Grace Under Fire - Part One

# Getting Back Up

## (2 Samuel 11:1-17)

Good morning. I’m so glad you joined us today, because we’re beginning a brand-new message series entitled Grace Under Fire. Now, I know that many of you are living in God’s grace, you’ve experienced God’s grace in your life, and you are thankful for it; but the reality is that we don’t always sense God’s grace. In fact, frequently we have trouble remembering just how gracious God really is. And that’s why this series is so important.

Over the next few weeks, we’re going to reflect on God’s grace, reminding ourselves of the abundance of God’s grace, because we will need that in those moments when we forget the goodness of our God. You see, the truth is that we all have times when it’s difficult to perceive the goodness of God, but it’s in that situation, in those circumstances, that the Bible says,

“These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine…” (1 Peter 1:7).

And so, it is through those struggles, the challenges, and the difficulties of life that we learn that God is faithful and his grace abounds. It’s for that very reason that James, the brother of our Lord tells us,

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers (and sisters), whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete…” (James 1:2-4).

And so, today, I want to begin this message series acknowledging that some of us don’t fully understand the depth of God’s grace. In fact, some of us have a sense of entitlement that affects so much of the way that we see life, but unless you have really been through something, I mean really been through some kind of trouble, some kind of trial, or some kind of scandal, you really haven’t understood what grace is all about. And so, we say things like, “We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.” And “If God is for us, who can be against us?” But many of us stop there and don’t truly understand the context of the Scripture because it continues saying,

“He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things” (Romans 8:28-32)?

You see, the truth of the matter is that if we were perfect, if we were always where we were supposed to be, when we were supposed to be, and always did what we were supposed to do when we were supposed to do it, we wouldn’t really need grace. But the reality is that we do need it, and so if you would turn in your Bibles to 2 Samuel, chapter 11, we’re going to look at an experience that King David had that deepened his understanding of God’s grace. And I believe this is going to deepen our understanding as well, and so let’s read together beginning in verse one,

“In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem” (2 Samuel 11:1).

“One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her” (2 Samuel 11:2-3).

“The man said, "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her” (2 Samuel 11:3-4).

And so, at a time when David should have been leading men into battle, and even though he knew this woman was the wife of one of his soldiers, he allowed his lustful ravenous immoral appetite to overcome his sense of right and wrong. And we discover that this isn’t just a case of adultery, but David betrayed one of his own men who loved him, was loyal to him, and served him. And so, David was unfaithful to Uriah, violating that relationship, and he betrayed him by sleeping with his wife. But not only that, the Bible says that after Bathsheba went back home,

“(She) sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant" (2 Samuel 11:5).

David panicked and impulsively devised a plan to cover up his sin. He sent a message to Joab, commander of his army,

"Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent him to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So, Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him” (2 Samuel 11:6-8).

And so, David brought Uriah home hoping that he would sleep with his wife and when it became obvious that she was pregnant he would assume that the baby was his. But it turns out in verse nine, that Uriah was more honorable than the king, because the Bible says,

“(He) slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house” (2 Samuel 11:9).

Now, when David was told that Uriah didn’t go home, he asked him,

“Why didn't you go home? And Uriah replied, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my master Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open fields. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and lie with my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!" (2 Samuel 11:10-11).

And so, Uriah refused to enjoy the pleasures of marriage while the rest of his brothers were on the battlefield. When David heard this, he said to Uriah,

“Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back." So, Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. At David's invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But (once again) Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master's servants and he did not go home” (2 Samuel 11:12-13).

David’s scheme to get him drunk did not work, Uriah maintained his integrity, and so in the morning David sent him with a letter to Joab.

“In it he wrote, "Put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die" (2 Samuel 11:14-15).

In other words, plan A did not work, plan B did not work, and so David set him up, conspiring with Joab to murder him. As they were fighting, while Joab had the city under siege, he put Uriah on the front lines where the battle was the fiercest.

“When the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of the men in David's army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died” (2 Samuel 11:16-17).

In a conniving, deceptive, and selfish act, David killed Uriah and took his wife as his own because she was pregnant with his child.

