

PROMISED LAND 2: Lesson Four, David's Sin and Its Consequences ***2 Samuel 11-24; 1 Chronicles 20-21; selected Psalms***

Subject: David's sin resulted in family and civil death and unrest but God redeemed these tragedies.

Main Idea: Sin has far-reaching consequences but will not have the last word.

Principles:

1. *Our desires are stimulated or inhibited by our own personal choices and habits.*
2. *Even "private sins" have widespread consequences.*
3. *God can redeem the messes of our lives.*

Introduction

For many years, we lived on the upper edge of the Sonoran Desert of Arizona. At 16,000 acres, the South Mountain Preserve in Phoenix is one of the largest municipal parks in the United States. Unlike many of the beautiful forested mountains on which I have hiked, these mountains span nothing but open, undeveloped desert. Most of the year, the only visible plant life is the varieties of cactus. But in the spring, especially in more rainy years, beautiful wildflowers appear, not only atop some of the cactuses but also out of what appears to be nothing but cracked, dry desert dirt. The prophet Isaiah may have been picturing a dry, desert floor suddenly blanketed with flowers when he wrote of "the year of the Lord's favor." He called it a time when God would replace the ashes of devastation with a crown of beauty, a time when mourning would be replaced with joy, and despair with praise (Isaiah 61:1-3). The desert wildflowers are a picture of this – a reminder that although sin has brought great ruination on our world, it will not have the last word.

In our last lesson, we saw that David's kingdom is a reminder of the greater kingdom of God. The early chapters of 2 Samuel tell of the many positive aspects of David's reign. In those chapters, David the shepherd models Christ and brings health to the nation. In the latter chapters of 2 Samuel however, David's life does not represent Christ and His kingdom. He represents the individual believer and the hazards we face. David succumbed to temptation and encountered tragedy as a direct consequence of his sin. It was a tragedy that stripped all the beauty from his life. He wrote, "My bones wasted away through my groaning all day long... my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer" (Psalm 32:3-4).

The consequences of David's sin were far-reaching. Indirectly, all Israel suffered. Later in his life, David sinned again and, on that occasion, 70,000 people died as a result! The damage done by one sin is almost always greater than what we imagine it will be. Sin has far-reaching consequences. In fact, we often bear its scars for life. But sin does not and will not have the final word. God is the God of desert wildflowers. Although the majority of the chapters in 2 Samuel that follow the account of David's sin highlight the many consequences, ultimately, we discover that when David gave the messes of his life to God, God brought something beautiful from them.

I. **David and Bathsheba** – 2 Samuel 11-12; 1 Chronicles 20:1-3

A. **David's Sins** – 2 Samuel 11

i. Adultery – 11:1-5

1. *Home from the Ammonite War*

- a. The account of the war David fought against the Ammonites, as recorded in 2 Samuel 10, is interrupted by the account of David's adultery. This war began when the newly crowned Ammonite king Hanun rebuffed David's condolences over the death of Hanun's father. Apparently, David's involvement in this war was inconsistent. At the beginning, his commanders fought without him (10:7, 13), but at the end of chapter 10 David is very much engaged in the battle.
- b. Chapter 11 begins by informing us that the war with the Ammonites was not over. The spring was the season in which wars would resume, but this particular spring, David remained behind in Jerusalem. The conclusion of the war is not recorded until the end of chapter 12, but the information we already have sets the stage for the disaster that took place while the war was being fought. David was not where he should have been. When we are doing something other than what God has called us to do, trouble is likely to find us.
- c. David was restless and one evening, he got up from bed to walk on his roof. The rooftops of homes in the ancient Near East were commonly used as extensions of the living space. From there, he looked down and saw a beautiful woman bathing. Instead of turning away from the scene, David allowed his passions to be aroused and he sent someone to find out about her.

