

Grace and Consequences

[Matthew 1:1-6, 2 Samuel 11-12](#)

Series: Unlikely Family Tree

After Action Report.

A friend of mine from a previous church served on the team that investigated the Columbia space shuttle disaster in 2003 that killed all seven astronauts on board shortly before it was to land. That clearly affected many, many people. They worked hard to learn the lessons of that experience so that it would not be repeated.

We will do a similar but way shorter exercise in examining one of the most well-known and tragic incidents in all of the Bible. But that's getting a little ahead of myself because this is a week before Christmas and this famous story in the Bible unexpectedly connects to the Christmas story because of the way Matthew begins his version of Jesus's story.

In a similar way, in the foyer is the sign advertising our Christmas Eve services next Sunday. We placed the sign near the entrance so that it's hard to miss and you can grab an invitation card.

At the beginning of the New Testament stands a placard that shouts at us that God is a God of grace and that he stands ready to forgive. He does this through the genealogy of Jesus.

[Mat. 1 Unlikely family tree. 5 women. Suspected.](#)

This **genealogy shows that** Jesus descended from King **David**. It traces his ancestors all the way back to **Abraham. He** lists **five women**. The reason reveals a critical piece of the Christian message and directly relates to the Christmas story. These women have one detail in common. **Each were suspected of illegitimate sexual activity related to their childbearing. In some cases, the suspicions were well earned. In others they were unfair. These suspicions affected even Mary the mother of Jesus.**

The Holy Spirit placed this announcement so that we can't miss it, like a big sign in the doorway. So, what does it mean?

[Matthew 1:1-6](#) (ESV) The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. 2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, 3 and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, 4 and Ram the father of

Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, 5 and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, **6 and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah.**

It's the last one mentioned in verse 6 we examine today. The text names her only as the wife of Uriah and by so doing exposes the need for why Jesus need to come in the first place. But that's **getting ahead of the story**. What it tells us here is that David, the king David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah. That **sounds tame**, the real story **bites**, it's a scorcher. It challenges anyone who will listen.

Such stories, the apostle Paul said, were written for our encouragement and he went on to say . . .

[1 Corinthians 10:13](#) (ESV) No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

We will see this play out in history that applies to us right now.

How can we be stunned by the grace of God and feel the seriousness of sin at the same time?

The **Christmas story stuns with the reality of grace God extends, but there is nothing in the exposition of grace that teaches therefore that sin doesn't matter**. But if we **expose grace correctly it will make us wonder, maybe you are saying that too well**, maybe you are **going too far**. It happened to the apostle Paul. He so profoundly preached grace that it caused people to accuse of him of taking it too far and so he needed to write

[Romans 6:1-4](#) (ESV)

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

The best stories don't shy away from speaking of the dark side of life. Instead, they tell the truth and they show the hard realities of the consequences.

I can't think of any story in fiction or non-fiction that does that better than David and Bathsheba. **The writer makes us stare at one of the major characters of scripture; a man held up as a man after God's own heart, but we are forced to recognize that he is impossibly flawed.** By today's standards he would be canceled and any monuments to his memory erased. Those who **want to remove such references to flawed characters in history** seem to claim that had they lived in such times, they would never have made those mistakes. Such an absence of self-awareness, if not rank hypocrisy staggers the imagination.

Rightly understood the **message of Christmas humbles us** to the core of our being. **If we are proud of our good record, it cuts us to the core.** If we are **despairing that we have gone too far, it shows that God stands ready to restore.**

The text **simply mentions that David fathered Solomon** by the wife of Uriah with **no mention of why that matters.** This is **why we need to know** all the Bible, why we need to **read,** and why we will always **need teachers.**

1. Find the way of escape

[2 Samuel 11:1-5 \(ESV\)](#)

In the spring of the year, the time **when kings go out to battle, David sent** Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But **David remained** at Jerusalem. It happened, late one afternoon, when **David arose from his couch** and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that **he saw** from the roof a **woman bathing;** and the woman was **very beautiful.** And **David sent and inquired** about the woman. **And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"** So **David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her.** (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant."

Several clues suggest that David **should have been with his troops** in battle. Instead, he is home and lounging. The word translated "couch" usually speaks to lying down for inappropriate sexual purposes.

The ot law usually prescribed the death penalty for sexual aberrations. The Bible does not say us to what degree such punishments were enforced. Such punishments seem way out of line. **But it may well be because Israel was surrounded by cultures in which such practices were normal. One of the most degrading features of pagan religions was the**

way in which religious and sexual expression were often one and the same thing.

Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 921–922.

Not unlike now. Our culture holds up the right to express oneself sexually according to one's own desires as the highest value in society, in other words, it's what we worship.

Back to verse 1, in the time when kings normally go out to battle which was their responsibility, it was their job, David sent Joab his command and his servants with him, and all Israel's army. He sent his people to do difficult work. But **David is taking care of David** and happily sacrificing his army to do the hard stuff. David remained at Jerusalem not doing what God had called him and equipped him to do. Though the work was brutal, this was the price of remaining a secure nation in that day.

There was **nothing wrong with David resting**. But in the context, this seems to be more evidence that David was taking it easy when he ought to have been working. **Nothing wrong with taking a walk** on his roof, but he **saw an attractive woman bathing and he did not turn away**. He **believed himself entitled** to a long lingering look. **No one knew, or so he thought**, that he was watching. He was **not thinking about the glory or the holiness of God** or that God sees and knows all.

Joel Beeke in his commentary on the **Revelation** says

Note particularly the description of Christ's eyes repeated from [Revelation 1:14](#). The Lord Jesus has **eyes that can burn through every conceivable façade and defense that we can devise to hide our true selves from others**, eyes that **penetrate right into our hearts**. When his eyes are upon you, He sees right through you. He knows all things; nothing in my life is shielded from His gaze, even those things that I hide from myself. Nothing is hidden from Him.

There is a **prayer long in use in the Church of England** known as The Collect for Purity, which reads as follows: "Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen."

Beeke, Joel. Revelation: (pp. 94-95). Reformation Heritage Books.

David sent and inquired about the woman. **I'm writing this on Cyber Monday and it's as if David has seen something online that he wants to buy and he goes to research it.**

He **learns information** that should have slowed him down. Is not this **Bathsheba**, the **daughter** of Eliam, the **wife** of Uriah the Hittite. This woman that you are leering at, she has a name. She has a life. She's **not on display for your consumption like a bag of Oreos**.

Uriah was one of David's warriors who **suffered and sacrificed for him**. But in this moment, David finds them **dispensable to his lust as well**. Sure, I can afford to spend one of those on my purchasing of pleasure for myself in this moment.

The sin of adultery is played down

greatly in our entertainment. Probably the **sin of murder even more**. We are **desensitized** to these realities by their ubiquity in pretend circumstances.

nothing entertaining about the reality.

But serving in ministry for 40 years and as a pastor for more than 30 of those, **I've sat with those directly grieved** by adultery against them and in some cases by them, and I have sat with family members who'd had a loved one murdered. There's **nothing entertaining about the reality**.

Find the way of escape. God provides way.

See people for who they are, name, life, dreams.

See people for whose they are.

Remember that God sees. no such thing as secret sin.

How can we be stunned by the grace of God and feel the seriousness of sin at the same time?

2. Resist the urge to cover up

[2 Samuel 11:6-13 \(ESV\)](#)

So David sent word to Joab, "**Send me Uriah the Hittite.**" And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah came to him, David **asked how Joab was doing and how the people were doing and how the war was going**. Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." And Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?" Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will

not do this thing.” Then David said to Uriah, “Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. And David invited him, and he ate in his presence and drank, so that he made him drunk. And in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

cover up his sin

David first tried to cover up his sin by creating a sexual liaison between husband and wife. That would have been a nice and tidy solution.

small talk/political games. uriah simple man

David asked Uriah how Joab was doing and how the people were doing and how the war was going. David was no stranger to playing political games. Uriah was a simple man by contrast. He's not playing an angle. He carries out his duty. He's given an order. He doesn't question it; he arrives and reports to the king.

first impulse was to hide.

We are not told how the king feels as this happens. We don't know what kind of guilt he might feel. **But regardless of what he feels, his first impulse was to hide.** This reveals that he feels shame. He knows he did wrong. A king of lesser character could have said, “I'm the king, I will take what I want when I want; who I want when I want as it suits me.”

efforts to cover up, shows that he is not insensitive to harm he created

As despicable as David has acted, **his efforts to cover up his sin actually show that he's not insensitive to the harm he has created.** Now he's trying to minimize it to reduce pain for everyone. Perhaps he thinks he can get things straight with God later, but in the meantime, he's trying to spare pain for others.

attempts Uriah have sex with wife & sends present

David first **attempts to have Uriah have sex with his wife** so there will be an alternate explanation for Bathsheba's child. David also sent him a present. David worked hard to compensate for his guilt and to try and clean up the mess he made. His actions were over the top. **It's not just that God sees. Others usually can also, and our efforts to cover up are futile.**

9 But Uriah slept at door of king's house

Uriah showed incredible attention to duty and solidarity with his fellow soldiers. This should have cut David to the heart. David lounged at home, taking care of his own pleasure, and there was Uriah who almost indescribably avoids going down to see his wife.

