

## 2 Samuel 10-11 – “From Victory to Vulnerability”

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2 Samuel 10 and 11 sit right next to each other – but they couldn't be more different. In chapter 10, David is strong, decisive, victorious. In chapter 11, David is passive, compromised, and hiding.

Same man. Same king. Just one chapter apart.

And it forces us to ask a sobering question: How does a man go from spiritual victory to moral collapse? And so quickly? And can it happen to us?

### 1. David's Kindness to Hanun Misunderstood – 10:1-5

**10:1-2 - *It happened after this that the king of the people of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his place. <sup>2</sup> Then David said, “I will show kindness to Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness to me.” So David sent by the hand of his servants to comfort him concerning his father. And David's servants came into the land of the people of Ammon.***

We've come off of Chapter 9 where David showed incredible kindness to a son of Jonathan – Mephibosheth. And here in Chapter 10, David is once again looking to exercise kindness. Things have been going good for David. He's not under any real threat, he's living large, and he's just looking to bless others. That's a great thing to do.

Now it's interesting who he's wanting to show kindness to – the son of Nahash, Hanun.

Now we were introduced to Nahash back in 1 Samuel 11 when his army laid siege to Jabesh Gilead. And the men of Jabesh Gilead said make a covenant with us and we'll serve you. Nahash responds by saying, I'll make a covenant with you, but on one condition, I get to put out all your right eyes. Basically, make them no threat to come against the Ammonites down the road.

So the people of Jabesh Gilead were like, give us 7 days to think this through.

- Now, if you ask me, there's not a lot to think through about this. The decision should have already been made. Nevertheless, they ask Nahash to give them time to send word to Israel to see if they can get some backup. It just gets weirder. And Nahash goes along with it, perhaps thinking if more Israelites come, it will only add to their victory.
- But Israel had a new king – Saul. And he was used of the Lord to defeat the Ammonites. So Saul and Nahash were enemies.

Now what happened where Nahash showed kindness to David? We're not really sure. It's quite possible that as David was on the run from Saul previously, Nahash provided refuge for David. He helped him out because of a shared common enemy. That's a likely scenario.

And now with Nahash's death, David is wanting to return this kindness upon his son, Hanun.

So David sent his servants to Hanun to bring condolences and maybe even gifts.

But notice the response:

**10:3 - *And the princes of the people of Ammon said to Hanun their lord, "Do you think that David really honors your father because he has sent comforters to you? Has David not rather sent his servants to you to search the city, to spy it out, and to overthrow it?"***

Hanun's princes give some bad counsel here. They're suspicious of David's motives. They're critical and making some judgment calls on what they think David is really up to.

- Now, there are times we certainly need to be cautious, but sometimes we can become overly suspicious about everything and begin to make judgment calls of people's motives when we don't always know their heart. When we make these rash judgment calls, we often end up hurting ourselves. This is what plays out in this account.

**10:4-5 - *Therefore Hanun took David's servants, shaved off half of their beards, cut off their garments in the middle, at their buttocks, and sent them away. <sup>5</sup> When they told David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, "Wait at Jericho until your beards have grown, and then return."***

Getting half their beard shaved off and their garments cut in the middle seems like they got off easy here.

But in this day (as is often still the case in the Middle East today) the beard was a symbol of strength, dignity and manhood. Only the servants were shaved. This was an incredible insult and embarrassment for these men to have their beards removed, even more so to have only half of it removed.

- It would be like someone pulling a prank and shaving my head. I can handle a shaved head, but to shave only half, that's a different story all together.

Now it would have been bad enough to deal with a half-shaved beard, but they add insult to injury by cutting their garments and exposing their buttocks. This was unnecessary and just cruel.

David is aware of this shame that's now come upon his men, so he sends to meet them and instructs them to wait at Jericho until their beards have grown back. David is wanting to protect them and encourage them.

- Go and enjoy the full moon tonight boys (or is that moons).

## 2. David's Response and Victory – 10:6-19

**10:6-7 - *When the people of Ammon saw that they had made themselves repulsive to David, the people of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Beth Rehob and the Syrians of Zoba, twenty thousand foot soldiers; and from the king of Maacah one thousand men, and from Ish-Tob twelve thousand men. <sup>7</sup> Now when David heard of it, he sent Joab and all the army of the mighty men.***

Now the Ammonites came to their senses and realized they blew it. *We've just put a big target on our backs with David!*

Now instead of confessing their wrong and trying to make amends, they try and stack the odds in their favour by hiring out mercenaries to come to their defense.

