



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Lessons from the Life of David

2 Samuel 11

“The Great Transgression”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Turning to 2 Samuel Chapter 11 and reading the entire chapter.

“It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king’s house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold. So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, ‘Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?’ Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house. And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, ‘I am with child.’ Then David sent to Joab, saying, ‘Send me Uriah the Hittite.’ And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah had come to him, David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people were doing, and how the war prospered. And David said to Uriah, ‘Go down to your house and wash your feet.’ So Uriah departed from the king’s house and a gift of food from the king followed him. [I

still like the Authorized Version rendering that “a mess of meat” followed him.] But Uriah slept at the door of king’s house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. So when they told David, saying, ‘Uriah did not go down to his house,’ David said to Uriah, ‘Did you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?’ And Uriah said to David, ‘The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing.’”

There’s a little bit of a textural problem in that text and it’s possible that the expression, *chayah* which means “as you live” is a corruption of an original, *chay adonai*, which means, “As the Lord lives,” which would seem to make a bit more sense. But, the textural question is, we are unable to solve it definitely. We’ll leave it like it is, “as you live and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing.”

“Then David said to Uriah, ‘Wait here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart.’ So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. Now when David called him, he ate and drank before him; and he made him drunk. And at evening he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house. In the morning it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, ‘Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die.’ So it was, while Joab besieged the city, that he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew there were valiant men. [These were the Elite Republican Guards of the Ammonites, I’m sure.] Then the men of the city came out and fought with Joab. And some of the people of the servants of Joab fell; [That’s interesting to note that not only is Uriah slain as a result of the wickedness and deception of David, but also other Israelites, totally unconnected really

with what had happened back in Jerusalem. So, in verse 17, at the end, we read.] and Uriah the Hittite died also.

Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war, and charged the messenger, saying, ‘When you have finished telling the matters of the war to the king, if it happens that the king’s wrath rises, and he says to you, ‘Why did you approach so near to the city when you fought? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? Who struck Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? [Abimelech was the son of Gideon and a very wicked son who slew seventy of his brothers, the account is given in Judges Chapter 9.] Was it not a woman who cast a piece of a millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you go near the wall?’ Then you shall say, ‘your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.’”

That’s very interesting because he anticipated that David was going to put on a show of anger to further throw people off his trail, so to speak. And Joab says, tell David about that Scriptural event that happened two hundred and thirty years ago, so that you might be able to explain to him, to his satisfaction perhaps, what happened.

“So the messenger went, and came and told David all that Joab had sent by him. And the messenger said to David, “Surely the men prevailed against us and came out to us in the field; then we drove them back as far as the entrance of the gate. The archers shot from the wall at your servants; and some of the king’s servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.’ Then David said to the messenger, ‘Thus you shall say to Joab, ‘Do not let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another. Strengthen your attack against the city, and overthrow it. So encourage him.’ When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. [And, incidentally, this was probably just simply the ceremonial mourning and was simply something that she carried out because of the customs.] And when her

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, when you read that, you really ought to put a plural on the thing but the thing, but when we think of the thing we should think of all the other things that went along with it. We'll try to make that, at least to some extent, plain in the message that follows.

May the Lord bless this reading of his word and let's bow together now in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee for the Holy Scriptures, which are so filled with admonition and instruction and recounting of blessings that are ours to be enjoyed as well as ours from which to learn. We thank Thee that the Scriptures very faithfully and forthrightly tell us not only the great blessings that are ours through Jesus Christ, Our Lord, who died for sinners, but also plainly and clearly and directly unfold the shortcomings and the sins and the rebellion of the men of the Scriptures and not simply those who are unbelievers, but many who were believers who have fallen into sin as well, because we know the sin principle still dwells in us who have been redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for this incident. We pray, Lord, that we may learn from it and that for us it may have special meaning and significance in drawing us away from the same kind of activity into which the great king of Israel fell.