Why did you not go down to your house? for all his power, he could not control

Why did you not go down to your house? Perhaps David had slept a little bit better that night. How clever and thoughtful he had been to put a **nice little bow** on this mess of his own making. But **for all his power, he could not control this simple** servant that stood before him. David has cruelly taken from him something precious to him.

not easy to deal with the fallout from actual sexual sin

For all of the simulated and insinuated sexual acts in our entertainment, my personal impression is that it is **not easy to deal with the fallout from actual sexual sin**. Our entertainment lies about this constantly in a way that harms all of us. It's not the unpardonable sin. The relationship with God can be restored. But the carnage created in human relationships often cannot be. The anguish I have heard in voices and seen in the eyes of those so betrayed is nearly unbearable to witness.

Uriah knows what David was encouraging him to do.

He didn't know why. "As you live king David, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing." What an **indictment in every word** that Uriah delivers. Notice that he mentions the ark first. Uriah believed that to go home and be with his wife was sin against God and disloyal to his fellow soldiers. Uriah's words had to have bitten hard. "The ark and Israel and Judah are living in tents, and the servants, your soldiers David are camping in the open fields. I am not going to set aside my duty and solidarity with them for even one night.

Resist the urge to cover up

recognize that our natural impulse to sin is to hide. How would you feel if everything you watched on a screen this week were listed publicly. What about every word you wrote in a text or an email to another person? Or every word you uttered toward another person?

Confess your sin quickly

Give people permission to tell you the truth

Because the longer you try to hide, the greater the danger for everyone around you

How can we be stunned by the grace of God and feel the seriousness of sin at the same time? find the way of escape, resist the urge to cover up because

3. Sin will take you farther than you want to go

[2 Samuel 11:14-21 \(ESV\)](#)

In the morning **David wrote** a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. In the letter he wrote, “**Set Uriah** in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then **draw back** from him, that he may be struck down, and die.” And as **Joab** was besieging the city, he **assigned** Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men. And the men of the city came out and fought with Joab, and some of the servants of David among the people fell. **Uriah the Hittite also died.** Then **Joab sent** and told David all the news about the fighting. And he instructed the messenger, “When you have finished telling all the news about the fighting to the king, then, if the king’s anger rises, and if he says to you, ‘Why did you go so near the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? Who killed Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman cast an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?’ then **you shall say**, ‘Your servant **Uriah the Hittite is dead** also.’ ”

David sinks to a new low here. He is out of touch with reality. This is almost incomprehensible. But he gives the order for Uriah to be killed all so that he can save face.

Joab carries out the directive without question, or again, we are not told of any pushback and we do know that pushback was offered, at least in the one instance later when David called for a census of the people.

Sins place us on a slippery slope that speeds up the longer we go without real confession and repentance.

David has created a problem for which he thinks he must keep sinning to get himself out of the circumstance and in the end creates a far worse circumstance. David and Joab knew the warfare tactics of the day. They had studied their military history. They used the machinery of war which they knew so well against a faithful and loyal servant who knew nothing of the murderous plan against him, all because he chose to do the right thing.

In this sense Uriah’s death helps to shed light on the death of Jesus on our behalf. Jesus suffered as we suffered yet without sin. Uriah was not without sin, but he was innocent in this circumstance.

[2 Samuel 11:22-27 \(ESV\)](#)

So the messenger went and came and told David all that Joab had sent him to tell. The messenger said to David, “The men gained an advantage over us and came out against us in the field, but we drove them back to the entrance of the gate. Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall. Some of the king’s servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.” David said to the messenger, “Thus shall you say to Joab, ‘Do not let this matter displease you, **for the sword devours now one and now another**. Strengthen your attack against the city and overthrow it.’ And encourage him.” When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband. And when the 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.**

David would certainly be canceled.

