

THE TIME WHEN KINGS GO FORTH TO BATTLE

2 SAMUEL 10:1 – 11:27

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~ When an unbeliever sins today, nobody seems to pay much attention to them. Even when their sin rises to the level of criminal and heinous, if they are rich and powerful enough, their sins will be covered up or rationalized away; because acting inappropriately is really all that is expected from unsaved people by unsaved people. However, when a man after God's own heart commits the slightest sin, the enemies of God come out of the woodwork; and they gloat, rejoice and delight over the fall.

Well, it's always been that way, but believers should mourn over the sin of others. I'm not sure that happens anymore; because of sin, the love of many has waxed cold – but I digress, sort of. The lessons we have been considering for the past several reports in Samuel should make us realize our own weaknesses and potential for failure; and this leg of our Spiritual Safari brings us to the great and tragic sin of King David in the Bathsheba affair.

If you have your Bible, you'll want to turn to this passage and pray for wisdom, judgment and discernment. Then, read this section of Scriptural text before reading this report; it will make your study much more meaningful. In this report, we have come to the beginning of the record of the sins of David. He has seen many triumphs and has become one of the great kings of the ancient earth. We have witnessed a tender side of David that few men have today. In chapter ten, David secures victory after great victory; but his motives, well, they're wrong, my beloved. The best that could be said of David's intentions would be "questionable." Since God tells us to put away even the appearance of evil, let's just go ahead and conclude David's motives are not good.

It is my estimation David has been promoted to such a high place of authority at this time that he is allowing his emotions to rule his policy; both politically and personally. Well, no good deed goes unpunished, either; and that's what happened to David. He tried to reach out and be

nice but Hanun, king of Ammon, either didn't want or need David in his life. So, David's motive for this war was an angry revenge for the way his messengers were treated. He started a war because he was angry and embarrassed....

X

1 And it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead.

2 Then said David, I will shew kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father shewed kindness unto me. And David sent to comfort him by the hand of his servants for his father. And David's servants came into the land of the children of Ammon.

3 And the princes of the children of Ammon said unto Hanun their lord, Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? hath not David rather sent his servants unto thee, to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it?

4 Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away.

5 When they told it unto David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed: and the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and then return.

6 And when the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David, the children of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Bethrehob, and the Syrians of Zoba, twenty thousand footmen, and of king Maacah a thousand men, and of Ishtob twelve thousand men.

7 And when David heard of it, he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men.

8 And the children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array at the entering in of the gate: and the Syrians of Zoba, and of Rehob, and Ishtob, and Maacah, were by themselves in the field.

9 When Joab saw that the front of the battle was against him before and behind, he chose of all the choice men of Israel, and put them in array against the Syrians:

10 And the rest of the people he delivered into the hand of Abishai his brother, that he might put them in array against the children of Ammon.

11 And he said , If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee.

12 Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the LORD do that which seemeth him good.

13 And Joab drew nigh, and the people that were with him, unto the battle against the Syrians: and they fled before him.

14 And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, then fled they also before Abishai, and entered into the city. So Joab returned from the children of Ammon, and came to Jerusalem.

15 And when the Syrians saw that they were smitten before Israel, they gathered themselves together.

16 And Hadarezer sent, and brought out the Syrians that were beyond the river: and they came to Helam; and Shobach the captain of the host of Hadarezer went before them.

17 And when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together, and passed over Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Syrians set themselves in array against David, and fought with him.

18 And the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew the men of seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen, and smote Shobach the captain of their host, who died there.

19 And when all the kings that were servants to Hadarezer saw that they were smitten before Israel, they made peace with Israel, and served them. So the Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon any more.

