

OT LESSON 24

# “CREATE IN ME A CLEAN HEART”

by Ted L. Gibbons

**INTRODUCTION:** William Shakespeare wrote:

What win I if I gain the thing I seek?  
A dream, a breath, a froth of fleeting joy?  
Who buys a minute's myrth to wail a week  
Or sells eternity to get a toy?  
For one sweet grape, who would the vine destroy?  
Or what fond beggar but to touch the crown,  
Would with the scepter straight be stricken down?

The willingness of some people to place the things of eternity—the things of true joy—on the altar of their desire for immediate pleasure and the gratification of appetites, passions, and desires, is terrifying. This poem could have been written as an additional psalm, not a psalm *by* David, but a psalm *for* him.

The poem and the events of 2 Samuel 11-13 remind me of this statement attributed to Stirling W. Sill: “Be careful what you want, because you’ll probably get it.” [I do not have a source for this quote. If any of you do, please let me know at [tedgibbons@yahoo.com](mailto:tedgibbons@yahoo.com).]

## 1. **DAVID COMMITS ADULTERY WITH BATHSHEBA AND ARRANGES THE DEATH OF URIAH, BATHSHEBA’S HUSBAND.**

Samuel described David as “a man after [God’s] own heart” (1 Sam 13:14). And he was. For so many years he was. His devotion and discipline are a standard for faithful disciples. His life was a pattern of piety and purity until that evening on his roof when he looked into his neighbor’s yard . . .

The story of the decline of David is a warning for all of us. The tragic ending of this story may obscure another message here. David could have fixed this problem so many times before Uriah died and he lost his exaltation. Let

us review the scriptures and analyze the areas where David could have done things differently and changed the history of his family and his nation.

And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem (2 Sam. 11:1).

I remember hearing President Packer say “it is a good feeling to know you are where the Lord want’s you to be.” David wasn’t. I wonder how many times he regretted his decision to tarry at Jerusalem. Both power and safety come from being where we are supposed to be.

And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house . . . (2 Sam. 11:1)

Many mid-eastern homes had flat roofs and external staircases. In the heat of a late afternoon and early evening, a walk on the roof would give a chance for cool breezes and reflection. While he was walking he glanced over at his neighbor’s house “and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself . . .” (2 Sam. 11:2)

This may be perfectly innocent. There is no inclination that David is looking for anything like this. He is just looking around, and sees something unexpected. There is a golden opportunity here for David to avoid the problems that are coming. All David has to do is take himself and his mind somewhere else. *Well, I guess I’ll go read the book of Genesis, or I’ll to visit my son Amnon and see how he is doing. or, I’ll write a message to Joab and see how the war is going . . .* David did none of these things. Instead, he looked long enough to see that “the woman was very beautiful to look upon” (1 Sam 11:2).

I believe that this is the commencement of the problems. When I was dating the wonderful woman who is now my wife, I took her to a few movies. One of them was called *Bonnie and Clyde*. We had been in the theater for about the first 10 minutes when something was presented that

was unacceptable to my future bride. I no longer remember what it was, but I remember what happened. Lydia stood up and said, "I'm leaving; are you coming?" and started for the door. She did not wait to see what I would do. She left, with me scurrying in her wake assuring her that I was about to leave also. A few weeks later we went to *Grand Prix*, and had a similar experience. I learned some important lessons about my wife. She has "zero tolerance." No movie, no TV show, no piece of literature gets a second chance. As Hugh B. Brown said, "Personally, I shall rebel if anyone tries to hold my head over a manhole into a sewer . . ." ("Purity is Power," BYU, Sept. 30, 1962). Lydia will not remain over the sewer to see if the smell improves. But David did. He watched long enough to see how attractive she was, and to become interested.

What counsel would you give David at this point. *Take a cold shower! Play Racquetball! Go look at some family photographs!* It would have been so easy, even at this point, to solve the problem. And it is a problem. David has some images in his mind that he ought to evict. A certain level of repentance is appropriate here. But David does something else:

And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? (2 Sam. 11:3)

I hope you who are reading this recognize that I am embellishing shamelessly. The only things we know for sure about this story are the ones we read in 2 Samuel 11. But if I offer a few conjectures, remember they are only that, and only intended to help us understand the story and the lessons.

