

## **The Need for Mercy**

*2 Samuel 11-12*

*Chair Bible 262*

**Main Idea:** The LORD graciously rebukes his people when they progress into the displeasing deceitfulness of sin.

### **David descends into the displeasing deceitfulness of sin**

**David remains in Jerusalem**

- *2 Samuel 11:1*

**David gives into his flesh**

- *2 Samuel 11:2-5*

**David progresses to murder and deceit**

- *2 Samuel 11:6-26*

**The LORD is displeased**

- *2 Samuel 11:27*

### **The LORD graciously rebukes David through Nathan**

**Nathan tells a prophetic story**

- *2 Samuel 12:1-6*

**Nathan speaks truth**

- *2 Samuel 12:7-15*

### **So What?**

- **Am I progressing into the displeasing deceitfulness of sin?**
  - *2 Samuel 12:9*
  - *2 Samuel 11:27*
- **Am I responding to the LORD God's gracious rebuke by crying for mercy?**
  - *Psalms 51:1-2*

11 <sup>1</sup>In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. <sup>3</sup> And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" <sup>4</sup> So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. <sup>5</sup> And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant." <sup>6</sup> So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. <sup>7</sup> When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab was doing and how the people were doing and how the war was going. <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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?" <sup>11</sup> 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." <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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.

<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."

<sup>26</sup> When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband.

<sup>27</sup> 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.

12 And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. <sup>2</sup> The rich man had very many flocks and herds, <sup>3</sup> but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and

it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. <sup>4</sup> Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." <sup>5</sup> Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, <sup>6</sup> and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

<sup>7</sup> Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. <sup>8</sup> And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. <sup>9</sup> Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. <sup>10</sup> Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' <sup>11</sup> Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. <sup>12</sup> For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.' " <sup>13</sup> David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die." <sup>15</sup> Then Nathan went to his house.

Notes:

Intro

In the course of his downward slide from temptation into sin, David manages to disobey three of the Ten Commandments: "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife"; "you shall not commit adultery"; "you shall not murder (Ex 20:17, 14, 13). (Longman III & Garland 428)

V1-5

The narrator thus leaves the impression that every able-bodied man in Israel goes to war—everyone, that is, except the king himself: "But David remained in Jerusalem." (Longman III & Garland 429)

"Remember all the commands of the LORD, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes" (Nu 15:39). Failing to heed the warning expressed in that and/or similar texts, David "saw" a woman (v.2) and wanted her. (Longman III & Garland 429)

"She had purified herself" - It's purpose is to inform the reader that Bathsheba was clearly not pregnant when she came to David, since she had just been "purified from her uncleanness." (Longman III & Garland 431)

The message she sends to David - "I am pregnant" - are her "only words in the entire narrative... The only recorded speech of Bathsheba, brief though it is, sets in motion a course of action which ultimately results in her husband's death." (Longman III & Garland 431)

V2-4

The bald facts are stated, including the detail that she was not pregnant when she came to David. Indeed, *she was purifying herself* when he took her. (Baldwin 248)

#### V4

Took = (lāqah) take (get, fetch), lay hold of (seize), receive, acquire (buy), bring, marry (take a wife), snatch (take away) (TWOT)

The basic meaning of *lāqah* is “to take, grasp.” *lāqah* also carries the sense of “get for oneself,” as in the demand of the taskmasters to the Hebrew slaves: “Go and *get* your own straw wherever you can find it” (Exod. 5:11), or the wisdom saying: “Whoever corrects a mocker *invites* insult [*getteth* to himself shame, KJV]” (Prov. 9:7). *lāqah* is also used to describe taking something as one’s own possession. Thus Jacob is accused of taking the wealth of Laban (Gen. 31:1), and Rachel takes the household gods when she leaves her father’s house (Gen. 31:34). Judah gives up ownership of the pledges he gave to Tamar: “Let her *keep* what she has [Let her *take* it to her, KJV], or we will become a laughingstock” (Gen. 38:23). Note Prov. 31:16: “She considers a field and *buys* it [lit., takes it]; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.”