Now, I know some of you are probably thinking, if the mighty David who wrote the Psalms, killed Goliath, and ruled over Israel could act this way, what about the rest of us, because we are men and women just like he is. We are made of the same material, the same substance, and honestly this is the conflict of the human experience. Some of us are stronger than others, more mature than others, but none of us are able to live a consistent Christian life without errors, mistakes, or contradictions. And that’s why Paul said,

“We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (2 Corinthians 4:7).

You see, this is where we live day in and day out, the treasurer is holy, but the vessel is a jar of clay. And that’s what keeps us humble, that’s what keeps us on our knees, because this grace is from God and not from us.

What we discover here with David is that he was just a shepherd boy out in the field, just like one of us, but God called him and anointed him to be king of Israel. Now he finds himself in this scandalous situation, not only guilty of adultery, but also conspiracy to commit murder. Of course, God knew and he was not pleased, and so he sent the prophet Nathan to declare:

“This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own” (2 Samuel 12:7-9).

Now, if you’ve read the Psalms, you know that David had one thing going for him, one thing that was consistent, and that is that he knew how to get into the presence of God. In other words, he was sensitive to the things of God and knew how to repent and get right with God. And so, he didn’t complain that the Holy Spirit wasn’t moving, he didn’t pack up his family and go to another church, because David knew the problem wasn’t with God. He knew that the problem wasn’t with the church, and he took ownership of the distance he felt from God, and he recognized that he was the problem.

The problem was that he was in trouble with God because he was seeking the wrong things. And so, when Nathan condemned his actions in the name of the Lord, David said to Nathan in verse 13,

“I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan replied, "The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the Lord show utter contempt, the son born to you will die” (2 Samuel 12:13-14).

In other words, because David had sinned and brought shame upon the name of the Lord there were going to be consequences. The child born to Uriah’s wife would die and the Bible says, “David pleaded with God for the child.” He fell to the ground a broken man because he knew that this was his fault. He began praying, mourning, and refusing to eat, trying to get God to change his mind, because his child was in a predicament. David was a mess because he knew it was his fault, this life-threatening health crisis was his fault, and the reality is that our sinful choices have consequences.

Now David is facing the consequences of his poor choice in a moment of passion. And I wonder if there are some of you who have ever done anything that caused some consequences that brought you to your knees? You know, where you needed God to fix your mess and you can’t blame anybody else because it is your mess. And so, like David, you find yourself praying,

“Help me, O Lord my God! Oh, save me according to Your mercy” (Psalms 109:26, NKJV).

David knows that he needs God to fix this, and so he prayed and he wept until he had no more tears. He refused to eat until his body was weakened, but still the child’s condition grew worse. He is grieved, mourning over the fact that his child is suffering for the choices that he made. This man, this giant killer, this mighty warrior who is celebrated for being victorious over his tens of thousands is now defeated by the consequences of his own personal giant. He is broken and conflicted because of his own unbridled lust and murderous scheming, and you wouldn’t think there could be such contradiction existing within the same person. And yet, the truth is, if you live long enough, you will discover that there is some good in the worst of us and some bad in the best of us.

And here we find this great contradiction living within the man known as the sweet psalmist of Israel, that is the conflict in our text today. The great and mighty king of Israel, the warrior who has slain his tens of thousands, is now lying on the floor in tears, refusing to eat, begging for mercy for a child that is quickly fading away. And the Bible says,

“On the seventh day the child died. David's servants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they thought, "While the child was still living, we spoke to David, but he would not listen to us. How can we tell him the child is dead? He may do something desperate” (2 Samuel 12:18).

But “David noticed his servants whispering among themselves” in verse 19, “and he realized the child was dead. "Is the child dead?" he asked. "Yes," they replied, "he is dead” (2 Samuel 12:19).

“Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate” (2 Samuel 12:20).

“His servants asked him, "Why are you acting this way? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!" (2 Samuel 12:21).

“He answered, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, 'Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me and let the child live.' But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me” (2 Samuel 12:22-23).

