

# CHAPTER 11

What David said of the mournful report of Saul's death may more fitly be applied to the sad story of this chapter, the adultery and murder David was guilty of. — “Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon.” We wish we could draw a veil over it, and that it might never be known, might never be said, that David did such things as are here recorded of him. But it cannot, it must not, be concealed. The scripture is faithful in relating the faults even of those whom it most applauds, which is an instance of the sincerity of the penmen, and an evidence that it was not written to serve any party: and even such stories as these “were written for our learning,” that “he that thinks he stands may take heed lest he fall,” and that others' harms may be our warnings. Many, no doubt, have been emboldened to sin, and hardened in it, by this story, and to them it is a “savour of death unto death;” but many have by it been awakened to a holy jealousy over themselves, and constant watchfulness against sin, and to them it is a “savour of life unto life.” Those are very great sins, and greatly aggravated, which here we find David guilty of.

**I.** He committed adultery with Bath-sheba, the wife of Uriah (v. 1-5).

**II.** He endeavoured to father the spurious brood upon Uriah (v. 6-13).

**III.** When that project failed, he plotted the death of Uriah by the sword of the children of Ammon, and effected it (v. 14-25).

**IV.** He married Bath-sheba (v. 26, 27). Is this David? Is this the man after God's own heart? How is his behaviour changed, worse than it was before Ahimelech! How has this gold become dim! Let him that readeth understand what the best of men are when God leaves them to themselves.

## <del>1010</del> 2 SAMUEL 11:1-5

### DAVID'S SIN WITH BATH-SHEBA

Here is,

**I.** David's glory, in pursuing the war against the Ammonites, v. 1. We cannot take that pleasure in viewing this great action which hitherto we have taken in observing David's achievements, because the beauty of it was stained and sullied by sin; otherwise we might take notice of David's wisdom and bravery in following his blow. Having routed the army of the Ammonites in the field, as soon as ever the season of the year permitted he sent more forces to waste the country and further to avenge the quarrel of his ambassadors. Rabbah, their metropolis, made a stand, and held out a great while. To this city Joab laid close siege, and it was at the time of this siege that David fell into this sin.

**II.** David's shame, in being himself conquered, and led captive by his own lust. The sin he was guilty of was adultery, against the letter of the seventh commandment, and (in the judgment of the patriarchal age) a heinous crime, and *an iniquity to be punished by the judges* (<del>18311</del> Job 31:11), a sin which *takes away the heart, and gets a man a wound and dishonour*, more than any other, and the *reproach of which is not wiped away*.

**1.** Observe the occasions which led to this sin.

**(1.)** Neglect of his business. When he should have been abroad with his army in the field, fighting the battles of the Lord, he devolved the care upon others, and he himself *tarried still at Jerusalem*, v. 1. To the war with the Syrians David went in person, <del>1010</del> 2 Samuel 10:17. Had he been now at his post at the head of his forces, he would have been out of the way of this temptation. When we are out of the way of our duty we are in the way of temptation.

**(2.)** Love of ease, and the indulgence of a slothful temper: *He came off his bed at evening-tide*, v. 2. There he had dozed away the afternoon in idleness, which he should have spent in some exercise for his own improvement or the good of others. He used to pray, not only morning and evening, but at noon, in the day of his trouble: it is to be feared he had, this

noon, omitted to do so. Idleness gives great advantage to the tempter. Standing waters gather filth. The bed of sloth often proves the bed of lust.

**(3.)** A wandering eye: *He saw a woman washing herself*, probably from some ceremonial pollution, according to the law. The sin came in at the eye, as Eve's did. Perhaps he sought to see her, at least he did not practise according to his own prayer, *Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity*, and his son's caution in a like case, *Look not thou on the wine it is red*. Either he had not, like Job, *made a covenant with his eyes*, or, at this time, he had forgotten it.

**2.** The steps of the sin. When he saw her, lust immediately conceived, and,

**(1.)** He enquired who she was (v. 3), perhaps intending only, if she were unmarried, to take her to wife, as he had taken several; but, if she were a wife, having no design upon her.