“Taking” in the sense of acquiring something is combined with that of selection or choosing when *lāqah* is used to denote the legal arrangement of marriage, especially in the Pentateuch. “To take a wife” or “to take a woman as a wife” is usually translated by the NIV with the simple verb “to marry”: “Abram and Nahor both *married* [And Abram and Nahor *took* them wives, KJV]” (Gen. 11:29). The same terms signal Rebekah’s marriage to Isaac: “Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he *married* Rebekah [and *took* Rebekah, KJV]. So she became his wife” (24:67). (Mounce)

The ironic contrast with 2 Sam 2-4 is marked: the king who was content to be given his kingdom must seize by force (against Uriah if not Bathsheba) a wife (Longman III & Garland 430)

#### V5

*And the woman conceive*: to David she had been merely “the woman” rather than a person; moreover, no mention is made of the agony of uncertainty she had suffered, all the more so because a child of the King was involved. (Baldwin 248)

#### V6-17

David had already “slept/lain” with Uriah’s wife - a matter about which Uriah probably has no knowledge - while Uriah himself has “slept” and would “sleep” only among David’s servants (vv. 9, 13). (Longman III & Garland 435)

His second attempt at covering up his affair with Bathsheba having failed, David senses that he has exhausted his options and so decides to have Uriah killed... Probably unwittingly, Uriah carries his own death warrant to Joab. (Longman III & Garland 436)

The literary unit closes with David’s criminal purpose finally accomplished - “Uriah the Hittite was dead” - a doleful refrain repeated in the rest of ch. 11, each time emphasizing not only a brave warrior’s mercenary status but also his unswerving loyalty to his liege lord. (Longman III & Garland 437)

#### V6-8

A royal gift is meant to encourage Uriah to consider himself specially favored, and therefore to relax and enjoy his opportunity to go home and be with his wife. (Baldwin 249)

#### V8

“Wash your feet” - Since this washing was done before going to bed, the idiom means to go home and go to bed. To a soldier coming from the battlefield, it said boldly “enjoy your wife sexually.” (MacArthur Study Bible 438)

Although usually an expression describing an act affording refreshment and relaxation in a land where dusty roads are the rule, the phrase may well be intended here as a double entendre, given the euphemistic use of “feet” in the sense of “genitals.” David would thus be suggesting to Uriah that he “enjoy his wife sexually. (Longman III & Garland 434)

V9-11

David had expected and hoped that Uriah would be like himself; instead he proved to be a man of integrity, whose first loyalty was to the king’s interest rather than his own pleasure. (Baldwin 249)

V14-17

David wrote a letter to Joab, and made Uriah carry his own death warrant. It was all part of David's attempt to screen himself from exposure, yet ironically the incident has become one of the best-known in Scripture. (Baldwin 249)

V18-27

And it is not the guilty king, safe in his fortress palace in Jerusalem, who suffers; the enemy’s arrows find their mark in his innocent “servants” (v. 24), in his innocent “men” (lit., “servants”), who are sacrificed so that David can inconspicuously dispose of his ultimate target, his “servant” Uriah the Hittite. (Longman III & Garland 438)

From his own selfish perspective the king is basically saying that what is done is done, that it cannot be helped, and that innocent people will often get caught in the crossfire when vital goals are pursued. (Longman III & Garland 438)

The Hebrew phrase translated “had her brought” (v. 27) is literally “sent and collected her” and emphasizes the abuse of royal power that David is increasingly willing to exercise. (Longman III & Garland 439)

V18-21

“Who struck Abimelech son at Zerubbabel?” The reference is to Judges 9:50-57, where in the siege of Thebez Abimelech went so close to the wall that a woman was able to kill him by hurling an upper millstone on top of him. The fact that a woman was involved is subtly hinted at by Joab, who has formed his own interpretation of David's activities in Jerusalem. He is not mistaken. (Baldwin 250)

V22-24

So worried has Joab been over all this avoidable bloodshed that the death of Uriah genuinely takes second place in his thinking. (Baldwin 250)

V25

by saying to Joab, do not let this matter trouble you ( “displease thee”,AV), David is at the same time speaking to himself and placating his own conscience. (Baldwin 251)

V26-27

The Lord in his infinite grace had allowed David's attempt at cover up to fail, and was about to confront him. (Baldwin 251)

V27

Displeased - translates the Hebrew word *raah* (רעע)

NASB translates the final sentence "But the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the Lord."

ESV has "displeased." The literal idea here is to be evil or displeasing in the eyes of Yahweh.

The essential meaning of the root can be seen in its frequent juxtaposition with the root *ʾôb*. Thus Moses concluded, "See I set before you today life and what is good [*ʾôb*], death and what is evil/bad [*ra* ] (cf. Mic 3:2). Frequently they occur in the merism that one distinguishes "good and evil/bad" (II Sam 14:17; 19:35 [H 36]; I Kgs 3:9; Isa 7:15; cf. here "tree of good and evil," Gen 2:9, 17). Since the decision that something is bad depends subjectively on one's taste, the root frequently occurs with the formula "in the eyes of." Thus Isaiah threatens those whose moral judgments are distorted: "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil." Because the Lord's judgment stands as a moral absolute, however, one can speak of objective evil, of sin. The formula *ʾāsâ hāra ʿ bē ʾênê YHWH* "to do evil in the Lord's judgment" occurs frequently in the OT. (TWOT 854)