- We don't 'right' a 'wrong' by trying to get more people on our side and have people try and defend our wrongs. Sometimes we think if we can get people on our side, then our wrong doesn't seem as bad.
- But it's not about stacking the odds in our favour, it's about recognizing when we've been wrong and owning up to that by confession and seeking reconciliation. This was not the Ammonite strategy unfortunately and they will pay for it, even though they enlist 33,000 mercenaries to help.

David in return enlists his mighty men under the leadership of Joab.

**10:8-12 - *Then the people of Ammon came out and put themselves in battle array at the entrance of the gate. And the Syrians of Zoba, Beth Rehob, Ish-Tob, and Maacah were by themselves in the field. <sup>9</sup> When Joab saw that the battle line was against him before and behind, he chose some of Israel's best and put them in battle array against the Syrians. <sup>10</sup> And the rest of the people he put under the command of Abishai his brother, that he might set them in battle array against the people of Ammon. <sup>11</sup> Then he said, "If the***

***Syrians are too strong for me, then you shall help me; but if the people of Ammon are too strong for you, then I will come and help you. <sup>12</sup> Be of good courage, and let us be strong for our people and for the cities of our God. And may the Lord do what is good in His sight.***"

As they go into battle formation the Israelites find themselves surrounded. But Joab comes up with some great strategy and insight. This wasn't always the case from him as he was often more known for his testosterone than his spiritual insights. But he gets it right here.

Joab puts one group in battle position against the Syrians and he puts another group (under the direction of his brother Abishai) against the Ammonites. And if any one group was needing support, then the other group would come to their aid.

And then he gives a great word: ***Be of good courage, and let us be strong for our people and for the cities of our God.***

- Your courage and strength is not dependent upon your circumstances. This is not a matter of your feelings. Joab says, **be** of good courage, **be** strong! This becomes a matter of choice and of your will. And these are things we are able to do when we are finding our strength in the Lord.
- **Ephesians 6:10**, "*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*"

And we can be of good courage and strength when we walk in support of one another. We need to have each other's backs and come to the aid of one another when we are feeling weak.

But ultimately we need to recognize the power available through the Lord's might! He is more than able.

Joab concludes, ***may the Lord do what is good in His sight.*** Joab had confidence in God carrying out His work.

- It's a good thing to realize that we need to be prepared and ready to do battle, but it's the Lord who will bring about the victory. We do what we can, but we trust the Lord to accomplish His work, and we take confidence in the fact that God will do what is good, no matter the outcome.

***10:13-19 - So Joab and the people who were with him drew near for the battle against the Syrians, and they fled before him. <sup>14</sup> When the people of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fleeing, they also fled before Abishai,***

*and entered the city. So Joab returned from the people of Ammon and went to Jerusalem. <sup>15</sup> When the Syrians saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they gathered together. <sup>16</sup> Then Hadadezer sent and brought out the Syrians who were beyond the River, and they came to Helam. And Shobach the commander of Hadadezer's army went before them. <sup>17</sup> When it was told David, he gathered all Israel, crossed over the Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Syrians set themselves in battle array against David and fought with him. <sup>18</sup> Then the Syrians fled before Israel; and David killed seven hundred charioteers and forty thousand horsemen of the Syrians, and struck Shobach the commander of their army, who died there. <sup>19</sup> And when all the kings who were servants to Hadadezer saw that they were defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and served them. So the Syrians were afraid to help the people of Ammon anymore.*

The Ammonites retreated into the main city of Rabbah, where we'll meet up with them again at the end of Chapter 12.

However, the Syrians were not going to go down without a fight. They muster up their troops again, bring in the reinforcements, and come against David and Israel again.

And David, a true leader, leads the people out in battle.

- Again, God is blessing David, their borders are being expanded and he goes down as the greatest leader in Israel's history.

But in this period of success and victory, David becomes very vulnerable.

- We need to be careful in those times where we feel that everything is going well, where we feel strong and impenetrable. It's in those times where we begin to relax a little where we're perhaps not depending on the Lord as much as we were when we were perhaps more desperate for Him. And it's at these times where the enemy looks to throw those fiery darts and hit us in those areas where our guard is down a little. This is what we will see with David now as we move into the next chapter.
- Paul would say in **2 Corinthians 12:10**, *"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."*

We've finished the first section of 2 Samuel where we've been looking at the Triumphs of David. But now as we get into Chapter 11 we look at this second section of the book, the Troubles of David. It's as though in Chapter 11, David files for Chapter 11 spiritually speaking.

