

Saturday Morning English Service - Nathan Confronts David

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Preacher: Rev I Watson

[0 : 00] We keep our seats and we bow our heads and we pray together. Lord God, I echo the words of the psalmist. Teach us your perfect way, O Lord.

Teach us your perfect way. Teach us to observe your ways. Confirm in us your gracious word. Confirm it, Lord, for that is what we long to hear.

Turn away that reproach of yours which we fear. Your judgments are indeed good and right. And therefore we fear your reproach. But Lord God, I we thank you that through our Savior Jesus Christ, you are a God who loves to forgive, quick to forgive.

Lord God, confirm that in our hearts as well. Lord, we depend upon your Holy Spirit to teach us these things.

[1 : 07] Lord, we look to you now as we consider your word. Through our Savior Jesus Christ we ask all this. In his name. Amen. Well, let's have our Bibles opened at 2 Samuel chapter 12.

One of the things, one of the things that convinces me of the truth of the Bible is it presents to us its heroes warts and all.

Abraham, the father of the nations, lies to save his own neck. And not once but twice.

Moses, the lawgiver, has a short temper. In his youth he killed an Egyptian. As an old man he struck the rock contrary to the Lord's command.

One of the twelve disciples was a traitor who betrayed the Lord Jesus to his enemies. And as for the rest of the disciples, well, they didn't exactly hang around when trouble raised its ugly head.

[2 : 18] Peter, for all his protests of loyalty, actually denied knowing the Lord Jesus. And in 2 Samuel chapter 11, we discover that David, the Lord's anointed king, David also had feet of clay.

We read at the beginning of chapter 11 that it was spring when the kings should be fighting their enemies. But David is taking a spring break.

What's the point of being king if you can't get others to fight your battles for you? And one evening he decides to go for a stroll around the parapets of the palace roof.

And across the street he spies a beautiful woman having a bath. Now if he had averted his gaze, if he had turned on his heels, if he had removed himself from temptation, he would have done nothing wrong.

Temptations will suddenly spring up in front of us when we least expect them. But he didn't do that. He stayed.

[3 : 34] He stayed. And he allowed temptation to ripen into sin. Do you remember how the serpent cast doubt in Eve's mind about the forbidden fruit?

You will not surely die, he said. And then we read in Genesis 3, when the woman saw, get that, when she saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and she ate it.

Good for food and pleasing to the eye. This is what the Lord Jesus was speaking about when he said, it's in Matthew chapter 6 verse 22, sometimes regarded as a rather enigmatic saying, but this is what the Lord was speaking about, the eye is the lamp of the body.

If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness?

David looked and he allowed darkness into his heart. He desired this woman Bathsheba.

[4 : 59] And the fact that she was already married was irrelevant. Uriah, her husband, was quite conveniently doing what David should have been doing, outfitting the enemies of Israel. So David and Bathsheba slept together.

And it all may have been kept quiet had not Bathsheba got pregnant. David recalled Uriah in an attempt to get him to sleep with his wife, but Uriah would not play ball.

So David ordered that Uriah should be sent to the thick of battle where he was sure to be killed. And that is exactly what happened. And after a respectable time of mourning, Bathsheba married David and shortly afterwards gave birth to a son.

And that would have been that. Except, as we read earlier on, the very last sentence of chapter 11. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

Now here's a question. How do you speak truth to power? How do you speak truth to power?

[6 : 10] Answer, very carefully. Very carefully. King Ahab. King Ahab threw the prophet Micaiah into prison to be fed only on bread and water because Micaiah told him, you're going to be killed in battle.

Jeremiah was tossed down a well for predicting the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians. John the Baptist, of course, had his head cut off for rebuking Herod for marrying his brother's wife.

How do you speak truth to power? Very carefully. And verse 1 of chapter 12 tells us that the Lord sent Nathan, the prophet, to David.

Now, we first meet Nathan back in chapter 7, at the beginning of chapter 7, where David is telling Nathan of his plans to build a temple, a house for the Lord.

And that little vignette of David and Nathan discussing things together really shows the closeness of David and Nathan, of how intimate they were together, an intimacy that King Saul and Samuel never had.

[7 : 22] How difficult was it for Nathan to confront David? And not just because he was his king, but perhaps even more because they were friends.

Proverbs 27, verse 6, wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses. How many of us are willing to listen to some home truths from our friends?

Or do our friends keep quiet because they fear they will lose us? They know that we're so thin-skinned that we would rather not hear their loving rebukes.

Wounds from a friend can be trusted. Well, however Nathan felt about confronting David. He did it. He did it because the Lord had sent him. And the way he goes about it leaves us in no doubt that this was a man who was filled with the spirit of wisdom.

