*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

August 2 - 7

David and Bathsheba

**Monday, August 2 2 Samuel 11:1-5**

*“David sends for Bathsheba”*

The books of Samuel have so far illustrated by means of both negative and positive examples the nature of genuine Israelite kingship. Saul was a negative example of how the monarch should appear; David has been exemplary as the ideal king. But the shocking events narrated here reveal that David is capable of shameful actions. The text invites us to consider that we are all capable of such dark behavior, and taken together with chapter 12, we can learn even through these difficult narratives how to deal with sin and death.

In contrast with Joab and the Israelite soldiers, who are at war, the king is loitering about on the roof of his palace when he sees a woman bathing on a nearby rooftop. The author emphasizes her beauty and immediately alarms the reader that danger lurks around the corner. David sends someone to find out more about Bathsheba and learns that she is married. Undeterred, David sends for Bathsheba and lies with her. Discovering that she is pregnant, Bathsheba sends a message to David.

*How easily we fall into sin, Lord, when our attention is not on you. Amen.*

**Tuesday, August 3 2 Samuel 11:6-13**

*“David sends for Uriah”*

David has the royal authority and power to *send* a decree to Joab, who has the military power to sendUriah back to Jerusalem from the battlefield. David believes he has a plan to hide the truth, and he does not hesitate to take action to enact the plan. In order to cover his guilt, David tries subterfuge and deceit, old and familiar friends of all who have walked this path. He has faith in his plan, and he believes his royal power is sufficient for the task. So, as elsewhere, David *sends* in order to control and dominate, and also this time to conceal.

When Uriah arrives in Jerusalem, David appears to be greatly concerned about Joab, the army, and the progress of the war. David’s pathetic attempts to manipulate and control Uriah bring the king’s hypocrisy to the foreground. Obviously, David wants Uriah to spend a night at home with his wife, creating the possibility later that Uriah is the father of Bathsheba’s child. But, Uriah refuses to go home despite the king’s persistence and cajoling. He disregards the king’s invitations out of loyalty to his fellow soldiers.

*Character, Lord, both good and bad, is revealed when tested. Amen.*

**Wednesday, August 4 2 Samuel 11:14-27**

*“David arranges Uriah’s death”*

When David’s attempts to cover his sins with subterfuge and deception fail to work, he does something more sinister. He is not finished *sending* yet; he has still other powerful means at his disposal. His next step is to write Uriah’s own death warrant and send it to Joab by Uriah’s own hand. As David had sent and taken Bathsheba, as he had sent and retrieved Uriah from the battlefield, now he sends and kills Uriah. His powerful royal prerogative has been turned to evil purposes.

David had shown the capacity to grieve deeply over the deaths of men who were his adversaries, such as Saul and Abner. In this case, Uriah is no adversary but a faithful warrior. Yet David does not mourn. His flippant response to the news of Uriah’s death is a shocking illustration of how far David has gone. His drive to cover up his sin leads him to sin again. Each new step of deceit and subterfuge seems easier than the last. In David’s eyes, sin has been concealed. But, in God’s eyes, evil has been done and it will be confronted.

*We arrange the concealing of our sin, Lord, but all will be revealed. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

August 2 - 7

David and Bathsheba

**Thursday, August 5 2 Samuel 12:1-12**

*“You are the man!”*

“The Lord *sent* Nathan to David.” David had sent, first in order to commit adultery, and then in order to cover up his crime. Now just when it appears David has gotten away with it and the story is over, God does some sending of his own. How *does* a prophet correct a king who has assumed absolute power? The best way to expose David’s hypocrisy is to have him condemn himself. Nathan’s parable about the rich man and the poor man arouses David’s indignation, and he quickly condemns himself by condemning the rich man.

Nathan comes immediately to the point of his parable: “You are the man!” David’s sin is that he has despised the word of the Lord by committing evil in God’s sight. The Lord has given him everything, but he wants more; especially he wants what is not rightfully his to have. As David chose the way of violence to cover his sin, using the sword of the Ammonites, so the sword will never depart from his royal dynasty. God’s punishment matches the crime. Furthermore, calamity will rise against David from within his own household.

*Indignation at the sins of others while excusing our own, Lord, is hypocrisy. Amen.*

**Friday, August 6 2 Samuel 12:13-25**

*“Death of the newborn; birth of Solomon”*

Here we learn David’s real character. Certainly he is remembered for the heinous sins of chapter 11. But his response to the prophetic word in 12:3 is why David became known as Israel’s ideal king. David’s words “I have sinned” are full of genuine remorse and sorrow. This passage also shows that David is someone who wants to be what he is called to be. He quickly confesses and repents, not because he is trapped but because he recognizes it as the best way. Ultimately, this is the difference between believers and unbelievers.

The death of Bathsheba’s child leaves us with a difficult question of faith. Why is David forgiven while the innocent newborn has to die? The answer lies in the Bible’s distinction between punishment and consequence. The child’s death is a result of David’s sin, but this is not the same as punishment. It is a fundamental principle of life that God may withhold punishment, forgiving and cleansing us of all wrongdoing, but the consequences of our sin may, and in fact often, remain. The innocent suffer for crimes committed by someone else, but such suffering is not punishment for those crimes.

*You forgive us, Lord, and restore us to right relationship with you. Amen.*

**Saturday, August 7 2 Samuel 12:26-31**

*“David captures Rabbah”*

The author now returns to the report of David’s Ammonite wars, narrating the capture of the royal city. This paragraph is a historical flashback used as a literary frame. It serves together with 10:1-11:1 to create a literary envelope for the whole of chapters 10 through 12.

Joab and the army (formerly including Uriah the Hittite) capture Rabbah’s water supply, and it will only be a matter of time before the city falls into Israelite hands. In the last occurrence of “send” in these chapters, Joab uses his power to send a message to David. Just as the war was precipitated by the sending of ambassadors from David to the Ammonites (10:2-3), so now it is concluded by David arriving to end the war. In a book that routinely gives few military details, this paragraph is striking. But the details themselves merely highlight the irony of David, who has stolen both Uriah’s wife and Uriah’s life, now stealing the credit for Joab’s work.

*Returning our attention to you, Lord, enables us to continue our God-given tasks. Amen.*