We pray for our country today. We ask Thy blessing upon our President, upon those associated with him in government and we, particularly, pray for the Secretary of Defense, General Colin Powell, General Schwarzkopf, and others who are associated with them in carrying on the operations in the Persian Gulf area. And we pray especially for our soldiers and we ask, Lord, that Thy protecting hand may be over them. And, if it pleases Thee, give them victory soon. We think, Lord, as we study the incidents that have

taken place there that justice stands on the side of the Coalition. And we pray, Lord, that Thou wilt honor them and give them victory.

And we pray, particularly, for the families of those who are represented in the armed forces there and we ask for encouragement and consolation and strengthening for them and understanding, as well. We are grateful Lord for our country. We thank Thee for President Bush and for his determination in these difficult days, for him, for the United States, for the other countries associated with us and for us, as well.

We pray for the Church of Jesus Christ and ask that, by Thy grace, these events may be useful in the propagation of the truth. We, especially, pray for the Christians in the armed forces. Sustain them and give them the testimony of word and life in the midst of their fellow soldiers, and may there be a number who turn to the Lord in these difficult days of their lives.

We pray for Believers Chapel and its ministries. We ask, especially, for those who have requested our prayers, Lord, undertake for each one of them, with the different needs that exist in their lives and families, and, O God, answer in an affirmative way and in accordance with Thy will.

We pray Thy blessing upon our service today and the service this evening and the Lord's Supper. We ask that as we sing, as we listen to the Scriptures, that we may be drawn closer to Thee. And if there should be some in our meeting who do not know our Lord as their own personal Savior, may they recognize their need and recognize that Christ has died for sinners. And may they flee to him for the assurance of eternal life.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today and the continuation in of our series of studies in the Life of David is, “The Great Transgression.” Shocking surprise meets us here. The Psalmist, the King, the chosen and beloved one, soiled and debased by one wicked, wild, passionate outburst, followed by monumental deceit with character blasted irretrievably.

A slip and then a headlong fall, and for David at least, it had permanent consequences. To put it in the words of a Latin phrase, *facilis de scinsos awarenee*. Easy is descent to the lower regions. And, surely, in the case of David, it seems extremely easy.

Thomas Goodwin, one of the seventeenth century Puritans, wrote with reference to this in a great treatise on the aggravation of sin that, “It was the matter of Uriah the Hittite more than the matter of Bathsheba that awakened the anger of the Lord against David.” That is to say, it was David’s sin of deliberation and determination, rather than his sudden sin of sudden and intoxicating passion.

Actually, of course, it was both matters but, for Mr. Goodwin, the more important of the two was the fact that David, after he slipped and fell by the outburst of sexual passion, persisted in the deceit for a year. And, not only did he persist in the deceit but he engaged in actions one right after the other, in an attempt to cover up his sin.

Dryden wrote in one of his poems, “The gates of hell are open night and day; smooth the descent, and easy is the way; but to return, and view the cheerful skies, in this the task and mighty labor lies.” And for David, it took an awful long time for him to come back to his senses, so to speak. The mystery of it all lies in the origin of the base feeling described in verse 2, where we read.

“It happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king’s house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold.”

If we were to look for the real full treatment of what went on in David’s life at this point, you would have to include two great passages. One of them would be James chapter 1, verses 14 and 15 in which the brother of our Lord writes.

“But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin and sin when it is full grown brings forth death.”

And the other passage is Paul’s great treatment of indwelling sin in Romans chapter 7, verse 13 through verse 25. It’s rather startling, is it not, that the only remark concerning David’s conduct, made by the sacred historian is the chapter’s last line, in which we read, “But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.” In fact, those words are very important because, to use modern language, it’s a heading, it’s a screamer that one would put over the remainder of David’s life because the history of David’s house is expressed so beautifully by that expression. The thing that David did displeased the Lord. He never recovered from it in its effects. He, himself, recovered but the effects of it lasted. And as the chapters unfold in 2 Samuel, you’ll notice that they persisted in the effects of the sin upon his family, his children, and in his kingdom, and finally even on his death bed, the effects of what had happened here remained with him. How important it is, my Christian friend, for us to give every attention to the details of our spiritual life that we might not fall into the same kind of sin into which David fell.

