



# NATHAN: PROPHET OF RIGHTEOUS JUSTICE

WEEK 2  
12.11.16



## FOCUS VERSE

### James 5:19–20

Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

## LESSON TEXT

### II Samuel 7:1–5

1 And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies;

2 That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.

3 And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee.

4 And it came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying,

5 Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?

### II Samuel 12:7–14

7 And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;

8 And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

9 Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

11 Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.

12 For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.

13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

14 Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.



## FOCUS THOUGHT

Because God loves us, He uses people in our lives to correct us.



## CULTURE CONNECTION

### God Save the Queen

**T**ony Blair was newly elected as prime minister of Great Britain when Princess Diana was killed in an auto accident in Paris. Her death placed a lot of pressure on Queen Elizabeth II and the royal family because of the divorce of Diana and Prince Charles. The Queen thought it best to allow Diana's family to handle the funeral arrangements as a personal family matter rather than having a royal state funeral. However, because of Diana's popularity with the English populace and her admirers around the world, an outcry arose toward the queen for the royal family to make Diana's funeral a royal state funeral rather than a private one. The English press had billed her as the "People's Princess." So great was the public outcry that the monarchy itself was being brought into question.

Young Tony Blair was caught between the people who had just elected him in a landslide vote and the resistance of the royal family for a state funeral. It was most difficult for the prime minister to tell the queen what she should do in the situation, even though Mr. Blair thought it was right and proper for Princess Diana to have a state funeral. His ability to influence and persuade the Queen toward a state funeral turned out to be the correct decision for the Queen and satisfied the people of England.

The willingness of Queen Elizabeth II to listen to counsel may have saved the monarchy and changed the cries of the press and the people from that of criticism to "God save the queen."

### OUTLINE

#### I. THE PEOPLE'S KING

- A. The Anointed King
- B. The Gifted King and Prophet
- C. The Beloved King

#### II. THE KING'S SEER

- A. Nathan the Prophet
- B. Nathan the King's Friend
- C. Nathan the King's Advisor

#### III. THE PROPHET'S REBUKE

- A. David Sinned
- B. David Sinned Again
- C. David's Judgment

#### IV. THE SAVING OF A SOUL

- A. An Erring Soul
- B. A Friend's Rebuke
- C. A Soul Saved

### CONTEMPLATING THE TOPIC

For 120 years the united kingdom of Israel was governed by three kings: Saul, David, and Solomon. Samuel served as the initial

prophet to the united kingdom and anointed both Saul and David as its kings. The pattern of a king and prophet association was established with King Saul and Samuel. It continued throughout the remaining history of the kings of Israel and Judah in the Old Testament.

What Samuel was to King Saul, Nathan was to King David. Each served as a voice of spiritual counsel and vision to the civil authority of the kingdom. They were the chosen voices of God to the nation in both physical and spiritual affairs. What Samuel set in motion as the stabilizing prophet to the first king of Israel, Nathan established as a pattern of relationship between the kings and the prophets. Nathan was the prophet of the court to King David, Israel's greatest king, and also to Solomon, Israel's wisest king. Nathan was the voice of righteous justice in times of great personal crisis. Had it not been for Nathan, the everlasting kingdom of David may not have been established. Nathan's voice caused David to repent of his sins,

correct the error of his ways, and continue to serve and lead Israel into greater physical and spiritual development.

A strong three-fold leadership cord of king, prophet, and priest emerged with David, Nathan, and Zadok. With David as king, the people of Israel had a compassionate ruler with their interests at heart. With Nathan as their prophet, the clear vision of righteousness was always priority. With Zadok the priest, the blessings of loyalty to leadership and faithfulness to Moses' law strengthened the kingdom immeasurably.

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

### I. THE PEOPLE'S KING

#### A. The Anointed King

Samuel was chosen of God and accepted by the people as a prophet from his youth. His voice of resistance to a king for Israel was evident in his warning to the people (I Samuel 8:7–22). However, with their insistence, God granted their desire. God chose Saul to be the first king, and He directed Samuel to anoint Saul. (See I Samuel 9:15–10:1, 19–26.) Saul was a warrior, head and shoulders above others, but humble when Samuel anointed him as king.

Saul's human shortcomings became apparent with time. There appear to be no altars in Saul's life. His inferior spiritual stature did not match his superior physical stature; therefore, his enemies triumphed. Disobeying Samuel's instructions concerning the Amalekites, he spared King Agag and some of the sheep and cattle (I Samuel 15). When the Philistines captured the Ark of Israel, Saul refused to go into battle with the giant Goliath. God's rejection of Saul was painful to Samuel, who as a young prophet had anointed and loved Saul as the king. Samuel, now older, had to face the reality of anointing a new king, one chosen of God but unlike Saul.