The messenger from Joab arrives to speak with David to give him the news of the battle. His briefing contains specific battle strategy, more than I had previously noticed. Their enemies had gained an advantage over us momentarily, advancing out in the world where we were, but we were able to counter their offensive and drove them all the way back to the entrance of that gate. But in our enthusiasm, we were obviously too close to the wall of the city and their archers stationed on the wall managed to kill some of your servants and one of those is your servant Uriah the Hittite. The man’s report gives a plausible telling of how this death could have happened. But it’s David’s response that we are surely meant to notice.

David in his words reveals a cold calculation. He shows no remorse, and he takes no responsibility. He plays this off to the servant as the price of doing business. “Hey, this is the business we are in. Some people are going to get hurt.” Perhaps it’s what he had to say in code through the messenger to get word to Joab without revealing to a rank-and-file soldier that would risk bringing the whole kingdom down. Even if David was grieved and didn’t know what else to do because he thought it would destroy the kingdom.

This represents an incident where the leader must be protected at all costs. But no one can be above the law. And when someone believes that the rules don’t apply to them, they are in danger of a fall of this magnitude.

(Get the iorg thing from the podcast on living on the edge)

But what all of this means in the larger context is that Jesus came to rescue the cold and the callous and the calculating as well. Perhaps you’ve been in the role of David, perhaps you have been in the role of Bathsheba and maybe even Uriah, well at least figuratively speaking.

God made us to love stories and hearing these stories and hearing how God moves to accomplish his purposes through wildly flawed people gives us hope, that we are not so sinful, we are not so far gone that God can't reach even so far as to us as well.

This also shows that the mood of our current time is to root out of our history any figure who doesn't adhere to all the moral sensibilities of our day. Part of the net effect of that over time is that we will lose all sense of history, because we will find fault with everyone in our history. And we can sit in self-righteous indignation and say, how awful those people in the past were, and not recognize how we have our own blind spots. No one can be made well, no one can find God through that kind of arrogance and self-righteousness. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. God is near to the contrite in heart.

This morning I saw a headline in the NYT called "Henry Kissinger the Hypocrite" I haven't read it. But Henry Kissinger died two days ago at the age of 100. What I know of Kissinger was that he was lifelong diplomat and I think he was most active in the White House of President Richard Nixon. But he had a long career of writing and speaking, well into his 90's and as one article said, the capitals of the world remained open to him. But the reporter strikes me as insufferable to sit back and claim the right to dismiss such a person with a wave of his hand. It makes me want to quote Teddy Roosevelt about the man in the arena.

4. Sin costs you more than you want to pay

On this last point, I only want to read you the text, I don't think it requires much explanation.

[2 Samuel 12:1-6](#)

And the **LORD sent** Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. 2 The rich man had very many flocks and herds, 3 but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. 4 Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." 5 Then **David's anger was greatly kindled** against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the **man who has done this deserves to die**, 6 and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

Nathan, at God's leading, walked David down a path that circled around his natural defenses that David would have built up about what he had done in the matter of Uriah. David condemned himself.

[2 Samuel 12:7-15 \(ESV\)](#)

7 Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. 8 And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. 9 Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. **10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house,** because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' 11 Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. 12 For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.' " 13 **David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."** And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. **14 Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD, the child who is born to you shall die.**" 15 Then Nathan went to his house. And the LORD afflicted the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick.

David showed genuine repentance in the simple statement and his response to the sickness of his child recorded later

We should recognize that all sin does this. The longer we stay on the path the further we go and the more damage that can be caused, regardless of the sin. God stands ready to forgive and restore our relationship with him for those who genuinely confess and repent. But our human nature is to hide and get defensive and to provide reasons why it's other people's fault or even God's fault that we have sinned. But when we confess, a broken and contrite heart God will not despise."

Jesus came to pay the debt we could not pay

[Matthew 1:16](#) and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

[Matthew 1:21](#) She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

The bigger picture of David’s story is that even the great King David is not the shepherd on whom we rely, but it his ancestor the Lord Jesus who came to give his life as a ransom for many.

Uriah died because he could not be manipulated by the king.

Jesus died because he would not be manipulated by Satan.

Uriah died unaware of what was coming.

Jesus died willingly walking into the circumstance for God’s glory and our good.

Uriah died far from home.

Jesus died outside the city.

Uriah died abandoned by his colleagues.

Jesus died abandoned by his friends.

Uriah died at the hands of his enemies manipulated by his leaders.

Jesus died at the hands of the Romans manipulated by the Jewish leaders.

Uriah died innocent in this matter

Jesus died blameless of all sin.

Uriah died to cover up the sin of one man

Jesus died to cover the sin of all.

