

Sex, Lies, but no Videotape (Summer Bible Exposition 8)

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[0 : 00] Lord, we thank you for your word again, and we pray tonight that as we look at it together, that you would help us understand it. Father, we pray that you'd be at work so that we might be transformed as you work through it by your spirit.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I must admit, this is a favourite passage for me. This particular talk, you land in one particular place and someone says, oh, the preacher hasn't turned up.

We need a preacher. What are you going to preach on? I will preach on this passage. It's just a wonderful passage for a number of reasons, and I know you know it well. It's one of those passages that occurs so, so often, and we know the story because it sort of is that dark moment in David's life.

Anyway, we're going to work through it together, and for the first part, I'm going to take it a bit slow and just show you some things in the text that are really just very intriguing, and I hope it'll give you some glimpses into the passage that you may not have seen before.

I want you to imagine, as a way of starting, that it's spring again. You know, we're a long way from spring, but imagine it is spring, you know, that season of flowers, that season of hay fever, and according to this passage here, the season when kings go out to war.

[1 : 25] But I want you to notice something. Have a look in your Bibles and see why the author tells you that. Can you see what happens? In the spring of the year, the time when kings go to war, David sent Joab.

Can you hear what the text is telling you? There is a thing that good kings do. They go to war at the head of their armies, but there is one king that doesn't.

The writer in the very first line or two is telling you there is something strange going on here, and David is not doing what he should be doing. So the text progresses.

So David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him. Now have a look at what happened. And it happened late one afternoon. Now, can you hear that? This is set in the late afternoon. And look at what David is doing.

[2 : 26] When David rose from his couch, so here are the armies of God waging holy war. And what is David doing? He's sleeping in in the late afternoon, you know, playing the part of a despot in some ways.

You know, just slacking around, not going to war with the armies of God, but staying at home. And so it tells you that he walked about on the roof of the king's house. Now, there's only one other place in scripture where I know you see a king walking around on the roof of his house.

Can you remember it? It is Nebuchadnezzar. And you might even remember what Nebuchadnezzar says while he's walking around on the roof of his house. Is this not Babylon which I built for the sake of my glory?

The roof of a palace house is one of the, apart from the temple, probably the highest roof in the city. And so David's walking around that and I wonder whether the same things are going on in his mind as went on in Nebuchadnezzar's mind.

This is all mine. I've worked hard for it. I've fought a guerrilla war for many, many years. This is my city. This is what I have done. And in that sort of frame of mind, what does he do?

[3 : 36] He looks down. And he sees a woman. And she's naked. She's bathing. And I wonder whether he just says, and she's mine too. And so he takes her.

And he inquires about her first. Have a look at it there in verse 3. It was reported, this is Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. This is some other man's wife. Let me tell you a bit about Uriah.

Uriah was in the equivalent of David's SAS. That is, he was one of his elite warriors. One of the 30 great fighting men of David. We know that from the last few chapters of 2 Samuel.

So, this is Uriah. He's a married man. And David hears that he's married to this woman Bathsheba. But he takes Bathsheba, brings her to him, and sleeps with her.

And then she returned to her home in verse 4. And the woman conceived. And she sent and told David. And in Hebrew, it's one word. Pregnant.

[4 : 37] And you can imagine how David reacts. Now, by the way, I should show you just one little thing. I don't know how much the ancient Israelites knew about a woman's menstrual cycle. But you might notice there in verse 4 that we're told specifically she was purifying herself after her period.

Now, that is probably 7 to 14 days afterwards. So, she is at one of the most fertile times in a woman's menstrual cycle. I don't know if the Israelites knew that and whether that's what the writer is saying.

But I wonder whether she knew what the chances were. Anyway, she finds out. She sends to David. I am pregnant. So, David sent word to Job. Send me Uriah the Hittite.

And Job sent Uriah to David. And when Uriah came to him, David asked how Job and the people fared and how the war was going. Now, let me tell you. If he really worried about it that much, where would he be? He'd be there, wouldn't he?

He would be where that war is being engaged with. So, anyway, then David said to Uriah the Hittite, Go down to your house and wash your feet. And I think we're meant to understand in inverted brackets here.

[5 : 43] And sleep with your wife. Because if this happened, it would all be sorted out for David. And he would be able to cover up what had happened. So, anyway, what happens is this.

