

Title: The Cover-up pt.2  
Text: 2 Samuel 11.14-27  
Theme: The devastating effects of attempting to cover-up sin  
Series: 2 Samuel  
Prop Stmtnt: The sacrificial death of the innocent is offered up to cover the sin of the guilty.

Read Text:

Galatians 6.1 says, "...if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual (of the Spirit) should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted."

Sin is sneaky and our hearts can be weak and the combination of sin's sneakiness and our weak hearts can be and is often catastrophic. David's sin with Bathsheba is rightfully seen as a sin of lust and power. He saw, he wanted, and his power enabled him to act on that desire. We are right to grieve over this and be warned. Given the character that David has demonstrated up to this point in his life, I think that we would be inclined to want to see restoration and pursue this with gentleness, grief, concern, humility and therefore, introspection. But, David's sin with Bathsheba is not the end of the problem. David's sin takes him down a dark road to a place that we have never seen David in before. David's sin of passion and lust is described in v.4 in staccato like verbs; sent, took, came, lay, returned. And before we know it, our minds are spinning. What just happened? He was taken in, snared, captured, deceived by his own heart, and we are stunned and then hang our heads in grief.

But, beginning in v.6, David's actions are not like that of someone caught suddenly in a snare. David is cunning, deceitful, deliberate, calloused, aloof and deadly. Verses 2-4 happen quickly, very quickly, but the rest of the chapter takes place over weeks and months; 9 of them. If anyone could be trusted with power, we thought it would be David. If anyone would not forget where they had come from, and what it was like to be at the mercy of a king using power to cover his own failures and sin, it would be David. But David, just like you and me, is no match for sin. It binds him and it blinds him.

We have not rushed through chapter 11 for the simple fact that the narrator includes a number of details that are designed to get our attention. The weight of the text focuses on David's response to his sin, so we need to take it in. It is hard to imagine that this is the same David that we have come to love. But this is the man after God's heart. This is the sweet Psalmist of Israel. And if he is capable of going this far down this road, we are too. It is one thing to say that we could not imagine ourselves doing something. But, to say confidently that we would never do such a thing, is the first step toward doing it. There are things (idols) that our hearts are drawn towards that we are so tempted to sin, in order to get them and sin, when we fear that we are going to lose them. David sins to get what he wants. But now he sins in desperation to keep what he fears he will lose.

1. **Toxic leadership is sinful leadership.**

### **A. Authority is necessary.**

Adam was charged with the oversight of the garden. Even in a perfect world, authority was a gift for the good of the creation. Now, in a fallen world, we need security. We want security. We want to be protected, defended and have a reasonable process to settle differences. We need a judicial system and a military. All of this was at the heart of Israel's demand for a king. People will give up many freedoms in order to be secure. We gave up the freedom to meet our family members when they get off a plane in order to ensure safety in our airports. We gave up the freedom to carry more than a few ounces of liquid on carry on, snacks and beverages to games, backpacks to certain schools, in an effort to ensure our safety. We give up trillions of dollars in taxes in order to be safe. We give leaders the power to tax us, take our property for their roads and military bases and take our children to fight wars. Authority is necessary.

### **B. Authority is vested.**

Ultimately authority is vested by God. God may use a democratic, military or birth-rite process but no matter who in charge, whether or not they recognize it, authority is vested for a time by God and is to be used in a way that reflects God's leadership. The authority will give an account back to God of how they used that authority.

### **C. Good authority is willing to be used for the good of others.**

Cathi and I sat somberly this past Monday morning at a Memorial Day Service as local leaders read the names of those who died in W.W.I and II, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan wars. A bell was rung, taps were played and bagpipes echoed Amazing Grace. We heard speeches about honor, bravery, freedom and the ultimate sacrifice. Around me were people whose family members were on that list. It was emotional. There was a basic understanding that these were honorable deaths, because these were honorable wars. We assumed (want to assume) that our leaders would never sacrifice the lives of our children for their own evil desires. We want to assume that when leaders call upon our children or grandchildren to die that they are not playing politics. That is why we give them the authority to tax us and the authority to take our children in battle. But what stops these leaders from turning the nation's security issues into wars for ego, personal vendettas or greed? The power granted to the leader to protect the people from the enemy can be turned against the very people it was called upon to protect. Thus, the sordid story of power in our world.