- A definition for chapter 11 is: “A debtor (business, individual, or partnership) is declared bankrupt, but is allowed reorganization to attempt debt repayment.”
- Truly David will hit an all-time low, but God will allow him to continue on because David has a repentant heart. He remains a man after God’s heart. And it will be a time where David can continue to be used of the Lord.

### 3. David Falls to Temptation – 11:1-5

**11:1 - *It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.***

Notice, *it was at the time when kings go out to battle*. Just as we have hockey season, football season, and hunting season, so too, the nations in this day had seasons when they would go to war. Things would start up in the spring time when everything would dry up, food would be more accessible, and it would be much easier to engage in battle. During the winter months, the conditions were not conducive for fighting. Chariots would get stuck in the mud, and people didn’t particularly want to fight when it was cold, so they would say, let’s wait until the conditions are a little more pleasant to kill each other.

So here David sends Joab and his men out to finish up the work against the people of Ammon who were taking refuge in the capital city of Rabbah.

***But David remained at Jerusalem.*** Here’s where the trouble began.

David should have been leading the campaign; he should have been out in the battle with the men. This is why Israel wanted a king, so he would go before them and fight their battles (1 Samuel 8:19-20). But David is staying at home and he’s going to end up succumbing to a different battle; a battle of the flesh.

- David was not where he belonged. He should have been in the battle sleeping in a tent with the other men. It may not always be the most comfortable, but when we are where we’re supposed to be, we avoid a lot of dangers.
- David has been enjoying the zenith of the kingdom. He’s in a comfortable place; they’re experiencing a lot of good momentum in the kingdom. They’re like the world power at this time. But being in the place of comfort is where we are often prone to a lot of dangers and temptations. It’s where we can

easily let the guard down and become susceptible to temptation. David is going to experience that and it probably would not have been the case if he was where he should have been.

Are we remaining in the place we should be? That place for us is always in the presence of the Lord; abiding in Him.

- We can at times think we're good, we can ease up a bit and enjoy a little comfort. But it's there that the enemy is lurking to catch us when our guard is down.
- **1 Corinthians 10:12**, *"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."*
- David is not doing what he should be doing, and in this idleness will fall prey to temptation.
- Let us be daily taking up the armour of God and making sure we are positioned in, with and for Christ.

**11:2-3** - *Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold. <sup>3</sup> So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"*

Here's David taking a nap while the men are battling. Little does David know there's a battle going on for his soul. He wakes up and goes for a walk on his roof.

- Now if you're unfamiliar with the houses in Biblical times this may seem a little weird. Like David is being a peeping tom hiding behind a chimney.
- But that's not the case. Homes were built with flat roofs which also doubled as a patio, or like a deck that we would have today. This provided outdoor living spaces and a way to sit in the cool of the evening and some would sleep out there in hot weather.

So David wakes up, looks to cool down out on his rooftop patio, but things are about to heat up all the more.

He sees a woman bathing. Again, this was not unusual to do on the rooftop as there wasn't really any indoor plumbing. And when you go to Israel today, you can sit on a rooftop in the city of David and look down the valley and see all the

rooftops below you. Now hopefully if anyone is doing any rooftop bathing today they have some privacy screens around them.

But David catches a glimpse of this woman, aptly named **Bath**-sheba.

This word **saw** implies to examine or inspect. In other words, David didn't just see this woman, he began to really dwell upon this woman.

- You see, it's not wrong what you see, we can't help what we see on a daily basis, but what we do with what you see is what's crucial.
- David had a choice in that moment he saw Bathsheba, look away, or continue to behold her. Instead of turning away, David began to entertain that thought, and that's when you get into trouble.

I like the example of Joseph who was put in a similar situation. He was given the opportunity to engage in a flesh filled festivity with Potiphar's wife, but what did he do when she was the one making the advances? He ran! He didn't linger and think through the ramifications, or stay and pray for strength – he got out of there. We would avoid a whole lot of pitfalls if we learned the art of running when tempted by sin.

