

INI

2 Samuel 12,1-15

Trinity 11 — 16 August 2015

Greeting: To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; mercy, peace, and love be multiplied unto you. Amen.

We hear a portion of the Old Testament lesson from Second Samuel, which was read earlier:

Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.”
And Nathan said to David, “The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die.”

So far the reading. Let us pray: Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of our hearts, be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

Introduction: Sin affects our lives. Sometimes to a greater degree than others. Sometimes the effects are evident, and sometimes not.

If you throw a pebble into a pond, there is a splash, and then ripples form from where the pebble went into the water. The ripples go out in a concentric pattern to the edge of the pond. The ripples disturb the surface of the pond. We can see the surface, but perhaps the pebble has disturbed the bottom as well, things we cannot see.

A gossip — it could be a man or a woman — went to a pastor to confess the sin of gossip. As part of the restitution, the pastor said to put a feather on the doorstep of each person the gossip had told tales about, and then to come back to him. After the gossip had deposited the feathers, he went back to the pastor. The pastor now

told him to collect the feathers. The gossip was dumbfounded. He said, “I can’t. The wind has blown them away. I’ll never find them.” The pastor then said, “Yes, precisely. Those feathers are like gossip. Once the words have left your mouth they can never be retrieved. Do you now see how serious and awful gossip is?”

Our text for today speaks about sin and forgiveness. But it also speaks about consequences — the consequences of sin that linger even after God has forgiven. This brings me to today’s sermon theme: “**Sin Has Consequences!**” I’ll develop this theme in three parts:

1) David Realizes His Sin And Repents ;

2) The Lord Forgives; and,

3) The Results Of Sin.

1) David Realizes His Sin And Repents. David, the young shepherd boy, has risen to be King and consolidated the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. He has established his capitol city in Jerusalem. He has built his palace. He is at the height of his power.

About nine months before the events in our text take place, he has sent his army out to fight. You might think that he would lead the army, but he has decided to take it easy. Perhaps that is one of the privileges of power.

One day he rises late, about the time when everyone else is sleeping. He walks on the roof of his palace and looks down on a neighboring house. There, he sees a beautiful young woman taking a bath . He is overcome with passion and exercises his kingly prerogative; he sends for her and sleeps with her.

She soon sends word to David, “I’m pregnant.” Bathsheba’s husband is Uriah the Hittite, and he is one of David’s soldiers.

David sends for Uriah and tells him to go to his house and be with his wife. Uriah does not, and tells David why:

The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in temporary shelters, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are campaigning in the open field. (2 Samuel 11,11)

Isn’t it amazing that this foreigner speaks of Israel’s covenant symbol — the ark of the covenant — while David had broken the covenant!?

David tries again. Uriah, however, still will not go. So David sends a secret order with Uriah; Joab, the commander of David’s army, should put Uriah in the front of a charge so Uriah will surely be killed. Uriah is indeed killed.

David did not mourn Uriah, but after Bathsheba’s time of mourning David sent for Bathsheba and makes her one of his wives. By now her pregnancy must have begun to show.

Nine months have passed and David is seemingly unaware of his sin.

It was only long after the event that David wrote Psalm 32. In this Psalm David wrote about his sin and the effects it had upon him:

While I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away
Through my groaning all the day long.
For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me;
My vitality was drained away as with the fever-heat of

summer. (Psalm 32,3)

Thus, in retrospect David could see that something had been wrong in his life. But during those nine months, he repressed all outward knowledge of this sin that was eating away at him.

This sin was much more than adultery or murder. This is the sin that refused to acknowledge God as the giver of all that David had, but decided that he would take God's place, and take what he wanted, because he was the king. God, however, sent the prophet Nathan to David. It is obvious that Nathan has been preparing for this time.

The story which Nathan tells David speaks about the utter abuse of power. A rich man takes a poor man's most prized possession, his pet sheep. The rich man had everything the poor man did not — riches and flocks. But the rich man is unwilling to part with what he has, and heartlessly takes what does not belong to him. The rich man "took" the poor man's lamb just as David "took" Bathsheba. Let us now face facts: then as now, the poor have little if any recourse against the abuse of the more powerful and rich.

David is outraged by the story. David believes that the story is real and is only presented by Nathan in story form. Thus, in the heat of anger, David declares that the rich, covetous, greedy, heartless thief deserves to die.

That phrase, "deserves to die," is literally "the son of death." This is the same phrase that King Saul used of David (1 Samuel 20,31); David was correctly seen as God's choice for king and Saul saw that David's rise would be the cause his death.

Now David uses the phrase, but unwittingly uses it against

himself! Then David correctly applies the Mosaic law and says that the rich man must make a four-fold restitution to the poor man (Exodus 22,1). But how can David make restitution, after all, he had Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, killed?

When David's rant is over Nathan pronounces one of the most powerful sentences in the Old Testament: "You are the man!"

God had given David everything. When David was still a young boy God had set him aside to be king. God anointed David as king. God had given David the kingdom. God had given David wives. And God would have given David even more — had David but asked!

But David had not been satisfied. David put himself in God's place, and took what he wanted. He took what was not his to take. Then he tried to cover up his sin. He did not repent. He did not acknowledge his sin. But in Israel, even kings stood under God's law. As such, David stood condemned before God. So after hearing the prophet and listening to his own words, David confesses: "I have sinned against the Lord."

David does not even try to hedge his confession.

He does not try to shift the blame.

He does not plead extenuating circumstances.