2. *Bathsheba*

- a. The woman, Bathsheba, was the wife of Uriah, one of David's "Thirty Mighty Men" and the daughter of Eliam, another of the Thirty. Furthermore, her grandfather, Ahithophel, was David's trusted personal counselor (11:3, 23:34). Although it is possible that David may not have known her personally, it seems unlikely. Perhaps he did not recognize Bathsheba from the distance, but it is also possible that the inquiry he made about her was not for the purpose of identifying her but to discover whether she was willing to come to him. Some have suggested that Bathsheba, who certainly would have known King David, was bathing at the time and location she chose with the express purpose of seducing him.

- b. The servant identified her as Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and *wife* of Uriah. Whether or not David recognized Bathsheba earlier, by the time he sent for her, he knew who she was.
 - c. As a result of their adultery, Bathsheba conceived. The fact that she had been performing the ritual bath of purification required by the Law of Moses after a woman's menstrual cycle when David laid eyes on her was proof that the child could not have been Uriah's. So, she sent word to David.
- ii. Deceit – 11:6-13
- 1. One sin leads to another. Instead of confessing his adultery right away, David attempted to cover it up with deceit. He had Uriah brought home from the war front under the pretense of getting a progress report from him. After they talked, he sent Uriah to his home, hoping he would take the opportunity to sleep with his wife.
 - 2. Many years earlier, when David was fleeing from Saul, he had given Ahimelek the priest assurance that his body and those of his men were ritualistically clean (1 Samuel 21:5). At the time, he indicated that ritualistic purity (including abstaining from sexual activity [Leviticus 15:18]) was the normal expectation for his soldiers, since Israel's battles against her enemies were holy wars. Uriah obviously understood that David had given him permission to sleep with Bathsheba, but out of duty as a soldier and devotion to the Lord, Uriah refused.
- iii. Murder – 11:14-27
- 1. When David's first cover-up failed, he sent secret orders to Joab to withdraw troops surrounding Uriah's in battle so that he would be killed. Thus, David was not only responsible for Uriah's murder but also for making Joab and his men accomplices in it.
 - 2. After Bathsheba's period of mourning for her dead husband ended, David had her brought to his house and she gave birth to a son. "But the thing David had done displeased the Lord" (11:27).

B. Bathsheba's Two Sons

- i. Nathan's Rebuke – 12:1-14
- 1. Nathan was a friend of David and also a prophet of the Lord. Previously, the two men had discussed David's desire to build a temple. The Lord had sent Nathan to tell David not to build the temple; that was a job for his son instead. The Lord also used Nathan to announce His wonderful covenant promises to David.

2. Sometime after David and Bathsheba's son was born, the Lord sent Nathan to rebuke David. Nathan was the right man for the job. Not only was he a prophet of the Lord, but he was also David's trusted friend.
3. David had the kingly responsibility of passing judgments. Therefore, Nathan wisely presented him with what seems to have been a fictitious case that, in the end, forced David to pass judgment on himself. The case involved a rich man who took the sole and beloved sheep of a poor man and slaughtered it to serve to a guest, rather than using a sheep from his own vast flock. David was infuriated that an Israelite would do such a thing, but Nathan replied, "*You* are the man!" (12:7). The Lord had made David wealthy in every way, even withholding judgment on him for taking many wives, but David took the beloved and *only* wife of Uriah for himself.
4. The parable highlighted another fact about David. The rich man owned a large number of sheep. Likewise, David already had a large number of wives and concubines (2 Samuel 3:2-5, 5:13-15 and 1 Chronicles 3:1-9).
 - a. Twenty of the children born to his wives are named in Scripture, nineteen sons and one daughter. In addition, he had other sons by his concubines that are unnamed (1 Chronicles 3:9). Although the Bible depicts its characters as sometimes having taken many wives, according to the cultural norm, it never condones polygamy (Genesis 2:21-24). Rather, it recounts the many jealousies and family struggles that resulted. David was a passionate man. His passion for God was great, but in the area of sexuality, his passion became problematic.
 - b. Temptation not only occurs when we are ignoring God's calling on our lives, but it also occurs in areas where we have made ourselves vulnerable. In His wisdom, God knew that having multiple sex partners does not satisfy a man's sexual appetites but only further excites it. Sexual satisfaction occurs in the healthy union between one husband and one wife. Gross sin never happens in a vacuum. David's polygamy had increased his vulnerability to adultery.
5. Nathan told David that, in consequence, the son Bathsheba bore him would die, the sword would never depart from his household, and someone close to David would sleep with his wives in broad daylight. 2 Samuel 13-20 records the outworking of these foretold consequences.