Anointing David as king must have been a bittersweet moment for Samuel. The bitterness of Saul's failures and the sweetness of David's love for the Lord were mixed as Samuel poured the anointing oil upon David's head (I Samuel 16:13). Years had passed and a new day was ahead for Israel

and for Samuel. David was to be the new king, and Nathan was to be the prophet of the king's court.

#### B. The Gifted King and Prophet

Unlike Saul, whose virtue seemed to be his height and strength, David was a man of many talents and gifts. His strength was that of inner character and courage rather than physical brawn (I Samuel 16:7). These strengths brought him favor with the people and made him a natural leader. God's favor significantly enhanced his natural leadership abilities. David placed his trust in the name of the Lord to accomplish great things for Israel, for with God all things are possible.

Ironically, Saul's servants recited David's gifts to Saul in I Samuel 16:18.

*"Cunning in playing."* A musician and songwriter, David's musical ability comforted him during the many lonely days in the shepherd's fields and later calmed the troubled spirit of King Saul.

*"A mighty valiant man."* He did not back away from a fight. His courage and strength were in his commitment to a cause.

*"A man of war."* David was a man of righteous anger and justice. He drew the sword in defense of righteousness and refrained from using the sword to take Saul's life in order to be right in the sight of the Lord.

*"Prudent in matters."* David was an intelligent person, wise in his words and his understanding of people. He understood both sheep and men (Psalm 49:3). He attracted people with his charismatic personality and winning ways. He surrounded himself with strong, faithful men who were loyal to him and to the nation.

*"A comely person."* He was a handsome man with pleasing looks and personality.

*"The LORD is with him."* In Acts 13:22 David is characterized as a man after God's own heart. His heart was for God and right, for Israel and his fellowman, and for the underprivileged and outcasts.

Besides the natural gifts and talents David possessed, he was also a prophet. His messianic prophesies were scattered among the psalms he wrote under divine inspiration. Peter, in his inaugural sermon on the Day of Pentecost, called David a prophet (Acts 2:30).

## C. The Beloved King

With the rejection of Saul, Samuel had anointed David to be the second king of Israel (I Samuel 16:6–13). But it was not until years later, after the deaths of Samuel and Saul, that he was crowned king. During those years, David faithfully served Saul as a brave warrior on the battlefield. With the killing of Goliath, he became a military hero. Israel loved him and sang his praises with song and dance: “Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (I Samuel 18:7).

Saul envied David and was afraid of him because the Lord was with him (I Samuel 18:12). But David behaved wisely and all the people loved him (I Samuel 18:15–16). Later, Saul sought to kill him, which only endeared David to the people more.

Upon Saul’s death, David fled to Hebron where he became the king of Judah for seven years and six months (II Samuel 2:11). He was thirty years old. Ishbosheth, Saul’s son, was made king over Israel. The house of Saul was against the house of David during those years, but David’s house grew increasingly stronger. Then came the tribes of Israel to David in Hebron saying, “We are thy bone and thy flesh” (II Samuel 5:1). They asked David to be their king. There the elders of Israel anointed him as king over Israel (II Samuel 5:3).

As king over all Israel, David continued his military conquest with victories over the Philistines to bring the Ark of God back to Israel. He conquered the Jebusites in Jerusalem and made their fortress of Zion his home, calling it the city of David. His victories continued until there was peace with all his enemies (II Samuel 7:1). Then Israel rejoiced with their beloved king with singing, dancing, and feasting (II Samuel 6:19). Because he was a king with a heart for the people, God loved and favored him.

## II. THE KING’S SEER

### A. Nathan the Prophet

Three prophets (also called *seers*, “ones who see”) were important to David’s life: Samuel, Gad, and Nathan. Samuel was to David a beloved elder, a trusted friend and counselor, a fatherly figure, a statesman, and most of all, a prophet. Samuel was there for

David during his formative years, and his influence remained with David until Samuel’s dying day.

The prophet Gad joined David in the wilderness when he was fleeing from Saul. David valued his advice to leave the stronghold in the wilderness and go to Judea into the forest of Hereth (I Samuel 22:5). Gad reappeared when David numbered the people and faced God’s punishment for his sin (II Samuel 24:11–19). It seems that Gad remained a part of the royal establishment in Jerusalem throughout the reign of David and wrote the history of David in a book at his death (I Chronicles 29:29).