Because rather than confront David outright, he tells him a story. He tells David a story that will force David to condemn himself.

[8 : 37] And what better way to evoke a self-righteous response, to evoke self-righteous indignation from a former shepherd boy than a story about a rich man stealing a poor man's wee pet lamb.

And look what it says in verse 5. When David had heard the story, then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. And he said to Nathan, as the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die.

Oh, is that right, David? The penalty for taking a lamb is to be death. What about taking another man's wife?

What about taking another man's life? Oh, says David, he must pay for that lamb four times over because he did such a thing and had no pity.

No pity. Oh, well, that's rich. That's rich coming from a man who ordered one of his soldiers to go on a suicide mission just to cover his own tracks.

[9 : 46] Now, I would love to speak to some actors about what comes next. Verse 7. Then Nathan said to David, you are the man.

Now, what was Nathan's tone here? How do you imagine Nathan saying this to David? Do you imagine Nathan towering over David, red-faced, finger-pointing, his eyes blazing, you are the man! Or was it a whisper? Was it a whisper with tears in his eyes? David, you are the man.

This is what the Lord God of Israel says. says, I anointed you king over Israel and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms.

I gave you the house of Judah and Israel and Judah and if that hadn't been enough, I'd have given you so much more. David, how could you so despise the word of the Lord by doing this evil in his eyes?

[10 : 57] Can you hear the pain? Can you hear the heartache in Nathan's voice as he communicates the pain, as he communicates the heartache of the Lord?

Do you know, I'm even wanting to say the Lord could barely believe it. It's as if the Lord, the Lord can't believe what David has done.

He's given David everything but everything wasn't enough. Is that hard for us to believe? Is this an unrealistic situation?

Maybe the only thing that makes this story credible is the knowledge of our own hearts. We know, don't we? As Paul says to the Romans, Romans 8 verse 32, we know he who did not spare his own son but gave everything up for us all.

How much? How will he not also with him graciously give us all things? The Lord, who is our shepherd, has brought us into the greenest of pastures to the most refreshing of waters.

[12:06] The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not be in want. He has set a table before us. Our cup overflows. Yet like Eve, yet like David, we listen to Satan.

And we think to ourselves how good this is and how pleasing to the eye. And so we take and we eat.

Friends, there's nothing about this story that is hard to believe. Now, when Samuel, when Samuel had confronted Saul about his sin, for example, back in 1 Samuel 15, Samuel was confronted with a litany of excuses.

1 Samuel 15, that's the story of how Saul had failed to destroy the Amalekites despite the Lord's command. And when Samuel says to Saul, what's this bleating of the sheep I hear?

Oh, it's the soldier's fault. It's the soul. And we've just kept some of the cattle back because we're going to use them for sacrifice. I've mostly done what the Lord had told me.

[13:18] And it was only after Samuel had told Saul that because of this the Lord was rejecting him as king of Israel. Then did Saul confess his sin.

But friends, David is different. David immediately confesses. Look at verse 13. David said to Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord.

So there's no excuses. There's none of this. It was her fault. No excuses. No blame calling. A bare confession.

And with that immediate confession comes immediate forgiveness. The Lord has taken away your sins, says Nathan. You are not going to die.

And there is a practice both within the Jewish and the Christian traditions of pausing at this point and of reflecting on Psalm 51.

[14:27] Psalm 51, which David wrote after all these events. He wrote in the aftermath of all these events. And that Psalm 51 has been described as the sinner's guide.

It guides us from guilt to forgiveness. It tells us what we need to do if we want forgiveness of sins.

Let's turn to Psalm 51 for a moment or two. Let's turn to the sinner's guide. What must we do? What must we do if we are to go from the road of guilt to forgiveness?

I'm going to suggest four things to you this morning. I hope this is very practical. Four things I want to suggest to you. Learning from David and his experience.

the first thing we must do is face up to the guilt of our sin. The first thing we must do is to face up to our guilt.

[15:36] Look at verse 3 of Psalm 51. For I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me.

I know my transgressions. Now, we do not know the exact timing of all this. Obviously, it was nine months from the adulterous affair to the birth of the child and we can only speculate that Nathan didn't hang around.

So, we're talking nine, ten months perhaps. Not long. Not long at all. But I'll tell you it's long enough for the weight of guilt to be pressing down on David's shoulders.

sinner. And I actually wonder, does he confess so quickly? Because he was desperate to do that. He was desperate, desperate to confess his sins.

Earlier on, we sang from Psalm 32. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night, your hand was heavy upon me. My strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

[16:43] Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgression to the Lord and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Friends, confession of sin comes as a relief. Why would you want to hold on to it? It comes as a relief.

