

Series: Life's Defining Moments

VBC

Pastor John Johnson

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2 Samuel 12

“When God Exposes Our Secrets”

We have an artist who made this plate—but as you can see—it is broken (I won't go into the details of how)

-and the question is—can these pieces be put back together again into an object of beauty and usefulness?

-or should they simply be consigned to next week's garbage pick-up?

-that's the question asked at the end of 2 Samuel 11—a chapter we looked at two weeks ago

-when, in a DEFINING MOMENT, David's life was shattered because of moral failure

-leaving us with questions

-is there a future when one makes a terrible decision?

-does God consign spiritual failures to the waste pile?

-are we ever unforgivable—does God ever say—“you can be of no use to Me anymore”?

-David would seem to be a prime candidate

-he was this anointed king who had everything going for him

-a man after God's heart—Israel's king and worship leader

-until sin got a hold of his life—and he did what sin does

1. IN ALL SIN—WE START PLAYING GOD

-David became enamored with his possessions, with women, with control—but most of all WITH HIMSELF

-and so—David became the subject of the verbs—“to send” being the main verb—

-David sends Joab out to war—while he stays home

-sends someone to inquire as to who is this beautiful woman bathing

-sends messengers to get her

-sends Bathsheba home after he has satisfied his lusts

-and once finding out she is pregnant, sends Joab to get Uriah her husband

-and then sends Uriah home to be with his wife as a nice way to get out of this mess

-and finally sends Uriah back to the front—after sending Joab orders to have Uriah killed

-as we saw two weeks ago—chapter 11 is not so much a story of murder and adultery as it is David's journey into godism

-into God avoidance and god pretentiousness

-it was a defining moment for David—but in the next chapter, David has another moment

2. IN ALL SIN—THERE COMES A DEFINING MOMENT—A DIVINE MOMENT—
read 11:27b-12a

-David seems to have navigated this whole affair successfully—his secrets have gone unnoticed, but nothing ever gets past God

-there comes a time when God settles accounts—either on this side—or the other

-David had nine months of playing God—but his time is up

-God will now assert Himself in the story—as He does ours

-and it becomes a defining moment

-God now reminds David who is the rightful subject of the verbs

-God is the One who sends—He “sent Nathan”, signaling that *David’s days of sending are over*

-as Peterson puts it—*“that’s the end of David’s detour into ‘playing god’ with people’s lives. God and only God is truly sovereign”*

-Nathan’s assignment had to be stressful

-perhaps the most distressing task for prophets is confrontation—*calling out sin*

-but this is their role—this was Samuel’s role with Saul, Elijah’s role with Ahab, Jeremiah’s role with the kings of his day

-*and there is no assurance the response will be positive*

-this is why prophets do not live long lives—why insurance companies refuse to write out life insurance policies

APPLICATION—occasionally God gives us a similar assignment—to speak needed truth at the right time—in the right way

-*tell a friend his behavior with his wife is wrong*

-*confront someone about their gossip or their flakiness*

-*speak up in a rapidly deteriorating culture and say—this is wrong—these behaviors are ungodly*

-but we tend to resist, avoid, ignore this need to speak truth

-we want to be liked—we would just as soon keep the peace

-sometimes we would rather just gossip

But here’s the problem—

-what if the church’s failure to confront sin is why too many of us are dull, out of spiritual shape, living unchanged lives?

Bonhoeffer once said—*“Nothing can be more cruel than the leniency which abandons others to their sin—but nothing can be more compassionate than the severe reprimand which calls another back from the path of sin”*

-what person in your life has the permission to tell you the truth—no matter what?

-Nathan is David's pastor—doing what he did in 2 Samuel 7—restraining David from his propensity to play God—by speaking a word from God—read verses 1b-4

-Nathan tells David a fictional parable—and he does it with great skill

-but David hears it as a real life situation that calls for justice

-what he hears is an account of an incident between two men

-the first man is not all that interesting—little is said

-only that he has immense capital—has a hold on vast properties

-that he is powerful—and abusive with his power—and treats people as things, as commodities to be abused, as objects to be taken advantage of

-more is said about the second man—who is the antithesis

-he is not powerful—he does not have the same privileges

-what the man owns means everything to him

-the rich man entertains his guest with all the appearance of ME generosity

-he provides a meal of wonderful lamb kabobs

-but there is nothing really good about this man—for underneath the exterior of hospitality

-he is a despicable fraud who takes advantage of his position—exploits, oppresses, and steals from others

-David, being a shepherd, is shocked at the level of crassness—at the immensity of this man's greed—read verses 5-6

-David is a king required to fulfill the law

-and the law in Exodus 22:1 requires fourfold restitution!

