

A Heart Astray – 2 Samuel 11 Part 1

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Sermon Titles

1. I don't usually spend much time trying to figure out titles for Sunday messages.
 - a. We need one for CD's & the bulletin, so I have to come up with something.
 - b. Usually, I just reduce the main lesson down to a few words.
2. Today we're taking a look at the story of David & Bathsheba, which has *several* excellent lessons.
 - a. My first thought was to title the message – “*David Takes a Bath*” but realized that wouldn't work.
 - b. Because it contains a high level conspiracy “Bathshebagate” seemed apropos.
 - c. Or how about, “David Lusted, Then He Hushed it, But Got Busted.”
3. Finally, I decided to link this lesson to *last week's*. Last week's title was “*The Heart of Worship*” Today's is “*A Heart Astray*.”
4. It's painful watching the David of ch. 6, who danced with all his might before the Lord, *fall* to the seduction of simple lust & all the grotesque sin it led to.

B. Hang On

1. There are so many important life lessons here we'll take 2 weeks to get through it.
2. Today we'll take a look at the first 5 vs. which recount David's fall,
3. Next week we'll examine his attempt to cover it up.

II. TEXT

A. V. 1

¹It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

1. By now, *most* of Israel's enemies have been vanquished & put under tribute.
 - a. For the first time, her borders are secure.
 - b. And her one-time small army has grown with each new victory into what is now a huge force.
2. Joab has proven himself a capable military commander, so David feels safe letting him lead the final campaign in the war with Ammon.
 - a. All that's left is to conquer the Ammonite capital of Rabbah.
 - b. Since the siege would last a while, David decided to stay home.
3. *There* begins his trouble.
 - a. There *will come* a time when David will be too old to lead the army – *but this isn't it*.
 - b. He's still strong enough to battle. His *proper place* was at the head of his men.
 - c. God had called David to *lead* Israel's liberation from foreign oppression & to secure the borders He'd promised them.

4. Ammon was one of the nations he was supposed to subdue.
5. But David had wearied of war. And now that he had a comfortable palace with lots of servants to cater to his every whim, he decided to take a break, stay home, kick back, & relax.
6. In Ephesians 6, the Apostle Paul says that as followers of Christ, we're engaged in a spiritual war.
 - a. This conflict rages 24/7/365, without let up.
 - b. We wrestle not with physical opponents, but a very real spiritual enemy who opposes God & all aligned with Him.
 - c. In order to win in this constant contest, God has provided us some spiritual armor.
 - d. One of the pieces of that armor is the right footwear – Paul says it this way – I paraphrase
“Make sure you *always have* your gospel combat boots on.”
 - e. One of the reasons for the success of the Roman army was their weapons & armor.
 - 1) Their footwear was unique; it had cleats that allowed the Roman soldier to stand firm on muddy & bloody ground.
 - 2) While his enemy was slipping & sliding, he stood sure because of his combat sandals.
 - f. But they weren't very comfortable. As the decades passed & the pride of Rome's army grew, discipline declined & the soldiers replaced their combat sandals with more *comfortable* footwear.
 - g. A shift took place in the thinking of the common soldier; he began seeing himself less a *warrior* and more a *consumer*.
 - h. And soon Rome began losing ground.
7. Paul calls us to *keep* our spiritual combat boots on – to never lose the awareness we're at war.
 - a. The battle is on – and we're *all called to fight*.
 - b. There are no conscientious objectors in spiritual warfare.
 - c. There's no vacation, no time out, no leave, no break in the battle.
 - d. The enemy offers no mercy, no quarter. It's a life & death struggle & it *constant*.
8. The minute you opt out, you paint a fat, red target on your forehead for the enemy to take aim at.
9. That's what happened to David. He backed away from battle to take it *easy*, and became an *easy* mark for the devil.

B. Vs. 2-3

²Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold. ³So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, “/s this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?”

1. Don't picture David climbing up a ladder and walking carefully on tiles over a sloped roof; that's not what the roof of ancient houses was like.
 - a. Roofs were flat & able to support the weight of several people.