- **2 Timothy 2:22**, *"Flee also youthful lusts..."*
- And flee middle age lusts, and senior lusts. The reality is this doesn't go away unless you learn to deal with it and master it.
- Paul said in **1 Corinthians 9:27a**, *"But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection..."*

David's already gathered many wives and concubines for himself (2 Samuel 5:13). The guy is not lonely. He's not starving for intimacy. And yet, he desired more.

- We can often think once I get married I'll be free from lust. Or, if my spouse only paid more attention to me I wouldn't be caught up in temptation. There's never an excuse. You have to learn to run from temptation and to overcome these things through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- There is a way of escape: **1 Corinthians 10:13**, *"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."*
- The same stairs that led David up to the rooftop were the same stairs to get him back down and away from the temptation.

Be aware that Satan specializes in making sin attractive. And you have to recognize what's lying behind this – an enemy who is deceptive, who presents something that will rob you of life as though it can enhance your life. Yet if it is sin, it will never enhance your life. It may be pleasant for a season, but its only objective is to destroy. It's not worth the damage that can result from it.

I think David would have run if he had a glimpse of the damage this would result in:

- David Guzik says: "If David only knew that this illicit pursuit of pleasure would directly or indirectly result in: an unwanted pregnancy, the murder of a trusted friend, a dead baby, his daughter raped by his son, one son murdered by another son, a civil war led by one of his sons, a son who imitated David's lack of self-control, leading him and much of Israel away from God."

We can get so blinded to the harm and the consequences of sin. This is why we must never allow temptation to take root which leads to sin, which will lead to death (James 1:14-15).

Job said wisely: "*I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?*" (**Job 31:1**).

Now once David heard that she was married, it should have been an end to it all. But instead he pursues her. Again, he's not starving for intimacy. But his many wives did not satisfy his lust. The problem is he's trying to satisfy the lust of the flesh rather than crucifying the flesh as we're called to do:

- **Galatians 5:24–25**, "*And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*"

**11:4-5 - *Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house. <sup>5</sup> And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, "I am with child."***

David knowing Uriah is out of the picture because he's where he's supposed to be (unlike David), David makes his move. He calls for Bathsheba and has relations with her.

- The fact that is shows she was cleansed from her impurity shows she had just come through her menstrual cycle and that this pregnancy was a result of David's actions and not another.

#### 4. David Tries to Cover His Sin – 11:6-17

**11:6-13 - Then David sent to Joab, saying, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. <sup>7</sup> When Uriah had come to him, David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people were doing, and how the war prospered. <sup>8</sup> And David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah departed from the king's house, and a gift of food from the king followed him. <sup>9</sup> But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. <sup>10</sup> So when they told David, saying, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Did you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?" <sup>11</sup> And Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing." <sup>12</sup> Then David said to Uriah, "Wait here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. <sup>13</sup> Now when David called him, he ate and drank before him; and he made him drunk. And at evening he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.**

David should have been repenting, but instead he's plotting. Right then and there he should have realized things have gotten away on him, the fire is spreading, and the antidote is to confess and repent of your sin. But David is choosing to try and cover up his sin. This only makes things worse as we'll see.

So he brings Uriah back and is attempting to have Uriah go home and spend a night with his wife Bathsheba so that it would look like he got her pregnant. And David pulls out all the stops: wash your feet – make yourself comfortable. He sends a gift of food with him – probably some wine, maybe some nice candles and a Barry White CD to set the mood.

Yet Uriah is showing more integrity than David.

And this must be really convicting for David. You see Uriah was a foreigner, a Hittite. And it seems he became a convert to Israel's God. But what a contrast we

get now between the king of Israel, the Lord's anointed, and this foreigner, who was one of David's mighty men. Uriah was an honourable guy, while David was acting as a deplorable guy.

In vv. 12-13 David attempts one more time to cover up his sin by having Uriah sleep with his wife. This is Plan B – Operation Get Uriah Drunk.

Why was this the plan? Because alcohol has a way of loosening our integrity.

- "David sought to get Uriah drunk because he knew, as the devil does, that alcohol lowers the resistance of moral fortitude. I could tell you story after story of godly men and women who began toying with alcohol and found their spiritual lives eroding. You are a wise person if you realize the danger of alcohol and say, "I have a hard enough time thinking right when I'm sober. I don't need to make it harder on myself."