6. David confessed his sin. According to tradition, David penned Psalm 51 at this time, a psalm of confession in which he pled for mercy and cleansing from sin and spoke of his broken spirit. In Psalm 32 he wrote of the anguish he had experienced before he repented. Unconfessed sin took a toll on his overall health (Psalm 32:3-5). The legal punishment for adultery, according to the Law of Moses, was death (Leviticus 20:10). David's repentance was sincere and the Lord forgave him (2 Samuel 12:13), but forgiveness does not erase the natural consequences. David received grace in that he was not immediately put to death. However, he bore the scars of his sin for the rest of his life.
- ii. One Son in Heaven and one Son on Earth – 12:15-23
1. As the Lord foretold, the son of David and Bathsheba's adultery died. Afterward, David expressed consolation that he would one day go to the child, even though the child would never (in this life) return to him (12:23). His statement is of theological significance because it tells of the futility of praying on behalf of the dead and also suggests that the Lord grants salvation and eternal life to those who die too young to be accountable for consciously rejecting Him.
 2. After this, David and Bathsheba conceived a second son and named him Solomon. The Lord sent word through Nathan to call Solomon "Jedidiah" meaning, "loved by the Lord." By this, David was intended to know that the Lord would henceforth bless his union with Bathsheba.ⁱ

Summary Statement: David's sexual appetites were stimulated by his polygamous habits and by his restlessness after he chose to stay home from the war.

Principle: *Our desires are stimulated or inhibited by our own personal choices and habits.*

Temptation begins with simple desire. James 1:13 says, "Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed."

David was thirty years of age when he became king and ruled for forty years. Although the text does not explicitly tell us how old he was when the incident occurred, it appears that he was middle-aged, perhaps in his fifties. Middle age can be a season of particular vulnerability. C.S. Lewis wrote, "The long, dull, monotonous years of middle-aged prosperity or middle-aged adversity are excellent campaigning weather [for the devil]."ⁱⁱ However, as David's story indicates, he had developed a habit of sleeping with multiple partners many years before he desired Bathsheba. In every stage of life, the *habits* we cultivate will either set us up for future victory or future defeat.

Application: What seemingly innocent indulgence could become a habit that later ensnares you? It could be staying up when you should be sleeping, pushing the speed limit when you drive, an eating or drinking indulgence, carelessness with small amounts of money, daydreaming or mindless entertainment. Is there an appetite of any sort that you have been careless about disciplining?

Not only should our habits be considered, but also our decisions. David needed to resume his responsibilities in the war. Have you made a decision that has moved you away from God's calling on your life? We all need periods of rest and refreshment, but if we are not careful, vacations from the responsibilities to which God has called us can lull us out of service to Him altogether. Is it time for you to get back on track with God's calling on your life?

The habits and decisions we make either set us up for future victory or future defeat.

Transition: The last verses of chapter 12 (26-31) tell us that Joab summoned David just as the war with the Ammonites was about to be won. David rejoined his army and returned to Jerusalem victorious. He was forgiven and back on track with his life, but unfortunately, he could not undo the damage his sin had caused. Many people were caught in the backwash of it. The first son Bathsheba bore to him died and as chapters 13-20 reveal, many other individuals were also affected.

