

Sleezy Saints, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. 08060730
2 Samuel 11:1-15 and Ephesians 3:14-21
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We have heard part of the story of David and Bathsheba. This is a story of lust, intrigue, and murder. We are not used to hearing things like this in connection with the church or the Christian faith. The story begins with the phrase, “In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle.”¹ Isn't that an interesting statement? It implies that war is a regular thing that kings and rulers do.

King David walked along the roof of his palace, and he saw a beautiful woman taking a bath. What went through David's mind? Why this woman taking a bath in public anyway? She in fact wasn't taking a bath in public. It was in her open court yard, a normal place for persons to bathe. David, from his position of power and height, David from his palace wall, could see many things that normal people could not. He could look down on Bathsheba.

David was turned on. He wanted her for himself. He sent his servants to bring her to him. (It is difficult to resist the king.) They slept together. Now, Bathsheba was already married, and as fate would have it, David got her pregnant.

Bathsheba's husband Uriah was a good man. He was not of Hebrew descent, but Hittite. He was a convert to the Hebrew faith. He was a “Mercenary” in the army of the Hebrews. But look at his faithfulness and devotion. While on leave from the fighting, he did not even go home. David tried to get him to go home and sleep with his wife. In this way, he might think he got wife pregnant.

David's scheming did not work. He even got Uriah drunk, hoping he would stumble home and sleep with his wife. That did not work. Uriah knew he was consecrated for holy battle, and slept at the doorstep of his king, protecting him. Uriah was protecting the man who got his wife pregnant!

This is an excellent example of how bad things happen to good people. There is no way to explain it, except by the greediness of a king: a man with power. David had Uriah killed by sending him to the front lines of battle, and had the other soldiers pull back.

David broke all the rules: legal rules; ethical rules; and religious rules about coveting a neighbor's spouse, stealing a neighbor's wife, committing adultery, and murdering. He did all this to cover up his guilt. In order to cover up small sins, he committed greater ones.

Is the king above the law? No. Nor are Presidents, senators, mayors, town supervisors, ministers, nor police.

Why is this story in the Bible? This is certainly not an example of how to live. We miss the outcome of the story. I invite you to read on by yourselves. The prophet Nathan challenged the great king. He was unafraid to point out the royal mistakes. He confronted the king face to face.

David was plagued by bad luck from this point on. His son died tragically. The great shining king who was so successful up to this point, now seemed to have everything go wrong.

What we don't hear about in this story is Bathsheba's feelings. What about the tragic loss of her husband? What about the tragic loss of her baby?

The characters in the Bible are not all saints— at least in the way we think of saints. They were not perfect. David, as many Biblical characters, was a “sleazy” saint. “Sleazy” refers to material

¹2 Samuel 11:1

made years ago in Silesia. It was considered inferior. It was flimsy and worn. It was thin and didn't cover up much. A sleazy saint is flimsy, worn, and not much baseness is covered up. Everything is all right out in the open for all to see.

Not all of David's characteristics are to be emulated. In fact, there are not many characters in the Bible that we should emulate. Some might say, "If David could do these things, then it's okay for me. After all, he was God's servant, and the story is in Bible." Verse twenty-seven reads, "But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD."

When a good person gets power, that person is often spoiled. It is difficult to keep from letting power go to one's head. Jimmy Carter is one of the few who has remained reasonably humble in spite of the office he held. Since leaving the presidency, he still teaches Sunday school and volunteers for Habitat for Humanity.

Power can corrupt, and the person in power will do most anything to maintain office, or power. We don't have many people to look up to today, either religious or political. We see corruption in political leaders. Newspapers carry stories of campaign money coming questionable sources and used for questionable purposes. We see the wealth and egotism in religious figures on TV and in megapulpits. There are not many people to look up to. We have sleazy leaders. So we hear the lines of some of the rap and hip hop stars proclaiming hopelessness and self-destruction. They also are not examples for us to follow.

We must remember that all saints and heroes are human and not perfect. Emulate their good qualities— the qualities that follow the ways taught by prophets and by Jesus. We must avoid the qualities that hurt and destroy: power, machismo, wealth, and strength.

Many of the things we do "Displease the Lord." We always have choices to make. Life always offers opportunities to sin, as it offered David. We can rise above such opportunities: God will give us strength.

Why are there stories like David and Bathsheba in the Bible? They are not examples of how to live, but rather of what happens when we don't live according to God's will of justice, love, and peace. We must ask the question, "Is what we are doing pleasing to God?"

We should try to emulate Christ. He is Savior because of what he taught as much as who he was. There are times when only weakness will win. The only way is the way of peace and humility.

We know we can't be perfect, but we can try to be better. What kind of examples are we for others to follow? What do we model for our children? Do you want the next generation to act the way you do? What kind of changes do you want to make?

We will make mistakes and commit sins, the same way David did, but we are not condemned to always make the same mistakes. We can be forgiven. We can learn from past mistakes, We can try to be better next time.

Oscar Wilde said, "The only difference between a saint and a sinner is that every saint has a past and every sinner has a future." All of us have the promise of a new future in Christ. We are forgiven. We can be better and live toward the future God gives us.