

2 Samuel 11:1-27 | “The Downward Spiral of Sin”
Preached on September 18, 2022 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to 2 Samuel 11. *[pause]*

In the *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, there was research conducted to study whether warning labels really worked.

In the research, it concluded a couple things, and among them were these conclusions...

First, analysis showed that not many people actually read, understood, and remembered the warning labels.

Secondly, they found that these warning labels didn't really impact consumer's perception of how hazardous the risks were.

And also, they discovered that for those who *did* heed the warning labels, it was often when it wasn't difficult to do, and when they were already familiar with the product.¹ *[pause]*

So what does all this research tell us?

We don't often listen to or pay attention to warning labels.

The warning labels are saying, “DANGER!” and we just go ahead and do what we think we should do. *[pause]*

Isn't that just like us with sin?

All throughout the Bible, there are warning labels telling us of the danger of sin, yet we often go ahead and do what we want to do. *[pauseeee]*

Now I want you to picture what a warning label for sin might look like.

What would it say?

Maybe you think it would say, “DANGER: THINGS GET WORSE AHEAD,” or, “DANGER: REGRET HAZARD”.

And that may be true, but the warning label we find concerning sin this morning is written a little different than that.

It's a unique warning label about sin, but it's given in narrative form.

It may not be written in bright, red letters in all caps, saying, “DANGER: SIN!”

¹ Argo, Jennifer J. and Kelley J. Main (2004), “Meta-Analyses of the Effectiveness of Warning Labels,” *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 23(2), 193-208. Found at: <https://www.acrwebsite.org/web/acr-content/705/do-warning-labels-really-work.aspx#:~:text=The%20fourth%20meta%20analysis%20for,perceptions%20of%20hazards%20and%20risks.>

Yet it will vividly get that point across by showing us how even the great man after God's own heart, King David, succumbed to sin's lure.

And so we shouldn't ignore the warning label of 2 Samuel 11, like we do for many other warning labels, but we would be wise to see it, understand it, and heed it. *[pauseeee]*

Let's **START READING** the story, beginning in verses 1 through 5. *[READ VERSES 1-5]*

I won't recount everything that happens here, but I do want to bring out a couple interesting facts that help us to see how horrible this sin really was.

And they revolve around who Bathsheba was related to, for we find that her family had a close relationship with David. *[pause]*

In 2 Samuel 23, David's mighty men are listed, and guess who is one of David's mighty men? Her husband, Uriah.²

This makes David's sin with Bathsheba and the killing of Uriah even more horrible, for he sleeps with the wife of one of his mighty men and then kills him off.

So Uriah wasn't just some random soldier, but he was someone who had been fighting for David and protecting him for years. *[pause]*

Not only this, but many people believe that the Eliam, who is named as Bathsheba's father, is another one of David's mighty men listed.³

And if that is true, then her grandfather would be David's counselor, Ahithophel.⁴ *[pause]*

Wow, talk about doing something against a family that had been loyal to him over the years.

Adultery is bad in itself, but it makes it more stinging and revealing of David's sin when it's with the wife of one of David's loyal, mighty men. *[pauseeee]*

So what does this story of David's adultery with Bathsheba show us?...

I. When we give into temptation, we sin. (1-5)

So simple, yet this is so critical to remember.

We don't sin just out of nowhere, but we sin when we give into temptation. *[pause]*

We are not just innocent people, who just so happen to sin accidentally, rather, we sin when we give into the enticement of our own desires. *[pause]*

² See 2 Samuel 23:39.

³ See 2 Samuel 23:34.

⁴ See 2 Samuel 23:34 for his possible relationship to Bathsheba's father (Eliam), and see 2 Samuel 16:23 for his role.

James makes this point in James chapter 1.⁵

We want something, we are tempted to get it in wrong ways, and then we give into that temptation. *[pause]*

You see, although you may know this truth about sin, our culture and world constantly tries to deceive us into NOT believing that sin comes from giving into temptation. *[pause]*

Think with me about how sin is portrayed in our culture.

First, our culture has tried to avoid the term ‘sin’ at all costs. *[pause]*

Just try this sometime: boldly proclaim that something is a sin and see what happens.

At the very least, you will see some raised eyebrows - at the most, you will be utterly scorned. *[pause]*

In fact, to see evidence of how pervasive it is to not talk about sin, just look at how it has infected American churches.

Listen for the word ‘sin’ and you won’t hear it, for it has been replaced with terms and phrases such as ‘mistakes’ or ‘moving away from your purpose’.

Yet we must go against the flow of culture, and in line with Scripture, we say, “When we give into temptation, *we sin.*” *[pause]*

A second way that our culture handles sin is they try to redefine sin into something else.

One way they try to redefine sin is by blaming it all on illness and environment.

Sin isn’t because we actively gave into temptation, but it’s reframed into something where you are passive, and you just couldn’t help it.