Those of you who have had the privilege of leading someone to Christ will know that often, immediately on surrendering to the Lord, the new Christian will just burst into tears. These are tears of joy. These are tears of relief. If you were with us last night at the fellowship meeting, you'll know that I grew up in a Pentecostal church and one thing about the hymns we used to sing were that so many of them were about the Christian experience of conversion. We used to sing about our experience of conversion. One of them went like this. I remember when my burdens rolled away. I had carried them for years, night and day.

[17 : 55] When I sought the blessed Lord and I took him at his word, then at once all my burdens rolled away. Rolled away, rolled away. I am happy since my burdens rolled away.

Oh friends, confession really is good for the soul. The first thing we must do if we want to go from guilt to forgiveness is to admit the guilt. We have to face up to the reality of it. And the second thing we must do then is confess it. Confess our sin. Confess that our sin affects our relationship with God. I have sinned against the Lord, said David.

Psalm 51 verse 4, Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight. And we must admit that the Lord is absolutely right to judge us so that you may be justified in your words. Isn't that what distinguished the penitent thief from his partner in crime?

[19 : 05] He turns to his erstwhile comrade and says, Don't you fear God since you are under the same sentence?

We are punished justly for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.

We must admit our sin. We must admit that we have sinned against God. And thirdly, we must actually want to be forgiven. Now, that may sound strange to you. Who wouldn't want to be forgiven? But the truth is, and there may be some people like this here this morning, there are actually some people who enjoy their guilt, who wallow in their guilt. They've built up for themselves a kind of lifestyle that ensures that they never have to face up to the truth. What am I thinking about? Well, for an example, there are people who are always negative about themselves.

[20 : 06] You know people like that? They're always down on themselves. Nothing they do is ever any good. And so, the rest of us will go out of our way to praise them, to always praise them, always encourage them.

And while they make a show of not accepting the praise, I wonder, I wonder if it is not a device to make sure that we do always praise them.

And we will never, ever point out their faults in love, never. Because, well, we wouldn't want to crush such a sensitive soul. Do you know the kind of thing I'm talking about? I'm thinking also of the perfectionist, you know, the person who has to be correct about everything. The house is spotless. The tiniest mark on the carpet generates a huge amount of anxiety. Their clothes are always immaculate. Friends, it's a conspiracy. It's a conspiracy to create the illusion of perfection so that we will imagine that the outer person must mirror the inner person.

[21 : 19] And none of us would ever dream that there might be something out of place within. If we want to be forgiven, we must want it.

If you want forgiveness, you must really want it. Look what David says in the opening verses of Psalm 51. They leave us in no doubt that he desired forgiveness.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy. Blot out my transgressions, wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Blot out. That has the idea of wipe it away, just the way that you would wipe a table with a cloth or dust your sideboard. That's the image there.

Blot it out. Wash away my iniquity, as if you're scrubbing dirty clothes. Cleanse me from my sin. The word there, cleanse, is associated with ritual purity within the temple, and that's where the hyssop comes in in verse 7, because a branch of hyssop was used to sprinkle anybody who was ceremonially impure.

[22 : 44] Like a leper, for example, they were sprinkled and made ceremonially pure. And only once they were considered pure could they join worshippers in the temple.

What is David saying here? He is saying that he feels that sin has defiled him. He feels like a leper. He has a vicious and ugly condition that renders him unfit to come before the Lord, and he longs to be cleansed.

He longs to be rehabilitated. And he is under no illusion as to how radical the treatment must be. Look at verse 10. Create in me a pure heart, O God.

Create in me. He has a heart transplant that exceeds anything a cardiac surgeon can do.

Because David is asking for nothing less than a miracle. He is asking for the miracle of creation. He talks about heart and spirit. He is talking about his inner self, his mind, and his will.

[23 : 50] You see, our sin, our guilt, it is not something that can just be scraped off, you know, like a fungus on a tree. It is not something that we can separate from our lives.

It is a defect at the very core of our personalities. It is the corruption of our nature. It is something we are born with, isn't it?

So when David says in verse 5, Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. He is not criticizing his mother for anything.

He is not accusing his mother of anything. He is asserting what we call original sin. That we are sinful from our origins. we emerge from the womb as sinners.

Our wills are corrupt, our emotions are corrupt, our minds are corrupt. And what we need is not a minor repair job. We need a complete moral overhaul.

[24 : 52] And that's not easy. God is not in the business of just patching us up. Create in me a clean heart.

Maybe that's why so many of us don't really want to be forgiven. Because we know it's going to be radical. We know that it's going to mean a lot of change.

I think David knew something of that. When he says in verse 12, restore to me the joy of your salvation and uphold me with a willing spirit.

You see, even the desire to be made clean is something that has to come from God. We have to face up to our guilt.