II. Absalom's Rebellion and the Aftermath – 2 Samuel 13-20

A. Amnon's Sin and Death – 2 Samuel 13

i. Amnon and Tamar – 13:1-22

1. Amnon, David's firstborn (2 Samuel 3:2), had undoubtedly observed his father's habits. Apparently, David did not know Amnon well enough to see that something troubled him to the point of illness, or else David ignored it out of his own guilt. True guilt had directed David to God for forgiveness, but perhaps David continued to struggle with false guilt. While true guilt is intended to motivate us to do what is right, false guilt is never productive and can prevent us from doing what is right.
2. Although David failed to see or inquire about the problem, Amnon's cousin Jonadab knew that Amnon was obsessed with his beautiful half-sister Tamar. Jonadab suggested a scheme to deceive David into ordering Tamar to attend Amnon in his quarters. When Tamar arrived, Amnon raped her.
3. David heard about it and was furious but did nothing (13:21). His knowledge of his own guilt with Bathsheba may have made it difficult for him to discipline Amnon, but his failure to confront Amnon set the stage for further disaster.

- ii. Absalom's Revenge Against Amnon – 13:23-39: Tamar was the full sister of David's third-born son, Absalom. Absalom hated Amnon for what he had done. Seeing that David neglected to do anything, Absalom determined to take matters into his own hands and created his own deceptive scheme to do so. Once again, Jonadab knew what was going on. He knew what Absalom was plotting (13:32), but David was either too unfamiliar with his children to know the depth of Absalom's resentment or simply ignored it. Two years later, Absalom deceived David into ordering Amnon and his other sons to join Absalom at a feast. After the king's sons arrived, Absalom killed Amnon and then fled to his maternal grandfather, the king of Geshur (3:3, 13:37), where he remained in exile for three years. Over time, David was consoled over Amnon's death and his heart longed for Absalom.

B. Absalom's Return from Exile – 2 Samuel 14

i. The Wise Woman's Story – 14:1-22

1. Joab knew David well and sought to alleviate some of his suffering from his family troubles. Under the pretense of seeking David's judgment, Joab sent a wise widow to present David with a case to be judged. The strategy was similar to the one used earlier by Nathan. It caused David to pass a judgment that he was then forced to apply to himself.
2. The woman told David a story about her fictitious, only living son who was about to be put to death for killing his brother. David could have ordered a death penalty but mercifully ruled to spare the young man for the mother's sake. If he were put to death, his mother would be left destitute, without a provider.
3. The woman suggested that her situation was the same as the situation of the people of Israel with regard to Absalom. She said it was the people of Israel who suffered from Absalom's ongoing exile (14:13). Her only son was her heir and apparently, with Amnon dead, Absalom was heir to Israel's throne. Although Daniel (the son of Abigail) was David's second-born, many conclude that the absence of information about him implies that he died in childhood or was somehow unqualified for the throne. If this were the case, then Absalom (David's third son) would indeed have been the heir apparent. As long as he remained banished, Israel would also be without its heir.

4. The woman's story helped David see how he could apply justice and still allow Absalom to return to Israel. While the Torah contained case studies to guide Israel's judges in rendering decisions (such as the case in which murderers were put to death by an "avenger of blood" [Numbers 35:12-21]), on the basis of the Law's stories and principles, a judge could also choose to extend mercy. The story the woman told bore resemblance to the story of Cain's murder of his brother Abel in a field. God had mercifully commuted Cain's death sentence (Genesis 4:15)ⁱⁱⁱ, and on that basis, David could likewise extend mercy to the son of the woman sent by Joab *and to his own son Absalom*.
- ii. Absalom's Return and Exoneration – 14:23-33
1. David ordered that Absalom be brought back to Jerusalem but refused to see him face to face. Apparently, he was still inwardly divided. He did not condemn Absalom but neither did he fully acquit him.
 2. While David struggled with his attitude toward Absalom, the Israelites praised Absalom. He was the most handsome man in Israel, especially known for his glorious hair (but as it turns out, the mention of his hair foreshadows his doom). Absalom was blessed with three sons and a daughter (but again, the mention of these foreshadows what was to come, since apparently all three of his sons predeceased him in death [18:18]).
 3. Once again, David's inaction allowed Absalom's resentment to fester, and once again, Absalom eventually determined to take matters into his own hands. He burned a field belonging to Joab to force an audience with him, then directed Joab to insist that the king either condemn or fully acquit him. It had been five years since Absalom and David had last seen one another.
 4. David granted Absalom's request and kissed him to signify reconciliation. Although he was formally reconciled to his son, it seems that too much time had passed and Absalom had already begun to formulate a plan to usurp the throne.