### **D. Bad authority uses others for the sinful desires of the leader.**

I was in Russia in January a number of years ago in order to do some teaching. It was cold and snowy. The city I was in, dumped dirt on the roads in order to give the cars some semblance of traction. Police officers would stand on the sides of the road and motion drivers to pull over. It was generally understood that if you were pulled over, you simply paid the officer money and you could go on your way. From the building inspectors to mayors to police officers, it was

understood that everyone was on the take. That was the government. If you did not pay them off, you would never get anything done. I was in a car with 5 brothers and we were pulled over. I was in the middle in the backseat. The guys on either side of me, immediately pushed my head down between my knees and covered me up with a coat. Having an American in the car would only make this unpleasant encounter even more unpleasant. I stayed in that position for what felt like 20 minutes. The officer had pulled us over because the car was dirty. Of course, it was dirty! Every car was dirty. All he wanted was money and our driver was protesting and protesting and protesting. He protested so long that the officer finally became frustrated and sent us on our way, because he was losing too many opportunities to make money from other drivers who would simply bribe him in order to be on their way. Does something like that shock you? No. There have been so many City Hall officials, police officers, pension fund officials, school and library leaders and a Metro Detroit Airport manager charged and found guilty of corruption, that when there is a career politician who is not associated with corruption or scandal, we are almost pleasantly surprised.

There is such a thing as toxic leadership. It should not surprise us, but neither should we get used to it, or tolerate it. That is what is so hard about this account. David has become Saul. He orders the death of an innocent man in order to keep his grip on power. With David we see that it begins in little ways. He is not out fighting the battles; he is enjoying the pleasures of his reign. He is not being used for the good of others, he is using others for his own pleasures. What kind of a leader am I? Being used for the good of others will benefit others and give you esteem. How do you leverage that esteem?

As the leader, David banks on the obedience and loyalty of his men. This loyalty is so strong that David can put the written order to have Uriah killed into Uriah's hands, knowing that Uriah would never breach his honor as a soldier by reading the message he was told to give to Joab. David also knows that Joab will do what David orders. Unquestioning obedience and chains of command provide leaders with the perception of distance from having their fingerprints on the smoking gun. This is part of the cover-up. Unconfessed sin turns us into legalists.

## **2. Unconfessed sin turns us into legalists and pragmatists.**

David writes the order to Joab and gives it to Uriah. This leads me to believe that Uriah did not suspect that his king had broken faith with his wife. The message is stunning. Put Uriah in the hottest part of the battle, then leave him there. Abandon him. Draw back that he may get struck down and die. David is not only being disloyal, now Joab has to choose to be loyal to David even as Joab has to be disloyal to Uriah. David has the levers of power at his disposal the messy fog of war that he can manipulate to cover his tracks. If the Ammonites kill Uriah, then David can claim that he did not do it. Later on (25), he blames it on the fate of the sword. These things happen, you know. Was this his effort to save his own conscience?

What was David's self-justification. What was he saying to himself? "Brave men would die anyway." If Uriah dies, I can have a state funeral, honor him, then provide for the grieving young widow, by taking her into my home. This would be best for her and the child. I can clean this up

and no one would know. Besides, if word of this gets out, if my leadership is questioned, it would not be good for the country. This, is really best. I hate to do this, but the alternative would be really bad for many people.

Lawyers are not the only ones who look for technicalities and loopholes in order to exploit. We all do it, they simply get paid. We do it all the time. "Well, technically that is not a lie. Technically, I didn't do it." Do you make to yourself in order to cover up what you know is sin? If someone used the excuses on you that you use, would you believe them? If you wouldn't believe them, why would you believe yours? Before we lie to others, we lie to ourselves, don't we? Before we break promises to others, we break promises we make in our own hearts.

Beloved, this account is here because we need this. We need to be honest with God and ourselves. Observing the Lord's Table is a time for us to ask the Lord to help us see what we have been trying to cover and to help us face what we have been trying to avoid. God is not interested in bringing you shame. He wants to bring you freedom. He wants to see the downward spiral of sin stopped. Instead of lying to yourself and others, instead of living in a world of hiding behind plots and plans, excuses and shame, the Lord wants you to be free from that. The way of the transgressor is hard. Sin and guilt are burdens we are not designed to carry.

### 3. **Unconfessed sin can lead to murder.** (15)

People in power attract people who gain power by propping up the person in power. The lust for power creates many ugly administrative marriages. Every administration produces the predictable kiss and tell books. Loyalty is flimsy and can be purchased for a lucrative advance on a book deal. We have seen Joab before. He is loyal to David and loyal to himself. He is always trying to identify which horse of power to ride. He can be the hatchet man and the shrewd politician. Arming Joab with this message, this secret and involving him in this plot would make Joab indispensable, or dispensable, depending. Oh, power and politics can be so ugly.