-and so—an indignant David demands retribution

-David wants Nathan to know he is adept at administering justice

-but David is inept—he can't see what is so obvious

-he is not even aware it is a parable

-but then—this is what sin does—it dulls our senses

-when sin gets a grip on us—we stop noticing things, picking up on things—we become inattentive to reality—we forget God

-this is how stupid sin is

"To sin against God is to saw off the branch that supports us"—Plantinga

-hence David is about to "stick his whole head in the noose"—and all Nathan has to do is give a pull

-and then, after a pause—Nathan, with the courage of divine conviction

-looked into David's eyes and spoke the words that came with the force of heaven—read verse 7-9

- you are the rich man—God made you incredibly rich
 - He gave you POSITION—God's anointed king
 - He gave you PROTECTION—God delivered David
 - He gave you POSSESSIONS—God lavished great wealth

- but it wasn't enough—in our moment of temptation we forget
- we overlook, we stop thinking, we stop thanking
- and then we start wanting—for sin is never satisfied

- so David is like this rich man—who exploits, oppresses, and steals
- and the poor man represents the people David was supposed to care for and respect
- you were supposed to go off to war to protect the brides of Israel—but you stayed at home to take them for yourself*

- now Nathan must lay out the costs—

3. IN ALL SIN—THERE ARE CONSEQUENCES—read verses 10-12

- like a sentencing judge—Nathan lists the consequences—for sin always has a cost

- sin may deceive us into thinking we gain more than we lose

- but it is all a lie—sin always diminishes

- the wages of sin is death

- sin's costs often *correspond with the offense*

- the sword that struck Uriah will now strike his family

- the fourfold restitution of the lamb's points to the four sons David will lose

- David took a wife in secret—his wives will be taken in public

- in a matter of seconds—David's self-assured world collapsed

- and then—David did a most amazing thing—read verse 13a

- to David's credit—he did not conveniently rid the world of Nathan like he did Uriah

- he did not shift into denial—did not come up with a list of excuses

- unlike Saul, he did not deflect—did not argue

- Saul would not give up playing god—David had enough humility to get off his throne and come back to God—do we?

- later—perhaps that night—David composed a song—known as Psalm 51—in which we get a *more interior look*

a) David pleads—“Blot out my transgression”

- David has gained his senses—he now sees the stain of sin—how much it has corrupted his soul

- how it has completely undone him—what it has cost—lost opportunities, lost relationships, lost time, lost life

b) he now sees that sin has a vertical direction—“Against You—You alone I have sinned”

-he pleads that God not abandon him as God did Saul—“Do not throw me away from Your presence”

-don't take this broken life and consign it to the rubble pile

-the words of Psalm 51 transcend mere regret—self pity

-this was not a good cry, a mere cathartic experience

-regret feels bad about the past—*repentance is a radical break from the past*

-regret only says how sorry we are—*repentance pleads for profound change*

-regret is trimming the leaves—*repentance is laying the ax to the root*

-it is wishing with all your heart you had never made the mistake you now despise—*it is nothing less than an eviction of self from the throne*

-and when repentance is awakened—we see the fourth truth about sin-

4. IN ALL SIN—THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY FOR GRACE

-with the same immediacy of repentance—God took away David's sin—read verses 13b

-He has caused your sins “to pass by”, disappear

-this is the grace does—it moves our failure off the table—orders it to leave on a one way ship

-there's an immediacy to Nathan's words—telling us...

-God has no desire to leave us in our sin—keep it on the table

-He has no desire to leave us groveling in guilt and shame

-sin is stubborn—but not as stubborn as God's restorative grace

-our sins—enormous as they may be—are wildly outdone by God's grace

-and though there are consequences—note verse 14ff

-David will immediately lose a son—and life will be much harder

-there is now a future—as well as the strength to deal with the consequences

LG QUESTIONS

1. Does this story of grace remind you of a similar story in your life? Share it with the group
2. What does Psalm 32 suggest was going on in these months leading up to this encounter with Nathan?
3. If God forgives, why doesn't God remove the consequences of sin?