

It Is YOU: The Denial Syndrome

2 Samuel 12:1-15

By [Dr. Derek W. H. Thomas](#)

Now if you turn in your Bible, it will encourage me if you take a Bible or use the pew Bible, and if you're using the pew Bible you'll find this reading tonight on page 263. We're in 2 Samuel chapter 12. You will recall a couple of Sunday evenings ago we were looking at the chapter where David has committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. She is now pregnant. He has failed to ensure that Uriah return home and enjoy conjugal relations with his wife. Men were fighting on the battlefields and he refused to do that and David has had him killed through Ammonite arrows and swords. But as we shall see in this chapter, the blame lies squarely upon the shoulders of King David. This is the lowest point in David's life. And we pick up the reading now as a prophet, a prophet the mouthpiece of God, Nathan, makes a house call.

Before we read the passage, let's pray together.

Father, again there are parts of Scripture that are so very solemn, even terrifying. Tonight we ask for the blessing of the Holy Spirit. Come, Holy Spirit. Shine a light upon our darkened minds. Bring the light of Scripture and the light of the Gospel to bear upon our reading of it that we might not just read but have an understanding also. And tonight especially as we ought always to pray, we ask for not just a formality and a ritual. We ask that You would have dealings with our own souls. As we watch what You did in the heart and soul of David, we ask that You would so work too within our own hearts. Draw us to Yourself. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

2 Samuel chapter 12. This is God's holy and inerrant Word:

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. The rich man had very many flocks and herds, 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. 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." 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, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

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. 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. 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. 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.' 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. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.'" 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. Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die." Then Nathan went to his house.

So far, God's holy, inerrant Word. And may He add his blessing to that reading of it.

Alec Motyer says in one place that "repentance is like throwing a stone into a pond. You can fetch the stone back again, but you cannot stop the ripples from spreading." The Lord will accept David's repentance in this chapter but He will not stop the ripples from spreading. David has opened the door to immorality and murder. In the next chapter, his eldest son, Amnon, will rape his sister. It will be followed by Absalom, the sister's full brother, who will kill Amnon, his half brother. What David sowed, he will reap in his own family. And this does seem to be a turning point in David's life. He will know forgiveness and he will know extraordinary grace, but there is a sense in which David will never be the same David again. He'll make some extremely unwise choices in battle. And there's a sense in which now his life will tumble downwards and he'll never see the glory that he saw prior to chapter 11 of 2 Samuel, despite the beauty of the words in verse 13, "The Lord has put away your sin."

There's a sense too in which we can't look at this section of Scripture, 2 Samuel 12, the first part of it, without also looking at Psalm 51, the great psalm of repentance. I want tonight simply to look at 2 Samuel 12, but I want you to be aware that in the background, and perhaps a little later, when David had reflected a little more, he would turn the dark experiences of these chapters into a song

that we've just sung and with which we'll conclude the service tonight, were David's own reflection on these circumstances in which he found himself. I want to see four or five things tonight.

And the first is in verse 1. We read that "the Lord sent Nathan to David." Nathan is a prophet. A prophet is a man who speaks for God and to the people. A priest is the opposite. A priest represents people to God, but a prophet represents God to the people. When Nathan steps in the door of the palace to speak to David it is as though God Himself were coming to meet with David. You see, God will not let David go. This sin, these multiple sins — adultery, murder — you might have expected and understood if God would have said about David what He had said about Saul, to take the Holy Spirit away from him. You'd understand that. You'd have to change your theology perhaps, but you'd understand that. It would be what you might expect. But God, God will not let David go. He pursues him. He goes after him. David, who at the beginning of this chapter has not so much as acknowledged his sin, God goes after him.

You know there's a label on some of your clothing, at least it used to be there, and it said, "Will not shrink." There are people like that. They will not shrink. They refuse to bow. They refuse to acknowledge their fault. They refuse to say, "I was wrong. I'm sorry." God sends a prophet. He comes with the Word of God and he speaks to David. God is pursuing him. He's coming after him. He will not let him go. When we sin, God won't let us go. He'll come after us. He's sent friends of yours. He'll send His Word. He will hound you and find you and speak to you. That's the kind of God we have.