Everything is blamed on our upbringing or some sort of illness. *[pause]*

Now I will certainly admit that upbringing and mental illness can influence people and make it harder to resist certain sins, but they do not force people to sin. *[pauseeee]*

Have you ever heard someone say, “I’m just an anxious person, that’s why I worry so much.”

That’s leaning towards an illness type of view of sin.

Instead of understanding that they are anxious because of sin, they blame it on just being an anxious person and that is seen as the root cause. *[pause]*

I say these things not to bash our culture just to bash it...

⁵ James 1:14-15.

...But rather, to make you aware of the air that surrounds us, and how easily our culture could deceive us into redefining sin according to its definitions and not according to God's. *[pauseeee]*

David gave into temptation and sinned.

This is utterly clear as day.

He sees Bathsheba bathing, and instead of resisting the temptation and leaving the rooftop, he lingers and then takes her and lays with her.

He even had a chance to reconsider when he found out who she was, and heard that she was married. *[pauseeee]*

So David gave into temptation and sinned, but *why* do we give into temptation?

We give into temptation because temptation is strong.

Temptation wouldn't really be temptation if it wasn't strong, right? *[pauseeee]*

In the *Frog & Toad* children's book series by Arnold Lobel, there's a funny, yet insightful story about the power of temptation.

Toad bakes some cookies and brings them to his friend Frog, who tries some.

And it says, "Frog and Toad ate many cookies, one after another.

"You know, Toad," said Frog, with his mouth full, "I think we should stop eating. We will soon be sick."

"You are right," said Toad. "Let us eat one last cookie, and then we will stop."

Frog and Toad ate one last cookie. There were many cookies left in the bowl.

"Frog," said Toad, "let us eat one very last cookie, and then we will stop." Frog and Toad ate one very last cookie.

"We must stop eating!" cried Toad as he ate another.

"Yes," said Frog, reaching for a cookie, "we need willpower."

"What is willpower?" asked Toad.

"Willpower is trying hard not to do something you really want to do," said Frog.

"You mean like trying hard not to eat all these cookies?" asked Toad.

"Right," said Frog.

Frog put the cookies in a box. "There," he said. "Now we will not eat any more cookies."

"But we can open the box," said Toad.

"That is true," said Frog.

Frog tied some string around the box. "There," he said. "Now we will not eat any more cookies."

"But we can cut the string and open the box." said Toad.

"That is true," said Frog. Frog got a ladder. He put the box up on a high shelf.

"There," said Frog. "Now we will not eat any more cookies."

"But we can climb the ladder and take the box down from the shelf and cut the string and open the box," said Toad.

"That is true," said Frog.

Frog climbed the ladder and took the box down from the shelf. He cut the string and opened the box.

Frog took the box outside. He shouted in a loud voice. "Hey, birds, here are cookies!"

Birds came from everywhere. They picked up all the cookies in their beaks and flew away.

"Now we have no more cookies to eat," said Toad sadly, "Not even one."

"Yes," said Frog, "but we have lots and lots of willpower."

"You may keep it all, Frog," said Toad. "I am going home now to bake a cake." *[pauseeee]*

Temptation is strong, for it puts in front of us something that we really want.

It promises pleasure and happiness, and appeals to the passions of our flesh.⁶ *[pause]*

For David, he sees a beautiful woman, wants to be with her to satisfy his fleshly desires, and gives in. *[pause]*

What temptation does in us is that it often causes us to only focus on that one thing we want, and blinds us to the truth. *[pause]*

David didn't think about the many, many wives he already had, but was focused on someone he didn't have.

He didn't think about how Bathsheba was married even after hearing that she was, but focused solely on being with her.

⁶ This is a phrase used by Peter in 1 Peter 2:11.

He was blind to the consequences and sinfulness of such an act, as he didn't consider her husband's view of this or God's view of it.

It was simply, "I want this and I *will* get it. Nothing will stop me." [pause]

What's interesting is that Bathsheba is only named once in this story.

Otherwise, she is the wife of Uriah and the woman.

This is because David's sinfulness is highlighted and also to David, she is just an object to be enjoyed for himself.

He was consumed with his own pleasure and satisfaction - everything else was subject to that master. [pauseeee]

These truths help us to battle our own temptations, for we are reminded of the nature of temptation.

We must remember that temptation is strong.

It will lure you and promise something, but its promises always remain *unfulfilled promises*.

They may bring very temporary satisfaction, but that temporary happiness is replaced with regret. [pause]

Just think of the headaches and regret that David experienced because he gave into temptation's worthless promises.

He was like a fish who only sees the lure, but doesn't consider the hook hidden underneath. [pauseeee]

When we are tempted by anything, we need to slow down, and think through what's going on.

Am I considering how God views this?

Am I thinking about the consequences?