**(2.)** The corrupt desire growing more violent, though he was told she was a wife, and whose wife she was, yet he sent messengers for her, and then, it may be, intended only to please himself with her company and conversation. But,

**(3.)** When she came *he lay with her*, she too easily consenting, because he was a great man, and famed for his goodness too. Surely (thinks she) that can be no sin which such a man as David is the mover of. See how the way of sin is down-hill; when men begin to do evil they cannot soon stop themselves. *The beginning of lust, as of strife, is like the letting forth of water*; it is therefore wisdom to leave it off before it be meddled with. The foolish fly fires her wings, and fools away her life at last, by playing about the candle.

**3.** The aggravations of the sin.

**(1.)** He was now in years, fifty at least, some think more, when those lusts which are more properly youthful, one would think, should not have been violent in him,

**(2.)** He had many wives and concubines of his own; this is insisted on, ~~1018~~ 2 Samuel 12:8.

**(3.)** Uriah, whom he wronged, was one of his own worthies, a person of honour and virtue, one that was now abroad in his service, hazarding his

life in the high places of the field for the honour and safety of him and his kingdom, where he himself should have been.

(4.) Bath-sheba, whom he debauched, was a lady of good reputation, and, till she was drawn by him and his influence into this wickedness, had no doubt preserved her purity. Little did she think that ever she could have done so bad a thing as to *forsake the guide of her youth, and forget the covenant of her God*; nor perhaps could any one in the world but David have prevailed against her. The adulterer not only wrongs and ruins his own soul, but, as much as he can, another's soul too.

(5.) David was a king, whom God had entrusted with the sword of justice and the execution of the law upon other criminals, particularly upon adulterers, who were, by the law, to be put to death; for him therefore to be guilty of those crimes himself was to make himself a pattern, when he should have been a terror, to evil doers. With what face could he rebuke or punish that in others which he was conscious to himself of being guilty of? See <sup><4122></sup>Romans 2:22. Much more might be said to aggravate the sin; and I can think but of one excuse for it, which is that it was done but once; it was far from being his practice; it was by the surprise of a temptation that he was drawn into it. He was not one of those of whom the prophet complains that *they were as fed horses, neighing every one after his neighbour's wife* (<sup><2418></sup>Jeremiah 5:8); but this once God left him to himself, as he did Hezekiah, *that he might know what was in his heart*, <sup><4433></sup>2 Chronicles 32:31. Had he been told of it before, he would have said, as Hazael, *What! is thy servant a dog?* But by this instance we are taught what need we have to pray every day, *Father, in heaven, lead us not into temptation*, and to watch, that we enter not into it.

## <sup><0016></sup>2 SAMUEL 11:6-13

### DAVID'S CONTRIVANCE TO HIDE HIS CRIME

Uriah, we may suppose, had now been absent from his wife some weeks, making the campaign in the country of the Ammonites, and not intending to return till the end of it. The situation of his wife would *bring to light the hidden works of darkness*; and when Uriah, at his return, should find how he had been abused, and by whom, it might well be expected,

**1.** That he would prosecute his wife, according to law, and have her stoned to death; for *jealousy is the rage of a man*, especially a man of honour, and he that is thus injured *will not spare in the day of vengeance*, <sup><3054></sup>Proverbs 6:34. This Bath-sheba was apprehensive of when she sent to let David know she was with child, intimating that he was concerned to protect her, and, it is likely, if he had not promised her so to do (so wretchedly abusing his royal power), she would not have consented to him. Hope of impunity is a great encouragement to iniquity.