Nathan was a contemporary of Gad. Both remained as part of the royal court with access to David. Both participated in establishing the musical arrangements for the house of the Lord (II Chronicles 29:25), and both wrote of the acts of David at his death (I Chronicles 29:29). But Nathan emerged as the predominant voice of the Lord during the heart of David’s leadership. He was there when David desired to build the house for the Lord and when David sinned with Bathsheba (II Samuel 7:1–3; 11:1–17). When David had his greatest responsibility to the nation, God provided him with two prophets of the court.

God has always provided counsel. From His voice in the Garden of Eden to the Comforter today, He will never leave us or forsake us, even to the end of the world. “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:20). (See John 14:18; Hebrews 13:5.)

### B. Nathan the King’s Friend

Spiritual leadership is often a lonely place where trusted friends become great assets. David had such a friend in Nathan. At what point Nathan became associated with David is not clear, but he was a familiar figure in the court at Jerusalem. He was there during the early good times of growth and prosperity for the kingdom when David wanted to build a temple (II Samuel 7:2–3) and in the mid years when David sinned and needed straight talk to correct his wrongs in order to continue his leadership (II Samuel 12:1–15).

Nathan was the voice of righteous justice who befriended David throughout his reign as king. No greater friendship could exist than one that guides an individual into a true relationship with the Lord, who is a friend that is closer than a brother. (See Proverbs 18:24.) In the closing days, Nathan was there to help guide the selection of Solomon as David's successor to the throne (I Kings 1:11–30).

### **C. Nathan the King's Advisor**

An advisor provides information and counsel to assist the advisee in making proper decisions in matters of grave concern. The best advisors are knowledgeable, professional counselors or those who have vested interests and personal knowledge of the advisee. With Gad and Nathan, David had God-qualified advisors as prophets with vested personal interests in him and the kingdom of Israel. It appears that David always followed through with what his seers advised. Gad seemed to function in the role of a lifelong personal friend whose heart was with David. Nathan seemed to function more in the pure prophet's role as God's voice to David. Each was there at the right time with the right advice. Nothing is more comforting than a word from the Lord brought by a friend in time of trouble.

## **III. THE PROPHET'S REBUKE**

### **A. David Sinned**

There is never justification for sin. It is always wrong and always has consequences. But there are times in life when it seems people are more prone to do wrong and commit sin. These times include times of stress, midpoints in life and experience, and times when individuals are relaxed from the pressures of obligations and commitments. Neither youthful indiscretions nor age-related tolerances can be ignored. Sin is sin regardless of how and when it happens.

At one point, David chose to tarry in Jerusalem during the time when the kings went to war (II Samuel 11:1). Joab, his servants, and all Israel were in battle, but David stayed home. There was no sin in not going to battle, but there was a vulnerability and weakness in noncommitment.

One evening David rose from his bed and walked upon his roof, where he observed Bathsheba washing herself. He sent for her, lay with her, and sent her home (II Samuel 11:1–4). Later, when she sent word that she was with child, David attempted to cover his sin by calling her husband, Uriah, home from the battlefield to be with Bathsheba. When Uriah refused to go home after David had summoned him from the battle, and instead spent the night with the servants, David devised a plan to have Uriah killed. Joab was to place Uriah in the forefront of the battle and withdraw from him to assure his death. Joab followed David's orders and sent word back to David (II Samuel 11:16–25). David then took Bathsheba for his wife.

David followed the same pattern of sin experienced in the beginning by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and by Achan in the exodus from Egypt. The pattern is (1) they saw something forbidden and coveted it, (2) they did wrong by taking what they coveted, and (3) they attempted to hide their sins by covering them. In short, the process is look, take, and hide. Little thought was given to the increasing discomfort of guilt and shame. (See Genesis 3:6–8; Joshua 7:20–21.)

Though David thought he had covered his sins, he could not hide them from God. The Lord was displeased with him (II Samuel 11:27), and David suffered the consequences of his sins.

The expression "two wrongs don't make a right" is true. Sin is not corrected by additional sin to cover the original sin. Even though David's sin was not immediately exposed, it was not hidden. David's heart and mind became troubled. In Psalm 32, David gave a glimpse of what was going on in his soul during the year following his sin. On the surface, David seemed to be doing fine. But consternation and raging guilt were in his heart. It is the amazing mercy of God that speaks to our hearts and gives us space and time to repent. (See Proverbs 28:13.)