The second thing we see here is a recognition. David is brought to a point where he recognizes that he has done wrong. When Nathan says to David, "You are the man," he has to be brought to that point. There was a general one time I think his name was Oglethorpe, he said to John Wesley, "I never forgive and I never forget." And Wesley said to him, "I hope sir that you never sin." David needs to be brought to a point where he acknowledges that he is a sinner, that he's done wrong, that he's in the fault. Nathan has this parable. It's heart-wrenching. This poor man who has one little pet ewe lamb, this lamb eats at the same table; he eats scraps from the table. He feeds it. It's there with the children. It's part of the family. It was like a daughter to him. And the rich man, when somebody comes into town and yes, offers him a meal, he doesn't take one of his lambs, he slaughters the poor man's pet lamb. And David is incensed. Isn't it fascinating how easily we see injustice in others, how quick we are to see the fault in others? When we are in the wrong, when we ourselves are in a state of unrepentance, we can still see the fault in someone else.

Jesus spoke about that in the Sermon on the Mount. He spoke about the man who could see a tiny speck in another man's eye and there was a beam hanging out of his own eye. He couldn't see the beam in his own eye but he could see the tiny speck in another man's eye. David is in a state of what moderns call "denial."

I guess that's what Tom calls it. It's a good term. It covers all the bases here. David is in denial. He's not acknowledging his fault. And Nathan, thank God for the Nathan's of the world — straight talk. When David is incensed, his fury is aroused, and he sees that what this rich man has done is wrong, and Nathan says, "You are the man. You, David, are the man." It has to begin there. It has to come home. It has to become personal.

John Bradford, 16th century English reformer and martyr under Mary Tudor. In 1555 when she came to the throne, several hundred were killed, John Bradford among them, in Smithfield Market in London. You can go there today. You'll see a clock in his memory. He used to sign his letters, "A very painted hypocrite." He was aware of the tendency in the natural heart toward hypocrisy, to seeing the fault in others but unable to see the fault in ourselves. David has to be brought to that point.

But it's more than that. There's a third thing here. David has to not just, not just acknowledge that he has sinned, not just realize that he is the man who has committed the wrong, but he has to see that sin is wrong. It's not just against Bathsheba; it's not just against Uriah; it's not just against the people of Israel. It is against the Lord. It is against God. That's where he will come to acknowledge in verse 13 — "I have sinned against the Lord." You remember what we've just sung, Psalm 51 — "Against You, You only have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight." He's not denying that he had sinned against Uriah, he's not denying that he had sinned against Joab, he's not denying that he had sinned against Bathsheba, he's not denying that he had sinned against the people of Israel of which he was king, but he had sinned against God. He had sinned against the Lord. He had sinned against Light. "You have despised Me," God says to him in this passage. "You have despised Me." That's the seriousness of sin. That's where we need to be brought. Sin is not a game, it's not a fancy. It is a violation against the Lord. It is God who has been offended. It's the point to which the prodigal son was brought when he beat upon his breast and said, "I have sinned against heaven and against you and am no more worthy to be called your son." Have you been brought, in the sins that we commit from day to day? Each one of those sins has the right to draw this conclusion — I have no right to be called a child of God. I have no right in myself. I have no entitlement in myself. I'm not worthy to be called a child of God.

But there's extraordinary, breath-taking beauty in this chapter. You see it in the first half of verse 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.'" Torah, Old Testament law, required that the penalty for murder was death. David had committed murder. You might dress it up as judicial murder. He had asked that Uriah be placed in the heat of the battle so that the circumstances would be such that he would die. He had arranged his death. He might as well have taken out a contract on this man. But God is unflinching. "You killed him. You killed him by Ammonite weapons but you killed him." And Nathan, speaking on behalf of

God, says to David, "An adulterer, and a murderer, your sins are forgiven. Your sins are forgiven."

You know, it's a test, isn't it? Our understanding of the Gospel tonight — it's a test, isn't it, because instinct says to us, "This isn't right. This is not right. This is not justice." Here is a man who has committed horrible sins, terrible crimes, but God says to him, "You are forgiven. Though your sins be red like crimson, they shall be as white as snow." It's a test, isn't it? That's the Gospel. Is there forgiveness for a little white lie? Is there forgiveness for adultery? Can adultery be forgiven? Can murder be forgiven?

Oh, twenty years ago, I used to visit a prison in Northern Ireland. A man who had murdered someone, in what euphemistically was called "the troubles." He'd shot him, killed him in a side street. He was in prison. I would go and see him. He had been converted in prison. It was, I think, a genuine conversion. I have a wooden windmill in my office at home that he made out of lollipop sticks in prison. Every month I would go to see him. It would take the best part of three or four hours to get in and out. He was a murderer and God had forgiven him. God had wiped away his sin. That's the power of the Gospel. Saul of Tarsus was as much a murderer as David was. He'd sign the death warrants that ensured the death of Christians, of believers, and God forgave him.

