

Some of you who heard me preach back in November might be thinking, “How did this guy get to preach again so fast?” I’ll be honest, I think I’m here today because Austin knows my story. A story that in part you heard back in November if you were here. In that sermon, I told some of my testimony from my life as a kid and young adult. I did that as an illustration for my points in that sermon but also just to tell you a little of my story and to allow you to get to know me better. Well, today’s message will be similar in that my story/testimony as a grown, married adult had a lot of parallels to David’s story in 2 Samuel 11 and 12. Unfortunately, for the nosey Nancys in the room, we don’t have time to get into all the details of how my story and David’s story from Chapter 11 are the same. Although I’m sure if you listen closely you will get a good enough idea.

What we are going to do today is look at 4 things from Chapter 12: 1) The confrontation between Nathan and David, 2) David’s confession, 3) the consequences of David’s sin, and lastly, 4) David’s repentance. While David was an absolutely selfish, lying, manipulative, evil guy in Chapter 11, here in Chapter 12 we get our guy David back again. We see how a “man after God’s own heart” responds to being confronted with his sin through confession and repentance. Sometimes when we are learning the right way to do something it’s helpful to know what NOT TO DO. So while David is back to being a good example for us to follow in Chapter 12 for his confession and repentance... the anti-hero role here today will be played by yours truly [take a sarcastic bow] I will again be telling you aspects of my testimony and you will learn how NOT to do those things well.

Listen, I know that last week’s sermon was spiritually and emotionally rough on some. It was hard to hear because we have unconfessed sin in our lives. First of all, I want to say “thank you for coming back today.” The guilt and shame that come along with the sins we discussed last week never go away by ignoring it or hiding from it or covering it up. I want to serve you today. I’ve prayed for the Holy Spirit to “help me, help you.” I’ve written this sermon with you in mind. I know what you are going through and what you are feeling because I have been there myself. If chapter 11 made you squirm in your seat with conviction because of sexual sin, adultery, betraying a friend, murder, lies, stealing, cover-up, abuse of power, manipulation, or whatever it might be, then today I want to show you how to handle that conviction. We are going to look at the life of David in 2 Samuel 12 and Psalm 51 as a positive way to handle sin and shame, and my story will serve as how NOT to handle things, the bad example straight from the life of Thomas. So here we go...

The Context: Ok, last week, David fell and it was an epic fall!! This is the same David who on one occasion writing in one of his poems was able to say “I delight to do your will oh my God, your law is within my heart.” But yet this same David here “despised the word of the Lord.” We see in one sorted and cynical enterprise, he has managed to break five of the Ten Commandments. In short order, as a result of that disobedience, his life will quite literally never be the same again. From the outside, it would have appeared to the casual observer that he had actually gotten away with it. After all the child had been born, he was more settled now and it would appear that his cover-up had actually worked. However, if we had been able to somehow or other be a fly on the wall in his bedroom during those nights, we would have discovered something there that we could never have known in meeting him in the street. That is because later on when he reflected upon this time he wrote a poem, and in that poem, he acknowledged what had actually been going on inside of his mind and conscience. This is what he writes in

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 dried up as by the heat of summer.”*

One of my favorite artists is John Lennon and on his Imagine album, he wrote a song called Crippled Inside. Listen to some of these lyrics from that song:

You can shine your shoes and wear a suit

You can comb your hair and look quite cute

You can hide your face behind a smile

One thing you can't hide

Is when you're crippled inside

You can go to church and sing a hymn

You can live a lie until you die

One thing you can't hide

Is when you're crippled inside

You don't have to be a Christian to understand this, pagans understand this. Sin cannot be sealed away in the past. Sin cannot be deleted like we hit the delete button on our computers. Even if the courts don't punish it, even if public scandal doesn't expose it, even if by hypocrisy we manage to conceal it, singing our hymns and attending our services, preaching our sermons, eventually the rot will smell so bad that everyone will know, it is killing us from within.

At least a year has lapsed, maybe even as much as almost 2 years has passed by between Ch 11 and 12. But time cannot erase the memory of hidden sins and certainly, time cannot cleanse the conscience. It is a myth for us to assume that we may simply move on from things and as long as enough time elapses between then and now we can just forget all about it. But when it comes to our own sinful hearts, such is not the case and in the mercy of God it shouldn't be the case. Now, it is the final sentence of chapter 11 which has set the context for all that we find here in chapter 12 and there we were told that “the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.”

I want to look at 4 aspects of it. Confrontation, Confession, Consequences, Repentance

### **The Confrontation:**

We see Nathan confront David with a parable. Normally when we think of Parables we think of Jesus who was famous for using parables. They are a great teaching tool and a wonderful way to help make a point. If I come to confront you with a list of all the things you have done wrong you are just going to get defensive and an argument is going to ensue. But if I come at you with a

story and weave all the points into the parable as I tell it, then it lands a lot softer and it's easier to hear and absorb.

