



Many years ago a boy lived in the country, out in rural west Texas. For facilities, his family had to use an outhouse, and the boy hated it because it was hot in the summer, cold in the winter, and stunk all the time. The outhouse sat on the bank of a creek and the boy fantasized about pushing the port-a-potty over the edge and into the water someday.

Well, one afternoon after a hard spring rain, the little creek became so swollen that the boy decided it was his perfect chance to get rid of the hated outhouse. With a giant crowbar, prying and pushing, the outhouse toppled backward into the creek and floated away.

The boy wondered how long it would take before the outhouse hit the fan so to speak. It didn't take long. That evening, his dad told him that they were going to the woodshed after supper. Weighing his options, the boy decided to play innocent and asked why. His father replied, "Someone pushed the outhouse into the creek today. It was you, wasn't it son?"

The boy thought for a moment and then switched his strategies, and answered, "Yes." After a quiet pause, he continued, "Dad, I read in school last week that George Washington chopped down a cherry tree and didn't get into trouble because he told the truth." His dad said, "Well son, George Washington's father wasn't in that cherry tree when George decided to chop it down."

While you may have never pushed an outhouse into a creek with your dad in it, all of us can identify with this story in a least three ways. First, there is something inside us that wants to do things our own way, no matter the consequences. The Bible calls it our sin nature. Second, our lack of goodness affects other people, not just us. I think many of us can think back and remember sitting in our outhouse, minding our own business and being pushed over by a sinful person; you know it left an effect on you. And finally, none of us get away with keeping our sinful acts secret. In fact, we often end up sinning more—lying or deceiving—to try to cover up our bad choices.

As we continue in *The Story*, we embark on a gripping, plot-twisting, edge of your seat, sex and murder mystery that threatens to topple the ruler of a great nation. As the story starts out we discover that things could not have gone any better for David. 2 Samuel 7:1 and 8:14 summarize the good that had come David's way. God had blessed this man "after God's own heart." His kingdom was large, secure and prosperous.

"After the king was settled in his palace and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him..." (2 Sam. 7:1).

"...The LORD gave David victory wherever he went" (8:14b).

David just kept winning battles. As we read through David's story we see that David was a valiant warrior, a gifted musician and song writer, a sensitive man of God, a man with grace and compassion. But as we look deeper at this man, we see that with great success comes great vulnerability. The tire looks full from a distance, but when you go closer and push, probe and pinch, you notice there is a little leak, and over time if the leak isn't patched, you wake up and go out to your car in the morning and the tire is flat.

We naturally view great success as a blessing from God. But if we have a few gray hairs, we have learned that great success, fame, power, and money bring temptation in many forms. David was no exception. As David was on the rise in 1 Samuel 31 we read about the violent battlefield death of his best friend Jonathan and know that David's emotional world was rocked. Later we are exposed to his troubled marriage. An unattended marriage brings leaks. David's marriage to Saul's daughter Michal was as cold as ice. When we look back into 2 Samuel chapter 5 we read that David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem. The Old Testament and the New Testament never speak favorably on having multiple wives, but instead shows how it complicates and compromises a person's life and his sense of reality.

We find out in chapter 7 that he wouldn't be able to fulfill his lifelong ambition of building the temple. That had to hurt. Then we see that something changed in David's mission and purpose. In the spring at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. But David stayed in Jerusalem. David had begun to take life a bit easy. Maybe getting too cozy in all the spoils of war around him. Maybe believing all the flattering words that were spoken to him.

Maybe no one around him knew it, but the 50-year-old King was having trouble sleeping. The King of Israel was troubled by a nagging feeling. A feeling of "lack" he couldn't shake.

"One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a very beautiful woman bathing" (11:2).

From the roof of his palace he could see into other houses, even into their bathrooms. What a pleasant surprise tonight. A woman. Notice the language "very beautiful woman." Language tells us that he did not glance, then look away in embarrassment. He didn't run away like Joseph before Potiphar's wife. But his eyes and thoughts bore in on her so that he made that analysis that she was of beautiful form and had beautiful features. So

what happens? His mind plays the "what if" game. But wait a minute, this beautiful woman was the wife of one of his most loyal and skilled soldiers, Uriah the Hittite. But he wouldn't have to know, nobody would have to know, right? What if...

"Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him and he slept with her" (11:4).

David toppled the outhouse into the river. Bathsheba was in it. Uriah was in it. And the whole nation of Israel was in it. David had resisted temptation on the battlefields of Israel, but he failed to resist temptation on the battlefield of his mind, and the inevitable happens. A lesson for all of us. This man who had fought bravely for God, prayed to God, danced before God, led with integrity, experienced the fullness of the Holy Spirit, flirted with temptation and fell. If we flirt with temptation long enough, if we go to the edge to create a little space between us and sin, like a moth drawn to a bug light, we will eventually give in and get zapped.

The outhouse isn't just in the river, it's been pushed over a waterfall. Then it's Bathsheba's turn to send a messenger to David. David gets the message and it says this, "I'm pregnant." What started out as a simple uncomplicated affair has gotten complicated. Okay, no need to panic, I'm the king, I can figure something out. So David engineers a brilliant three-phase scheme to cover up the scandal. He sends word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite."

David begins with small talk. Tell me about the fighting. How is Joab and the rest of the soldiers doing? All things a king should care about, but he didn't care about them at all right now. Then he says, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." It's a wink and a nod statement to go home and sleep with your wife. Problem solved, right? But Uriah was too honorable to do this.

"Uriah said to David, 'The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!'" (11:11).

If phase one doesn't work how about phase two? He will get Uriah drunk. But this doesn't work either. Instead of going home, he takes his mat and sleeps with David's servants.

Okay, phase three. Uriah has got to go away. So King David, the writer of Psalm 23, arranges for Uriah's murder.

"In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. In it he wrote, 'Put Uriah out in the front where the fighting is the fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die'" (11:15).

But Joab didn't pull back his men, and a whole contingent of David's men died along with Uriah. In verse 25 we read David's hardened cynical response, "Don't let this loss upset you Joab; the sword devours one as well as another." Empty words, but David's plan had worked. Uriah, whose name means "My light is the Lord," is dead. How ironic. The man after God's own heart

had become so dull, so darkened, that he set out to extinguish the "light of the Lord" in Uriah. Bathsheba mourns the death of her husband for an appropriate time and then David sends for Bathsheba again and he marries her.

For the next 12 months or so David's conscience continued to bother him. In Psalm 32:3 David says, *"When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long."*

Did you ever read Edgar Allen Poe's story, *The Telltale Heart*? The main character has committed murder and he buries the body of the victim in his basement, but he's unable to escape the guilt of his crime. He begins to hear the heartbeat of his dead victim. This goes on and on and on, the heartbeat growing louder and louder. Eventually the man goes mad, but the pounding that he heard was not from the grave below but from within his own chest. You get the feeling that's how David felt. The guilt became unbearable. So God sends a prophet, Nathan, to David because he loves him too much to let him go on like this, damaging himself and his kingdom. The message to David is: "David? It's me, God. I'm in charge and you are not."

"The LORD sent Nathan to David..." (12:1)

Nathan had a tough job, a job none of us would have wanted. He approached the king to tell him the truth. The truth was something that David had probably not heard in years.

Nathan chose the indirect approach. He told a parable to David. It involved two men—one rich and one poor. The rich man had many flocks. The poor man had only one lamb, which was like a daughter to him. A traveler came to the rich man seeking hospitality, but the rich man refused to feed him from his own herd. Instead, he stole the poor man's only ewe, prepared it and fed the traveler. David was totally drawn into the story Nathan told him. How did he react?

"David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, 'As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity'" (12:5-6).

Without realizing it, David sentenced himself.

"Then Nathan said to David, 'You are the man!'" (12:7).