We have to confess our sins. We have to desire forgiveness. And all that entails. And then here's the fourth thing I just see in here.

[25 : 58] Believe. believe that God will forgive you. David had a sacrifice that he was going to bring to the Lord, but it wasn't a sacrifice of bulls and goats and lambs.

Oh, it was something far more costly. Look at verse 17. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God.

you will not despise. The sacrifice that David will bring is his self will, his self importance.

David is saying to the Lord, all I've got, all I've got is my broken and contrite heart. But Lord, I know that this is a sacrifice you will accept.

I know that you will not turn these away. me. You see, David actually knows God. He knows his God. Restore to me, restore to me the joy of your salvation.

[27 : 03] He knows what it is like to have reveled in the love of God, to have enjoyed, to have basked in the love of God. There was a time when he had enjoyed a personal and intimate communion with the Lord.

He knew what he had lost and he wants it back. Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord? Where is that so refreshing view of Jesus and his word?

What peaceful hours, what I once enjoyed, how sweet their memories still, but they have left an aching void the world can never fill.

Is that you today? You want it back. Oh, how you want it back. So David says in verse 11, cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me because what David fears more than anything else is losing God forever.

Losing God forever. And that's why he starts the psalm in the way he does because it's a plea, isn't it? It's an inferior asking a superior for something.

[28 : 22] For an undeserved favor, have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy, brought out my transgressions.

Mercy, unfailing love, compassion. These are all words of tenderness, my friends. These are, this is how a father, a loving father feels towards his children.

And David knows that he can lay such feelings before the Lord because that's how the Lord feels towards his children.

And in his justice, God could have banished David from his presence forever. He could have, of course he could have. But David had discovered that there is an unending love in the heart of God for his children.

Now just as we start to conclude, as we go back to 2 Samuel 12, we have to recognize that forgiveness of sin does not mean that sin's consequences can be overturned.

[29 : 43] What do I mean? Well, the body that's been ravaged by substance abuse is not going to turn into a picture of health overnight. Relationships which were destroyed through spite and bitterness and hatred will take time to heal.

David's sin has consequences. consequences. The long-term consequences are trouble and strife within the family, not least of which was the rebellion by his son Absalom.

But more immediately, the baby will die. And what can we say about that? It seems so very, very unfair.

But I ask you today, does the God you know, is the God you know unfair? Is that your experience of God, that he is an unfair God?

This child was born into a covenant family, within the covenant nation. And so we trust that child to God's merciful keeping.

[30 : 50] And as for David, he learns that when God forgives, he really forgives. He really forgives. Bathsheba conceives again and gives birth to Solomon.

who is also given the name Jedediah, which means loved by the Lord. And the chapter closes with David defeating the Ammonites, again confirming that the Lord is blessing David once again. When the Lord forgives, he really forgives. God is willing to forgive. Now, we are preparing ourselves to gather around the Lord's table tomorrow. The Lord's table reminds us that at the end of the road to forgiveness, there's a cross.

That cross, my friends, is the irrefutable evidence forgiveness, that God is willing to forgive.

It's the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ that blots out our transgressions. It's the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ that washes away our iniquity.

[32 : 11] It's the blood of our precious Lord Jesus Christ that cleanses us from our sin. So, my dear friends, if today you are hearing God's voice saying, you're the man, you're the woman, do not ignore him, do not dismiss him, do not send him away, listen, oh, listen to him, and respond to him, because what else are you going to do with your guilt?

What else are you going to do with it? Are you going to bury it? Are you going to try and cover it up? Are you going to pretend that there's nothing wrong? Surely David shows us a better way, that we face up to our guilt, that we confess it to our God, that we desire to be forgiven, desire the change that he offers us, believe that he will accept you through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Do that, dear friends, and like David, and like millions of believers down through the centuries, you will also be able to say, open Lord my lips and my mouth will declare your praise.

Let's bow our heads, let's pray together. Our gracious God and our Father in heaven, as we bow before you, we do so in awe and wonder.

Lord God, how can it be that this man who lived so long ago can speak to us about our own situation, about our sin, about our guilt, about the weight we feel on our own shoulders, weighing our souls down?

[34 : 08] How can it be? Lord, this must be your word. This must be your inspired word. Lord God, if you are speaking to us this morning, oh, Father God, we pray that you would make us willing, willing to come to you, willing to confess our sin, willing to profess our faith in your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

For at the end of the road to forgiveness is his cross stained with his blood. Lord God, have mercy upon us.

Give us the faith. Give us the courage. to face up to the truth about ourselves, and then to face the truth that you are a God of mercy, the God who blots out all our sins and iniquities and transgressions.

In your holy name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.