After long months of living with guilt, the Lord sent Nathan to David with a parable and a message. The parable was that of a rich man with many sheep and a poor man with only one little ewe lamb. The rich man took the ewe lamb for a meal and offered it to a

wayfaring traveler rather than taking a lamb of his own flock. (See II Samuel 12:1–6.) David's anger was heated and he demanded justice of the rich man. Then his friend, the prophet who loved him, spoke the truth to David in love, the way truth is always supposed to be presented (Ephesians 4:15), and said: "Thou art the man" (II Samuel 12:7).

Before David had time to respond, Nathan continued with the full story and sequence of events. He started with the blessings of the Lord upon David's life. Then Nathan gave the order of the severity of the sins. First was the sin against the Lord of despising His commandments and doing evil. Next was the sin of murder against Uriah the Hittite. Last was the sin of adultery against Bathsheba, the wife of another man. David knew the Lord had revealed his sins to Nathan, and David believed he would die because of them.

Nathan pronounced judgment upon David (II Samuel 12:7, 11). The pronouncement of the sword and the destruction of the sacredness of his wives were heavy words upon David's ears. He did the only right thing he could do and cast himself upon the mercy of the Lord with repentance. He confessed to the prophet, "I have sinned against the LORD" (II Samuel 12:13). David realized his sin carried a death sentence both by the law of Moses and by his own pronounced judgment upon the rich man who took the poor man's lamb in Nathan's parable.

Following David's confession, Nathan told him he would not die. However, because his deed gave the enemies of the Lord great occasion to blaspheme, the child would die. With those words, Nathan left David, and the Lord struck the child with a severe illness (II Samuel 12:15). For seven days David lay before the Lord upon the earth, fasting and praying for the child, hoping God might reconsider.

When the child died, David rose from the earth, washed himself, changed his clothing, and went into the house of the Lord where he worshiped, beginning his healing process. He knew righteous justice had been done. He knew Nathan was a true prophet. He knew he would live. He knew the Lord loved him. He knew he needed to fulfill his responsibilities as the king of Israel.

Sin stops forward progress. It causes one to cover and hide. It prevents the blessing of God. It inhibits the joy factors of strength and victory from flowing naturally within our lives. It destroys our purpose and separates us from our calling. It also causes others to suffer. Joab spent an entire year or more in besiegement of Rabbah, the royal city of Ammon, with no success. However, when David made things right and entered the battle, Rabbah was conquered and David was crowned with the king's crown of Rabbah. (See II Samuel 11:1; 12:26–31.)

Two important lessons emerge from the closing of the story. First, David forgave himself, a difficult thing to do. Second, he comforted Bathsheba and went in to her, and she conceived another son, Solomon, whom God loved and who was to become David's successor to the throne. Repentance and forgiveness are wonderful gifts.

## **B. David Sinned Again**

Approximately fifteen years after David sinned with Bathsheba, he sinned again and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, which resulted in seventy thousand people being slain by an angel of the Lord. God's anger was not against David personally as much as it was against Israel as His people. The correlation of the accounts from II Samuel 24 and II Chronicles 21, plus the solution to the sin, gives us probable insight to the real sin of David, which was not the actual numbering of the people. The mere taking of a census was hardly sinful. (See Numbers 1:2–3; 26:2–4.) There was no immediate external threat to prompt a military census. And since the solution to the slayings was in building an altar, it appears that the sin was attached to some spiritual deficit in the nation and possibly in King David himself.

Since there was no military reason for the census, Joab questioned the purpose of David's numbering the people, except it be for the king's delight (II Samuel 24:4). Joab's question leads us to believe there may have been an element of pride rising within the people to glory in themselves because of their size. Or they could have begun to trust in themselves rather than the Lord for their victories. Perhaps it was both. This

would explain why the anger of the Lord was against the people and not David alone.

Joab completed the survey in nine months and twenty days and presented it to David. David's heart smote him when he realized his "foolishness" and he asked the Lord to take away his iniquity (II Samuel 24:10). That same morning, the Lord sent Gad, David's seer, to David with a choice of three things as punishment for his actions: seven years of famine, three months before his enemies, or three days of pestilence in the land. David preferred to fall into the hands of the Lord, who is merciful, rather than the hands of man (II Samuel 24:14). So the Lord sent pestilence into the land, which caused seventy thousand people to die.

When the angel of death came to Jerusalem, the Lord stopped him at the threshing place of Araunah the Jebusite saying, "It is enough: stay now thine hand" (II Samuel 24:16). David spoke to the Lord when he saw the angel, and said, "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house" (II Samuel 24:17). That same day Gad came to David with a solution: Go up and build an altar at the threshing floor where the angel stood. David did so, the Lord was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel (II Samuel 24:18–25).