- b. Ancient houses had few windows. Inside was often filled with smoke and stuffed with supplies, so they didn't make very comfortable living spaces.
 - c. People spent *most* of their time at home on the roof.
 - 2. Even a palace like David's would have an open courtyard at ground level where royal activity took place.
 - 3. Sleeping quarters were indoors, but apart from sleeping & cooking, most time was spent outdoors.
 - 4. One night, David couldn't sleep. Being restless, he got up & went to the roof.
 - 5. As he strolled around the edge, overlooking his neighbors' houses, he saw something he shouldn't – a woman bathing.
 - 6. As the writer says, she was superfine. David's curiosity peaked so he asked his servants to find out who she was.
 - a. They came back with the report she was the daughter & wife of 2 of his mighty men; Eliam & Uriah. That's why she lived next door to the palace.
 - b. David rewarded soldiers who'd been with him from the beginning & had shown special loyalty to him by giving them housing in the prime real estate next to the palace.
 - c. Both Eliam & Uriah, Bathsheba's father & husband were men who'd laid down their lives many times for David. It makes what he's about to do all the more heinous.
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7. There are 2 things for us to deal with here:
- a. **The first** is David's lust.
 - 1) Because David had let down his spiritual guard, when he saw Bathsheba, he wasn't prepared to handle the temptation the sight presented.
 - 2) If he'd been in the right place in his walk with God, he'd never have been on that roof in the first place; he'd have been at the head of the army laying siege to Rabbah.
 - 3) But let's say he was walking his roof, sleepless *because he realized his error* in not going to battle.
 - 4) If that were the case, when he saw Bathsheba, he would have quickly turned away, knowing if he let his gaze linger, it would lead to a temptation too difficult to overcome.
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- 5) We don't have time to go into this as I'd like, but let me just say that God designed men to be attracted by, drawn to, *excited* with a woman's beauty.
 - a) It's an incredibly powerful bonding mechanism God gave to forge intimacy between a husband and wife.
 - b) One of the woman's primary needs is *security*, so God gave her an incredibly powerful means to bind her husband's heart to hers through his attraction to her form.
 - 6) The problem is, the Fall messed with every part of creation, including the male's attraction to feminine beauty.
 - 7) Sin twists it into *lust*, something that doesn't produce intimacy within the bonds of marriage but seeks *selfish* pleasure from *any* source.
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- 8) The man of God knows lust leads to ruin, so he *protects* himself.
 - a) *Realizing he's always at war*, he keeps his guard up.

- b) He's careful about what he *allows* his eyes to access.
 - c) He doesn't go places or do things that are going to present images that will fix like fiery darts in his mind and start a roaring blaze of lust.
 - d) And he knows that even *with all his precautions*, because he lives in a fallen world, there's still a *chance* he could see something that would trip him *if he wasn't prepared* –
 - e) So he *decides ahead of time* what he'll do *when*, not *if*, he sees something he shouldn't; *He'll turn away and not linger*.
- 9) In light of David's failure in this story, I think a good dose of frankness is what we need. I know this isn't typical Sunday fare.
- a) Most men, not godly men, but men in general, fantasize about a beautiful woman seducing them. Some *long* for that to happen.
 - b) The *godly* man needs to do *the exact opposite* – prepare for how to respond if it were to happen!
 - c) He needs to decide ahead of time if a woman suggests they hitch up, he'll confidently tell her he could never do that because it would grieve the Spirit of God.
- 10) Joseph was a young, good-looking teenager working in the home of a powerful Egyptian official.
- a) The official's wife made it clear she thought Joseph a hunk.
 - b) He steered clear of her but saw the writing on the wall; one day, she'd make a play for him.
 - c) When it finally came, he knew exactly what to do because instead of fantasizing sin, *he'd planned faithfulness ahead of time*.
- 11) My brothers in Christ – our culture is profane & sensual; downright bold in its enticement to sin.
- a) Lust is no longer a vice to shun, it's celebrated and promoted.
 - b) Don't give up or in. Keep on in the battle.
 - c) Don't pursue those images that will ensnare your soul.
 - d) And decide ahead of time what you will do in those “surprise attacks.”

b. Second – What of Bathsheba? What role did she play in this?

- 1) Ancient custom placed great *shame* on public nudity. We have an example of that in ch. 10.
- 2) In such a culture as that, *women* were *ultra careful* guarding their modesty.
- 3) They wore garments that hid both skin & form.
- 4) Baths were only taken every few days & *always indoors*, out of sight of others.
- 5) Bathsheba's outdoor bath was *highly unusual*.
- 6) Because of that, many commentators say she did it *on purpose*, knowing she was within sight of the palace.
- 7) The text doesn't say that and no where suggests she was at fault. David is clearly the guilty one in what happens. But what the text *does* record is Bathsheba's unusual behavior.