*"It is not for kings to drink wine or princes to drink strong drink. Let drink be given to those who are perishing and those that be of a depressed spirit"* (Proverbs 31:4–7). Therefore, if you want to be a king or a prince, if you've discovered there's power in prayer and liberty in praise, you won't need the crutch of alcohol to get through a day or a situation." <sup>1</sup>

But even in a drunken stupor, Uriah wouldn't go down to his house. Perhaps he passed out before he could even get there. Plan B failed. So David moves to Plan C – Operation Have Uriah Murdered.

**11:14-17 - *In the morning it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. <sup>15</sup> And he wrote in the letter, saying, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die." <sup>16</sup> So it was, while Joab besieged the city, that he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew there were valiant men. <sup>17</sup> Then the men of the city came out and fought with Joab. And some of the people of the servants of David fell; and Uriah the Hittite died also.***

David knew that if Uriah was put on the front lines of battle he's going to be an easy target of the enemy.

And David is so trusting of Uriah that he even has Uriah bring the letter with his death warrant to Joab. Uriah is seen throughout this account as an honourable man.

<sup>1</sup> Courson, J. (2005). *Jon Courson's application commentary: Volume one: Genesis–Job* (pp. 925–926). Thomas Nelson.  
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So Uriah dies and we see what began as a simple look has turned into the murder of an innocent life. Tragic. Sin has a way of compounding if we don't get a hold of it.

## 5. David's Calloused Conscience – 11:18-27

**11:18-21 - *Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war, <sup>19</sup> and charged the messenger, saying, "When you have finished telling the matters of the war to the king, <sup>20</sup> if it happens that the king's wrath rises, and he says to you: 'Why did you approach so near to the city when you fought? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? <sup>21</sup> Who struck Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Was it not a woman who cast a piece of a millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you go near the wall?'—then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.'* "**

Joab sent word back to David of the results of some of the battle. The results were that some of their men died. He alludes to an account in Judges 9:50-54 where Abimelech advanced up the wall of a city they were laying siege to, but was killed when a woman had a large millstone drop on his head.

Joab tells the messenger that if David is upset at the loss of men, remind him that Uriah is dead also. Basically that his orders have been carried out.

**11:22-25 - *So the messenger went, and came and told David all that Joab had sent by him. <sup>23</sup> And the messenger said to David, "Surely the men prevailed against us and came out to us in the field; then we drove them back as far as the entrance of the gate. <sup>24</sup> The archers shot from the wall at your servants; and some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also."* <sup>25</sup> Then David said to the messenger, "Thus you shall say to Joab: 'Do not let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another. Strengthen your attack against the city, and overthrow it.' So encourage him."**

David had no choice but to act in the way he did. He nonchalantly dismisses the news of the death of his men as, 'These things happen in battle. You win some you lose some.'

- Not only is sin compounding, but David is becoming very calloused in his attitude toward sin. There's no sign of remorse with him.

- The more we entertain sin, the more we become numb and desensitized to it. This is like what we read in 1 Timothy 4:2 where people have seared their own conscience. That's not a good place to be.

**11:26-27 - *When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. <sup>27</sup> And when her mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.***

Bathsheba mourned her husband's death. David should have been mourning over his sin in repentance. Instead he thinks he will make amends. I'll marry her and this will solve it all. In fact, he may have thought people would praise him for taking in this pregnant widow.

David may have thought, I've gotten away with it all. But notice how the chapter ends: ***But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.***

God saw it all. What David may have thought was done in secret, was done before the Lord who sees and knows all.

Ultimately that's who we are sinning against. Joseph said: *"How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9b).*

This was an agonizing time for David and it's reflected in Psalm 32:1-5.

As much as we don't like to be convicted over something, we need to see it as God not wanting to leave us in the place that breeds misery. And it's exciting to see that God will not leave David in this state of sin. He wants to restore him, as we will see in the next chapter.

Maybe you've been hiding a secret sin and thinking you're getting away with it. We never get away with sin. Its very nature is to destroy. God sees all, but His desire is for you to confess it and return to Him in repentance. When confession is made, restoration can happen. Don't allow sin to take root in your life, give it to the Lord and find freedom in Him.

### **Points to Ponder:**

1. Stay where you belong. David fell because he wasn't where he should be. Are you remaining in Christ and abiding in Him daily?
2. Stop sin early. The battle is won or lost at the first look. Don't entertain what you should escape.
3. Don't cover up sin – confess it! Confession brings restoration (1 John 1:9).