C. Absalom's Conspiracy and Death – 2 Samuel 15:1-19:8

- i. Absalom's Ruse – 15:1-12: Over the next four years, Absalom stole the people's hearts by suggesting that he was more interested in them than was his father. Once again unaware of Absalom's true intentions, David granted his request to purportedly fulfill a vow and worship the Lord in Hebron. Absalom brought two hundred guests with him, presumably, David's officials. Many had no idea that Absalom had sent messengers throughout Israel to announce that they were crowning him king.

However, not all were innocent. Ahithophel, David's trusted counselor, was among those who willingly joined the conspiracy. No reason is given for his betrayal of David, but one might assume that he had never recovered from the disgrace to his family brought on by David and Bathsheba's adultery.

ii. David's Flight – 15:13-16:14

1. When the pretentious announcement of Absalom's crowning reached David, he took flight. He left ten of his concubines to care for the palace but the rest of his family accompanied him, as did his remaining officials, his closest friends, the high priests and their sons, and all David's warriors. Mephibosheth's servant Ziba also joined David, claiming his master had stayed behind in hope of an opportunity to regain his grandfather Saul's throne (allegations Mephibosheth later denied).
2. David directed the priests, Zadok and Abiathar, to return to Jerusalem with the Ark and serve as his informants, sending any news through their sons. He also sent back his close friend and advisor Hushai the Arkite who bravely agreed to try to convince Absalom that he had transferred his loyalty to him and covertly thwart Ahithophel's sage advice.
3. David was truly humbled and heart-broken, as evidenced by his refusal to take the Ark (he had lost confidence that the Lord was with him) and his response to persecution. When Shimei, a Benjamite from Saul's clan, cursed David and pelted him with stones, David stated that the Lord might have been behind this cursing. Ultimately, Shimei was not the source of David's grief, Absalom was. His own "flesh and blood" was trying to kill him (16:11). The Lord had said David would have trouble within his family as a consequence of his sin with Bathsheba, and David acknowledged that the Lord would do whatever was right, even if that meant he would lose the throne (15:25-26, 16:12).

iii. Absalom's Counselors – 16:15-17:23

1. Meanwhile, Absalom and his co-conspirators arrived in Jerusalem. In accordance with the advice of Ahithophel, he erected a tent and slept with his father's concubines within sight of the public. Doing so, Ahithophel suggested, would have the positive effect of strengthening the resolve of any of his supporters who may have wavered. Thus, Nathan's prophecy about someone close to David sleeping with his wives in broad daylight (2 Samuel 12:11-12) was fulfilled.

2. Ahithophel also advised Absalom to set out immediately in pursuit of David, while David was still weak and weary. Although the plan seemed good to Absalom and his advisors, this time Absalom sought the advice of Hushai as well. Hushai appealed to Absalom's vanity and suggested that even though it would delay the chase, he should first rally the support of all Israel to fight with him. Now David had prayed that God would turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness (15:31) and, as a result, Absalom chose to follow Hushai's advice. 17:14 explains, "The Lord had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom." Although David was suffering the consequences of his sin, because he had repented, the Lord heard his prayers. Ahithophel traveled to his hometown and hung himself in disgrace.
 3. In the meantime, news of the advice both counselors had given Absalom was secretly carried to David by the sons of Zadok and Abiathar. Unsure at the time which course Absalom would pursue, David and his followers put an extra barrier between themselves and Absalom by crossing over the Jordan that very night.
- iv. Absalom's Death – 17:24-18:18
1. Absalom gathered all the men of Israel, as Hushai had advised, and appointed his cousin Amasa as the commander of his army. This meant that the commanders of the two forces, Joab and Amasa were both nephews of David by different sisters (Abigail and Zeruah). The war was truly becoming a family feud.
 2. While Absalom wasted time gathering Israel, David moved into the former fortress of Saul's son Ish-Bosheth at Mahanaim. David's men were determined to protect him, and when the time for the battle finally arrived, they insisted he remain within the fortress.
 3. In the hearing of all the troops, David charged his commanders to be gentle with Absalom for his own sake. David's men routed the troops of Israel. During the battle, Absalom's hair became entangled in the low-lying branches of a tree. His mule kept going without him, leaving him suspended in midair. His defenseless position was reported to Joab. Years earlier, Joab had believed it was in Israel's best interest for Absalom to be brought back from exile, but by the time of the battle, he felt it was his public duty to kill Absalom (despite David's orders). Together with his armor-bearers, Joab struck and killed Absalom.

