

- *Pray for those who struggle with coming out from the oppressions of sin, and do not know how to deal with what has happened to them, either because they have committed sin, or because sins have been committed against them.*

Final Prayer

Let me hear Your voice tonight, faithful God and Lord of all. Speak to me so that I may know Your will, whether it be hard or easy, comforting or challenging, exciting or mundane; and let me value each and every word of instruction You give for Your servant's life. Thank You Lord; AMEN

Prayer

Gracious Lord, help us in the midst of our troubles.

Sort out the mess we have made and save us from sin:

Accept our apology for making chaos out of Your order,

Lead us to repentance and a complete change of heart,

Forgive us for our stupidity in following the paths of evil,

Restore us by Your peace to rise again above our distress:

On this Your day, Gracious Lord, we thank You. AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Broken families

In the UK we have been shocked by the deaths of little children, murdered by parents whose lives are broken. Pray for broken families in your country, especially the children.

On-going prayers

- *Give thanks for the gifts of life and joy and love.*
- *Pray for the security of the seas and the problem of piracy*
- *Pray for little children who are abused by family members*

Meditation

Lord God, Holy Father, Almighty Saviour and Lord;

Our lives are nothing without the power and drive
of Your redeeming love, by which we are saved.

Our spirits crave the creative power of Your Spirit
like a plant needs water, and an artist uses a canvass:

Our souls desire the love and care of the Creator
cherishing, cleansing, nurturing, empowering:

Our bodies cry out for the healing of the Saviour,
restoring flesh and bones, and speeding recovery:

Our minds love the challenge of a life lived for You,
Intellectual, practical, pragmatic or reflective:

Thank You, Lord, forever and ever; so be it, AMEN!

Bible Study - 2 Samuel 11:22-17

²² *The messenger went, and when he arrived, he told David everything that Joab had sent him to tell. ²³ He said to David, 'The men took advantage of us and came out against us in the open; we pushed them back to the entrance of the gate, ²⁴ but then the archers shot at us from the wall. Some of the king's army died; and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead as well.'*

²⁵ *David told the messenger, 'Say this to Joab, "Don't let this upset you, for the sword takes now one and then another. Press on with your attack on the city, and overthrow it." Then, encourage him.'*

²⁶ When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him.

²⁷ Once the official time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house. She became his wife, and bore him a son. However, the Lord regarded the whole affair as evil.

Review

The tragic truth is played out in this conclusion to the story of Uriah's death and David's acquisition of Bathsheba as his wife. This part of the story of David and Bathsheba simply follows on from what has gone before, with a few additional touches of insight. David attempted to put a gloss on the affair and Bathsheba did what is right to mourn her husband, but David did what he wanted and made her his wife. Yet again, we are left asking many questions about this whole tragic affair. Did David really think that he had acted appropriately, or that he had simply exercised his rights as an oriental king? Was Bathsheba a willing partner in the affair, and what were her thoughts and motives? Lastly, did everyone really know what was going on, and did David make a laughing stock of himself in front of his courtiers?

The report back to David It is pathetic to see how the whole sordid story was reported back to David. Joab had previously asked the messenger to report what happened, but responded to David's concerns about the battle by saying 'Uriah is dead' (11:21). However, when the time came for him to deliver the message, he blurted out the whole story, leaving nothing out and concluding with the climactic statement, 'and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead as well!' (11:23,24). Even though David had attempted to keep the matter secret in order to keep his name clear of any accusation, it really does seem that the messenger knew full well what David really wanted to hear. He had worked out what was going on from the manner in which Joab reported it all to him (11:19-21).

This response by David is unsurprising. Someone who knowingly sins will often believe it is possible to hide wickedness even though the evidence is before them that other people know exactly what is happening. The result is that the sinner lives in a state of denial about the reality of what they have done, and represses all inner guilt. This is particularly true of sexual sin of any kind, and it normally needs something dramatic and out of the ordinary to shift someone out of such delusion. This will of course happen to David, but in our text today, he continues his charade of grand, innocent authority, wishing to be seen to rise above all problems; after all, everything had gone exactly to plan as far as he was concerned. Puffing himself up with the authority of his position, he sought to minimise the effect of what had happened by sending a message back to Joab which accepted the loss of life as if it were it was the mere collateral damage of war; tragic, but unavoidable. It was a truth used to hide a lie; an unsophisticated attempt to justify the reprehensible.

Consequences The effect of David's statement was not only to minimise the death of Uriah, but scandalously, to minimise the death of others who had died in the unnecessary action he had ordered to ensure the death of Uriah. Such an attitude towards his own men was disgusting. In the past, David had mourned the loss of life in war (2 Sam 1:20ff), but never excused it as collateral damage. David was now caught in the trap of maintaining a lie, not just about the facts of the situation, but about his own real feelings. The David who had maintained faithfulness to Almighty God through war and distress was now being covered up by the aggrandisements of power and the effects of sin.

Meanwhile, Uriah's wife, Bathsheba was brought into David's house as soon as was proper and convenient. It is difficult to know exactly what Bathsheba thought of everything, because the whole story reflects male power and authority in days when marriage was not a formally celebrated contract, but the consequences of a man's choice and exercise of power. Most probably, she had no choice in the matter from beginning to end. As the

whole story of David unfolds, however, we discover that Bathsheba was quite capable of being manipulative in order to gain personal advantage (see 1 Kings 2). She was probably sustained through these events by her strength of character.

The future and David's son In the middle of verse 27, we are told the simple words 'she ... bore him a son'. From the point of view of the writer of this story, this was the crucial issue. Was this the right way for the son and heir of David to be born, that is, from adultery and disobedience to the Lord's commands? We will discover in the coming chapters that David was quite happy with the idea, however, our text ends with God's verdict on the matter; 'the Lord regarded the whole affair as evil'. In other words, there was no way that the Lord would accept the continuance of David's dynasty based upon a son born out of adultery; the future for the child was uncertain.

We know from scripture generally that the damage done by this whole business did not prevent God from fulfilling His plan of salvation through David's dynasty, or from restoring his relationship with David. But David lived a lie from the moment he gave in to the temptation to adultery, and in so doing, he belittled himself in the eyes of God and all those around him. There are hints of this in the responses of both Joab and the messenger; they are faithful to David, but appear to know everything. We can learn from this about the true dangers of succumbing to sin and the consequences of deceitful human behaviour.

In the course of time, David's dynasty would produce a Saviour (Jesus) who would cut through the human and spiritual consequences of sin and defeat in with a work of God designed to deal with all evil. God did not do this to vindicate David, but to give hope to every one of us that sin and its consequences can and will be overcome in Christ. However, we had better know the full extent of the nature of sin, so that we may know the full extent of our salvation.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Check out the difference between what Joab tells the messenger (11:19-21) and what the messenger tells David (11:23,24). Why is there a difference?
2. Imagine yourself as a member of David's army. How would you respond to reports of this nature about what your King was doing?
3. What are the full consequences of David's sin, and the evil which the Lord saw in His actions. What more can you add to what I have outlined?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

The story of David slows right down at this point and we become almost oppressed by the monotony of its themes. This is part of the storytelling technique of scripture, warning us about the significance of what had happened, and forcing us to dwell on matters longer than we would normally do in a newspaper story today, or in a modern novel. In truth, the sadness of such sin continues and goes on far longer than people imagine, but that in itself is a lesson which needs to be earned, and if we will not learn it from scripture, then we are forced to learn it from our own experience.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- Write down a list of the sins you believe David has committed. They go further than adultery and murder. See how the sins intertwine, and see what you can learn from this about the nature of sin and its effect on your life today.