In the moral and religious realm of meaning, the verb denotes activity that is contrary to God's will. Bildad alludes to this aspect of meaning in Job 8:20, and the prophets Isaiah (31:2) and Zephaniah (1:12) state it more strongly. A phrase which highlights God's evaluation of action is "in his sight" which appears three times in relation to the verb (Num 22:34; Prov 24:18; Mic 3:4). Another way is to contrast *rā ʿ a* ' activity with God's good acts (Josh 24:15) or with good people. The latter uses a participial form and is confined to the Psalms (26:5; 37:9; 92:11 [H 12]). (TWOT 854)

*Heb* "and the thing which David had done was evil in the eyes of the Lord." Note the verbal connection with v. 25. Though David did not regard the matter as evil, the Lord certainly did. (NET Bible notes)

It is furthermore ironic that "Yahweh does not act. Rather, the deed is subject of the verb. The deed did evil 'in the eyes of Yahweh.' Yahweh does not act or move or intervene or assert himself. He is simply there. The Lord's people are confident that he himself will "do what is good in his sight", even though all too often they do the reverse. (Longman III & Garland 439)

V1-14

Introductory formula V1a

Presentation of the Case V1b-4

Judgment of the case V5-6

True meaning revealed V7a (Longman III & Garland 443)

In any case,

Instead of slaughtering one of his own animals, however, he "took" (v. 4) the poor man's one ewe lamb instead—just as David had sent messengers to "get" (lit., "take," 11:4; see comment there) Bathsheba. (Longman III & Garland 444)

David has been trapped by his own sentence. (Longman III & Garland 444)

Many have seen (correctly, in my opinion) in the fourfold restitution as applied to David “an allusion to the death of four of David’s sons, namely Bathsheba’s first child [v. 18], Amnon [13:28-29], Absalom [18:14-15] and Adonijah [1 Kings 2:25] (Longman III & Garland 445)

“You are the man” (v. 7a), a statement that McDonald calls “the most dramatic sentence in the Old Testament”... The Hebrew phrase...wonderfully emphasizes that, in the final analysis, David is simply a man. David is not addressed as ‘king,’ or ‘lord,’ or even ‘prince,’ but simply as *ha’ish*, the man” (Longman III & Garland 445)

Perhaps most significantly vv. 9-10, the middle two verses of the six that make up the oracles, can be arguably defined as the literary, historical, and theological crux and center of 2 Samuel as a whole. (Longman III & Garland 445)

David is now truly and undeniably under the Curse (Longman III & Garland 446)

Although the Lord “gave” and would have given “even more” (v. 8), David “took” someone else’s wife to be his own. (Longman III & Garland 446)

As David has done what is evil (v.9), so the Lord will bring calamity upon him (v. 11; same Heb. word); and as David has done evil in the Lord’s eyes (v. 9), so the lord will bring calamity upon the king “before [his] very eyes” (v. 11). (Longman III & Garland 447)

But although David did evil in secret, the Lord will do his will against David in broad daylight. (Longman III & Garland 447)

The fact that God does not hesitate to strike people down for what might be considered lesser infractions makes his forbearance in David’s case all the more noteworthy. (Longman III & Garland 448)

V1

David, the Supreme judge, who could be expected to pronounce on hard cases, paid attention to the details, which the prophet outlined in 61 carefully chosen words. (Baldwin 252)

V5-6

David attempts to rid himself of his guilty conscious by passing judgment on someone else, while subconsciously passing judgment on himself. Only after that does he mention fourfold restitution to compensate the poor man for his loss, and explain the reason behind his verdict. (Baldwin 253)

David means to occupy himself with the reality outside of himself, the rich man and his misdeed, but, in fact, he is involved with himself and seeks to restore his feelings of well-being in this way. (Baldwin 253)

V7-12

Though by the law of the land he might be judged not guilty, he had no ground for appeal before the Divine judge, who went on to uncover the adultery that motivated the murder. (Baldwin 254)

V13-15a

Psalm 32, traditionally accepted as expressing David's thoughts on this occasion, is exuberant over the joy of knowing forgiveness in the place of guilt, restoration of fellowship after the pain of conviction of sin. (Baldwin 255)

This transforming experience does not mean, however, that the judgments which the Lord has announced through the prophet have been annulled. The consequence of David's having *scorned the Lord* still have to be faced, and of that, one further consequence will be a sign: *the child that is born to you shall die*.  
(Baldwin 256)<sup>2</sup>