

File No. 64

II SAMUEL 11:1 — 12:14

Psalm 51: 1–19

DAVID'S GREAT SIN

(SBS Bk 2 Story No. 48)

Story Notes

Background Information

Joab and the entire army of Israel were sent to deal with the Ammonites. They were successful, and their main city, Rabbah, was all that remained to be subdued. But all was not well in the palace.

Israel had been told not to dispossess them because they were descendants of Lot (Deut. 2:19–20).

Main Lesson

David had shown great integrity in his kingship. However, with his power over the land and among his leaders secure, his usual fear of God was forgotten and he could not recognise what belonged to his neighbour.

He did not plan to have Bathsheba as his wife and sought to cover his adultery by Uriah's homecoming. When this plot failed, he sent Uriah and his fellow soldiers on a suicidal mission so he could marry the widowed Bathsheba and make her pregnancy look legitimate. The integrity shown by Uriah (a Hittite by background) and the recklessness of David are in stark contrast.

What court could condemn David? Probably, none. But he still feared God. The Lord sent Nathan to David and he carefully led David to condemn himself, of theft (12:6 with Exod. 22:1) and lack of compassion. In his one act of adultery he had been ungrateful and covetous, had ignored the word of the Lord and despised the Lord. God told him that the young child to be born to Bathsheba would die, that he would have constant warfare and rebellion among his sons. His wives would be publicly disgraced.

The 'court' had been convened and the sentence handed down. David could only confess his sin. He had abused man and God. But this servant of God had more to do than condemn. The justice of God was not satisfied with penalties but with the removal of David's sin and the promise of life instead of death. Well may David have prayed the prayer of Psalm 51 at this time. He asked from God what he had not shown to Uriah: grace, steadfast love and compassion. He, like Saul, had sinned; but, unlike Saul, believed he could be cleansed of his sin. He did not want the Holy Spirit to be taken from him as it had been from Saul.

God's work among the nations was not just to subdue them but to reveal the glory of his law among them (Deut. 4:8). If David's deed had brought him the lasting pleasure of the child he had conceived, the nations' scorn of Israel's law may have been justified. David longed for the child to live, but then, accepted the judgement of the Lord.

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