Uriah went to the king's house. And there followed him a present from the king's house. And there followed him a present from the king. But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king's house with all the servants of his lord and didn't go down to his house.

Now, when David finds this out, first of all, he was panicked by this woman's pregnancy. But now he's panicked because he can't get this man down to his house. It really doesn't matter what happened down there.

As long as he can get him down there to his house, he knows there's a chance. So, see what he does. So, panic has set in. And look at what he says. When they told David, Uriah did not go down to his house.

This is verse 10. David said to Uriah, you have come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house? And Uriah said to David, now, remember who Uriah is because I want to tell you he's not an Israelite.

[6 : 46] He's a foreign mercenary. He is not someone who naturally would fear and worship Yahweh, the Lord of Israel. And can you see what he says here?

It's absolutely profound. He says, The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths. And my Lord Joab and the servants of my Lord are camping in the open field.

Shall I then go down to my house to eat and to drink? And notice what he says. He doesn't hide it. And to lie with my wife. Can you hear what he's saying? Here is David who's willing to stay at home, not fight the wars of God.

And here is this foreigner who is willing to go out and fight the wars of God in David's place. And who's so committed to God, such a godly man, that he will not go home.

He will not take benefits that the other warriors cannot take. And so while he's loyal, faithful, a worshipper of God, David is staying home, not waging wars with the armies of God and sleeping with other people's wives.

[7 : 56] The writer wants you to know David is doing a shocking thing here. Anyway, let's follow the story. And so as you live and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing.

And then David said to Uriah, remain here today or so and tomorrow I'll send you back. So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and on the next day David invited him to eat and to drink. And I wonder whether David now thinks, well, I wonder if a little bit of the fruit of the vine might shift in inhibition or two.

You know, whether perhaps a bit of alcohol might just mean that he'll forget his loyalty to Yahweh and forget his loyalty to the battle being fought. And, you know, he'll just loosen up a bit.

And so he gets him drunk. And in the evening he went down to his couch. He went to lie on his couch with the servants of the Lord, but he didn't go down to his house. This man's loyalty to God and the people of God and the wars of God are so entrenched in his psyche that alcohol will not shift them.

That alcohol won't wear them away. And so David engages in a plan. In the morning he writes a letter to Joab. Probably in these days Uriah could not read.

[9 : 09] And I can imagine in my mind's eye what would have happened. David says, Uriah, come here. Here's the letter. And he gives them a letter. It might have been a clay tablet or they did have some other forms of writing in those days.

But he puts it in Uriah's hand and he carries his own death warrant. And I can imagine him handing it over to Joab. And Joab picks it up because Joab probably can read.

And he reads it while he looks at the man he's got to kill. And Joab, if you've read 1 and 2 Samuel, is a loyal warrior. He's a statesman and he's someone who looks after David anyway.

Look at what happens. Then Joab went and told David, this is sorry, verse 18. Then Joab, this is after Uriah has been killed.

Joab went and told David all the news about the fighting. And he instructed the messenger. Now, what I want you to do is, as I read this text, I want you to think in your mind, what is different about what Joab tells the messenger to say and do and what the messenger actually does.

[10 : 14] Did you notice this when we read it? It's just really intriguing. See if you can spot it. I suppose if you haven't already spotted. And he instructed the messenger. When you finish telling the king all the news about the fighting, then if the king's anger rises and he says to you, why did you go near to the city to fight?

Didn't you know that? And so on and so forth. Then the messenger went. And he came and told David all that Joab had sent to him to tell. And the messenger said to David, well, the men gained an advantage over us and came out against us in the field.

And we drove them there back to the entrance of the city. And when 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. Now, did you notice the difference? Do you remember what Joab said?

He said, when he pauses, pause at this point. And when David gets angry, tell him the punchline. And Uriah the Hittite is dead also.

Can you see what Joab's doing? Joab wants David to get angry. He wants him to say, you fool. Why did you do such a thing? Don't you know that by the rules of war, when people do this, people, they get millstones dropped on their head.

[11 : 22] Notice what the messenger did. He doesn't let David get angry. In the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, when David's got angry with messengers, he tends to be a bit quick with the sword.