v. David's Mourning – 18:19-19:8

1. When David heard the news, he was distraught and cried, “My son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you!” (18:33). David’s grief was multiplied: his men had disregarded his orders, his son had died in rebellion against him, and all of this had resulted from his own sin (as Nathan had foretold [12:11]).
2. Word spread quickly among the victorious troops of David’s despairing response. Joab sharply rebuked David (19:5), seeing that he was at risk of losing the support of those who had fought so loyally on his behalf. David recognized that he had shamed his men and appeared before them to express his gratitude.

D. David's Return – 2 Samuel 19:9-19:40

- i. Two Unifying Initiatives: The tribes of Israel argued among themselves over the protocol of bringing David back to Jerusalem. Division between Judah and the rest of Israel had developed and this tension came into play. Perhaps attempting to resolve a stalemate, David sent a message to the elders of Judah requesting that they, his own relatives, take the initiative in his return. Furthermore, he attempted to reunite the land by appointing Amasa as his new commander in place of Joab.
- ii. Passing Judgments: David passed several judgments on his return. Shimei begged David’s forgiveness for having cursed him as he left Jerusalem. Although David’s motive for consenting is not expressed, perhaps he knew that the Lord had been merciful to him and he extended mercy likewise. Mephibosheth accused his servant Ziba of betraying and abandoning him. Apparently unable to determine who was telling the truth, David ordered that Mephibosheth and Ziba divide Saul’s land. The elderly Barzillai was one of three wealthy men who had provided for David and his household in Mahanaim (17:27-29). David offered to provide for him in the palace in Jerusalem. He graciously declined David’s offer but asked that David extend the offer to Kimham (presumably one of his relatives) instead.

E. Sheba's Rebellion – 2 Samuel 19:41-20:25: No sooner had David left Mahanaim for Jerusalem than the dispute between Judah and the tribes of Israel over the protocol of his return became more serious. A Benjamite named Sheba became the voice of the northern tribes and encouraged the men of Israel to once again desert David.

- i. David's Concubines: After David returned to his palace, his first order of business was to move the concubines whom Absalom had abused into a special house. They could no longer have sexual contact with David and were forced to live as widows the remainder of their lives. These women were among the many, many casualties of David's sin with Bathsheba.
- ii. The End of Sheba's Revolt
 1. David's next step was to put down Sheba's revolt. He sent Amasa to summon the men of Judah within three days, since it was important that he act quickly. When Amasa took longer than expected, David sent Joab's brother Abishai after Sheba.
 2. Apparently, Joab was among those under Abishai's command. When Amasa met up with them, Joab's defenses rose up within him. He had just finished fighting a battle led against him by Amasa. Furthermore, Amasa had been given the job of leading David's troops in Joab's place. Joab stabbed and killed Amasa and assumed leadership over the troops in pursuit of Sheba.
 3. Sheba entered the city of Abel Beth Maakah, and Joab and David's men besieged the city. The siege ended when a wise woman who resided there negotiated with Joab and her people, ultimately delivering Sheba's head to him.
- iii. David's Officials: David's throne was again secure. The listing of his officials at the end of chapter 20 appears to reflect the names of those who served him in the latter season of his reign.

