

## **Flesh and Blood**

**2 Samuel 10:1-11:27**

**By [Dr. Derek W. H. Thomas](#)**

Now turn with me if you would back to 2 Samuel. We've taken a break for a few weeks in December as we looked at some Nativity passages in Luke and Matthew and now we're returning to the narrative of David's life as we find it in 2 Samuel. Chapters 10 and 11 in some ways go together. I'm not going to read chapter 10, but let me tell you what's in chapter 10.

David, you remember, had shown mercy to Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, in chapter 9, and here in chapter 10, David attempts to do the same, showing mercy to a new King, Hanun, you'll see in verse 1 of chapter 10, who's the king of the Ammonites. His father has just deceased and David thinks it a good thing to send some men to the Ammonite district. Ammon is across the River Jordan from Jerusalem and slightly to the north. It's that area to the east of David's domain and kingdom. Now these Ammonites treat David's men rather badly. They shave off half their beards and cut off their clothes at their middle exposing them. It's a matter of great discomfort to these men for sure and a bad idea on the Ammonites' part because it raises the wrath of David. And David sends an army to deal with the Ammonites. The Ammonites are joined in a battle by Syrians to the north and east, all the way up to Damascus, which is in modern Syria. And Joab, David's commander, is sent to deal with this skirmish. His brother, Abishai, is there. The Ammonites retreat back into the city, which is where we're going to pick up in the first verse of chapter 11, and there's a skirmish with the Syrians. There will be another skirmish towards the end of the chapter in which the Syrians lose seven hundred men, charioteers, and forty-thousand horsemen. You see that in verse 18. At the end of this chapter, David's kingdom has now extended more or less east and way up beyond Damascus in the north. His kingdom is now probably twice the size that Saul's kingdom, which stretched from Dan to Beersheba, David's kingdom is now probably twice that size.

Now the Ammonites, having gone back into the city, and we learn in verse 1 of chapter 11 that the city is called Rabbah in Ammon, it's several months later — this was not the time to deal with a seize battle in a city; that would be best done later the following year in springtime where there would be crops from which David's men could glean and get food and sustenance and so on. And we're going to pick up the reading in verse 1 of chapter 11.

Now before we read the passage, let's look to God in prayer.

*Father, this is Your Word and we want it to be a word that speaks to our hearts and minds and wills and affections. We want Your Word to be lodged deeply within our hearts. We desire, as we read it, that we might see it as a word for us tonight - for us as a people, for us as a congregation, for us as followers of Jesus. We thank You, O Lord, that Your Word is quick and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword, dividing asunder the joints and the marrow. Now, grant Your blessing as we read the Scriptures. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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.

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. 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?" 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. And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant."

So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab was doing and how the people were doing and how the war was going. 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. 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. 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?" 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." 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. 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.

In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. 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." And as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men. 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. Then Joab sent and told David all the news about the fighting. And he instructed the messenger, "When you have finished telling all the news about the fighting to the king, 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? 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."

So the messenger went and came and told David all that Joab had sent him to tell. 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. 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." David said to the messenger, "Thus shall you say to Joab, 'Do not let this matter trouble you, for the sword devours now one and now another. Strengthen your attack against the city and overthrow it.' And encourage him."

When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband. And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and born him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

So far, God's holy and inerrant Word.

Sometimes I think this passage should be preached once a year in the times that we live in. This is like a story that could be told today. There are few valleys so deep and dark as this one in the Scriptures. The fall of David is tragic and gripping and it's charted not just by this historical account here in 2 Samuel but also by the psalm of repentance in Psalm 51. It is dark and deep because this is David. This is David. This is the sweet psalmist of Israel. This is the man who wrote half of the psalms. This is the man who is described in Scripture as "the man after God's own heart." And it is dark and deep because of the nature of this sin.