~ Alright, verse three reveals the surrounding nations didn't trust David's motives, either. I do agree that the treatment of his men in verse four was insulting and unnecessary; in fact, they couldn't have been any more insulted! However, I think David was a big enough man that he could have – and should have – ignored this sort of thing; but he didn't. David was a rugged and highly skilled general and could easily overcome the opposition and bring an overwhelming slaughter. It seems the only purpose and accomplishment of this war was his own motive to establish himself as the greatest ruler of the region in that day. Well, God doesn't use that - but we're just going to leave it at that as far as this report is concerned and move on to chapter eleven....

XI

1 And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.

2 And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.

3 And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?

4 And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.

5 And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child.

~ Candidly, this is the section of Scripture where almost all Bible teaching concerning King David begins. This passage, in particular, is the one chosen by the critic when seizing on David's sins; and there's no question David does have a serious sin in this episode. Our Spiritual Safari does not mitigate adultery, friends – we're all going to face-up to some ugly spiritual facts in this report. We will literally exhaust the subject of adultery, and we'll revisit it *MYRIAD* times in future reports. This is sin; and God labels it that – *SIN*.

God says very definitely in the last verse of this chapter – that this thing that happened with Bathsheba displeased Him. The punishment that follows is severe. That seems to be the one Bible fact that teachers teaching on the sin of David usually seem to mysteriously omit – but I digress again – although not really. In subsequent reports, we'll see how David responds to said chastisement, too. David's response is what defines a genuine man after God's own heart from a counterfeit Christian, too, by the way. Make a note.

It is very interesting to me that during "the time when kings go forth to war," King David didn't go forth to war – he stayed at home – but he sent his men to war. In Biblical times, there was an open season for war, just as we have open season on animals today; at certain times one can hunt but, at other times, one cannot legally do so. Even in modern times, certain weather and geographical conditions will determine the timing of any attack; and has a potential to slow down a battle and even stall it. During World War II, the greatest suffering was unquestionably from the weather itself. If you read back through the commentary of news sources in that day, you'll find unfavorable weather is mentioned in almost every single report. Unfortunately, David's men had gone to war without him. Intriguing.

David sent Joab and the rest of his army to fight for him while he was womanizing with a married woman; and, honestly, I have to wonder why.

The only suggestion I have is that David has now built a very comfortable and luxurious palace; and that palace was quite different from the cave of Adullam where he had spent the last decade or so running and hiding from King Saul. I think David had had enough of that. We know he loved Mount Zion; so, it makes sense he wanted to hang back. But it doesn't make sense from a king's perspective. Luxury and riches have trapped and prevented many men – and women – from serving God; and riches have caused many men to fall into a lifestyle of abject sin. Actually, our prosperity and comforts today are a burden, friends – a curse; and you can just write that down. David remaining – tarrying – in Jerusalem was a huge first mistake!

Anytime we find ourselves in the wrong place at the wrong time we have the potential for disaster. Well, David is walking – probably pacing – on *his roof*; I'm sure he had a lot of things on his mind. Maybe the fresh air helped him think? I can almost assert that his conscious was bothering him about his men out there on the battlefield. I think this was one of many sleepless nights for David. That's when he looks around and sees a beautiful woman and all those worries and cares dissolve in the night air.

We live in an age when women's dress has become a fatal flaw to mankind. I know I sound like a square – don't bother writing me and telling me that. It seems most women – even Christian women – have no idea what they are doing with their appearances; and even the way they dress their children. I saw a woman with a no more than four-year-old baby girl in the grocery store the other day, and the child had on the clothes of a stripper. It was shameful. I felt embarrassed just being there. There are woman singers in the church whose voice can carry you to the gates of Heaven, but who are wearing clothing that drag your mind to the gates of hell. This report may well be one long digression, friends.

Either way, Bathsheba was bathing in a place where she could be seen by David, so she was not exactly being cognizant of her privacy – and I have to assume it was intentional – for whatever reason. I think she knew David's reputation, and we know David had so many wives at this time that we don't even know where they're all at. Bathsheba was a Hittite – a foreigner – and we also know David had a penchant for foreign women. This is another mistake by David because the Mosaic Law insisted that the men in

Israel not marry women from outside Israel – but that’s another Bible lesson for another time – and my fourth digression in this report on sin. I may need to look into that. Let’s move on....