- 8) We'll see something else in a minute that makes us wonder about her motive, but for now, I want to pause and reflect on what we can learn from Bathsheba so far.
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- 9) Even if what she did was innocent, it was incredibly unwise.
- She **knew** where she chose to bathe was within sight of the palace roof.
 - The palace was a busy place, with guards who kept watch at all times.
 - Anyone* strolling along the roof would be able to see her.
- 10) Very simply, Bathsheba was being **immodest**.
- 11) This in no way justifies, excuses, or lessens David's sin.
- 12) But at the same time we have to acknowledge if Bathsheba had not been doing what she was, David would have had nothing to see and this whole sad story wouldn't have happened.
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- 13) Just as God designed the man to be **stimulated by what he sees**, woman is given **the beauty that sparks him**.
- And there's something deep within her that **longs** to give her beauty **to** the man.
 - In the same way The Fall twisted this into lust in men, it twisted the woman as well, so that she seeks power over man and **uses her beauty to get it**.
 - Let me **prove my point**: Fashion, clothing styles. Go to the store and see what's hot. What's selling.
 - Go to any high school or college campus & take a look at what the young women are wearing. Watch TV. Pick up a magazine.
8. At the same time Christian **men** need to take their **eyes & minds** captive to Christ, Christian **women** need to take their **wardrobe** captive to Christ.
- As the godly man commits himself to holiness in what he **sees**,
 - The godly woman must commit herself to holiness in what she **wears**.
9. But let me be clear; modesty does not mean dowdy, ugly, plain, unkempt, or ragged.
10. Beauty & modesty are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, there's a **beauty in genuine modesty** unrivalled by those who aim at sensual enticement.

C. Vs. 4-5

⁴Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house. ⁵And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, "I am with child."

- When David learned who the bathing beauty was, he realized both her husband & father were away, out with the army laying siege to Rabbah.
 - Thinking it safe, he summoned her. She went to the palace & David's bed.
 - Having completed her cycle not long before, there could be no doubt her pregnancy was the result of this tryst.
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4. While David is obvious at fault, no where do we read of her **complaint**. There's no protest or attempt to reason with him.

5. Later, when David brings her husband home, trying to cover his tracks, Bathsheba never tells Uriah what happened.
 - a. Though Uriah refused to go to his house, Bathsheba knew he'd returned & was at the palace nearby. Why didn't she go to him and tell of David's abuse?
 - b. Without in any way lessening David's guilt, Bathsheba's actions in all this *do* raise some questions about her motives.

III. CONCLUSION

A. *The Progression of Sin*

1. Chart the progress of David's sin –
 - 1) He withdraws from battle in an attempt to take it easy. He dropped his guard.
 - 2) Next, he sees a woman bathing. But instead of immediately looking away, he lingers, and the resulting lust starts a fire of desire.
 - 3) He follows up on that desire by seeking to discover her availability? "Can I do this? Can I get away with it?"

Did you notice the *answer* to his inquiry in v. 3 – Someone said,
"Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"

Whoever answered knew where David was going and tried to head him off. "David – this isn't just some *object* to be used for your selfish gratification. She's a *person*, with a name. She someone's *daughter*, someone's *wife*.

Even more, the father & husband are men so loyal to you they've place their lives on the line many times & are EVEN NOW doing it again, fighting YOUR battle!"

The problem with lust is that it *turns* people created in God's image, for His pleasure, *into objects* to be used as carnal images for our selfish pleasure.
 - 4) David's desire was running hot and he was past being talked out of sinning, so he *sent* for Bathsheba.
2. This is the way it is with sin; it builds inertia so that pretty soon, it seems we can't stop.
3. This isn't the end of David's downward slide, it gets much worse as we'll see next week.

B. *Next Week, If . . .*

1. I say we'll finish ch 11 next week, Lord willing. *If*, Jesus doesn't come back for us first.
 2. You don't have to be a Bible scholar to know that the events prophesied in Scripture heralding the end times are all in place.
 3. Jesus could come for His people in the Rapture at any moment. If He returned today, *where* would you hear the trumpet call to join Him?
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4. As we end, let me ask – If this were your story, *Where would you be?*
On the battlefield with your armor on and the sword of the Spirit in your hand, laying claim to territory for the Kingdom of God both in your

life and in your loved ones?

Or have you dropped your guard and are taking it easy, out of commission?

Are you pacing the roof; restless because of a lack of spiritual contentment in Christ, so searching for satisfaction in the things of the world?

- If you are, *careful*; because the enemy has you in his sights and has a lovely little Bathsheba all set somewhere near for you to fix your desire on.

Are you Bathsheba, stumbling others because of your spiritual sloppiness & moral carelessness?

- Don't justify immodesty by saying the problem is men—"They just need to get over it."
- That's true—they do. But *love* demands you *help* your brothers in Christ stay pure.
- In Romans 14, Paul said because of love, he would *never use his liberty* if it meant a weaker believer would stumble seeing him do so.

Maybe you've gone farther than all this, and are in bed with Bathsheba or David.

C. Not Perfect.

1. The Bible is unique in that it doesn't ignore the faults & failures of its heroes.
2. Those men & women who stand as the greatest examples of faith are show with all their warts.
3. God does not require *perfection* – what He requires is *honesty* & a willingness to admit we've messed up.
4. When we ask Him to forgive, the pardon is instantaneous and complete.
5. So, no matter where you are today, if you're not on the battlefield, right now, you can come back to God.