Can this temptation truly fulfill what it's promising?

Like Christ, during his temptations in the wilderness, we need to fight off temptations with the sword of Scripture.⁷ [pause]

When we rely upon His power, the power of temptation weakens.

When we rely upon His promises, the promises of temptation are seen for the sham that they are.

The truth and power of God overcomes the lies and power of temptation. [pauseeeee]

⁷ See Matthew 4:1-11.

There's so much more that could be said about what happens here, but David's sin with Bathsheba shows us that when we give into temptation, we sin.

But sadly for David, his sin doesn't stop with adultery, for he adds onto it some attempts at cover-up.

Let's CONTINUE READING in verse 6. [*READ VERSES 6-13*]

When David finds out that Bathsheba is pregnant, he devises ways to try to cover up his sin.

He calls Uriah off of the battlefield, and tries to get him to spend the night with his wife, so that it would look like the baby was Uriah's, and not his own.

In this way, David could then have plausible deniability, for who could prove that the child was his?

But Uriah at this point is much more righteous than David.

Uriah is so loyal to Israel that he refuses to sleep in his own house because the army of Israel was out sleeping in the open fields. [*pause*]

David even tries to get him drunk, so that he would go home, but still, drunk Uriah won't go against his determination to not go home.

So David is probably very frustrated at this point because his attempted cover-ups weren't working, and through his attempts, he shows us that...

II. When we sin, we often try to cover it up. (6-13)

There's a story of a man named Waylon Prendergast who had been out drinking when he decided to rob a house on his way home.

The drunken man forced his way into a house, filled a suitcase he found there with the valuables he discovered, and made his way to the living room.

In his stupor, he decided it would be a good idea to set a fire to cover his tracks, so he ignited a blaze before making his way out the back door.

Thinking he was home free, he continued on to his house—only to find three fire trucks parked outside fighting the blaze he had set to cover his theft.

And here the home he set ablaze was his own.⁸ [*pause*]

Isn't that just like us?

⁸ Original Source: Herald Sun, December 6, 2012. Found at: <https://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/the-bondage-of-alcohol>.

In our efforts to protect ourselves, we try to cover up our sinful tracks, and make things worse in the process. *[pause]*

We seek to hide our shame and guilt, and strive to avoid the consequences of our own sin.

We don't want to face the ramifications of our own doing.

Like Adam and Eve, trying to cover up themselves from the consequences of their sin, so that's what we try to do.⁹ *[pause]*

We try to avoid the shame, guilt, and consequences because we know it's wrong! *[pause]*

David knew what he did was wrong, and he wanted to hide it.

He looked for any way to make it look like he was innocent, and not involved in this sinful act.

He thought, "If only I can get Uriah to sleep with his wife, then no one will ever know, and I can just move on with my life." *[pause]*

Instead of repentance, David's response was concealment. *[pause]*

Have you ever done this?

Have you been more focused on hiding your sin than on repenting of your sin? *[pauseeee]*

You see, what David did here reminds us that even after we give into sin, it's important what we do next.

Will we continue in a sole focus on self and try to conceal our sin, or will we recognize our sin and bring it to God in repentance? *[pauseeee]*

Something else that I want you to think about is the failures of David's cover-up attempts here.

David was probably very frustrated at his concealing efforts not working, but I want you to rethink this.

When David's cover-up attempts were thwarted, what was God doing?

He was giving him chance after chance not to go forward with hiding his sin, but to face his sin! *[pause]*

God in His mercy was frustrating his cover-up attempts!

Everytime that Uriah didn't go down to his house was another act of grace.

It was a chance to not add sin upon his previous sin, but to make things right. *[pauseeee]*

⁹ See Genesis 3:7-8.

We don't often see our failed cover up attempts in this way, do we?

More often, we are like David: frustrated that we can't cover up our sin easily.

But what if we saw every failed cover-up attempt as mercy flowing down from God? *[pause]*

We should actually be thankful when our cover-up attempts don't work!

They are God's grace in our lives! *[pause]*

Just think of the future headaches and regret that David could have avoided if he saw these failed attempts as mercy from God?

He wouldn't have gone forward and killed off Uriah. *[pause]*

So when your cover up attempts don't work, turn to Him and thank Him that they didn't work!

They are chances to not go forward in sin.

They are windows of grace, providing opportunities to avoid future regret.

That's the time to go to God with your sin, for it can't be hidden from him anyway. *[pauseeee]*

So David's attempted cover-ups didn't work, but what would he do next?

LOOK THERE AT VERSES 14 and following. *[READ VERSES 14-27]*

Because David's previous cover-up attempts didn't work, this led him to do an extreme cover-up: murder and theft.

He tells Joab to put Uriah on the front lines and then draw back so that Uriah is killed off by the enemy. *[pause]*

In this way, David feels like he can get away with his sin.

