

# The Savior's Sermon 3) Live A Holy Life

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Trying to hide a problem never solves it. It can start with something like a small stain on your shirt. You might reason, "I can just put some spot remover on that." But unless you have a good idea on how to treat certain stains, it can become a trial-and-error process. "Okay. Now that stain has become a blotchy mess. Perhaps if I just spread some more cleaner on it. Oops. Now the whole shirt is pink instead of white." Then the cover up comes. "No one will ever notice the defect if I just put this sweater over it. Me 1, stain 0." Or perhaps you show the stain who is boss and throw it all in the garbage. We've all probably tried to just sweep something under the rug at one time. But hiding the problem doesn't get rid of it. Sin is like that. And today we see what happens when you try to cover it up as we look at David's pitiful and desperate spiral into sin.

If you read through 1 and 2 Samuel, you see the unfolding of a very godly life. David was a man after the Lord's own heart. In fact, when God chose David, he told Samuel, "The Lord looks at the heart." David appeared with righteous zeal and courage as he slayed Goliath. He humbly served King Saul. God blessed David with victory after victory in battle. David showed a great mercy as he twice spared the life of Saul who was trying to kill him. When he finally has the title, "King David" he is depicted as courageous, and loyal to the Lord. The Lord lifted the lowly shepherd boy to be the greatest king of Israel. And David's kingdom expanded to unprecedented boundaries. He danced with holy zeal before the ark of the Lord. He conquered the city of Jerusalem. He received the promise that his kingly line would endure forever. The Messiah from David's line would reign on the throne forever. Who was like David? Recall some of the most memorable words of Scripture which he wrote: *"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want. ... You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life...."*

But it is when David is wearing his royal garments that his ugly stains become most apparent. At the height of his power, David found one enemy he could not defeat: his own sinful heart. A blemish is recorded in the life of David. It starts off so small. David didn't go out to battle in the spring when it was customary time for kings to wage war. And David had faithfully done this before. But not this time. He wasn't off in battle. He sent his army to fight without his leadership. He decided to stay behind in Jerusalem. Idle hands and pride are a dangerous recipe.

You might think, "David probably had important administrative tasks to complete in Jerusalem." If he did, it involved lying in bed until just before sunset. Apparently, leisure was his pressing reason for neglecting his duties. Dusk approached and he walked idly back and forth on his rooftop. At this time David had a fine palace made of cedar which towered over the city dwellings below him. And there, not too far away, he saw the home of one of his personal bodyguards, Uriah. He noticed something he should have turned respectfully turned away from right away. But instead, he peered and watched. Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, was bathing.

You might argue that "David was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. He didn't ask for trouble." Perhaps not. But what does he do next? *"He inquired about her and sought after her."* Lust had taken hold in his heart. And he was now letting his sinful desires dictate his life. The words which follow don't implicate anything really against Bathsheba. David *the King* "inquired, sought, sent for" her. She came at the King's request. He *"went to her to lie down with her."* The point is David is wholly to blame. He was in the position of power. He made things happen.

Maybe someone might think David just didn't understand exactly what he was doing. David knew exactly what he was doing. He just was letting his sinful heart take control. Bathsheba was married to Uriah, one of David's personal bodyguards. Sin is like an ugly wound. Left to just be there it can fester and get infected. It takes on a terrible power of its own. David might have acted like he was in charge, but he was now controlled by his sinful desires. Didn't he care about the fact that he was betraying a close friend? It began as lust, and it was left unchecked. It now was adultery, betrayal, and couldn't be stopped, swept under the rug, or wiped away. David slept with Bathsheba.

It is certainly odd that after the whole adulterous affair is completed Bathsheba undergoes the procedure for ceremonial cleansing. The word here for her cleaning up after isn't just like taking a shower to hide any evidence of the adultery. The word refers to ceremonial regulations of cleansing. She was following God's directions to be ceremonially clean. It's comparable to stopping to make sure you pay the parking meter when you are driving in a stolen car. How inconsistent in keeping God's will! She couldn't fix David's mess.

Before long she sent David the message: "I'm pregnant." David knew a child expose his adultery. Uriah had long been absent fighting a war. He would be certain the child couldn't possibly be his own. Sooner or later the truth was going to literally come out: David had betrayed his faithful bodyguard and friend.

David thought he could cover his tracks. He called for Uriah to return from the battlefields. But instead of confessing his sin, he attempted to deceive Uriah into thinking the child was his own. He told Uriah, "Why don't you just take it easy and head on home to your wife?" Uriah, however, was too loyal. "How can I?" he says, "While my comrades are still sleeping in tents and fighting a war?" He refused to share in David's first guilty pleasure: idle leisure at the expense of others. David tried to get Uriah intoxicated so he would go home. But loyal Uriah did not go home.