So, this messenger doesn't want David getting angry. And so he gives him the punchline without the gap. But now I want you to notice what is said here. And David said to the messenger, this is intensely patronizing stuff, isn't it?

Thus you shall say to Joab, do not let this matter trouble you. For the sword devours now one and now another. Press on your attack on the city and overthrow it. And encourage him. This is a man who has lost one of his SAS fighters.

He has lost an elite army man. An elite warrior. And David's being so patronizing with him. And he's saying, oh look, it's alright. They all know what's happened.

Joab and David know what's happened. And they know it should not be done. And anyway, when the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentations for him. And when the morning was over, David sent and brought her to his house.

[12 : 26] And she became his wife. And bore him a son. And you know, the storyteller in 1 and 2 Samuel very rarely intervenes in the story and tells you an opinion. But he's just about to do it.

Have a look there at that very last verse which our translators have put with chapter 12. Now the thing that David had done displeased the Lord. And we know when we read this that when God is displeased, you are going to find out about it sometime or the other.

And so he does. And this I think, you know, I think at this point David must think to himself, well, you know, that looks pretty neat really. It's taken a bit of effort.

But no publicity. Not too ugly. No loose strings. Bathsheba's mourning. Everything looks alright. And then this author has opened up heaven for us and said, God is not pleased.

Surely, David thinks, surely I've got away with it. God thinks, no you haven't. Now, so the Lord sends Nathan, the prophet, to David. Now, in my view, this next little section is one of the best little sermons.

[13 : 33] This little story about the ewe lamb is one of the best sermons in the Bible. Why? Because you get your congregation where you want them in about five lines.

Okay. It's just wonderful. You know the story, don't you? Let me read it to you. He came to him and he said to him, there were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. Now, the rich man had many flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb which he had bought. Which he had bought. And he bought it up and it grew up with him and with his children.

And it used to eat of his meager fare and drink from his cup and lie in his bosom. And it was like a daughter to him. Now, there came a traveler to the rich man and he was loath to take one of his own flock or heard to prepare it for the wayfarer who had come to him.

But he took the poor man's lamb and prepared that for the guest who had come to him. Now, you might know that in... Is this... Has the mic gone? Are you still getting sound?

[14 : 40] You're right. Good. You might know that in the story of 1 and 2 Samuel, if you want to tell David something that is hard for him to hear, do you know how you do it?

You tell him a story. Why? I think because David's the consummate artist. I think he gets emotionally engaged. I think when he hears a story that touches his emotions, he really gets into it. And we know he's an artist, don't we? Because he's a psalm writer. He loves musical instruments. He loves music. He loves poetry. And so Nathan decides the way to get to him is to tell him a story. And he tells him this story. And David gets emotionally engaged. He hears this story. His anger rises. He does the natural thing. He identifies himself with the poor man as he hears this story. And he takes on his role as a God-appointed judge. He pronounces sentence. And he says two things must be done. The rich man must die. And what was taken must be restored fourfold.

[15 : 46] And the reason? Because this man showed no pity. And at this point, the trap closes on its unsuspecting prey. With one gentle tug, what Nathan does is remove the veil.

Or if you like another analogy, he holds up a mirror to David's face and he says, you're the man. You are this man. And then comes the whole story.

What David had tried to hide is, as it were, proclaimed from the rooftops. His sin is made public and it's condemned in public. And I want to just paraphrase what happens in the verses that follow.

Nathan hits David with every single accusation that is so, so tough. He speaks the words of God to him and he says, and this is my paraphrase. David, I have been very generous to you.

I have given you this kingdom with all its benefits. And if this had not been enough, I would have given you more. And what you have done is despise my generosity and my word.

[16 : 47] You've despised me. Most seriously, you have despised me by committing theft. In murdering Uriah, what you have done is stolen his wife.

You behave like a common thief who creeps into someone's place late at night and kills in order to get his prize. You've been like the thief, a thief like the rich man in the parable.

And you will be punished for it. And the punishment will fit the offense. Since you took up the sword to do this act, the sword will never depart from your house.

Since you stole another man's wife, then before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you.

And he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did what you did in secret. But I, God, will do this in broad daylight before all Israel.

[17 : 45] And David is floored. You see, he deserves death. But God forgives. And another dies in David's place.