I do not think David left the roof wondering how he could get his neighbors wife to commit an awful, immoral act with him. I know there are men who do this kind of thing. But not David. His problem was that he allowed those powerful, unexpected images to take up space and time in his mind. Finally, perhaps having convinced himself that his only motivation was neighborly interest, he make inquiries about her. He learned her name and that her husband was away serving the king and the kingdom. Time must have passed here. Elder Packer said,

People don't get in serious trouble in one step. I don't think anyone steps off a precipice into the depths of immorality and apostasy. They slide down the slippery sides of the chasm . . . (Improvement Era, May 1970, p. 7)

And now?

David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him . . . (2 Sam. 11:4).

What is he thinking? What is his intent here? In the compressed language of the scriptures, his sending for her and his adultery with her come in the same verse, but I have difficulty believing that he sent for her with that intent. He probably found a way to rationalize the invitation. He may have wanted a closer look at the woman he saw from his roof. But I doubt he sent for her so filled with lust that he had abandoned all concern for his own worthiness and eternal blessings.

She came. the king had sent for her. She had to come. And then, on that night or a later night, it happened. “[S]he came in unto him, and he lay with her . . . and she returned unto her house” (2 Sam. 11:4).

Even now this problem can be fixed. David and Bathsheba had committed a huge sin, but it was not larger than the atonement. I do not know what it might have cost David to confess and repent, but it would not have exacted the payment finally required of him. His intent to protect his name and his image—to cover his sins—in the end cost him almost everything, including Bathsheba.

When Bathsheba sent word that she was pregnant, David acted at once.

And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David. And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered. And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king's house, and there followed him a mess of meat from the

king (2 Sam 11:6-8).

David's intent is transparent. *If Uriah spends the night at home, he will think the child to be born is his child.* But Uriah did not go home. He slept on the King's porch. There is a hero in 2 Samuel 11. Uriah is a faithful, disciplined, trusting servant. He stands in glaring contrast to the king himself, who is unfaithful and undisciplined and certainly not trustworthy. David tried a second time.

And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from thy journey? why then didst thou not go down unto thine house? And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing. And David said to Uriah, Tarry here to day also, and to morrow I will let thee depart. So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day, and the morrow. And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house (2 Sam. 11:10-13).

I hate to keep playing the same song on my harp. But I will. David can still repent. Anyone could, even this far into the minefield, he could find his way to safety without a cataclysmic explosion. But he would not.

And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die (2 Sam. 11:14,15).

David has, by this command to Joab, come a great distance from the inadvertent glimpse of a woman washing in a neighbor's back yard. David is on the verge of an unforgivable sin (D&C 42:18).

And when word comes that Uriah is dead, David places a final stone on the mountain of his hypocrisy when he declares to the messenger

Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it: and encourage thou him (2 Sam 11: 25).

The text of the announcement of Uriah's death implies that other mighty men were killed with Uriah that might have been safe were it not for the king's command (1 Sam. 11:16,23,24). The Lord imposed the punishment required by divine law.

David's wives and concubines were given unto him of me, by the hand of Nathan, my servant, and others of the prophets who had the keys of this power; and in none of these things did he sin against me save in the case of Uriah and his wife; and, therefore *he hath fallen from his exaltation*, and received his portion; and he shall not inherit them out of the world, for I gave them unto another, saith the Lord (D&C 132:39, emphasis added).

## 2. **DAVID IS TOLD THAT HE WILL BE PUNISHED BECAUSE OF HIS SINS.**

3. When all is said and done, there is nothing gained from pre-marital adventure except immediate pleasure, and that at tremendous risk and exorbitant cost. No really intelligent person will burn a cathedral to fry an egg, even to satisfy a ravenous appetite (Henry A. Bowman, cited by Hugh B. Brown in "Purity is Power," BYU, Sept. 30, 1962, pp. 10,11).

David's *adventure* was not pre-marital, but the risk and the cost were the same: *tremendous and exorbitant!*

Nathan the prophet came to see David. After he had announced that David's sin was not after all hidden. The text of 2 Sam. 12 implies that

many know what happened. “. . . by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme . . .” (2 Sam. 12:14).

Among the most chilling of all the statements in the scriptures is the one in 2 Sam. 12:7: “Thou art the man.” Nathan then proceeded to prophesy of the exorbitant cost of David’s transgressions.