It's a test of the Gospel. We want to say, "There's something not right about that, there's something not fair about that," but there's something not fair about the Gospel itself. How can sinners, how can sinners, dark sinners, terrible sinners, wicked, evil men, how can they be forgiven? "But there is forgiveness with God that He may be feared," as David would put it in Psalm 32.

But there's something else. You see, not only was David forgiven, and that's beautiful, there's grace in this chapter, there's Gospel in this chapter. There's grace to cover crimson sins, terrible, dark sins. I suspect — I don't know — I suspect in a room full of people this size there are some pretty dark sins somewhere in your past and you came to Jesus and God wiped them away. God wiped them away never to be remembered no more forever, and you are justified by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. And when you die, you'll be taken into heaven to be before the face of your precious Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. But you see, you may be forgiven, you may be a child of God, but there are consequences. There are consequences. This man had murdered and there were consequences. He had found Jesus and he was forgiven but there were consequences. He was imprisoned.

Bathsheba was pregnant. That was a consequence. There's a child involved now. You might think, you see you might think that all you have to do is to say, "Sorry," but it's more than that. There's restitution. There are things that you've got to put right. God brings a word of judgment upon David in terms of consequences. He's forgiven. He's not going to die. His sin is forgiven. He's not

going to pay the penalty for that sin but there are consequences, there are ripples. You may take the stone out of the pond but you can't stop the ripples from spreading. It's going to come into his own home and into his own family - Amnon and Tamar and Absalom and your son, your son, the child of Bathsheba. But notice she's never called Bathsheba here. She's called the wife of Uriah. She's David's wife now but the text keeps referring to her as "the wife of Uriah." You can't deny this David. And there are going to be consequences.

And we're going to look next week at the whole matter of the death of this little child and there are enormously important and difficult and sensitive pastoral issues that can't be dealt with in a couple of minutes. That aspect of it I'm going to try and deal with next week when this child will die. Isn't it interesting though, that for David to experience forgiveness, that a son must die? I'm not sure about what's going on here, and perhaps in the strange and mysterious ways of God a little thought, a little seed is being planted in David's mind. You will be forgiven, David, but there is a cost, and what a cost. What a cost — the death of a son. You know, for our sins to be forgiven — your sins and mine — and those dark sins that you don't want to talk about and I don't want to talk about them either because they're forgiven, but there was a cost. Even God Himself couldn't say, "I forgive you," just like that. A Son, a Son had to die. The Son of God, enfleshed, had to die a terrible, terrible death so that we might hear similar words to David — "Your sins, they are forgiven you."

This is tough love here. Who's the initiator of tough love? God is. God is; perhaps to ensure that David will keep on shrinking. You know, we need to repent every day of our lives. One Puritan said he will take repentance with him into heaven. We fly like a bird with two wings, faith and repentance, and we take both with us into heaven, to the very gates of heaven. Our dying thought will be, "I'm sorry for my sins because it cost the death of Your Son, the Lord Jesus." You see, this episode of David's life, this shocking turn of events, they were to ensure, I think, the severity of the judgment. It wasn't the judgment that he deserved but it was severe. His son would die. And I think it was to teach him, the sweet psalmist of Israel, to teach him every day we need to get lower and lower and lower and say, "Yes, nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling."

Let's pray.

Father we thank You for Your Word. Thank You that You don't leave us in our state of sin and misery but You bring us to acknowledge it. Deal with us tonight if we find ourselves in denial, always looking at other people's sins, never seeing our own. We want to have honest dealing with You. And we pray, Lord, that we might ever remember that there is a cost to those sweet words, "Your sins are forgiven you," in Jesus, who died for us and rose for our justification. Now bless Your Word to us. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Please stand. Receive the Lord's benediction. Grace, mercy, and peace from

God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

©2013 First Presbyterian Church.

This transcribed message has been lightly edited and formatted for the Web site. No attempt has been made, however, to alter the basic extemporaneous delivery style, or to produce a grammatically accurate, publication-ready manuscript conforming to an established style template.

Should there be questions regarding grammar or theological content, the reader should presume any website error to be with the webmaster/transcriber/editor rather than with the original speaker. For full copyright, reproduction and permission information, please visit the First Presbyterian Church Copyright, Reproduction & Permission statement.

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#) (Thirdmill). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*.

Subscribe to *Biblical Perspectives Magazine*

BPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like BPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [BPM](#), please select this [link](#).