Well, let’s look for a few moments at the enticement of desire, as it is expressed in verses 1 through 5. It’s a kind of study of 1 Corinthians chapter 10 in verse 12, where the Apostle Paul says, “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall.” It’s a turning point for David’s life. And after this as you study the life of David, as someone has put it, “It’s a cataract of calamities.”

The persons involved are three, primarily, David the King, Bathsheba the wife of Uriah, and Uriah the Hittite. Think of David, fifty to fifty-five years of age at the present time, twelve years now he has reigned in Jerusalem as king, he had all of the natural gifts of the psalmist, the military warrior, the wise politician, and in addition piety, love for our Lord and a life that was almost always characterized by thanksgiving to God. He’s at the

pinnacle of human glory, so to speak. But there is one thing in David's house that is, perhaps, the fundamental reason for his problem. In David's house there existed polygamy.

Now, we know the sense of delicacy and chastity has a purifying effect on the lives of all who by God's grace are kept pure. In David's case, with his whole family, a family of wives, a polygamist relationship, in one sense it's not surprising that this ultimately, happened. In fact, as someone has put it, I think, very beautifully, “David is like a majestic forest tree that is blown over by a rather light wind.” And as one wonders why this great majestic tree is blown over, he walks over to it and looks and discovers that decay has been working for a long time in the midst of the tree, because that's the picture that we get of David here.

He is a man who, unconsciously perhaps, has neglected the responsibilities of his place. He should have been out with the soldiers, of course. In fact, that seems to be the point of saying, “It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle.” Winter is over. The men are out in the field, fighting the Ammonites at Rabbah, approximately our present Ammon. And, David, however, has stayed back like other Eastern kings who eschewed the fighting on the front lines. But, up to this time, he had stood with them.

Now, however, he's back, staying in Jerusalem, idle. As Matthew Henry said, “Standing waters gather filth.” “The industrieth man has no leisure for sin, the idle has no leisure or power to avoid sin,” someone else has said.

Hengstenberg, the great German commentator on Scripture and theologian, for that matter, Old Testament scholar, said, “This single act can only be regarded as the expression of his whole disposition of mind.” In other words, the idleness, the failure to do his duty, so to speak all comes to its head now as he gets up from his afternoon siesta, it is, according to the Hebrew text in the late afternoon that this incident took place. He walks out on the roof and there he sees the beautiful Bathsheba purifying herself from her

monthly uncleanness. And that’s made specifically the point because David’s not going to be able to get out of this. And the Scripture sets forth precisely the condition in such a way that no one can say he’s not guilty. At any rate, he walks out and he sees her and that brings us to the second person, Bathsheba.

We know some other things about Bathsheba and one thing we know about her, in contrast to Abigail who was a beauty and a brain, she was a beauty but not a brain. And later on in 1 Kings chapters 1 and 2, you discover the kind of person that she was. She fell far short of what one might have expected. She’s the kind of person that the writer of the Proverbs, I think, has in mind when he writes in chapter 11 in verse 22 as “a ring of gold in a swine’s snout, so is a lovely woman who lacks discretion.”

And there is another Proverb that I think is the precise opposite of this. Someone, incidentally, has thought that perhaps this referred to Bathsheba, but it does not. “Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing.” That’s important for us to remember, isn’t it both ladies and men. “Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.”