David had to get rid of Uriah. Uriah was too honorable, too honest, too loyal, and too faithful. This is what the king of the people of God had come to. He had to sacrifice an innocent man in order to cover up his own sin. But, if Joab did this, then Joab would have blood on his hands. Joab would lose the confidence of his men if it were discovered that Joab sacrificed Uriah to cover up for his boss. There is nothing good that come from this. Joab follows the order, sort of. He just doesn't make it as obvious as David commands. Joab accomplishes David's goal, but in a way that would not make it so obvious. Joab makes a "mistake of strategy" that will bring about the desired result, but will cover the tracks a little more effectively. But more than Uriah would die. Several of David's good soldiers would die so that king's sins would be covered up. Joab carries out the plot. Uriah, along with several other good soldiers, die. So, Joab takes David's orders and gets a little creative with it. We get the details of what actually happened by Joab's instructions to the messenger who is to give the battle report to David. If David gets angry by Joab's strategy, which Joab assumes, tell him that "your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also." When the messenger reports to David, he doesn't wait for David to get angry. In fact, when he

tells David that Uriah is dead, David is rather matter of fact about it all. It is too bad, but in David's mind, it had to be.

It's an undeniable axiom. Injustice demands a sacrificial payment, usually in blood. From the person who cuts their arms in the privacy of their bathroom in order to pay for their shame, to those who shoot into a crowd because they feel wronged, or those who kill children in schools because they feel misunderstood, the message is the same. Someone has to pay for the wrongs. Someone has paid that price. Here, Uriah is the innocent one who is sacrificed in order to cover up the sins of the guilty, except that it didn't work. Uriah's death did not cover up David's sins, it only added to them. Like Pontius Pilate who washed his hands and claimed that he was innocent, David's plan ensured that his fingerprints were not on the sword or bow. But, that is not how God saw it and God loved Uriah, David, Bathsheba and his people to go along with David's plan. If we cover our sin, God will uncover it. He is too good not to. He knows what covered sin does to us.

#### 4. **Unconfessed sin distorts our purpose and mission.**

Instead of defending the nation, David is killing his own. Instead of strategizing for the good of the army, David is plotting his own devices and schemes. He is way off his game. Joab assumes that when David gets word of the lives loss that David would be angered. He prepares the messenger to assuage the king's anger by telling him at the end of the message that Uriah is dead. But the messenger blurts it out and the king is seemingly unfazed by the defeat. He is not grieved by the loss. He is not angered by the defeat. He is unmoved. He blathers on philosophically and callously about the unpredictable nature of war. Life happens! You can't always predict what will happen in war. Well, don't let this get you down. Don't let this trouble you. You will win. The King has lost sight of what it means to be a king. Bathsheba laments the death of her husband. David is relieved. When the mourning was over, David sent once more and this time he brought her to his house, and she became his wife. His plan, worked. He finally got what he wanted. The scandal was manageable now that it was confined to his own house. He could figure out what spin to put on it.

Beloved, we do not enjoy God when we are hiding from him. We do not enjoy grace when we pretend that we don't need it. When we live with unconfessed sin, our posture becomes defensive and blame-shifting. We lose the freedom to be honest and open. Every word is calculated and analyzed for any hint of our secrets getting out. We simply cannot be the people God designed us to be when we fail to address our sin.

#### 5. **Unconfessed sin does not stay hidden.** (27b)

It started with a glance. David saw. We all see images. It is not a sin to see. It is a sin to keep looking for the purpose of lusting or coveting. Luther said that you can't stop a bird from landing on your head, but you can stop the bird from building a nest in your hair. David looked at kept looking, and then he acted. It is a story that has been repeated so many times among the people of God. People who know better. Church leaders entrusted with esteem, confidence and

influence use that to get what they want in the moment, and then try to cover up. It comes out and the damage is horrific. There are some clear takeaways that never get old.

- Stay away from isolation. We were made for fellowship. We need one another. That is why you need the church. You need to be with the people of God.
- Don't believe the lie that my sin does not matter. It matters because you matter. You matter to God and you matter to others.
- Don't believe the lie that you can never change, or that it is too late. David's sin was about to become a national scandal. The repercussions and consequences were massive, but you know what? He was still forgiven when he confessed. If David 's sin was uncovered, ours will be too. And, if his sin could be forgiven, so can yours!