Thus says the Lord God of Israel. David, you are the man. David the King was now naked before the Judge. The Lord through Nathan was saying, "I gave you everything: victories, a palace, a family, all of Israel and Judah. If all of this was too little, I would have given you even more." It might as well had been you sticking the sword in Uriah the Hittite yourself. The secret of his sin was now in the open.

"Then David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD'" (12:13).

Thank God the story doesn't end here for David. Thank God that it doesn't end here for us either. God offers David an opportunity to come clean. We now see how everything that David did was big and ugly, but God's grace is infinitely larger and beautiful. David recorded Psalm 51 about his experience.

Psalm 51 is an invitation to all of us to come clean, to come alive, to be reminded this morning that there is someone who has the power to cleanse us and raise us and restore us.

**Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.
Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin. Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions (verses 1–2).**

Notice his prayer is not for justice, it's for mercy. On what basis would God give us mercy we don't deserve instead of the justice we do deserve? That's God's love for us, his people who sin against him, who admit their sin and rely on God's mercy and grace. It's *hessed* love, committed love like Ruth's love for Naomi. It's an amazing thing to consider that God can and will blot out real sins we commit. The idea is to wipe away entirely, like David says in Psalm 103, *"as far as the east is from the west he has removed our transgressions from us."* Wash—this word is so descriptive. My sin makes me dirty, foul, smelly. Like a stain on a sweater, you can't just clean the surface, it needs to be sponged, soaked, rubbed on a wash board, even pounded against rocks so every part is scrubbed clean, washed deeply to get the stain out. Sin doesn't just stain the outside of the body, it stains the soul. It requires a supernatural wash board to purify the soul.

We all want to connect with God and experience forgiveness that brings life. We need to feel grief over our sin. One of the things God looks for in genuine repentance is, "Do I really grieve over my sin?" Paul says godly sorrow leads to repentance. If we are going to apply Psalm 51 to truly be transformed, we must genuinely feel a sense of our own unworthiness.

Another thing we see here is that David no longer wants to be sinning. He is telling God, "I don't want to be the old David anymore. I want to come clean. This sin only brought misery." I could see him praying, "God, make sin so disgusting to me that I will hate sin, and make yourself so beautiful to me that I want your ways for my life."

**For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
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 (verses 3–4).**

In verses 3–4 David acknowledges his sins. As much as he or any of us don't want to re-live our sin, we cannot confess our sins without bringing them up, remembering, admitting, being honest. How can I be forgiven if I don't know what I am being forgiven for? The promise from God is this: If I remember them now, he won't remember them later. This may seem to understate the affects on Uriah or Bathsheba, but the point for us is that every sin we commit against another is a sin we commit

against God. I am to own them. I am to feel shame and sorrow over them. So in a sense if I display my numerous sins before God, he will display even more forgiveness back to me. God, you are my judge. My sin may not be illegal in a court in California, or even frowned on by society, but I am accountable to you, my ultimate judge.

**Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place (verses 5–6).**

I liken this to having a pool. As a kid after a windstorm, I would go out and look at the pool in the backyard and say, the pool is dirty. That's one thing. It's quite another to declare that the water source to fill the pool is dirty too. That's original sin. As David processed this he saw his own depravity. I didn't just flub up one time on that roof top. I perpetually do what I don't want to do, and don't do what I want to do. At my source I am a wretched man. Even before my birth I was a sinner, I couldn't save myself. David has learned that he can't even express faithfulness on his own. Faithfulness itself is a gift from God. Without faithfulness we cannot please God.

**Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity (verses 7–9).**

Hyssop is a common plant in the garden. It's spongy and holds liquid. It's a picture of the blood of the sacrifice dipped in hyssop and then sprinkled on the door posts of the Israelites' homes in Egypt as part of Passover. Is becoming whiter than snow even possible? We have carpet in our home that we vacuum regularly. It looks okay considering it is old carpet and we and our prior owner have a dog. I read about a carpet cleaner who gets his business by shining a powerful black light on their customers' carpets, drapes and furniture. We have quite an old dog and he is rather moist. If we were to shine that black light in our home, I'm afraid of what I might see. I might see every drop and dribble to the point of saying, "Shut that light off, I can't take it anymore, just please clean my carpets. I'll pay you anything, just get them clean!" Now imagine the carpet guy saying, "Hey, my job is not to actually clean your carpet, it's to just point out the dirt." God shines a black light into our souls, but he doesn't then walk away and say, "My job is to not clean your carpet, just point out the dirt." He knows I can't clean my heart, so he cleans it. To be cleansed is to experience joy. When we don't hide from our sin and come clean, God will hide our sin and no longer hold our sin against us. It's blotted out.