Summary Statement: As a consequence of David's sin, he lost three sons, his daughter was disgraced and unable to marry, and ten of his concubines lived the rest of their lives as widows. But the devastation extended beyond David's own family. Uriah died (and other soldiers with him [11:24]) and Israel suffered a civil war in which 20,000 soldiers perished.

The many chapters of scripture devoted to detailing the consequences of David's sin warns us against believing the lie that we can sin without anyone else being affected. The results of sin are always more widespread than we can imagine when we are pondering the temptation.

When Eve was tempted in the Garden of Eden, do you think she could have possibly imagined all the evil that has occurred in history as a result of her sin? So, it was with David and so it is with us today. When we choose to sin, we do so blind to the full scope of the consequences. But we have been warned! We mustn't think that we can sin now and ask God's forgiveness later without experiencing consequences. We reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7) and others almost always suffer the repercussions as well.

Principle: *Even "private sins" have widespread consequences.*

Application: Perhaps you are thinking that adultery is not as private a sin as those sins you are entertaining or presently engaged in. But even bad attitudes have sweeping consequences beyond what we can imagine -- unwillingness to forgive, jealousy, resentment, and other wrong attitudes – they all spill out and impact others. Bitterness keeps us from sleeping well, distracts our thoughts throughout the day, makes us less productive, and often erupts in mistreatment of innocent people. Not everyone may discover the source of the trouble, but usually our families do, and our children will follow our example. Have you deceived yourself into believing that no one will be affected by your “private sin?”

Transition: Thankfully, the commentary on David’s life in the books of Samuel doesn’t end in chapter 20. The final four chapters are considered to be an appendix, much as the last chapters of Judges are an appendix to that book. In both cases, the events in the appendices did not necessarily occur at the end of the periods chronologically. No one knows exactly when in David’s reign the two national disasters described took place. The information contained in these chapters helps summarize important roles that David filled as king and significant aspects of his life, reminding us that with regard to David’s legacy, sin did not have the final word.

III. Appendix to David’s Life Story – 2 Samuel 21-24; 1 Chronicles 20:4-21:30

A. The Gibeonites and the Famine – 2 Samuel 21:1-14

- i. Background to the Famine: Since the time Joshua and the Israelites began the conquest of Canaan, God had used the Israelites as His instrument of judgment to destroy the wicked peoples of the land. In Joshua’s day, one of these people groups, the Gibeonites, had resorted to a ruse and deceived the Israelites into entering a peace treaty with them (Joshua 9). Later, in Saul’s zeal, he apparently tried to annihilate them. God takes vows very seriously. Since the Israelites were His representatives, their vows had to be honored. It would not do for them to commit to protect the Gibeonites and destroy them instead.
- ii. The Deaths of Saul’s Family Members: After three years of famine in David’s day, God got the Israelites’ attention and they realized they were no longer experiencing His blessing. David sought the Lord and the Lord told him that the famine was because Saul and his house had put the Gibeonites to death. According to Numbers 35:33, when bloodshed desecrated the land, blood was required for atonement. Seven members of Saul’s family were killed to make amends for the wrong committed against the Gibeonites. Just as we saw in the life of David, Saul’s sin had consequences his family had to pay.
- iii. David as Israel’s Judge and Intercessor: Although the account certainly indicates the seriousness with which God takes vows, with respect to David, it reminds us of the importance of his role as Israel’s judge and Israel’s intercessor.

B. David's Heroes and David's Praise – 2 Samuel 21:15-23:39

- i. David's Mighty Men: David was a mighty warrior and battle commander who fought on God's behalf against the enemies of God's people. 2 Samuel 21:15-22 tells of multiple battles between the Israelites and the Philistines and the spectacular feats of some of David's mighty men. Here, and also in the listing of David's mighty warriors in chapter 23, we are reminded of the power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who are right before Him. By the power of His Spirit, God grants us amazing victories. One example was the occasion on which Benaiah son of Jehoiada went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion (23:20). When we think of David and his mighty men, we should think of the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives and remember Paul's words, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).
- ii. David's Song of Praise: In addition to his role as judge, intercessor, and battle commander, David was also a spiritual leader to his people. The song of David recorded in 2 Samuel 22 (and also in Psalm 18) and his words at the beginning of chapter 23 reminds us of that. He taught his people to worship, to pray, and to praise. Although the sin in David's life had far-reaching consequences, these last chapters of 2 Samuel remind us that God is the God of second chances. Sin did not have the last word in David's life.