For the child of this adultery dies despite the mourning and the pleading of David. If you read on in that chapter. By the time, let me tell you, here's a very interesting fact. By the time David gets to the end of his life, guess how many of his sons will have died in a manner linked with sexual sin?

Four. Four. He will have made fourfold restitution for what he has done here. Four will have died, as it were, in his place.

You see, David's legal sentence upon the rich man that he pronounced would be carried out on he himself. He chose the punishment himself. The punishment of the law has been left, has been met. I want to tell you what I think it is. He's guilty of adultery. There's no doubt about that. But he murdered in order to get this woman. What's the punishment in the Old Testament for murder? Life for a life, isn't it?

[18 : 56] And for theft, what is the punishment? Fourfold restitution, isn't it? So, death and fourfold restitution.

So, we have the David of 2 Samuel 11 and 12. And this David that we meet at this point is a man who knows sin. This man is a man who will spend the rest of his life facing the consequences of that sin.

And yet, he's a man who knows and loves God. And what's more, he's a man who knows and has experienced God's forgiveness. And he actually records it for us.

Turn with me in your Bibles. Keep your finger, no. Go to Psalm 51, which of course most of you will know. So, turn to Psalm 51, which is the psalm that David wrote in response to this.

And with all that background, let's listen to it together. David says, Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love. According to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions.

[20 : 03] Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions. And my sin is ever before me. Against you, you alone have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.

So that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment. Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.

You desire truth in the inward being. Therefore, teach me wisdom in my secret heart. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness.

Let the bones that you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

Don't cast me away from your presence. Don't take your Holy Spirit from me. Can you hear? Don't do, please, what you did to Saul. Please don't take your Holy Spirit from me.

[21 : 04] Restore me to the joy of your salvation. And sustain me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways and sinners will return to you. Deliver me from bloodshed.

The bloodshed he's committed. O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance. O Lord, open my lips and my mouth will declare your praise.

For you have no delight in sacrifice. If I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit. A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Do good to Zion in your good pleasure. Rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Then you will delight in right sacrifices and burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings. And bulls will be offered on your altar.

And God answered his prayer. God forgave him and he gave him a mouth that could record all of those psalms that we have to read of his. Now, friends, this is a story we know so well, isn't it?

[22 : 08] And in paraphrasing it or going through the text slowly with you, I hope you've seen some things you've not seen before. But I want to now, and so I've given you this overview of the passage, but I want to now take another overview to look at this, what has happened here from another perspective.

I want you to look at verses 24 and 25 of chapter 12. Sorry, I did tell you not to keep your finger there, didn't I? But now go back to 2 Samuel 12. And I want you to see what happens there.

You see, we're told of the birth of Solomon, who is called Jedidiah or Jedidah. Look at that. I'll read from verse 25 on. Then, I've got the wrong passage.

So from chapter 12, verse 24. Then David consoled his wife Bathsheba and went to her and lay with her. And she bore a son, and he named him Solomon.

And the Lord loved him and sent a message by the prophet Nathan. And so he named him Jedidiah, which means loved by the Lord. Now, I want you to think of the background to those passages.

[23 : 13] What have we seen in chapter 11 and chapter 12? Think of the background. Treachery, intrigue, adultery, murder, lies. And yet David is forgiven.

And he marries Bathsheba. And she becomes his wife. And they have a child together. And this child will be loved by God. This child will be born to be a great king.

This child will be born to be the king over whom all the land that God promised to Abraham will be ruled. The writer's point is really apparent.

Out of such deep sin as this sin David has committed, the purpose of God has come. Out of such human failing, God's chosen king is born.

Now, travel with me some years into the future. And I want you to come with me to Matthew chapter 1. So turn in your Bibles, if you can, to Matthew chapter 1. And I don't know if you've ever noticed it, but your tendency is probably a little like mine, that when you come to genealogies in the Bible, you skip over them, don't you?

[24 : 21] So, you know, because it can never be anything much interesting in a genealogy. But this one's a beauty. This one's a beauty because it is full of skeletons in the closet.

The writer wants to show you the skeletons in the closet of Jesus. Have a look at it. We'll just start and I'll show you some of them as we go. Abraham was the father of Isaac and Isaac the father of Jacob and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar.