“the sword shall never depart from thine house . . .” (2 Sam. 12:10)

“I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house . . .” (2 Sam. 12:11).

“I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor . . .” (2 Sam. 12:11).

“the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.” (2 Sam. 12:14).

David acknowledged his sin, but that did not change the nature of the sin nor the Lord’s judgement.

And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord.  
And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath not put away thy sin that thou shalt not die (2 Sam. 12:13, JST).

We live in a world where immoral images can be seen from almost every rooftop. Proverbs 7, in an allusion to the temptation to immorality tells us

Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner (Prov. 7:12).

President Benson, speaking 38 years ago warned us.

No sin is causing the loss of the Spirit of the Lord among our people more today than sexual promiscuity. It is causing our people to stumble, damning their growth, darkening their spiritual powers and making them subject to other sins.

Recently, a young man commented that if he quit reading

books, watching TV, seeing movies, reading newspapers and magazines, and going to school, there was a chance he might live a clean life. And this explains, in large part, the extent to which this insidious evil has spread . . . (C.R., October 1964).

The message of the story of David and Bathsheba is repeated in 2 Samuel 13. The participants are different, but the lessons have a familiar sound to them. And in the telling of this version, we find David's two oldest sons guilty of the same crimes committed by David: immorality and murder.

Amnon was in love (*love* is the word used in the scriptures. It is not my word) with his half-sister Tamar. He found a way to get her in his bedroom, ignored her pleas, and raped her.

Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he had loved her. And Amnon said unto her, Arise, be gone (2 Sam. 13:15).

He then had her thrown out of his house. How could hatred come so quickly?

I heard Elder John A. Widtsoe, who at one time presided over the University of Utah, say, "It is my observation that a young man and a young woman who violate the principles of morality soon end up hating one another." I have observed the same thing. There may be words of love to begin with, but there will be words of anger and bitterness later (Gordon B. Hinckley, "True to the Faith," Ensign, June 1996, p. 5).

David knew what had happened. "But when king David heard of all these things, he was very wroth" (2 Sam. 13:21). Wroth, yes, but also paralyzed. David did nothing about this terrible act of the crown prince. Why do you think David would not, or could not, act?

After two full years (13:23), Absalom, a full brother to Tamar and half-brother to Amnon, had Amnon murdered in retaliation for what he had done



(2 Sam. 13:28,29).

### **3. A REPENTANT DAVID SEEKS FORGIVENESS.**

The heading of Psalm 51 indicates that David's plea for forgiveness is in the matter of Bathsheba. When David composed this I do not know, but certainly he knew that there was no forgiveness in the matter of Uriah. Read this Psalm as a recipe for forgiveness. Wonderful doctrine can be found here. Note (mark?) the things David asks the Lord to do for him:

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness" (Ps. 51:1).

"Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (Ps. 51:2)

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Ps. 51:7).

"Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice" (Ps. 51:8).

"Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities: (Ps. 51:9).

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10).

"Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me" (Ps. 51:11).

"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit" (Ps. 51:12).

All of us have sought forgiveness. David's words are a powerful description of what the Lord and the Atonement can do for the repentant. But in addition, David promises to do some things to show the reality of his repentance.

"Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee" (Ps. 51:13).

"my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness" (Ps. 51:14).

"my mouth shall shew forth thy praise" (Ps. 51:15).

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17).

A willingness to teach and to testify, to praise and to be humble, and evidences of true repentance. David has taught us great lessons here. Similar feelings appear in Psalm 38. You might want to read and mark that passage as well.

## **CONCLUSION:**

The Bible gives powerful warnings about the dangers of immorality. Let us conclude with a couple of passages and comments from Proverbs. Understanding these passages will be easier if you will think of the feminine pronouns as references not to gender but to immorality, and references to the male pronouns as allusions to anyone tempted by immorality. The first passage comes from Proverbs 7.

21 With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him.

22 He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks;

23 Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.

24 Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth.

25 Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths.

26 For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her.

27 Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

Verse 26 is thought-provoking. Certainly David is one of those “strong men”

who “has been slain by her.” The second passage is from Proverbs 9. Apply the same rules to the pronouns here.

14 For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat  
in the high places of the city,

15 To call passengers who go right on their ways:  
Proverbs 9:16

16 Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for  
him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,

17 Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret  
is pleasant.

18 But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and  
that her guests are in the depths of hell.

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