6 And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David.

7 And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered.

8 And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king's house, and there followed him a mess of meat from the king.

9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house.

10 And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from thy journey? why then didst thou not go down unto thine house?

11 And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing.

~ Well, the account of what happened is brief and simple language in verse four; there’s no question what transpired. The fact that she conceived presents David with yet another problem, of course. Her husband is one of his most mighty and loyal men. So, David makes a pretense that he has brought Uriah back from Battle for consultation on how the war was progressing. I’m sure David made Uriah feel as if a promotion could be waiting – and that is simply shameful deception. It actually seems as if David’s life is spinning out of control at this point.

As we continue, David makes every attempt possible to absolve himself of responsibility. When Uriah won’t go to his house and be with his wife, I

think David was shocked – and angry. The loyalty of Uriah is not questionable. David's is. This is another rebuke to David who was hanging around doing nothing except enjoying the luxuries of palace life when he should have been out fighting for his people alongside his men. Of course, David was trying to have Uriah go to Bathsheba so the child would not be attributed to David. David even tries to get Uriah drunk. But Uriah was an honorable man, friends. His loyalty was a slap in the face to David without Uriah even knowing it; and it *COMPOUNDS* David's already treacherous sin....

12 And David said to Uriah, Tarry here to day also, and to morrow I will let thee depart. So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day, and the morrow.

13 And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house.

14 And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah.

15 And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die.

16 And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men were.

17 And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell some of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also.

18 Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war;

19 And charged the messenger, saying, When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king,

20 And if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall?

21 Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? why went ye nigh the wall? then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.

22 So the messenger went, and came and shewed David all that Joab had sent him for.

23 And the messenger said unto David, Surely the men prevailed against us, and came out unto us into the field, and we were upon them even unto the entering of the gate.

24 And the shooters shot from off the wall upon thy servants; and some of the king's servants be dead, and thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.

25 Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it: and encourage thou him.

26 And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.

27 And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

~ The progression to the last portion of the account chills the blood; and comprises the most treacherous aspect of David's sin. The cover up is always worse than the crime – and this cover up is murder. It's inexcusable, calculated violence, plain and simple. The Word of God records it that way because God isn't going to cover it up. This is part of the record of the total depravity of mankind. If God had approved of any of this, then it would

have been omitted altogether from our account. Trust me on that, unbelievers. David is as guilty as he could possibly be.

The messenger sent to Joab to “encourage” Joab was nothing in the world but pious drivel. This leg of our Spiritual Safari concludes with shame and embarrassment. An awful thing has been done by the king of Israel. What do you think should happen to David at this time? Well, the Lord is displeased, and God is going to punish David for it. From here to his dying day, David will have nothing but trouble in his life.

My friends, you choose to do right or wrong – good or evil – all day every day. You can choose to sin; and you can get drunk, do drugs and have an affair with another man’s wife if you want to. The man of the world will seemingly get away with impunity doing such things in this life, too – but, if you are a child of God – you aren’t going to get away with sin in this life. God doesn’t correct the children of the devil, friends; but He will have no problem taking His Own children out for a beating. Don’t think so? – try it. Take it from a man who believes God and who has been beaten by God within an inch of his life – me – I happen to know what I’m talking about.

David thinks he has covered up his sin; but it’s an open scandal in his Cabinet. Joab, his captain, knows what happened. Some of his most closely connected counselors – ones who went and brought Bathsheba to him that night – know *EXACTLY* what happened. No one else seems to know; and these men aren’t about to talk – or maybe it was an open scandal in Jerusalem; *BUT* – either way, as David sat on his throne from here forward, he had to look around and ask himself who else knew about this thing. We’re told that *OUR* secret sins down here are open before God in Heaven. Well, Nathan the prophet knows, too; and Nathan is compelled to confront David about it in our next report ~