So let's reflect on this parable for a minute. Keep in mind that there was a law among the Jewish people. The 'law of hospitality' requires that you feed and house travelers for a minimal period of time. A rich man is visited by a traveler and instead of feeding the traveler out of his own abundance, the man decides to take the only possession of his poor neighbor. Now this poor neighbor had only one lamb, who he had bought as a baby and raised in his house with his kids. He fed the lamb from his own table and let it drink from his cup and cuddled with him. It was like his pet and he loved it. The rich neighbor didn't need this lamb, he didn't love the lamb, he hadn't cared for the lamb... he just took it, his wealth and position told him he could get away with it, so without care for his neighbor he took it and made a meal of it for his guest.

David is furious at the end of the story. His anger is over the top and he says to Nathan "*As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing.*" There is no question here about David's judgment as the King over this man who has done something David considers so evil and despicable. "As the Lord lives!" I mean that's as strong a language as you can get. "He deserves to die, and not only that but before you put him to death make him give 4 lambs to the poor man." David is incensed that a man with that kind of wealth and possessions would have no pity on the poor man. David is fired up!!

And of course, David's response just sets Nathan up to deliver the punch line, and in the shortest most powerful sermon ever given, says: "You are the man!" David has condemned himself to death with his own mouth.

Confrontation is not easy; it's one of the hardest, most unenjoyable aspects of the Christian life. The feelings of nausea and dread that can overtake us as we prepare to confront a brother or sister in sin is very real. I'm sure Nathan got no pleasure going to the King of Israel with this message. BUT ...The only way to the gospel is by way of the Law! When you preach the gospel from either the New Testament or the Old you have to begin by putting your finger on the sin and telling how God hates the sin and is angry against the sin. Unless the sinner feels the conviction of sin in their heart, the message of repentance and forgiveness is never going to stick. What is more, God sends Christians to speak to fellow Christians who have fallen into serious sin. In Galatians 6:1 it says "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness." Confrontation brings our sin before our face and forces us to deal with it. For David, it happened through Nathan; for you, it might be in a rebuke from a friend or a teacher or a boss, or through a message you hear at church, it might have been last week's sermon, or perhaps the Holy Spirit is working on your conscience even now.

Confrontation is the first step in the process towards restoration so it's important. But even more important is how we respond to it. So let's look at David's response.

### **The Confession:**

Verse 13: David said to Nathan, *“I have sinned against the Lord.”* Finally, David’s eyes are opened. In one honest sentence, all the lies, secrecy, cover-up, guilt, and shame are exposed. There is nowhere to run and hide. There is only one true remedy for sin, and that is to confess it and repent.

The question is not, “Do you sin?” the question is, “What do you do after you sin?” The answer to that question is a matter of life and death. For David's own sake and for God’s own glory, God chooses to expose David's sin. And in a moment of profound humility, David finally comes clean.

Psalms 51 is the Psalm David wrote after this confrontation with Nathan. And in Psalm 51:4 David writes, *“Against you, you only, have I sinned.”* Now that doesn’t sound right to our ears, “Against God only?” Sexual abuse, murder, those are pretty big sins against Bathsheba and Uriah. He says this because he knows that as bad as his sin was against those two, and it was horrendous, our sin is first and foremost against God. Think about that, adultery and murder are for us some of the worst sins people can commit against one another but here David says the worst of it is what he did to God. If David was writing a theological essay here then yeah it would be insufficient to say *“against you only have I sinned.”* But this is a prayer of repentance and he is right to focus on his sin against God.

If we only focus on hating the consequences of sin, we never actually get to the root of the problem which is hating the sin itself and putting it to death. The only way we see real genuine change in our lives is to get to a place where we don’t just change behavior because we fear consequences. The way to real Christian change is to actually hate the sin and the idols in our lives. When Christ sits as King in our hearts then there is no room for idols. And when there are no idols it is far easier to be killing sin.

Here is my first plea to you today...confess. Don’t wait for a confrontation or maybe consider last week's and this week's sermons your confrontation. Confess it to God, that’s first. But don’t stop there. I used to rationalize not confessing my sin to anyone else by saying to myself, “Well I’ve told God, he knows, so I don’t need to tell anyone else.” That is a lie, it’s a spiritual warfare tactic of Satan that keeps us closed off and living in guilt and shame and paralyzing our relationship with God and the church. It’s going to be hard, it’s going to suck, there will be consequences. Don’t do what David and I did and suffer in silence. Don’t live under the weight of unconfessed sin until it nearly drives you insane. For the sake of your soul, for the sake of your relationship with your creator who loves you and will work all things for your good, confess.