Next David is pleading, "You have cleansed me, now restore me. I can't restore myself anymore than I can cleanse myself."

**Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.**

**Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me
(verses 10–12).**

Create, *bara* in Hebrew, means the kind of creating that only God alone can do, the same “create” that God did in Genesis 1:1 when he created the heavens and earth, not just a repair of my old heart, like a bandage, but a new heart. David asks God for a new heart and then a new mind within him to follow the right paths that God lays out. He is agreeing that he deserves to have the Holy Spirit taken from him and he is thankful it doesn't happen. God, I didn't function when unconfessed sin obscured the Holy Spirit in my life. He is glad to experience something he hadn't experienced in months.

One of the tell-tale signs of repentance is a revived heart toward God. You see it in David. What does it look like in us? The Word of God becomes nourishment again. We can't wait to be with the people of God. No fear except a healthy fear of God which leads to doing what he asks. The more of God in my life the more the joy. These are fruits of repentance.

Notice that in Psalm 51 there is no plea to have consequences taken from him. God is clear. Our sin has consequences. The breach your sin placed between you and God is repaired, but there will be consequences. We can read on and discover that David's child to Bathsheba dies, David's daughter Tamar is raped by her half brother Amnon. Absalom, David's son and Tamar's brother murders Amnon in a revenge killing. Absalom loses respect for his father David and sleeps with his father's concubines, and then attempts to dethrone David and he gets murdered in the process and grieves openly over his rebellious son's death. It's as if David gets it and accepts it and then in Psalm 51, he offers a final plea.

**Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
so that sinners will turn back to you.
Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
Open my lips, Lord,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise (verses 13–17).**

He is now a teacher, a teacher with experience. David's prayer is that God would use him to teach others to turn to him. Maybe it's as simple as, “listen people, don't do what I did.” God will use that. You and I have a story to tell. We have many blemishes

but we have a story to tell. Nothing is wasted in the hands of a sovereign God. You know why? Because no sacrifice on earth can atone for the guilt of murder and adultery. No dead animal will take that kind of guilt away. We see in the greater story only the sacrifice of God's Son Jesus will atone for sin.

What is a contrite heart? It is a heart with a deep sense of sorrow over sin. And then walking through that path of repentance, God lifts us up with forgiveness, cleansing, spiritual restoration, and the opportunity to be useful again. My sin separates me from God; a broken and a contrite spirit restores the relationship.

You want to know what a last fruit of repentance is? It's the opportunity to move forward after repentance. To be restored and useful again. Serving the Lord, loving people and ministering in his church alongside others who may be the ones your sin hurt in the first place.

Did you know that there are 300-500 dimples on a golf ball? The ball flies 1/3 farther because the blemishes create resistance and resistance increases air speed and driving distance. Be encouraged. If we have blemishes, God will use them to take us farther.

Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.” And you forgave the guilt of my sin. Therefore let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found; surely the rising of the mighty waters will not reach them (Psalm 32:1–6).

There is an interesting back story to Michelangelo's sculpting of David. The piece of marble sat in a field in Florence for 25 years before it was cut to be sculpted. It received the effects of 25 years of weather and neglect. It was viewed as a flawed piece of marble. When Michelangelo was commissioned to sculpt David, he claimed that piece of marble. The other artists said, Why would you want that piece of marble? It's flawed. There are much more beautiful and pure pieces available. And Michelangelo answered them, “A flawed piece of marble is exactly the right piece of stone to sculpt a man like David. It was God the great artist himself who made a flawed man like David beautiful.”

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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