**2.** It might also be expected that since he could not prosecute David by law for an offence of this nature he would take his revenge another way, and raise a rebellion against him. There have been instances of kings who by provocations of this nature, given to some of their powerful subjects, have lost their crowns. To prevent this double mischief, David endeavours to father the child which should be born upon Uriah himself, and therefore sends for him home to stay a night or two with his wife. Observe,

**I.** How the plot was laid. Uriah must come home from the army under pretence of bringing David an account *how the war prospered*, and how they went on with the siege of Rabbah, v. 7. Thus does he pretend a more than ordinary concern for his army when that was the least thing in his thoughts; if he had not had another turn to serve, an express of much less figure than Uriah might have sufficed to bring him a report of the state of the war. David, having had as much conference with Uriah as he thought requisite to cover the design, sent him to his house, and, that he might be the more pleasant there with the wife of his youth, sent a dish of meat after him for their supper, v. 8. When that project failed the first night, and Uriah, being weary of his journey and more desirous of sleep than meat, lay all night in the guard-chamber, the next night *he made him drunk* (v. 13), or made him merry, tempted him to drink more than was fit, that he might forget his vow (v. 11), and might be disposed to go home to his own bed, to which perhaps, if David could have made him dead drunk, he would have ordered him to be carried. It is a very wicked thing, upon any design whatsoever, to make a person drunk. *Woe to him* that does so,

<sup><3825></sup>Habakkuk 2:15, 16. God will put a cup of trembling into the hands of those who put into the hands of others the cup of drunkenness. Robbing a man of his reason is worse than robbing him of his money, and drawing him into sin worse than drawing him into any trouble whatsoever. Every good man, especially every magistrate, should endeavour to prevent this sin, by admonishing, restraining, and denying the glass to those whom they

see falling into excess; but to further it is to do the devil's work, to officiate as factor for him.

**II.** How this plot was defeated by Uriah's firm resolution not to lie in his own bed. Both nights he slept with the life-guard, and *went not down to his house*, though, it is probable, his wife pressed him to do it as much as David, v. 9, 12. Now,

**1.** Some think he suspected what was done, being informed of his wife's attendance at court, and therefore he would not go near her. But if he had had any suspicion of that kind, surly he would have opened the letter that David sent by him to Joab.

**2.** Whether he suspected any thing or no, Providence put this resolution into his heart, and kept him to it, for the discovering of David's sin, and that the baffling of his design to conceal it might awaken David's conscience to confess it and repent of it.

**3.** The reason he gave to David for this strange instance of self-denial and mortification was very noble, v. 11. While the army was encamped in the field, he would not lie at ease in his own house. "The ark is in a tent," whether at home, in the tent David had pitched for it, or abroad, with Joab in the camp, is not certain. "Joab, and all the mighty men of Israel, lie hard and uneasy, and much exposed to the weather and to the enemy; and shall I go and take my ease and pleasure at my own house?" No, he protests he will not do it. Now,

**(1.)** This was in itself a generous resolution, and showed Uriah to be a man of a public spirit, bold and hardy, and mortified to the delights of sense. In times of public difficulty and danger it does not become us to repose ourselves in security, or roll ourselves in pleasure, or, with the king and Haman, to sit down to drink when the *city Shushan was perplexed*, <TAB5> Esther 3:15. We should voluntarily endure hardness when the church of God is constrained to endure it.

**(2.)** It might have been of use to awaken David's conscience, and make his heart to smite him for what he had done.

**[1.]** That he had basely abused so brave a man as Uriah was, a man so heartily concerned for him and his kingdom, and that acted for him and it with so much vigour.

[2.] That he was himself so unlike him. The consideration of the public hardships and hazards kept Uriah from lawful pleasures, yet could not keep David, though more nearly interested, from unlawful ones. Uriah's severity to himself should have shamed David for his indulgence of himself. The law was, *When the host goeth forth against the enemy then, in a special manner, keep thyself from every wicked thing,* <sup><E33D></sup>Deuteronomy 23:9. Uriah outdid that law, but David violated it.