So Bathsheba falls short and, as a result, so far as we can tell, she was in complicity with David in the adultery. As a matter of fact, there’s something else you can say about Bathsheba. She was more scrupulous for the ceremonial than for the moral law. In other words, she was more anxious to be sure and carry out the ceremonial law regarding the laws of purity and cleansing than she was to carry out the commandments of the Lord, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

And then there’s the Hittite. You might think that Uriah the Hittite, having come from a pagan background, might be the one who would be least approved by the Lord in this incident. But, it’s quite the reverse, incidentally, as often is the case in Holy Scripture, Uriah was an honorable patriot. He was one of the famous thirty of David’s warriors. And, as a matter of fact, he was associated with those warriors with the father of Bathsheba, Eliam. He was one too. Bathsheba was the granddaughter of Ahithophel,

who if you remember is the one who counseled David but who was the traitor in his council. And as a matter of the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament, the Lord Jesus, in the Upper Room Discourse, points back to Psalm 41 in verse 9, where David refers to the one who had broken bread in his house, lifting up his heel against him. That was Ahithophel. And our Lord sees Ahithophel as illustrative of Judas himself. So Bathsheba is the daughter of Eliam, who was the son of Ahithophel. And you can see from this that Uriah and the father of Bathsheba were friends in the army and associated together. But he's the honorable man and Joab and David are the dishonorable ones in this instance.

There is a statement to the effect someone has made, “Were honor driven out of the world it should find a refuge in the breast of kings.” Well, kings are dishonorable people in so many instances. Someone else has made an interesting comment about this, they have said, “There is a black spot, though it is bigger than a beans eye in every soul, which if once set a working will over cloud the whole man in darkness and something very like madness, and will hurry him into the night of destruction.” That, incidentally, is an Arabic saying. The obvious application is this the problem with Saddam? Does he have this black spot no bigger than a bean's eye in his soul, which has been set a working, and now the result is a man in darkness and madness. Well, it's really a truth of Scripture in the sense that within the heart of all men, even the redeemed, there lies the principle of sin.

Now, Christians have the means by which to counter the ravages of indwelling sin in the ministry of the Holy Spirit, as the Apostle Paul points out in chapter 7, that this sin principle exists in man and he fights against it, and acknowledges that in himself it's impossible for him to be victorious. But then says, “Thank God through Jesus Christ Our Lord,” and unfolds then in the 8th chapter, the ministry of the Holy Spirit by which we may be delivered from indwelling sin's ravages as we walk by the Spirit.

Now, the actions are very plain. There's no point in going through the exposition of them. David has been idle. Strong temptation suggests itself. He dismisses the law when he calls or asks someone to go down and find out who this is. The word comes back to him. Someone said, “Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?” And so he has complete and antecedent knowledge that this will be an act of adultery, which according to Jewish Law exposes him and Bathsheba to stoning to death. I'm sure, as King, he thought he could survive that. But, nevertheless, that's what the Law of Moses says. And he was guilty of the adultery and guilty now of stoning to death. So we go on to read that didn't stop him a bit, the wife of Uriah, he sent messengers. He took her, she came to him; there is no indication that she did not come willingly. He lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house. And the woman conceived and sent and told David and said, “I am with child.”

Now comes the cover up; the wicked ways of sin. How revealing this is? Make the application, my Christian friend. Don't pass by this and talk about David. But talk about you and me, because this is so revealing of you and me. Oh, perhaps we're not guilty of the adultery, but all of our sins are reflective of the problem here, the deceitfulness of sin. It's so deceitful it is not until you get to be in the Christian faith for a lengthy period of time that you really realize how deceitful sin is. And you discover, as your days go by, you never have a complete handle on that.

But, at any rate, David when the word comes that Bathsheba is pregnant; it's obvious Uriah must die. Dead men tell no tales. And so, consequently, he's going to as Mr. Churchill said about the East, he's going to erect a curtain of fog and iron, so that no one will be able to put the finger on him. It's a sham. It's a bamboo curtain. It's a curtain that, unfortunately, for David does not stretch this way, but that way. And so the dissimulation that takes place is very educative.

Look, he recalls Uriah. And when Uriah comes he doesn't call Joab. Joab is the commander in chief. He calls Uriah. So he calls Uriah and it's on the pretext of finding

out information about how the army is doing. Why call someone who's not the commander in chief. He calls Uriah. And when Uriah comes, he says, “How's Joab doing? And how are the people doing? And how is the war doing?” The one man, who could give the information, better than anyone else, was General Joab. But, no, Uriah is called. David has his ulterior motives. The fog and the iron curtain are up.

