

## The Conflict Caused by the Nature of Sin

2 Samuel 11:6-27

*“But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD”*

**Introduction:** It is NOT unusual around the celebrations of Thanksgiving and Christmas to put on a little weight. There are certain delicacies that are ONLY enjoyed during these times: pies, cookies, and personal temptation in fudge. As I get older there has been a greater comprehension of moderation around these times, but the reality stays the same when faced with sugary or high calorie treats: we may say we aren't going to eat any this year, only to be betrayed by the siren call of pecan pie and your wife's cookie baking prowess! Desire for baked goods can often overcome and win out over our better reason and mental decision-making.

In a small way this illustrates our battle with sin in our pursuit of Christ. There is a battle raging IN us as we walk each day in what the Bible calls our **flesh**. We know a few things about this battle that allows us to fight well.

- 1) When we come to Christ by faith, we are made **NEW**, having old things pass away:

**2 Corinthians 5:17** – *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**. The old has passed away; behold, **the new has come.**”*

This “NEWNESS” is a quality of new, meaning we have new desires, new motives, new purposes, new goals, and a new object of worship, even though we are still in the same physical body in the same physical place

- 2) Because we have been made new, we have the **ability** to put off the old man and put on the new:

**Ephesians 4:20-24** *“But that is not the way you learned Christ! — 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, 22 **to put off your old self**, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be **renewed in the spirit of your minds**, 24 and to **put on the new self**, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Before Christ changed us from the inside out, we had NO ability or opportunity to fight against our sin, and the reality is, we did not even WANT to. But in our **new nature**, we have both the ability AND desire to operate counter to our former nature.

- 3) The battle with and against our **flesh** will continue on in our sojourn on this earth:

**Galatians 5:17-18** – *“For the **desires of the flesh** are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.”*

**1 Peter 2:11** – *“Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to **abstain from the passions of the flesh**, which **wage war against your soul.**”*

**Romans 7:21-25** *“So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another **law waging war** against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 **Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?** 25 **Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!** So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.”*

We are new, but we are bound, for now, in these old bodies and old fleshly desires. When Paul uttered the words, **‘Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?’**, his cry is mirrored by every believer who has succumbed to temptation and sinned, even though we KNOW it is an offense to God and something we want to HATE! The picture is that of a corpse that hung on him that he could not free himself from (Robert Mounce). This is the nature of our sanctification, where we desire to obey all that God commanded (1 John 5:2), but also have foreign desires, echoes of our former nature, that still creep into our mind and actions. This conflict is frustrating, sad, and maddening, but is NOT hopeless. God has given us the **Spirit** to guide and convict so that we do not have to live out the deeds of the flesh, and have the work of Jesus Christ our LORD applied on our behalf, so that we can shout and sing, **“There is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”** (Rom. 8:1) The battle is real but temporary, and though we may lose some battles, the war has already been won through Jesus. The issue for any believer is simply this: **are we engaged in the battle, or have we simply been given over to our sin.**

This understanding helps frame **the story of David in 2 Samuel 11**, a vivid and cautionary tale of a believer who can be captivated by sin, caught in its web, and locking into its progressive nature. This is ultimately a hopeful story, where grace is greater than sin and God’s forgiveness shining through, but also one that gives us all pause and motivation to evaluate our hearts and minds. We will look four ways that **sin operates so that we can be equipped for the battle as we look to Jesus, our better King and Savior.**

We will look at the story through the lens of how sin operates, seeking to understand each step so that we can confess, repent, and turn when we are tempted by the same things.

### **Sin Will Progress is Not Killed (11:6-13)**

*So David sent word to Joab, “**Send me Uriah the Hittite.**” And Joab sent Uriah to David. 7 When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab was doing and how the people were doing and how the war was going. 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 there followed him a present from the king. 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 When they told David, “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 dwell in booths, 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? **As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing.**”*

*12 Then David said to Uriah, “Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. 13 And David invited him, and he ate in his presence and drank, **so that he made him drunk.** And in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, **but he did not go down to his house.***

Sin does not fight fair, does not stay in its lane, never takes a break, and seeks to destroy. On top of this, our enemy knows that **external temptation** stirs up **internal desire**, so he is adept at putting things in front of us to trip us up and nudge us along the path of destruction. This is why sin must be **put to death**, what theologians call the *mortification of sin*. **“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”** (Colossians 3:5) Notice that Paul goes above and beyond calling it a battle, he says the goal has to be killing it, which requires **active, ongoing, faith-driven, Spirit empowered, trusting work**, since sin is an unquenched appetite, needing more and more to deliver the temporary happiness its promises. Left on its own, sin will grow out of control, taking over more and more of life.