## <sup><0114></sup>2 SAMUEL 11:14-27

### DAVID CAUSES URIAH TO BE SLAIN

When David's project of fathering the child upon Uriah himself failed, so that, in process of time, Uriah would certainly know the wrong that had been done him, to prevent the fruits of his revenge, the devil put it into David's heart to take him off, and then neither he nor Bath-sheba would be in any danger (what prosecution could there be when there was no prosecutor?), suggesting further that, when Uriah was out of the way, Bath-sheba might, if he pleased, be his own for ever. Adulteries have often occasioned murders, and one wickedness must be covered and secured with another. The beginnings of sin are therefore to be dreaded; for who knows where they will end? It is resolved in David's breast (which one would think could never possibly have harboured so vile a thought) that Uriah must die. That innocent, valiant, gallant man, who was ready to die for his prince's honour, must die by his prince's hand. David has sinned, and Bath-sheba has sinned, and both against him, and therefore he must die; David determines he must. Is this the man whose heart smote him because he had cut off Saul's skirt? *Quantum mutatus ab illo! — But ah, how changed!* Is this he that executed judgment and justice to all his people? How can he now do so unjust a thing? See how fleshly lusts war against the soul, and what devastations they make in that war; how they blink the eyes, harden the heart, sear the conscience, and deprive men of all sense of honour and justice. *Whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding* and quite loses it; *he that doth it destroys his own soul,* <sup><0162></sup>Proverbs 6:32. But, as the eye of the adulterer, so the hand of the murderer seeks concealment, <sup><8214></sup>Job 24:14, 15. Works of darkness hate the light. When David bravely slew Goliath it was done publicly, and he gloried in it; but, when he basely slew Uriah, it must be done clandestinely, for he

is ashamed of it, and well he may. Who would do a thing that he dare not own? The devil, having as a poisonous serpent, put it into David's heart to murder Uriah, as a subtle serpent he puts it into his head how to do it. Not as Absalom slew Amnon, by commanding his servants to assassinate him, nor as Ahab slew Naboth by suborning witnesses to accuse him, but by exposing him to the enemy, a way of doing it which, perhaps, would not seem so odious to conscience and the world, because soldiers expose themselves of course. If Uriah had not been in that dangerous post, another must; he has (as we say) a chance for his life; if he fight stoutly, he may perhaps come off; and, if he die, it is in the field of honour, where a soldier would choose to die; and yet all this will not save it from being a wilful murder, of malice prepense.

**I.** Orders are sent to Joab to set Uriah in the front of the hottest battle, and then to desert him, and abandon him to the enemy, v. 14, 15. This was David's project to take off Uriah, and it succeeded, as he designed. Many were the aggravations of this murder.

- 1.** It was deliberate. He took time to consider of it; and though he had time to consider of it, for he wrote a letter about it, and though he had time to have countermanded the order afterwards before it could be put in execution, yet he persisted in it.
- 2.** He sent the letter by Uriah himself, than which nothing could be more base and barbarous, to make him accessory to his own death. And what a paradox was it that he could bear such a malice against him in whom yet he could repose such a confidence as that he would carry letters which he must not know the purport of.
- 3.** Advantage must be taken of Uriah's own courage and zeal for his king and country, which deserve the greatest praise and recompence, to betray him the more easily to his fate. If he had not been forward to expose himself, perhaps he was a man of such importance that Joab could not have exposed him; and that this noble fire should be designedly turned upon himself was a most detestable instance of ingratitude.
- 4.** Many must be involved in the guilt. Joab, the general, to whom the blood of his soldiers, especially the worthies, ought to be precious, must do it; he, and all that retire from Uriah when they ought in conscience to support and second him, become guilty of his death.



**5.** Uriah cannot thus die alone: the party he commands is in danger of being cut off with him; and it proved so: some of the people, even the servants of David (so they are called, to aggravate David's sin in being so prodigal of their lives), fell with him, v. 17. Nay, this wilful misconduct by which Uriah must be betrayed might be of fatal consequence to the whole army, and might oblige them to raise the siege.

**6.** It will be the triumph and joy of the Ammonites, the sworn enemies of God and Israel; it will gratify them exceedingly. David prayed for himself, that he might not fall into the hands of man, nor flee from his enemies (<sup><0243></sup>2 Samuel 24:13, 14); yet he sells his servant Uriah to the Ammonites, and not for any iniquity in his hand.