And so after they have the little discussion, he sends Uriah off to his house, with a mess of food. But Uriah is not the kind of man that he hoped that he would be. He's a man who, surprisingly, out of commitment to duty, as he says, to the ark and to Israel and Judah, he prefers the guardroom to the bedroom. Amazing, astonishing, so that doesn't work, the gift of food. So now, David must do something else. All the time, his conscience must be giving him an awful time.

He says, now, we must do something else. So he calls him, calls him to have dinner with the king, has him eat and drink before him, and he plies him with the spirits, and finally he reaches the stage where he's drunk. And David thinks, maybe I have him now. And he's befuddled because he's drunk, but he's not inflamed with passion for his wife. Befuddled, but not inflamed. Someone has said, “Uriah, drunk, is more pious than David sober.” This is an astonishing story.

Well, there's one last thing that David thinks of and that's to write a Uriah letter. It's come to be that, you know. I guess this has been carried out in the history of men. Maybe some of you men, I don't know, this might be the perfect time with [indistinct] conditions the way they are, you may be responsible for taking the message for your own firing. But that's precisely what Uriah did. He takes the letter from David, written incidentally with the same pen and hand with which David wrote the great psalms, the psalms of his personal experiences with the Lord God, and he takes it back to Joab.

Joab opens it up and I think, F. B. Meyer is right, he says, “Joab says something like, this master of mine can sing the psalms with the best but when he wants a piece of

dirty work done, he comes to me.” Remember, Joab is one of the sons of Zeriaah that David once said “are too harsh for me,” because he slew Abner without any real excuse.

He wants to rid himself of Uriah. And Joab says to himself, according to Mr. Meyer, “I wonder why? Well, I’ll help him do it. At any rate, he will not be able to say another word to me about Abner. And, furthermore, I’ll be able to do almost as I will with him. He’ll be in my power from henceforth.” And so, Joab accepts the opportunity to bring David into his own power, so that David cannot say anything further about him.

Well, no need to go into it; but, look, this is what we see. There is, of course, the lust, the adultery, the deception. All this is a string. In my notes, I have all these with arrows pointing, adultery, deception, ingratitude, injustice, temptation, treachery, murder. That’s not the end of it. That’s just the end of David’s actions. That doesn’t say what went on in his inmost being. It doesn’t say what happens to him as a result of what he has done, even though he is forgiven.

You know, my Christian friend, we must never forget this; that our sins are forgivable when we confess them. They are forgiven. But the consequences of our sin, frequently, go on to the end of our days. Never forget that!

So the final chapter of this iniquitous drama unfolds. David, Joab, and the men of Ammon unite in the death of a noble warrior; and, evidently, a man of God, too, at least, a high regard for the ark, for Israel and Judah, and for duty within the kingdom of Israel.

Joab’s a cunning man and he thinks, well David has told me to get Uriah killed, and I’ll do that. But he tells the messenger now, when you go back David is going to act like he’s angry. And so you remind him of the incident that happened two-hundred and thirty years ago. I don’t know whether he knew whether it happened two hundred and thirty or one hundred and thirty, but he knew the Scriptures enough or knew history enough to know that that had happened. That Abimelech had gone too close to the wall and the woman had dropped the millstone on his head and killed him. So he said, you tell him about that. But then when you get through, you tell him about that. And he’s

angry and it's all a put on, of course, as far as David's concerned. He wants, he must act, of course, as if he hadn't planned it, so, be angry. Why did you get him so near to the wall so he got killed?

So he says, when David expresses his anger, then you just say, “Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.” So the messenger went and came and told David all that Joab had sent by him and the messenger said to David, “Surely the men prevailed against us and came out to us in the field; then we drove them back as far as the entrance of the gate. The archers shot from the wall at your servants; and some of the king's servants are dead,” not simply Uriah, but other Israelites as well, as a result of David's dissimulation, his sin, “And your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.”