Now there are four things I want us to see tonight. First of all, the circumstances of David's temptation. Some time has elapsed. We saw in previous chapters David has prospered, conquered cities and regions and districts and expanded the kingdom to twice the size of Saul's kingdom. He reigns over a phenomenal amount of territory. It's a time of great success and prosperity in David's life, but with that success and with that prosperity, David is no longer the man that he

was. Power has begun to eat into David's life. We see two things here. First of all, and not every commentator is agreed on this, but it is a time of neglected duty. At the opening of this chapter we read it's a time when kings go off to war. It's springtime. And this war was going to happen, this war against the Ammonites, against the city of Rabbah. "But David," the end of verse 1, "David remained at Jerusalem." Now some commentators say it wasn't the king's business to go off to war. He wasn't involved in the skirmishes recorded in chapter 10 either. But most commentators will suggest that in this period of history it was the position of the king to lead his men into battle, at least to be present at the battle. And David, as the writer of 2 Samuel seems to be saying in the adversative form of verse 1, "but David remained at Jerusalem," David is not doing his duty. It's a time of dampened zeal. It's a time of dampened zeal. Uriah shames him in the contrast between this military, soldier, principled man who refuses even to pop down and say hello to his wife because his men are fighting in battle in the open field.

Where are you tonight? At the beginning of this year — you know we sometimes take stock, don't we, at the beginning of a new year — where are we in our relationship with God? Where are we in our relationship to the Scriptures? Where are we in relationship to the things of God? Is this describing us in some fashion, that we have begun to neglect our duty, that religion has become a form, a pattern, a thing that we do, but the heart, the zeal, the love, the devotion, the spirit, has gone? David appears here in this chapter to be in a position where he is no longer nourishing his spiritual affections. He has no energy to resist the onslaught of temptation. All, all that David needs is opportunity. All that he needs is for opportunity because desire is already there. Do you ever think of that my friends, that the only thing that keeps us from great sin is the intervention of God, that the opportunity just isn't there because the doors are wide open on our part, it's just that the opportunity has just never presented itself? David finds himself now in a position where opportunity and desire coincide. That's the first thing I want us to see.

The second thing I want us to see in this chapter is the morphology of temptation, the progress of the enticement. You see in verses 2, 3, and 4 the main verbs — "he saw." Now, one commentator whom I love dearly says, "it wasn't a sin for him to see Bathsheba; it was a sin for him to note that she was beautiful." Somewhere from seeing her to actually making the mental note that she was beautiful he has crossed the line. "He saw, he sent for, and he laid with" — those three verbs in verses 2, 3, and 4. It's a progression. At any point you see, you could stop the progression but it doesn't stop. There's an advancement to sin. What happens is what James tells us in the first chapter. Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire, then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, and when it is fully grown, brings forth death. It begins with a thought. It begins with a little glimpse. It begins in the mind somewhere and it grows and grows and grows and ultimately brings forth death. David saw.

She, Bathsheba, is bathing. Don't be too hard on Bathsheba, I have no idea, neither do you, of what the cultural mores of bathing were in this period of history. And maybe she was on the edge and maybe she wasn't, but the whole focus here is on David. David saw and in seeing he lost his mind and that's where sin always starts — in the mind, as a thought, as a thought that is nourished and watered and promoted into growth. His understanding, you see, no longer rules his affections. He saw Bathsheba and in seeing Bathsheba, he lost sight of God. He lost — it's like looking into the sun. That's what the beginning of sin is like. You look at something and it impregnates — sorry for the pun here. There's a mental image and no matter where you turn, that mental image will not go away. Like looking at the sun and for minutes afterwards all you can see is this white blotch in front of you. He saw Bathsheba and he lost sight of God.

This is the David who looked at the giant Goliath and with faith and courage and tenacity enters into battle with him because he didn't see Goliath, he saw God. And now everything has changed, everything has changed. In this period of David's life, he's lost sight of God. Sin is deceitful. You see, when he saw Bathsheba he didn't see sin, he saw beauty. He saw something desirable. Now my friends, the seed of every known sin lies within all of our hearts. The seed of this sin lies within all of our hearts.

The third thing I want us to see here is the complexity of this sin, the complexity of this sin. David becomes like a man who's trying to fight an octopus. You know you grab hold of one limb but there are seven more wrapping themselves around you. By the end of this chapter, David has broken almost every commandment. It's like a puzzle — find the broken commandment. Has he broken the first table of the law in denying God His glory and due? Has he dishonored his parents? Has he committed adultery? For sure. Has he stolen? For sure. Has he committed falsehood? For sure. Has he murdered? Yes, to all intents and purposes, he will be guilty of judicial murder. Has he coveted? Yes, for sure. Find the broken commandment in this chapter. You see what happens when life is put under the microscope? Sin, sins — not just one sin; it's not just two sins; it's a complex of things. When you sin it has ramifications.