First, he doesn't actually have to kill Uriah himself, for he can just claim that the enemy killed him.

And secondly, once Uriah is killed, he can quickly marry Bathsheba and make it look like the child born to her was conceived in marriage, not adultery. *[pauseeeee]*

Now you may understand why this is murder because David ordered Joab to take steps to put Uriah in harm's way.

But why do I say that this was murder *and* theft?

Well think about it: what is the only reason that David was able to marry Bathsheba?

Because he first killed her husband. *[pause]*

That's like breaking into someone's house, killing the owner, and then taking their possessions.

In this way, David is not only guilty of murder, but murder and theft.

Even in the next chapter, when God confronts David through Nathan, he emphasizes his sin in not only killing Uriah, but then also taking his wife to be his own.¹⁰ *[pauseeee]*

So what does this last section of the chapter demonstrate to us? ...

III. When our cover-ups don't work, we take drastic measures. (14-27)

David's cover up attempts didn't work, so he went to the extreme in order to cover his tracks.

He went from adultery, to attempted cover-ups, to murder and theft.

He added sin upon sin upon sin because he tried to hide his sin.

And this is what happens when we are determined to cover up our sin at all costs: we end up taking drastic measures. *[pauseeee]*

Sometimes at malls you will see those spiral wishing well coin collectors.

You know the thing that you put a penny in and it just keeps spiraling downward until it finally slows down enough to go in the hole.

Well that's what David was doing with his life.

He thought he was being so smart with his cover-up attempts, but he was spiraling downward with each passing, like that coin...

...Until finally he drops in the hole, as he has taken one of the most drastic measures possible: murder. *[pauseeee]*

He thought he was in control, but he was a slave to his sin.

And we must remember this: when we try to hide our sin, we are not in control, but we have enslaved ourselves to our sin.

We are not shrewd like we think we are - we are foolish, for we are ruining our lives. *[pauseeee]*

You see, sin tries to self-preserve, but destroys itself and the life of others.

It causes us to go down roads we never would have thought, and to hurt others. *[pauseeee]*

David took drastic measures and felt like he had finally gotten away with it.

¹⁰ See 2 Samuel 12:9.

He married Bathsheba and could claim that the child had been conceived in wedlock, but there was someone who wasn't fooled.

The very last verse says, "But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord." *[pause]*

Though he thought he could cover up his sin, it was not truly covered up to the Lord.

We must always remember this: we may fool others, but we cannot fool God into thinking that we haven't done something wrong.

Trying to cover up your sin in front of God is like trying to put a band-aid on a severed arm, or like trying to cover a mountain with a blanket - it won't work.

We act like Adam and Eve, who thought that some fig leaves and trees would hide them from the all-knowing, all-seeing, ever-present God.¹¹

There's no need to try to cover our sin, for God knows it, and covering it only makes things worse as we spiral down deeper into sin. *[pauseeee]*

This was such a low moment for David, and it's a big and clear warning label for us, for it reminds us that...

Sin can take you places that you never dreamed of going.

Have you ever thought to yourself, "I can't believe I did that," or, "I can't believe I went that far."?

That's what happens when we let sin control us.

Sin let go is a recipe for more and more sin. *[pause]*

We become like someone trying to drive somewhere without a map, just a couple wrong turns and you're thinking, "This is bad. How did I end up here so far away?" *[pauseeee]*

Do you really think that David would have ever pictured himself committing adultery and murder?

Of course not, but when we let sin go, it takes us to dark places that we would have never imagined. *[pauseeee]*

Since sin can take us places that we never dreamed of going, where is our hope, since even King David let sin take him to dark places?

Our only hope is Christ! *[pause]*

¹¹ See Genesis 3:7-8.

Because He came to this earth, lived a perfect life, died for our sins, and rose again - now by faith in Him, we can stand forgiven and justified in God's sight.

We don't have to hide our sins in guilt and shame and make matters worse by covering up our sin, for we can stand in the forgiveness that Christ has secured for us. *[pause]*

So if you are caught in sin, and have been trying to cover it up, going even far with it, repent of that, and rest in the forgiveness that Christ has freely given at the Cross. *[pauseeee]*

Not only does Christ provide forgiveness when we sin, but he provides power to resist sin.

Because of His work, and then giving us the Spirit, we are empowered to fight off sin and live for Him.

We don't have to face the power of temptation on our own, but as we walk by the Spirit, we are promised that we will not gratify the desires of the flesh.¹² *[pauseeee]*

As you can see, it is Christ, who gives us the power to resist temptation, and His forgiveness-providing sacrifice is the reason why we don't need to cover our sin in guilt and shame.

Run to your only hope against sin's guilt and power: Christ Jesus, the much, much greater David, who didn't give into temptation, but resisted it for us.

And who didn't take a life to save His own, but gave His life to save ours.

¹² See Galatians 5:16.