

How David Treats a Sinner. How the Lord Treats a Sinner.

¹ The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, “There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. ² The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, ³ but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.

⁴ “Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him.”

⁵ David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, “As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this must die! ⁶ He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.”

⁷ Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. ⁸ I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. ⁹ Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. ¹⁰ Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.’

¹¹ “This is what the LORD says: ‘Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. ¹² You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.’ ”

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

Nathan replied, “The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.

David and Bathsheba. That story needs no introduction. We remember it from Sunday school or our day school. Even non-Christians know it. Hollywood came out with a movie by that name in 1951 starring Gregory Peck as David and Susan Hayward as Bathsheba. The theme of a man cheating on another man’s wife, intrigue and murder is very popular in entertainment.

Of course, we refer to it as the story of David and Bathsheba. But this story isn’t really about Them. It is the story of our Lord and how he deals with murder and adultery. Today we will understand our Lord better as we compare how David treats a sinner and then we will see how the Lord treats a sinner.

I. *The dangers of sin.*

This story of David lets us know how bad sin is. Let me set the context for you. In the chapter before our text, we are told that David did join the army when it marched out for the spring campaign season. That is very unusual. But as we get more into the story, maybe there is truth to the line, “idle hands are the devil’s workshop.” One evening David went to the roof of his palace. There he saw a beautiful woman bathing on the roof of her house. No one should see you bathing on the roof unless that person is a bored king on his roof.

David’s problem wasn’t that he saw her. That was an accident. His problem was he kept looking. You heard what Jesus said earlier. **I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.** David didn’t cover his eyes or go back into his house. He kept staring and the sin of lust now has taken root in his heart.

We begin to see how nasty sin is. It wants to control us. It will not rest until it is your slave master. Sin was becoming his God as he began to forget the true Lord. And sin is not satisfied. It demands more. David sent servants over to that house to invite Bathsheba over. She became pregnant. See how sin multiplies? Lust gives birth to adultery, and adultery gives birth to betrayal. Her husband was a very close friend to David. His name was Uriah and he is described as one of his thirty top fighting men. If Robin had his merry men, Uriah was like Little John to David.

When David heard she was expecting, he panicked. Here is a crucial point in David’s life. How do you deal with guilt? The right thing would be to man up, confess it with complete remorse, and pray for forgiveness. But the sinner doesn’t want to admit anything. David instead tried to hide it. But everything he did failed. He ordered Uriah back from the front so that the newspapers might claim the child was his. But that failed. David gets more desperate so he wrote orders, secret orders to put Uriah in a part of the battle where it would be guaranteed he die in battle. It worked. He died in battle. Lust gives birth to murder. To complete the cover up, David marries Bathsheba. I am sure the newspapers would praise their king for caring for the widow of a fallen comrade. Unless they counted the time between his marriage and the birth of her son, maybe they would assume the child was his without sin.

I pray we see how terrible sin is. I hope we understand that it is our god and master. We look at David and we can easily say, “I would never do that.” Once you say that, you have taken your first step, a big step toward sin. Your pride or your naivete toward sin means you don’t fear it or respect its power. Now, let’s get to our text and see what should be done with the sinner.

II. *How does David treat a sinner?*

The worse thing God could do is just let David be. If he did that, David would die an unbeliever and sinner. God loved him. That is why God sent his prophet to save David. This meant he had bring David's sin and guilt out into the open. I love how he did it. Instead of pointing his finger at David, he tells him a story of a rich man with many sheep being so calloused and uncaring that he would snatch the poor man's pet sheep, slaughter it and feed it to a friend visiting his house.

Now, we get to see how David wants to treat a sinner. ⁵ **David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this must die!"** ⁶ **He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."** At first David overreacted. He wanted the man executed. Then he calmed down a bit. He passed judgment on the man. This calloused man should pay for the sheep four times over. I guess that would be called punitive damages, damages inflicted on someone as punishment. And David was right. The wrongs committed here must be punished.

That is how David reacted to a sinner. Now let's see how God reacts. ⁷ **Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man!"** Nathan didn't have to say anymore. He didn't have to point out how David lied, committed adultery, committed murder. And David didn't just sin against Bathsheba, Uriah, against his nation. He also sinned against God. God reminded David that all he did for him. And if he wanted more, all he had to do to ask. But David's sinful heart led him to steal another man's wife and to murder her husband to get cover it up. David sinned against God and he takes it personally.

God may send a Nathan in our lives to remind us of what we have done. He may use our consciences, where he wrote his holy law to nag us about our sin. And he uses the Bible to act like a mirror. It is his law and it is crystal clear. As a mirror it doesn't lie. Just when we think we are not all that bad, just when we think we got away with it, his law compares holiness with our sinful lives. And it goes deep. Sure you didn't kill anyone, but Jesus pointed out that your anger is just as bad as you kill in your heart.

And God agrees with David. Sin must be punished. But God's justice is longer lasting. Did you hear Jesus mention it? **If you right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.** There is a prison for sinners. It is hell, and the sentence is forever. If only we can be rid of the offending part that sins like the eye or the arm or ear, but we can't. If we start cutting off those pieces, there would be nothing left.

But this where God departs from David. David, you, me, we all stop at punishment. God wants more. God wants to save us. ¹³

Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan was right. He was that man. He was ashamed of his sins. **Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.**

There is the difference. God forgave David. God forgives sinners. How? Jesus Christ. Instead of condemning you to hell, he condemned his Son to hell for your sins. Instead of taking your life, Jesus gave up his on the cross. Jesus wasn't suppose to be on the cross. He is the perfect Son of God who had no sin. But he took the place of sinners. Look at what this means. Your sins are forgiven. You have redemption, salvation, peace with God, eternal life past the grave. God's loving grace covers over all sin.

It doesn't get much lower than David. But it doesn't matter who you are or what you have done or not done, there is forgiveness. Heaven is full of adulterers and murderers, liars and cheats for God justifies the sinner, he declares him not guilty.

And it isn't surprising that this affects us more than heaven. It isn't surprising that redeemed sinners also hate sin so much that they want to stay away from it. Paul spoke of doing good and living a godly life and loving each other. We need that encouragement because it is against the grain of this sinful world and our own sinful flesh. So we ask God for help. He gives his Word as a map so we know what is good and what to avoid. He gives us a coach, the Holy Spirit, to encourage us. He tells us to stay in his Word. That struggle will go on for our earthly days. We will still trip and fall, Lord willing much less than before. But he is still there to forgive us.

If only David had repented earlier. Think of the weeks or months of sleepless nights and agonizing guilt he endured. Don't wait as long as David. Turn to God every day. Don't make excuses. Don't justify it. Don't hide. Don't sugarcoat it. Admit to him that you have sinned and deserve the worse God can give. And what will he say? **The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.** This is what the church, the Bible, Christ is all about, God saving sinners like us. Amen.