That's incest, really. Well, it's not. It's him. It's Judah sleeping with his daughter-in-law. And she played the prostitute in order to get him to do it. And Hezron the father of Ram and Ram the father of Abinadab and Abinadab the father of Nashon and Nashon the father of Salmon and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab.

Now, you didn't have to put that in, did you? But who's Rahab? Another prostitute and a foreigner at that. And then he goes on.

Now, in the book of Deuteronomy, Moabites are specifically excluded from the congregation of God's people.

[25 : 37] So, now you've got Moabites in here as well. And then, keep going. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah. Now, you didn't have to put that in, did you?

You could have just said, was the father of Solomon and got on with the story. So, why is the writer doing this? Why? Why is, I think he's making exactly the same point as Samuel.

And that is why he speaks of the wife of Uriah. What he's saying is something like this. God's purposes for His world are fulfilled through men and women and sinful men and women at that.

Our God, you see, is a God who involves sinful men and women in accomplishing His grand will.

He does not, as it were, sit in heaven rolling cosmic dice, you know, determining people's fate.

No, He's the God of providence, the sovereign God. And so, in this story, what we have is on the one side, the free will of humankind, of one particular human being, David.

[26 : 37] And in this story, the free will of David has been in full flight. A human who has asserted himself against God. A human who sins. A human who leaves his wounds on human affairs and human life.

A human who displeases his God. That human being, David, is totally, totally, totally responsible for what he does. And he deserves all the punishment that he will be given.

But on the other side, in this story, we see God. A God who's present. A God who's interested. A God who's involved.

A God who's displeased. A God who's in control. A God who, through such willful human sinfulness, works out His purpose. David is sinful.

David is responsible. But God is in control. And His will is accomplished. David commits adultery. David murders. And Solomon becomes king.

[27 : 39] And his ancestor, Jesus, is born to be the Christ. And that's the beauty of 2 Samuel, let me tell you. 1 and 2 Samuel. It's a book full of snapshots.

Snapshots of a king. Snapshots of a father. Snapshots of an adulterer and a murderer. But above all, David is a man.

And we have snapshots of this man. And the writer is telling us, David is like you, friends. He's like me. He's human. He's sinful.

He's imperfect. He's not this sort of cardboard cutout of a man, is he? But he's a human being like us. And 2 Samuel tells us the grandest thing.

2 Samuel tells us, God loves such people. And God uses such people. He doesn't use plastic saints or cardboard cutouts.

[28 : 42] God uses us. And He does so without at all restricting His purposes. God and His kingdom are not dependent, thankfully, on my failings, my blunders, my mistakes.

And God and His kingdom are not dependent on our blunders, our failings, our mistakes. God's purposes can march on despite them. God is a sovereign God.

Now, friends, let me tell you that as I look at my own past, and as I look at my present, and as you look at your past and you remember your present as well, I, and I'm sure you, are only too aware of our imperfections, of our constant failure to meet our own standards, let alone God's standards, of our many blunders in past life that we'd rather forget.

But we can't forget, can we? Because often we daily live to face the consequences of previous sin. And do you know what? God speaks to us in such passages as this.

2 Samuel speaks to us. God speaks to us through 2 Samuel. And the words are clear to us. And I want you to go home with them. Our God is a sovereign God. Our God has a purpose in His world.

[30 : 14] And our God takes us up wonderfully into His purpose. Our God is here. He is in, with, and under everything that happens.

And He sweeps us into His grand purpose with Him. This is a marvelous passage, isn't it? It's not just about adultery. It is about that.

But it's about God and His purpose for His world and His involvement, and His involvement of us in that. So let's pray. Father, as we look at our lives, we, like David, are only too aware of sin.

We are acutely aware of our own imperfection. Of our constant failure to meet our own standards, let alone those that you have. We are aware of mistakes we have made in the past and parts of our lives that we would rather forget.

Some of us face the consequences of our sin in daily life. Father, we thank you for the message of these two chapters. Father, we thank you for the assurance that it gives us, and that you take us up into your purpose.

[31 : 44] That you are here with, in, and under everything that happens. Father, we thank you for the assurance that it gives us, and the promise of the future that it gives us.

Thank you for this, in Jesus' name. Amen.