage of the poor man by taking the family pet and serving it for a meal. Would we not love to have been in the palace that day to see the face of the king as Nathan gave this report? David was known for being a kind king, but he was also known for being a just king who righted the wrongs in his kingdom. Nathan has presented this case so the king can make a judgment and deliver a verdict.

b) A Ruling for the King's Decision (12:5-6)

David was enraged. Who would do such a thing? Nathan was about to have a ruling for the king's decision about this rich man. Verse 5. *"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. ⁶ He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion."*

Nathan received the angry king's verdict. The rich man "deserves to die." He must give back four lambs for the one he took. He must rectify his lack of compassion. He may even lose his life for such a deed.

c) A Chastisement for the King's Decision (12:7-15)

Then Nathan spoke, and out came a chastisement for the king's decision. Verse 7. *"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.'"*

The penalty for what David did with Bathsheba and Uriah in secret will be known throughout all of Israel. Indeed, this principle has remained true throughout all of Judaism and Christianity. Given enough time, all evil committed in secret will see the light of day. Those who commit evil will be found in this life or the next. The LORD will not allow evil to go unchecked. For David, because he so quickly repented, the LORD did not take his life, but there was still a penalty to be paid. A life for a life the LORD would take. The child of adultery would not live. Furthermore, the LORD prophesies *'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.'"* Israel will know all about this when it happens. David will not be able to hide his secret sin any longer. The LORD will fulfill this prophecy many times in David's life, and we will see how soon in this story.

Again, *"Can Someone's Sin Really Cause a Lifetime of Trouble for Others?"* David's sin had caused a lifetime of trouble for Bathsheba, Uriah, and Bathsheba's child. David knew it. Bathsheba knew it. Nathan knew it. David's servants knew it. The kingdom knew it. Israel's enemies knew it. It cannot be covered over. This sin has screamed from the pages of God's holy writ for centuries and it will always be there. The stain of David's sin cannot be washed away. It did not affect just David. Sin never affects just one person. The whole family pays the price for the actions of one. David's sin will visit all of his heirs and cause grief for Israel from the nation's enemies forever.