C. The Census and the Plague – 2 Samuel 24; 1 Chronicles 21

- i. Time of the Census and Plague: David took a census in order to count the size of his army. He later realized that he had sinned and been foolish for doing so. In this case, David was not the only one who suffered. Only the Israelites suffered the consequences. The passage explains this by saying that the Lord had been angry with Israel. Although no specific indication is given about when these things occurred, it has been suggested that perhaps the Lord's anger with Israel resulted from their participation in the rebellions of Absalom and Sheba against David, His anointed.
- ii. The Source of David's Temptation: While 2 Samuel 24:1 says that the *Lord* incited David to take the census, the correlative account in 1 Chronicles 21 states that *Satan* incited David. This is not as difficult to reconcile as it appears. "God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone" (James 1:13), but God *permitted* Satan to tempt David. Similarly, the Lord had allowed an evil spirit to torment Saul (1 Samuel 16:14) and had permitted Satan to trouble Job (Job 1:12, 2:6). In this case, the reason He allowed it was that the Israelites deserved the resulting judgment by plague.

- iii. David's Sin of the Census: The text also does not explain why David sinned in taking a census. The best suggestion is that he became proud of his accomplishments. Rather than crediting his victories solely to God and leaving the number of fighting men a mystery, he thought that counting them would increase his sense of personal satisfaction.
- iv. The Plague: God gave David three choices of punishment and David chose three days of plague. After 70,000 people died and just as the angel of the Lord was about to destroy Jerusalem, David interceded and the Lord relented. The plague ended with the angel of the Lord postured above the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. David bought the threshing floor, and at the Lord's direction, built an altar there and offered sacrifices. As 1 Chronicles 22:1 explains, the land on which David built this altar became the site on which Solomon built the temple.

Summary Statement: The epilogue to the books of Samuel shows David acting as Israel's judge, military leader, spiritual leader and intercessor and concludes with a story about the origins of the Temple Mount.

Principle: *God can redeem the messes of our lives.*

The final story of 2 Samuel speaks of the widespread consequences of sin but also reminds us that sin does not have the final word. 70,000 people died but God had a plan to bring a lasting legacy out of the tragedy of the census and plague: the Temple, the place where God's wrath met God's mercy. For hundreds of years, the Temple stood as a reminder that God brought something beautiful out of the disaster. The consequences of David's sin were devastating, but God had the final word on the matter.

Conclusion

This story bears significant resemblance to the story with which our lesson began. David committed adultery, many people suffered as a result of his sin, but God brought something beautiful out of the mess. Solomon was born to parents who never should have been married to one another. Their relationship began completely outside of God's will. However, when we truly repent, God is not only able but also desirous of bringing glory to Himself by taking the heart-breaking circumstances we have deserved and weaving them into a thing of beauty. Solomon was an author of the Bible, the wisest man who ever lived, except for Christ, and was used by God in his own day to build the Temple and to speak to many of God's glory. While David lived the rest of his life with the scars of his sin, and our sin will also leave us with scars, when we truly repent, God begins to work to bring beauty from the ashes. He is indeed the God of desert wildflowers. If you are suffering the consequences of a sin of which you have repented or are suffering the consequences of the sin of someone else, will you trust God to bring beauty out of disaster?

ⁱ Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. (1996). *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Vol. 2, pp. 631–632). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.

ⁱⁱ C.S. Lewis (1959). *Screwtape Letters* (p. 132). New York: Collier Books.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bergen, R. D. (1996). *1, 2 Samuel* (Vol. 7, p. 390). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.