Now, what will David do? Listen to what he says. This is so obvious. “Thus you shall say to Joab: ‘Do not let this thing displease you,’” Joab, Don't be down about it, because “the sword devours one as well as another.” This is warfare. Nothing to be concerned about, Joab. This just happens. This is warfare. In other words, David replies in what I personally would call unctuous cynicism. That's precisely what it is.

Well, as a result of this, the morning the news comes to Bathsheba and she goes through the ritual of mourning, and David takes her to his house, perhaps feeling that's the least that he could do. She becomes, of course, the mother of Solomon, that's very interesting, also. But, at any rate, the chapter ends with the words: “The thing that David had done displeased the Lord.”

Now, I'd like to go back over the steps of David's decline, just simply to inform us of the way of sin and judgment. First of all, there was the abdication of the royal functions, subtle declension. Hosea says something about an individual talking about Ephraim. He says, “Gray hairs are here and there among him on his head, and he doesn't know it.” I know mine, incidentally. But, in spiritual things decay, declension, often sets in just that way. Gray hairs are here and there on his head, but he doesn't know it.

So David has spiritually gray hairs; susceptibility to sensual passion. We think, on the other hand of Joseph in Genesis chapter 39, verses 8 and 9, I believe, in which Potiphar’s wife seeks to seduce him. And Joseph, contrary to David reacts as we should expect a Christian to do. We read, “But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand.” Everything in this house has been given to me by Potiphar; and I am the manager of everything, a lofty position. “There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?””

Lust takes root, as the Lord Jesus said, “when a man looks upon a woman to lust after,” he’s committed that sin. David committed that sin while he was on the roof, but then carried it out within his palace; and all that follows develops from that. As a matter of fact, David broke not one commandment. He broke three commandments. We don’t have time to talk about it, but if you’ll read the Ten Commandments and think of this, you’ll see at least three of the commandments were broken by him.

Now, he has committed his sin and so what is the first step of the impenitent man? Well, the first step of the impenitent man is to cling to his sin. That’s natural. He will cling to his sin. And so he does. He’s like Adam when God comes down into the Garden of Eden after his sin, he runs off and hides, clings to his sin. Or Achan, who when the children of Israel went in and destroyed Jericho and were warned that they were not to take of the things that belonged to the inhabitants of Jericho, he took and he was clinging to his sin until, finally, the finger was put upon him. Or Ananias or a long string of others? And then, think of you and me, because that’s precisely what we do. We cling to our sin, first of all, cling to it.

Then, the search for means of escape, the mighty warrior, now, think of it, the mighty warrior, David, King David, the one with whom God was so constantly, the Lord was with him! The Lord was with him. We read in the word of God. “The mighty

warrior, trembling for fear of being uncovered in his adultery.” Dissimulation, then the evil deeds involving the murder of the noble warrior.

Someone has said, “The Devil was always a great schemer and his dupes catch his spirit.” Really, you don’t have to catch his spirit. It’s just born in you. If you think of one sin as sufficient, in itself, to bring the mass of sin into the human race, you can see how sin fills and grows within the hearts of men. One sin of Adam has produced what we know as sin.

Then the completion of the cover-up; and the word comes to David, “Your servant Uriah,” he, also, is dead.” What do you think David felt at that point? I imagine he must have turned and felt a sigh of relief. Uriah is gone; the cover-up has worked. And now, no one knows but the Lord. In the last line of the chapter, “But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.” So the cover-up of the slaughter of Uriah, I’m sure he explained it like this, if someone raised the question, “Who slew Uriah?” He would have said, “The Ammonites slew him.” And he would say, “Ask Joab.” So, he and Joab concur in the fact that the Ammonites slew Uriah, but the real slayer was David.

