

Nathan Confronts King David

Second Samuel 11 reports King David's adulterous affair with Bathsheba, the resulting pregnancy, and David's arranging for Bathsheba's husband Uriah to be killed in battle. Second Samuel 11:26-27 states forthrightly,

²⁶ When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. ²⁷ And when her 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.

God held King David accountable for his sinful actions. Second Samuel 12:1-25 reports the initial aftermath of David's sins. God "sent Nathan [the prophet] to David" and confronted him directly.

Observations and Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Item one: To his credit, David confessed his sin when Nathan confronted him. "I have sinned against the LORD," David said (2 Sam. 12:13). God was merciful to him, forgave his sin, and spared his life; but the baby died, and, as Nathan put it,

^{12:9} "Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. ¹⁰ 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.' ¹¹ Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from 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. ¹² For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.'" (vv. 9-12).

Nathan did David and all of Israel a great service by telling David the truth. Bible scholar Warren Wiersbe writes,

The sword did not depart from the king's household, and his wives were taken and violated just as he had taken Bathsheba. Indeed, David did pay fourfold, for Bathsheba's baby died, and his sons Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah were slain (13:29; 18:14-15; 1 Kings 2:25). David's beautiful daughter Tamar was raped by her half

brother (chap. 13), and David's concubines were humiliated publicly by Absalom when he captured the kingdom (16:22). For the rest of David's lifetime, he experienced one tragedy after another, either in his family or in the kingdom. What a price he paid for those few minutes of passion with his neighbor's wife!¹

David subsequently penned Psalm 51, a powerful confession of his sin to the Lord and a prayer that God still would be with him and use him. It reads in part,

¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

¹¹ Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

¹² Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.

¹³ Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners shall be converted to You.

Item two: Note the bolded portion of the text in Item one: **Nathan did David and all of Israel a great service by telling David the truth.** Nathan, of course, was just doing his job, but we cannot deny that in this instance, his job wasn't easy. He did not know how David would respond, but the reality was that David needed to be confronted. The words of the Lord to Ezekiel come to mind:

^{3:16} Now it came to pass at the end of seven days that the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ¹⁷ "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore

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hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: ¹⁸When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. ¹⁹Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.

²⁰ "Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand.

²¹ Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul" (Ez. 3:16-21).

God gave Ezekiel a similar message in Ezekiel 33:1-9. Basically, the Lord said to His spokesman, *If I give you a warning to give to a man committing sin and you are faithful to give it, if he doesn't heed the warning and turn from his sin, it's fully his responsibility; you did your duty. Yet, if I give you a warning to share and you keep your mouth shut, "that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand" (v. 8).*

Who are the people God has given warnings to share with those living in sin? Isn't it all those He has redeemed? God is a righteous and holy God who judges sin. All are sinners, and the only hope anyone has is to come to Christ on His conditions. A sinner must repent of his or her sins, believe Jesus is God and that He lived a holy life and died

on the cross for people's sins, and receive the gift of salvation He offers. Without that, a person faces eternity in hell. But people need to know about their sinful condition and the only remedy for their alienation from God! "How shall they hear without a preacher?" Paul asked in Romans 10:14.

The point here is that people need to understand how dreadful and corrupt they are in their sins. This isn't the whole gospel, but it is an essential part of it. By upholding God's truth and contending for laws consistent with God's law, God's people help everyone, and help society as a whole, understand the value of God's laws and their need for a Savior. Laws that align with God's law honor the Lord and actually advance His kingdom and promote the gospel, albeit at times in indirect ways.

Item three: Nothing is quite as satisfying for the believer who has warned a sinner as watching the person heed the warning and turn to God. Discuss how Nathan must have felt when David confessed his sins and repented. And note this from an article about Nathan at gotquestions.org (<https://bit.ly/3HZkQf4>):

First Chronicles 3:5 reveals the fact that King David and Queen Bathsheba named one of their sons born to them in Jerusalem "Nathan." No doubt, the child's name is a reflection of the royal couple's appreciation for the prophet Nathan's faithfulness, friendship, and tough love through the years.

Discuss how satisfying this must have been for Nathan.

Item four: Why has the modern American church largely abandoned warning individual sinners and the culture at large? What can you do to help the church recover this essential ministry?

Note:

¹Warren W. Wiersbe, *the Bible Exposition Commentary, Old Testament: History — Joshua–Esther*, (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2003), 337.