**II.** Joab executes these orders. In the next assault that is made upon the city Uriah has the most dangerous post assigned him, is encouraged to hope that if he be repulsed by the besieged he shall be relieved by Joab, in dependence on which he marches on with resolution, but, succours not coming on, the service proves too hot, and he is slain in it, v. 16, 17. It was strange that Joab would do such a thing merely upon a letter, without knowing the reason. But,

**1.** Perhaps he supposed Uriah had been guilty of some great crime, to enquire into which David had sent for him, and that, because he would not punish him openly, he took this course with him to put him to death.

**2.** Joab had been guilty of blood, and we may suppose it pleased him very well to see David himself falling into the same guilt, and he was willing enough to serve him in it, that he might continue to be favourable to him. It is common for those who have done ill themselves to desire to be countenanced therein by others doing ill likewise, especially by the sins of those that are eminent in the profession of religion. Or, perhaps, David knew that Joab had a pique against Uriah, and would gladly be avenged on him; otherwise Joab, when he saw cause, knew how to dispute the king's orders, as <sup><0195></sup>2 Samuel 19:5; 24:3.

**III.** He sends an account of it to David. An express is despatched away immediately with a report of this last disgrace and loss which they had sustained, v. 18. And, to disguise the affair, 1. He supposes that David would appear to be angry at his bad conduct, would ask why they came so near the wall (v. 20), did they not know that Abimelech lost his life by doing do? v. 21. We had the story (<sup><0063></sup>Judges 9:53), which book, it is

likely, was published as a part of the sacred history in Samuel's time; and (be it noted to their praise, and for imitation) even the soldiers were conversant with their bibles, and could readily quote the scripture-story, and make use of it for admonition to themselves not to run upon the same attempts which they found had been fatal.

**2.** He slyly orders the messenger to soothe it with telling him that Uriah the Hittite was dead also, which gave too broad an intimation to the messenger, and by him to others, that David would be secretly pleased to hear that; for murder will out. And, when men do such base things, they must expect to be bantered and upbraided with them, even by their inferiors. The messenger delivered his message agreeably to orders, v. 22-24. He makes the besieged to sally out first upon the besiegers (*they came out unto us into the field*), represents the besiegers as doing their part with great bravery (*we were upon them even to the entering of the gate* — we forced them to retire into the city with precipitation), and so concludes with a slight mention of the slaughter made among them by some shot from the wall: *Some of the king's servants are dead*, and particularly *Uriah the Hittite*, an officer of note, stood first in the list of the slain.

**IV.** David receives the account with a secret satisfaction, v. 25. Let not Joab be displeased, for David is not. He blames not his conduct, nor thinks they did wrong in approaching so near the wall; all is well now that Uriah is put out of the way. This point being gained, he can make light of the loss, and turn it off easily with an excuse: *The sword devours one as well as another*; it was a chance of war, nothing more common. He orders Joab to make the battle more strong next time, while he, by his sin, was weakening it, and provoking God to blast the undertaking.

**V.** He marries the widow in a little time. She submitted to the ceremony of mourning for her husband as short a time as custom would admit (v. 26), and then David took her to his house as his wife, and she bore him a son. Uriah's revenge was prevented by his death, but the birth of the child so soon after the marriage published the crime. Sin will have shame. Yet that was not the worst of it: *The thing that David had done displeased the Lord*. The whole *matter of Uriah* (as it is called, <sup>11156</sup>1 Kings 15:5), the adultery, falsehood, murder, and this marriage at last, it was all displeasing to the Lord. He had pleased himself, but displeased God. Note, God sees and hates sin in his own people. Nay, the nearer any are to God in profession the more displeasing to him their sins are; for in them there is

more ingratitude, treachery, and reproach, than in the sins of others. Let none therefore encourage themselves in sin by the example of David; for those that sin as he did will fall under the displeasure of God as he did. Let us therefore stand in awe and sin not, not sin after the similitude of his transgression.