“And Nathan said to David, “The Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die.” God is gracious and merciful to David. He could have, according to Leviticus 20:10, been put to death for his actions in Chapter 11. But God spares his life.

### **The Consequences:**

While David is forgiven by God that does not mean that there are not still consequences for his sin. In verses 10-15, we see some of these consequences foretold. First off, the child born out of

the affair will die. Secondly, because David used the sword to kill his friend, Uriah, the sword will never depart from David's house. It's a tragic price for David's family. He will later lose 3 of his son's to violence. Amnon (2 Sam 13;28-29), Absalom (2 Sam 18:14-15) and Adonijah (1 Kings 2:24-25) all die in violent ways. David's sin affected his family for years to come. He would see his wives treated in a similar manner to how he treated Bathsheba. His own son, Absalom, would go and sleep with David's wives in public view. David's sin paralyzed him when it came to dealing with sin in the lives of his children. The knowledge of his own sin caused him to do nothing about the sins of his sons. His sins were forgiven, but the subsequent consequences that his sin put into motion still had to play themselves out.

This should be a good reminder for us as we are tempted to sin. Sin isn't done in a vacuum. We might think our sin affects no one but ourselves. But we are wrong. There are people in the room who are on the brink of enormously foolish decisions, on the edge of situations we know we shouldn't go anywhere near. It might be an affair. It might be cheating in school or dishonest financial decisions at work or a grudge you have been nursing that is consuming your heart. Whatever it is, you need to know that the joy and pleasure that sin promises you is always followed by disaster and consequences.

As John Owen said, *"Be killing sin or it will be killing you."* Self-control is a requirement. Here is a quote I took off Instagram, so you know it's true, *"Lust doesn't care if you are single or married. You may be Solomon in wisdom, or David in praise, or Abraham in faith or Joshua in war, But if you are not Joseph in discipline you'll end up like David and Samson in destruction."* Again, *"Be killing sin or it will be killing you."*

#### Personal testimony:

I'm pretty good at giving advice. I'm not always so great at following it though. Let me make all this stuff I'm teaching and preaching personal for a moment.

If you've seen me walking around here on Sundays in Dallas or in Lincolnton you may have noticed that 50% of the time I have a crew of 3 kids following me around and the other 50% of the time I'm flying solo. You may also have noticed that while I'm clearly a Dad of 3 kids, I don't wear a wedding ring. I'm divorced. My "chapter 11" has so much tea in it that all the British aristocracy couldn't drink it if they tried. And if I told you my story from a purely secular perspective you might hear it and be like "Yeah, I get it." But from a Christian perspective...My confession is the same as David's, "I sinned against the Lord." No matter what excuses, justification, logic, or reasoning I might have convinced myself of at the time...ultimately I am a sinner and I was not putting my sin to death, my sin was killing me. I was not Joseph in discipline, I was much more a Chapter 11 David. And while my sin hurt others (like David's hurt Bathsheba and Uriah) ultimately and primarily my sin was against God. I valued other things more than him. I put my sinful desires before my relationship with God. To quote Miss Swift, "It's me, hi, I'm the problem, it's me."

And the consequences were brutal: divorce, loss of 50% of my time with my kids, single parenting, and loss of a career in the Middle East where I had felt called to work and form relationships with people who had never heard the gospel. My degrees, (while still personally

valuable) were professionally null and void. I essentially had to totally start over in life while parenting 3 kids. I needed a new place to live, a car, furniture, a new job, a new career. It was tough. My relationship with God was not in a good place.

David sat down after his confrontation with Nathan and penned Psalm 51, which we are going to look at here in a moment. It's like the best song on repentance ever written! I, on the other hand, went in a totally different direction. I was mad at God, I was mad at my ex, I was mad at the institution of marriage, I was just in general mad. And I was depressed and ashamed. I became cold and distant towards others. I mean my fall was not nearly as epic or as consequential as David's in chapters 11 and 12 but my response was not initially one of genuine repentance. It took me years to stop justifying my sin and pointing the finger at others. Over time though God finally brought me to a point where I could confess and repent and acknowledge like David in Psalm 51:5 that at my core, I'm a sinner. I did what I did because it is at the core of who I am, "I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." True repentance begins when we admit that our sin goes down to the depths of who we are. We have no hope of acceptance by God except for his grace and no hope for change except by the power of his Spirit.

### **The Repentance:**

And finally, we come to repentance, we are going to look at David's Psalm of repentance written in [Psalm 51](#).

1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. 5 Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. 6 Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place. 7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. 8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. 9 Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. 10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. 13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you. 14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Savior, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. 15 Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise. 16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. 17 My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.