Pride is a subtle sin, but it is just as deadly as adultery and murder.

### **C. David's Judgment**

Righteousness has rewards and sin has consequences. When David did that which was right, God blessed him abundantly. When he did wrong, he was judged with righteous judgment to bring him back into the favor of the Lord. The judgments of God are for restoration, not destruction.

When David sinned with Bathsheba, his judgments were threefold, the same as his sins. He sinned against the Lord, against Uriah, and against Bathsheba. His sin against the Lord was forgiven; he did not die. Forgiveness from the Lord is not a long process. But his sins against Uriah and Bathsheba were lifelong. Uriah died by the sword of David; therefore the sword never left the house

of David. Because Bathsheba was another man's wife, David was to lose wives from his own house. As we sow, we reap; only we reap more than we sow.

## **IV. THE SAVING OF A SOUL**

### **A. An Erring Soul**

Sin is no respecter of persons. Whether a king or a beggar, all are subject to failure and sin. In observing David's life, we realize any of us can err from truth and righteousness. All are subject to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Sin is deceitful, the flesh is weak, and temptations are plentiful. Therefore, we must continually pray for the Lord to deliver us from evil and forgive our trespasses. (See Matthew 6:9–15.) The Lord is able to keep that which is committed into His hands if altars are maintained and His Word is hidden in the heart. The admonition of Hebrews 12 is the key to sustained faith without error.

### **B. A Friend's Rebuke**

Numerous verses in Proverbs speak of the role of friends, especially in times of adversity. A friendly man will have friends and a man of pure heart and gracious words will have the king as his friend (Proverbs 18:24; 22:11). But a true friend is one who loves us enough to tell us when we are wrong. A wise rebuke is sent of God through a caring friend (Ecclesiastes 7:5). It is not easy to tell a friend he is wrong, but the wounds of a friend are faithful expressions of love (Proverbs 27:6).

David had true friends in both Nathan and Gad. Both were loyal friends of David's court, but more loyal to God. Nathan especially demonstrated wisdom and courage in approaching David concerning his adultery. His friendship through the years and his loyalty to God gave acceptance to his rebuke. David repented, accepted the consequences of his sin, and retained Nathan as his friend and counselor.

Later, Gad played a similar role in David's sin of numbering the people. His friendship through the years as David's seer allowed him to help David recover from his sin. And David kept Gad as his friend and seer until his death. A faithful friend who is near with godly counsel in times of trouble is better than a

brother far away (Proverbs 27:10). David was wise in sustaining the friendships of Nathan and Gad throughout his reign for both good and bad times. A godly friend is a wonderful shield in the prevention of sin and error.

### C. A Soul Saved

When Adam sinned in the Garden, all humanity became subject to sin's dominion. Jesus Christ, the expressed love of God, came to save sinners. He gave His life to redeem mankind and offered salvation to all who would believe. The wonder of the gospel is carried by the voices of human beings, be they prophets or preachers, saints or friends, small or great, young or old. The voice of the believer proclaims the message of Christ on earth so the voice of the Lord Jesus can reclaim a soul in Heaven.

## INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

Nathan was exemplary of all that prophets are supposed to be and do. He is the prophet's pattern. What Samuel instituted, Nathan established as a model for all to follow. The prophet's allegiance was always to God first. His friendships and normal functions of life were always subject to the high calling. The prophet's voice was equated to that of the Lord.

The seer's vision was that of divine revelation. He saw what was not available to human intelligence and proclaimed it to the hearers. The desired results were always to bring about change, to correct error and sin, and to establish truth and righteousness. In some cases, it was to pronounce judgment upon those who refused to change or had led others astray.

Nathan was a prophet of righteous justice. His influence reached into the reign of Solomon, who gave the conclusion to the whole matter:

*"Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).*

Jesus Christ is the new pattern of righteous justice. To be a Christian is to be like Christ. We hear His voice and keep His commandments. His righteousness becomes our righteousness; His grace, our strength. His justice is administered in mercy; His truth is given with love; His rebukes are expressed in gentleness with the intent to lift and heal. ■

## REFLECTIONS

- Discuss the advantages of a theocracy over a monarchy form of government.
- How much of David's favor and success was attributed to his family and youthfulness, his musical talent, his military skills, his selection of friends, and his anointing?
- Discuss why David seemed always to respond positively to correction.
- How important is it for correction to be administered by a friend?
- Discuss the long-term consequences of sin, even though it is forgiven.
- In light of the prophet's role, discuss how we hear the voice of the Lord today as Christians.