And, incidentally, my friends, what we are seeing in the Persian Gulf today is probably a good illustration of that. Pardon my politics, but I don’t think it is politics. I think justice lies on the side of the Coalition. And, in my opinion a lot of the things that are happening there are, ultimately, traceable by the Lord God, back to individuals and perhaps one great individual within the enemy, responsible for literally thousands and thousands of lives. He has succeeded in his country, perhaps, in the cover-up, the devices have worked, but they do not work that way. There is no curtain this way. There may be a curtain of fog and iron down here, as Churchill used to speak about it, but not that way. The thing that David did displeased the Lord. And the deterioration of his family underlined it, in the years that followed.

Well, we return to 1 Corinthians chapter 10, in verse 12, “Therefore let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” That’s written for you and for me. If David

can fall, if Noah can fall, if Abraham can fall, if Moses can fall, if Peter can fall, and if David can fall, we don't have to presume that we cannot fall, do we? No, we do not.

You know, there is something very striking about this that has struck me as I have restudied this section. To me, it's one of the great ironies of the word of God. And there are many of them, as you know. The Lord God has certain ways of using irony to make his points so plain that you never forget them. This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. Pilate said, “Right, this is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” Oh, what irony there is in that.

And they put up there, “This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” And they put it up just as a kind of screaming headline, so to speak, over the cross. But how true it was! How true it was! That's precisely correct. And Pilate says, “What I have written, I have written,” when the Jews object to it, but I'd like to rephrase that Scripture. It's, “What Pilate you have written you have not written.” It's God who wrote that! His sovereign will determine that! And Pilate, you were an instrument in God's great working.

So now, what do you think that David wants above all else? Well, David wants to screen himself from exposure of his idolatry, and when his devices work, and it appears that he has succeeded, the whole world now knows about it. The whole world knows about it! Ironically, it's now written in Holy Scripture. And so when you say, “Do you know the life of David?” “Yes, I know the life of David.” “What's the incident that above everything else comes to your mind?” “His adultery. His fall.”

So here is a man who seeks to cover up and God advertises what he has done down through the centuries. So that's a word of warning for us, isn't it? It's a word of warning for those of us who like to cover-up. And I presume there are probably some of you with me who like to cover up. The word of God says, “He who covers up his sins will not prosper. But whosoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.” David will illustrate that too. But, I think, it's so ironic that here is David covering up, covering up, doing everything to cover up his sin and up there, he knows. And it's as if he says, in

his righteousness and holiness, this incident must be placarded over the whole of creation that sinful men may receive proper warning.

And for you and for me, in this audience, may God in his grace make that a warning for us and may our lives never be touched by the sin of David and Bathsheba, but with reference to other sins, may God enable us in his grace to erect no cover-ups, no clings, but when sin takes place to penitently ask God for his gracious forgiving mercy.

If you are here today and you have never believed in Christ, we remind you that forgiving mercy is only ours by virtue of what Christ has done in winning forgiveness by his death for sinners on the cross at Calvary. We can plead only what Christ has done. And may God in his grace cause you within your heart to turn to him, acknowledge your sin, and plead the merits of the finished work of Christ who died for sinners, now, two thousand years ago.

If you are here today and you have never believed in Christ, we invite you to come to him. Come to him! Trust in him! Not down front, but in your heart acknowledge that Christ has died for sinners and you're a sinner and you receive as a free gift, for it comes as a free gift, not by joining the church, not by observing the ordinances, not by good works, not by culture, not by education, but simply through grace. For by grace are you saved through faith and that, not of yourselves, it's the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. That's the only way you can get it as a gift. You cannot earn God's blessing. Come to him! Don't leave this auditorium without the knowledge of him.

Let's stand for the Benediction.

[Prayer] Father, deliver us from the cover-ups, which so often characterize our lives. O God, may we learn by Thy grace. May the power of our great God so enable us that we in grace overcome. Lord, if there shall be some who never believed in Christ, touch their hearts, turn them to Thee at this very moment.

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For Jesus' sake. Amen.