We left David last week with the news that his sexual interaction with Bathsheba, the daughter of one of his faithful officers and wife of his courageous soldier, was pregnant. At this point David had options to stop the digression of sin, but his chosen path was to continue down the steep embankment of sin’s progression, picking up momentum as he went. His **first plan** to cover up the sin was simple enough: if Bathsheba’s husband could come back off the battle/siege field and lay with his wife, the sinful deed would be covered up by plausible deniability since the timeframe of pregnancy would work out. But nothing is simple when trying to cover sin up.

We meet Uriah, a Hittite by birth meaning he was not a natural citizen but whose family were native to the land and most likely joined up in loyalty to Israel and their God (Uriah’s name means ‘the LORD is my light’). Uriah was from Canaan but proved to be the only true Israelite in the whole story. David brought him back from the battlefield, and used kind words and gifts (v. 6, 8) to give him a clear pathway back to his house and wife for some downtime and long awaited physical intimacy with his wife. But Uriah proved to be a man of **conviction and faithfulness**, since he had taken a vow of celibacy during the battle (see Lev. 15:18; 1 Sam. 21:15; Ex. 19:15), and a stance of **solidarity** with the rest of his comrades on the battle field. David KNEW this was right and himself had practiced this in his lifetime, but was willing to **compromise** for the sake of cover up.

But David was undeterred, and started phase 2, this time applying alcohol to the mix, getting Uriah drunk so that his guard would be down and would more easily give into his fleshly desires. However, Uriah would NOT yield to his fluids and instead slept outside of his house and the confines of his marriage bed. Instead of realizing he was simply making matters worse, David continued down the path of destruction, ramping up *what needed to be done*, all the while allowing sin to snowball, with an initial sin of lust turning over to the sin of pride, selfishness, an idolatry.

### **Control Over Sin is a Mirage (11:14-25)**

<sup>14</sup> *In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah.* <sup>15</sup> *In the letter he wrote, “Set Uriah in the forefront of the **hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die.**”* <sup>16</sup> *And as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men.* <sup>17</sup> *And the men of the city came out and fought with Joab, and some of the servants of David among the people fell. **Uriah the Hittite also died.*** <sup>18</sup> *Then Joab sent and told David all the news about the fighting.* <sup>19</sup> *And he instructed the messenger, “When you have finished telling all the news about the fighting to the king,* <sup>20</sup> *then, **if the king’s anger rises, and if he says to you, ‘Why did you go so near the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall?’*** <sup>21</sup> *Who killed Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? **Did not a woman cast 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.’”*

<sup>22</sup> So the messenger went and came and told David all that Joab had sent him to tell. <sup>23</sup> The messenger said to David, "The men gained an advantage over us and came out against us in the field, but we drove them back to the entrance of the gate. <sup>24</sup> **Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall. Some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.**" <sup>25</sup> David said to the messenger, "Thus shall you say to Joab, '**Do not let this matter displease you, for the sword devours now one and now another. Strengthen your attack against the city and overthrow it.**' And encourage him."

We all like to be in control, whether it is over the events of the day, knowledge that tomorrow will be okay, or the actions of others, we like to live in the fool's paradise that we can control outcomes. Add to that desire the ability to have **actual power over areas of life**, it is a recipe of self-deception, believing we have some sort of competitive sovereignty with God. A desire to be in control can be a sanitized sin that many struggle with but few actually deal with since it can remain unrevealed to the masses.

David had a high sense of control because he had a high level of power. People would have to do what he said or face the consequences, which sounds good on paper but also demands great responsibility. When he was matched with a man who showed **greater integrity** than he had, with Uriah unwilling to compromise his commitments and integrity, David had to turn to the next tool in his arsenal, which was to lean on his **power and authority to silence the one man who could expose his sin**. This required David to reverse his better judgement, his normal *modus operandi* in leadership, and his own tactics in war.

As David sent Uriah back to the encampment at Rabbah where Israel was waiting out their foe in a walled city, he placed a letter into his hand for Joab's eyes only. What this letter contained was a **premeditated hit, a death sentence for the one carrying it**. As Joab read the letter, he realized what needed to be done. David wanted Uriah dead, and wanted the battle to cover it up. This left Joab with an unenviable decision: *how to follow the king's orders without raising suspicions*. Remember, during a siege the goal was to stay AWAY from the walls until they or the gates could be breached, since until then, a skilled archer or unskilled commoner could kill someone simply by throwing something off the wall down at you. In **Judges 9:53** it was said that a **woman threw a millstone onto Abimelech and killed him**. Everyone knew to stay away. So how to get Uriah close to the wall?

