

Speaking Truth to Power

General Topic: Justice and Adversity

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Lesson Text: 2 Samuel 12:1-9, 13-15

Background Scripture: 2 Samuel 12

2 Samuel 12:1 And the Lord sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.

2 The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds:

3 But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

4 And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

5 And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die:

6 And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

7 And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;

8 And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

9 Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

2 Samuel 12:13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

14 Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

15 And Nathan departed unto his house. And the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick.

Lesson Objective(s):

This week's lesson will explore accountability at the highest level. Students will come away from this passage with an understanding that no one is above the wrath of God or beyond his forgiveness. .

Teaching Tools:

from the consequences of his actions, nor was he able to sin outside of God's omniscient view.

Word puzzles may be developed from the following site: www.puzzlemaker.com. Also, www.dtlk.com has several visual aids that may be beneficial, as well as www.kidssundayschool.com which provide other helps for teaching.

Bible Journaling may be an interesting way to involve older teens in self-expression of the lessons they are taught. Visit www.lifeway.com/Articles/how-to-start-bible-journaling-in-six-easy-steps to find ways to use this valuable tool to learn and reinforce Scripture.

The Lesson:

“If you can't be them, join them.” A common phrase that has traveled the globe. It's a refrain that indicates assimilation is easier than standing up for what is right. It's a saying uttered by those who have chosen to surrender to the sins they see everyone else commit, rather than choosing the narrow path. Finally, this collection of words would not be a thought process that our lesson's main character would subscribe to. Today, we will see an exemplary figure who could have easily chosen to dim the torch of righteousness. On the contrary, he chose to speak truth to power.

Background

Our first character to be aware of this week is David. David is one of the Bible's great heroes, in part because his story covers such a wide range of human experience. Born the youngest of eight sons, David had few, if any, expectations on his life, beyond shepherding and following the orders of others. David would rise quickly from the moment of his anointing, through great victories in battle, and ultimately succeed Saul as king. Like many who rise to power, David was not exempt from temptation, nor was he innocent of yielding, particularly as his life changed upon encountering Bathsheba. Just like the rest of us, David was not exempt

Nathan was a faithful prophet and a trusted advisor. Unlike others who hover close to the seat of power, he maintained his faithfulness to God first, and the king next. While many people fear losing their place if they do not enable a misguided leader, Nathan shows that it is more important to trust and obey God. Nathan utilized his creativity to instruct and correct David, retaining respect as a man of God. Nathan was aware of many of David's sins, but he intervened before David made the mistake of thinking he was invincible. Many of us need genuine friends who will tell us the truth, versus what we want to hear.

The imagery of the innocent lamb should resonate with Christians. David is now king, but many years ago, he had been a shepherd. No doubt, Nathan was able to relate to David at this core place in his personal history. While most are quite separate from our agricultural origins today, we do not have to look far to see how God has brought us from humility to glory, all because of His grace and mercy. Nathan's story of the beloved sheep may be expanded to represent God's love for His people. He holds us close to His bosom. While Nathan's story holds a tragic end for the lamb, our truth is that God promises nothing, and no one can pluck us from God's hand. Although David was guilty of taking Bathsheba wrongly, God's grace and mercy spared David's life and allowed him to continue to fulfill the call upon his life. There were still consequences, but Nathan's intervention on God's instructions saved David from absolute catastrophe.

God Reveals (2 Samuel 12:1–7)

God used Nathan to reveal to David the truth of his own actions. Similarly, Christ would use many parables during His ministry. Preaching and teaching by illustration can actually lead to greater revelation in some cases. In verse 5, David's anger reached its highest point, as he was insulted on behalf of the poor man and

his beloved lamb. Sin causes us to be arrogant and to become blind to the reality that we have caused damage by our actions. David had not just damaged Uriah, he had taken his life in order to take his wife. This extremity was no secret, yet God used Nathan to reveal the horror of this behavior to David so that he could see himself from another perspective.

In this moment of revelation, David went from being royal to wrong, and the anger he demonstrated would soon be turned toward himself. God reveals our wrongs to us so that we can take corrective action. David was no stranger to repentance, but he had let this practice lapse. Revelation has a way of rerouting us from disaster.

God Reforms (2 Samuel 12:7–9)

“Thou art the man!” These words ring from the voice of Nathan, and David stands accused in his own royal chamber. His guilt is inescapable, and his accuser is not the prophet, but Almighty God Himself. Truly there can be no remission of sin without repentance, and there can be no repentance without an acknowledgment of guilt. God’s reform is thorough. God is not interested in temporary remedies that will spare our feelings or compromise right and wrong. Instead, God can only reform us when we yield to Him, acknowledge His righteousness, and admit our wrong.

After the initial shock of the revelation of David’s guilt, Nathan continues by prophetically declaring all the many reasons David had no excuse for what he had done. Again, revelation leads to reformation, as we all must account for our wrongdoings, and evaluate how to make better choices in the future. David had been blessed to accomplish great things. He had absolutely no reason to take his soldier’s life and seduce his wife. He did so simply because he could.

God Redeems (2 Samuel 12:13–15)

The beauty of the grace of God is that it covers a multitude of sins. David’s confession is refreshing, considering our political climate which finds many powerful leaders quite unrepentant and indignant at the notion that they may be wrong. In David’s case, he had the power as a king to command right and wrong to be precisely what he chose. Yet, by recognizing God’s revelation and accepting God’s reformation, he could now fully receive God’s redemption. “I have sinned against the Lord.” These simple words are very difficult to say sometimes, but they are no less vital to the quality of our Christian life.

We are not capable of living a sin-free life. However, we are entirely free from sin because of God’s redeeming grace. In yet another parallel similar to the poor man’s lamb, God used Bathsheba’s child as an example for our faith. While the child had committed no sin in being conceived, it was still conceived in sin, and would no doubt have lived a life of scorn, shame, and mistreatment. While the loss of the child was incredibly painful, it is a reminder that God Himself sacrificed His own Son so that the sins of the entire world may be forgiven.

David and Bathsheba’s child died as punishment for sin, but he was still not to be the propitiation for all sin. David is a perfect example of God’s ability to expose, admonish,

and forgive those He loves. A person may bear up under some of the effects of God’s displeasure in this world, but the fierceness of His anger, when it fastens immediately upon the soul, who can bear it? Instead of resisting the Lord, sinners should repent and fear before him. (I Chronicles 16:30)

Final Thoughts

Although David eventually was restored to favor with God, he had to endure the consequences of his sin. Here, we have an example of what it means to be humble before God, even as we retain prominence in other areas. The fact is that no one is exempt from the truth. Right is

right and wrong is wrong, regardless of our station in life. Fortunately, God so loved the entire world that He gave His Son, so that those who believe shall not perish in their sin but shall have everlasting life.

Be Salt! Be Light! Be Blessed!