Listen, you might be thinking something like this right now, "Thomas I appreciate everything you have tried to do here today. I see the work you have put into this and I hear your heart but... I can't imagine doing it myself. I'm not arguing with you but I don't think I could ever confess and repent like that."

Here is the secret. The power for all of this, the power for repentance is in verse 1 of Psalm 51. "Have mercy on me O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy

blot out my transgressions.” The way David changed, the way he killed the things that were killing him, without killing himself, was he didn't look primarily at punishment. He didn't look primarily at the fear of consequence. He didn't look primarily at what he might lose. He looked primarily at God. He used the unfailing, unconditional love of God. He looked at God's abundant mercy. He looked at how God loves to forgive and blot out our sins. That's what changed him, that's what changed him.

What was he saying in verse 4 when he says, “Against you, you only, have I sinned...” Realize what this psalm is about; this Psalm is primarily about adultery. If you look in any Bible the title of Psalm 51 is “A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he committed adultery with Bathsheba.” But when you get into the song you'll notice that it doesn't mention sex once, it doesn't mention murder, it doesn't mention lying or cover-up. So what is David saying? “Against you I did this sin.” Before I committed physical adultery, I was committing spiritual adultery. Before I committed adultery with Bathsheba, I was committing adultery against you. Why did I need power? Why did I need her? Why did my soul have this incredible vacuum in it? I needed her arms because I didn't have your arms. I needed her beauty because I didn't have your beauty. But there are no arms like your arms. There is no beauty like your beauty. There is no love like your love. “Restore to me the joy of your salvation.”

The fear of consequences doesn't get rid of the emptiness, it just makes it worse! Fear of consequences might make us pull back temporarily, but it doesn't fill the vacuum and emptiness of our hearts. The sin under the sins, the sin under the physical adultery is spiritual adultery. I wasn't in your arms, I wasn't in your love, I had lost it (God didn't lose it, David did). So he reminds himself here in verse 1 of God's steadfast, unending, all-satisfying love and that is what changes him.

Centuries later, Jesus, also confronted a woman caught in adultery. Jesus confronted a “female David” as it were, a woman caught in adultery and you know what he said to her? Did he say, “forsake your sins and I will condemn you no more?” Is that what he said? No, that is religion; that is fear of consequences. He didn't say “Stop sinning and then I won't condemn you.” He says, “Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.” And that is the gospel. He says, “Because I have taken your condemnation upon me because I received all the things that David asked God not to give him.” David says, “Don't cast me away from your presence,” but Jesus on the cross was forsaken. David said, “Don't break my bones,” but on the cross, Jesus was crushed. David says, “Please don't give me this and that.” God didn't give them to him, “Why?” because Jesus received them. Jesus says to you, “I have taken your condemnation, go and sin no more.”

That will free you because you see the love of Jesus! And that love fills the emptiness that was the cause of the sin, to begin with! When we turn to Jesus and give him our sins and our failures and the things that need to be changed about us... we will hear him say, “I have taken the condemnation on myself.” And our hearts no longer need those things when we have him.

In closing, let me bring my testimony full circle. Over time, after my divorce, my period of anger, shame, and depression, just wore me out. I spiritually felt like a shell of a man. And in my desperation, like David, I called out to God, “Create a clean heart in me and renew a right spirit within me. Restore me to the joy of your salvation and uphold me with a willing spirit. Give me

grace and I will teach transgressors your way so that sinners will return to you.” I didn’t need reform or re-education or some behavioral tweaks, I needed resurrection. I didn’t need a new leaf, I needed a new life. And that is what he has been giving me ever since I finally confessed and repented.

My life now is as gospel-centered as it has ever been because I know and have experienced full well that I cannot do it on my own. The more reliant on the gospel I become the more my joy has returned. Jesus has taken my shame and eased my depression. My kids are doing great. Two of them have been baptized here at Venture and I got to baptize them. They have been on a mission trip to teach the Bible at a children’s home in Kenya. They will come and tell Bible stories with me in Venture Small Groups that I teach in. My relationship with their mother is a healthy co-parenting relationship. I’m way more open and friendly than I was in the past. I’m way less judgemental of others, I’m more patient and less prone to take issue with little things. I’ve formed some really close friendships with people here in this church who have helped me walk through my time of healing.

There is light and hope at the end of the tunnel for you as well. On the other side of confession and repentance is a whole new life of reliance on Jesus that brings restoration and healing. Yes, there will be consequences that still play out but Jesus has atoned for your sin, and that means, no matter what you have done, I don’t care if it’s adultery, I don’t care if it’s murder, in Christ it can be healed. Your primary relationship, the one with your Creator God, who loved you enough to send His only Son to die for sins such as these, can be healed, it can be restored. “There is no sin so great that it can bring destruction on those who truly repent.” (WCF)

*"do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."*

***1 Corinthians 6:9-11***