The answer was to send Uriah WITH other valiant soldiers to fight a needless battle against overwhelming odds. The result was as obvious as inevitable: *Uriah died, as did many other Israelite soldiers*. Joab knew this news would make David furious, but he made sure to tell the courier that the battle was fierce by the wall, and **Uriah the Hittite also died**. And Joab was both shrewd and correct. Normally a decision like this would have been met with swift ire, but David simply responded with cold indifference: *Let Joab know that sometimes these things happen in war. Don't fret. Keep going. You're doing a good job*.

In this, David found the success he was looking for. Uriah was dead. The 'secret' was safe. He had done it. But it was clear that he sacrificed much to be in control. Instead of being an adulterer and liar, he was now a murderer, and **a mass one at that**. He took advantage of those under his care, those that could not fight back, those that could not resist. **The desire to control, especially in keeping up appearances, causes a multiplication of sin**. But any attempt to control life or sin on our own without the help of the Spirit of reliance on Christ is merely a mirage, drinking a big mouthful of sand that leaves us unquenched and in a desperate situation.

### Self-Autonomy is a Death Trap

At this point, it's important to look at one more principle in battling sin, one that is more implicit than explicit in the text. David was always at his best when he surrounded himself with good people, those who told him the truth, and that could even correct him. Jonathan did that for him, and even Abigail impressed him with her clear thinking and conviction. He had asked the opinion of **Nathan the prophet** in the beginning of chapter 7, trying to understand the will of God. But it is clear over time that David had fewer and fewer people who either knew his life or could speak truth into it. It was also clear that many knew what was going on behind the scenes, but nobody was willing to confront.

First, think through the list of people who would have known what had happened with Bathsheba: 1) the servants who David inquired about her, and then the ones who came and got her; 2) Any medical people who would have confirmed her pregnancy; 3) The servants who saw and interacted with Uriah 4) Joab, the general; 5) Bathsheba herself, who could have told her husband. In all of this, NO ONE risked reputation or death to say "no", to confront the king, to stand their ground. Many went along with the ploy. We stay silent when we are more concerned about self-preservation than righteousness.

Second, it was David's responsibility to surround himself with true friends, to invite truth, and to invest in those who would truly know him. This is so often a missing ingredient in our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ, as we want to live like maverick, independent, and self-autonomous followers. But IT NOT ONLY IS UNBIBLICAL, it does not work.

**Hebrews 3:12-13** *"Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin"*

We need to surround ourselves with people who will be truthful and compassionate, those who are empathetic and clear, those who will confront and encourage. This requires **time, risk of honesty, and trust**. *Without this, we set ourselves up to function just like David, simply at a different level.*

### Fear of the Lord is the Counter Measure (11:26-27)

*26 When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband.  
27 And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. **But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.***

The story ends with a death, mourning, a wedding, and a birth. All seemed to go according to plan, the cover-up complete, and everyone could move on. But this is where the **brilliance of the writer of Samuel and the sovereignty of God comes into play**. Up until this point, the one actor in the drama left out has been God, and the writer wrote intentionally to show that David **functioned like a practical atheist throughout**, like God did not exist. The man after God's own heart not only rebelled against God, but acted like He wasn't real, as do all who sin continually. But as **Dale Davis** wrote, *the silence of God does not mean the absence of God*. And God was not absent in the chapter, as we will see in chapter 12.

Unbelievers are characterized by the *lack of fearing the Lord*, as **Romans 3:18** says, *"there is no fear of the Lord before their eyes."* But anytime a believer in Jesus Christ sins, we function in unbelief, and there is no fear of the Lord in our eyes. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 9:10) and is the **hatred of evil** (Prov. 8:13). The fear of the Lord is a means to grow the church (Acts 9:31), motivates us to persuade others in the gospel (2 Cor. 5:11), and creates boldness in our witness (Phil. 1:14). In other

words, if a **lack of fear of the Lord** causes us to ACT in unbelief, a proper fear of the Lord will **keep us from the progression of sin.**

**The takeaway for us is clear.** Are we acting like God is not real or that He is not the One who has authority to cast us into hell (Luke 12:5)? The opposite is run TOWARD Him, to pursue Him, to be honest with Him, to cry out to Him, to confess our sin to Him (1 John 1:9), to trust Him, to obey Him, to pray to Him, to worship Him, to live each day with the awareness that He is present and knows all things. We again remember where David failed, Jesus succeeded. Jesus never wavered, never sinned, never gave in. He was the One who satisfied the righteousness of God, so that we can run to Him. That is why Paul said at the end of his crying out over the failure of the flesh:

**Romans 7:25-8:1** *"Thanks be to God **through Jesus Christ our Lord!** So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.  
**There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**"*