What follows is disheartening to read. David wrote a message sent it in the hands of Uriah back to the commander, Joab. It read: "Have Uriah put where the fighting is the fiercest. Then fall back so that Uriah the Hittite is struck by the enemy and dies." Uriah had to unwittingly carry his own death warrant. Again, David abused Uriah's loyalty. The commander followed David's orders. Some of the Israelites died because of this foolish plot, including Uriah.

Did David sigh in relief when he heard that Uriah had died? Bathsheba didn't. She grieved. Her marriage was now the story of a guilt-laden widow, and her betrayed and murdered husband. David appeared to be a compassionate king as he took on yet another wife into his sinful and non-monogamous harem. David thought he had covered his tracks.

The chapter almost ends with David in the clear. But we can never cover our sins. There is nothing done in secret. God knows. Nothing is hidden from his sight. The NIV doesn't quite translate the closing phrase of this chapter as strongly as it is written in the Hebrew. It more literally says, "Evil was the thing which David had done in the eyes of the Lord."

And who could stand to have David think he could get away with all this? We know what happened! We see the ugly stain, how it festered, rotted, and brought death in the end. How could he think he could get away with it?

How do we ever think we can sweep our sins under the rug? David started with a small stain, didn't he? Pride. He wasn't doing his job. What about you? Have you never found yourself in idleness because you were too proud or lazy? When temptation allures us do we stop it in its tracks or go further? David fed his sinful desires. What about you?

When people have affairs, it begins with an innocent mingling that they feel they did nothing wrong. A simple click and 'like' on Facebook, a business lunch meeting, a chance encounter, a friendly checkup of another on their social media. When they sense excitement and infatuation with someone, what do they do? They arrange for more. Sin always starts in the heart. And your sinful heart will clamor for more and more, never satisfied until death takes hold.

"Turn away!" we want to scream at David in frustration. "You fool!" But have you kept your heart pure? Have you turned from every sinful desire, every sinful thought, kept away from books, movies, bars, or parties, or phone apps which would foster lustful thoughts? It starts with wandering eyes, because of a wandering heart.

And when you and I find ourselves guilty of wrong, don't we sometimes think we can just cover it up? "I'll just keep giving to church, making good attendance, doing the outward little things. I'm still ceremonially clean, right?" The ceremonial cleansing meant nothing, covered nothing. David's plan to hide the sin by lies did nothing but fester and rot. *David* was a sinner. Sinners try to cover up their sins, hide them, bury them. Don't you and I often do the same? Maybe we find it so hard to read about David's pitiful attempts to cover sin because we know why David lost control.

David exemplifies the Christian today. Christians have affairs, get sucked into grievous sins of adultery, live together outside the bond of marriage, and lie about their sins. They slip into terrible traps of covering their tracks and even acts of murder—as is evidenced by the number of Christians who suffer under the guilt of using abortion to cover an affair. Turn to your own heart. Everyone loves to hear a little affair and some gossip about others. But how would you like your lies exposed? "Oh, but I don't hide sin." That is exactly what David could have said. He appeared nice and generous in the end. He got by off a façade of a reputation and the misplaced trust of those around him.

Every believer who is aware of the depravity of sin sees why David ended up doing what he did. He attempted to just make the guilt go away. But you can't do that. Left untreated, sin festers, rots, and kills its victims. In the end, when sin is left to reign, it leads to spiritual death. David was now headed down this perilous path. Sin will fester, rot, and kill.

But our Savior forgives, restores, and heals. David was eventually confronted for his sin. The Lord sent a prophet who rebuked him and exposed his sin to him. And in the depths of the pits of despair David found the true meaning of mercy. He wrote shortly afterwards, "*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.*"

David knew full well you can't just sweep sin under the rug. "My sin is always before me." But God in mercy blotted out his record of sin. He took that sinful stained garment and got rid of it from his sight. Far better than when one applies a spot cleaner, he removed the very record of our sins against us. Far greater than washing or a ceremonial bath, he cleansed us from our sins, washed the stain of our iniquity. He did this with the waters of our baptism. With water and the Word God says we are "holy and blameless in his sight."

How can this be? Doesn't God hate sin? Evil was the thing which David had done. Evil are the things we have done. But in mercy God's Son took the punishment that we deserve. The Son of David, Jesus the Christ, died for David's sin, for yours, for all peoples. Instead of just sweeping our sins under the rug and pretending they are not there, God really took them away. Your sins were placed on Christ so you could be spotless.

Far greater wonder to us than "How could David do this?" is the thought, "How could Jesus do what he did?" Praise him for his loyalty to willing die to cover our sins! Live now as those rescued from evil. With his cross and bright clean resurrection to life we have nothing to hide. It's all covered. It's all clean. Your garments are bright and so is your future with Christ. Don't hide your stain. Sin will fester, rot, and kill. But our Savior forgives, restores, and heals.