It's not just David and Bathsheba, it's that stunningly 2010 little phrase in this chapter — “I'm pregnant.” And now, like a tidal wave of trying to undo what David has done. It's hard to imagine. It's like some bad opera scene — bringing Uriah back from battle, sending him to his house, refusing to go, sleeping outside on the step, staying an extra day, making him drunk, still finding him on the step in the morning, writing a letter, giving it to Uriah — Uriah's carrying his own death warrant — to ensure through Joab that Uriah will be killed. It's heart breaking reading David's response, saying to Joab not to be distressed - one dies just like another in battle, *c'est la vie*, this is life, this is what happens in war. It's like trying to pull a pebble out of a pond. You can get the pebble out of the pond but the

ripples keep going back and for, back and for.

The fourth thing I want us to see is the heart of David's failure, the heart of David's failure. You'll notice in verse 27 — Uriah is dead, Bathsheba has performed her mourning for her husband. Verse 27 — "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." Now look at verse 10 of chapter 12 — "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from you house, because you have despised Me" — this is God now speaking to David. The thing that David had done displeased the Lord. David had despised God. That's God's verdict, that something has happened in David's heart. Something has happened in his heart that God says, "You've despised Me." You can almost imagine, you remember when David loses his son Absalom, you remember David says, "Oh Absalom, Absalom, my son, Absalom," and it's almost as though in this chapter you can hear God saying, "Oh David, David, My son, David. What are you doing?"

I want to say several things by way of application. First of all, the importance of guarding our minds, of guarding our minds. Psalm 119 and verse 11 — "I have stored up Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You." That's the importance of memory verses. That's the importance of teaching a children's catechism. That's the importance of making sure that the Word of God is treasured up, stored up in our hearts so that at the moment of temptation the Word of God is like a two edged sword.

I want to say, how can I put this, I want to say that it's possible, it's all too possible that this may be the very temptation that you are facing right now and I want to say to you, run! Run like Mark in that mysterious Gospel narrative leaving everything behind. Just run, flee, flee temptation. This may be the very area of your temptation. You know for some of you, it isn't, I mean it really isn't. And what I want you to do brothers and sisters is to covenant to pray this year for the rest of this congregation that this sin of adultery will not manifest itself within the doors of this church. That would be such a great thing - to pray for our marriages, to pray for our men and women in this church, that those especially whose lives and occupations and businesses are at the very forefront where this temptation is perhaps acute. Some of you travel. I travel. I know what it's like. You're off in some strange city in some strange hotel. Who knows you from Adam? Pray for our marriages. Pray for our young people. Pray for our young people that they would see the blessing of purity, of sexual purity.

But there's something else here and we're going to have to wait a couple of weeks before we see it but I want to say it now — that there is a way back. There is a way back. You know, when we come to the end of this chapter, only the Gospel can save David now. Good intentions, resolutions — with all due respect — resolutions won't cut it. David can make all the resolutions he wants but it's only the grace of God that will help David now. It's only the grace of God in the

Gospel. You know, there is forgiveness even for this sin. It's hard to think of that, isn't it? You know if Bathsheba was our wife or Bathsheba was our daughter — but there's forgiveness for the likes of David because there's forgiveness for the likes of you and me. The blood of Jesus covers all sin. Now David must repent and we'll see that in the next chapter, but a knowledge that there is a way back from the darkness of this chapter, even for sins like this.

*Father, we thank You for the Gospel and for the blood of Jesus that covers all sin, and yet we're just mindful tonight that sin has so many ramifications, that it hurts all kinds of people and all kinds of relationships. And we have found ourselves in situations where instead of repenting of sin we want just to cover it up and we do more and more sin in order to cover up another sin and another sin and another sin and it is a spiral that can only lead into despair. Father, we thank You, we thank You for the Gospel. And we ask now tonight for Your blessing as a congregation. Keep us, keep us Holy Spirit from this particular sin. And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Please stand. Receive the Lord's benediction. Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

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