He did not try to say that while he had sinned in this area he was doing O.K. in other areas.

He is broken by the stark realization of what he has done and says, "I have sinned against the LORD."

The good news now is given to him by Nathan:

2) The Lord Forgives. Yes, God has forgiven David his sin. Later in Psalm 32 David would say:

I acknowledge my sin to You,
And my iniquity I did not hide;
I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”;
And You did forgive the guilt of my sin.
Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time
when You may be found. (Psalm 32,5-6)

David could thank God that David could still find God and ask for forgiveness. God had sent Nathan at the right time and David’s heart was as yet not so hardened that he could not see his sin and ask for forgiveness.

Psalm 51 was written after Nathan had come to David. In it, David said:

Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your steadfast love.
According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my
transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity.
And cleanse me from my transgressions.
For I know my transgressions.
And my sin is ever before me. (Psalm 51,1-3)

David was sincere in his confession. It was complete. It took but a moment for him to come to the realization of the awful sin he had committed. Some people feel that God will only forgive after a long and drawn out struggle to admit sin. But that is not necessarily the case. The Law can crush a person instantaneously — and confession and forgiveness can come about just as quickly.

As we look at Psalm 51, we realize that David knew that he had sinned not only before God but also before man.

There are three words for sin and they overlap.

“Transgression” usually is an act of rebellion and disloyalty.

To “sin” means “to miss the mark,” often intentionally, of God’s expressed and revealed will.

“Iniquity” often means a “crooked” or “wrong” act directed against both God and man.

But David did not look to himself for earning forgiveness, rather he looked to God’s lovingkindness and compassion.

David knew that his confession could not be perfect. He says:

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity. (Psalm 51,5)

Here we see Paul saying something very similar in Romans:

There is none righteous, not even one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3,10+23)

David looks for restoration because God is steadfast love and compassion. David looks forward to the day when this steadfast love and compassion will be revealed in all of its completeness. Paul says this happened when God sent His Son, Jesus. It is on account of Christ that we are “justified as a gift through the grace of God through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 3,24)

God does not show us His grace, His steadfast love or compassion in the Law. This is shown only in Christ, by Whose

death and resurrection we have been reconciled to God. In the next chapter Paul cites David's words in Psalm 32 to show that our works cannot gain salvation for us:

Just as David also speaks of the blessing upon the man whom God reckons as righteous apart from works:

Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven.

And whose sins have been covered.

Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account. (Romans 4,7-8; Ps 32,2)

Jesus is the One Who was conceived not in sin, but in holiness. He is the One Who never sinned. He is the One Who took our place on the Cross to die for our sins — to make us right before God. He is the One Who calls us through the Gospel to believe this Good News of reconciliation and forgiveness.

But even as David was completely forgiven before God, just as are we for Jesus' sake, he and we are still confronted with:

3) The Results Of Sin. David had sinned in secret, but as God's anointed king over Israel, God said David's sin would be revealed before the nation. This is really not surprising. It would have taken an extremely stupid person not to connect the dots: Uriah is killed, David takes Bathsheba as his wife, and less than nine months later a baby is born to this union of David and Bathsheba. Believe me, even 3,000 years ago people knew that between conception of a child and birth was nine — count 'em — nine months.

David's sin disrupted his entire family.

When God said the sword would not leave his household, it

was more of a statement of fact than a threat or punishment, although a punishment it surely was.

What happened to David's family?

His son, Amnon, raped his sister, Tamar; another son, Absalom, killed Amnon and then led a revolt that almost succeeded in wresting the crown from David. In the process of the revolt, Absalom even took some of David's concubines. Indeed, disruption continued in the generations that followed.

A specific punishment is spoken against David: the child of David and Bathsheba would die — and he did.

But the child did not belong to David; David cannot enrich himself at Uriah's expense, and so in a sense Uriah sees justice done. But after the son died, probably before he was eight days old and as yet unnamed, David said:

I shall go to him, but he will not return to me. (2 Samuel 12,23)

In other words, we know that David was forgiven, died in the Lord, and had the promise of eternal life; so also with the son who died. The promise of eternal life is greater than the misfortunes of this world.

Now we live with the forgiveness, but do we still live with the results of sin? Yes. Even though forgiven, the person who gossips has to live with broken relationships. The person who divorces, still has to live with the brokenness that comes from that act. The person who commits a crime may have to live with a jail sentence and a criminal record. The person who lives in anger and strife may see anger and strife reflected in his or her family. The list goes on.

Forgiveness restores us to God, but restoring broken relationships may be a lot more difficult. The consequences of sin may leave holes in our lives over which we may have regrets our entire lives. We may find that our attempts at reconciliation are spurned and brokenness continues. We have been forgiven by God, but may spend a lifetime seeking forgiveness from others whom we have wronged.

Conclusion. Sin is awful. Its consequences, as David found out, can last a lifetime.

God grant that if we do fall into sin, God will come to us like Nathan came to David — and shock us back to reality. Then we can only confess, “I have sinned against the Lord.” Then may we hear the words of comfort and consolation: “The Lord has also taken away your sin; you shall not die.”

God has taken our sin away for Jesus’ sake. Even though the consequences of sin may remain, Jesus’ forgiveness gives us the strength not only to seek forgiveness from others, but be forgiving. If there are holes left in our lives because of the consequences of sin, God will give us the strength to fill those holes and continue to walk in the forgiveness of God. We cannot do any less, for in Jesus’ forgiveness God gives us life and salvation. Amen.

Now, the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

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