In other words, David recognized there was nothing more that he could do about it. He’d been pacing the floor, blaming himself, depressed and crying long enough. And so, how do you find the grace to go on when you’ve made one poor choice after another, one mess after another, and there is nothing you can do about it? Well, David got back up off the ground, and that’s important because there is a way back from that crisis, a way back from that disgrace, a way back from that embarrassment.

“David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped”

(2 Samuel 12:20).

He realized that it was time to wash away the guilt and the shame, washing his face, washing it out of his mind, his thoughts, and his spirit. The Washing it out of his heart, washing it out of his behavior, because he couldn’t go into the presence of God and worship carrying the guilt of yesterday. And so, he turned to God, recognizing that this situation was in the hands of God and as the apostle Paul said,

“If God is for us, who can be against us” (Romans 8:31)?

And so, David seized the moment, anointing himself, changing his clothes, and changing his attitude, because he saw a chance to experience the grace of God.

David went into the house of the Lord, and nobody knows better than David that you can’t enter his gates with guilt and condemnation, you…

“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise” (Psalms 100:4).

Today, I’m afraid there are some of you that are still down on the ground, you’re still mourning, praying, and fasting, trying to gain access to the mercy of God. And the question I have for you today, “Is do you have the courage to get back up?” You see, there is not one of you that has gotten so far from God that he would not welcome you back. And so, do you have the courage to anoint yourself, to forgive yourself, to change your clothes, to walk past all of the gossips, all the perfect people, the self-righteous people, and enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise?

You see, you can’t really praise God until you’ve got a praise you don’t deserve. It may be a weak praise, a broken praise, a praise that just got up off the floor, and I know the person sitting next to you may not understand, but for those of you who’ve ever made a mistake, who’ve gotten it wrong, who’ve messed up and had regrets, if there’s anybody that has a right to give God the praise it’s you. In fact, David said it so well in Psalm chapter 103. He said,

“Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits — who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion” (Psalms 103:2-4).

I know there are some of you that are living by his grace, you’re walking in his grace, and there are some of you that have been to hell and back and God has given you a second chance. And so, if anybody gives God some praise this morning, it ought to be you, because if it wasn’t for God’s grace you wouldn’t even be here.

There may be some of you here whom God is about to give you a new beginning, and a fresh start. He’s going to make a way where there was no way. And David made up his mind and said,

“I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Psalms 34:1, NKJV).

The Bible says, when David got through praising God, that he comforted his wife Bathsheba.

Now, I’m not sure what he said to comfort her, but nobody can comfort you like somebody who has been tempted in every way just as we are and yet was without sin. Nobody can comfort you like someone who has been there and done that, someone who has experienced God’s grace, someone who has seen God pull them out of the ditch and learned how to humble themselves under God’s mighty hand.

And so, the Bible says that David came in and comforted Bathsheba, and somewhere in the process of comforting her, “he went to her and lay with her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon” (2 Samuel 12:24).

And so, it was out of David’s greatest failure, his weakness, his immorality and treachery, that according to God’s grace, Bathsheba would give birth to the next king of Israel, and the Bible says, “the Lord loved him”.

Just imagine for a moment such grace, that God would use David’s greatest mistake to birth his successor; that God would allow Solomon, the successor to David’s throne to come out of the worst moment of his life. If that’s not a message of grace, I don’t know what grace is, and I believe that God can still work some good out of the worst moments of your life. That is if you allow him to pick you up off the ground, to wash you and anoint you, pouring out his grace upon you, so that you are finally able to walk away from your guilt and shame like David did.

My prayer is that you’re able to understand what is going on in this text so that you can finally enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. And I know that we live in a world where there is very little grace, but aren’t you glad that we serve a God who says we can come boldly to the throne of grace, that we can receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need? That the gospel of God is not exclusive, it’s not discriminatory, but that it’s for all who come to Jesus believing and repenting?

There may be some of you listening and maybe you’re wondering how do you get that grace? Well, Jesus invites us to come, and so you just come to him and tell him, I was wrong and I am sorry. I want to do better, I want to live better, I want to be saved, and I want to be whole.

Today as we close, we’re going to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, and I wonder if there are some of you who have some washing up to do, some changing of your garments, some oil you need to put on your face. Maybe the comfort of the Holy Spirit to take you in his arms and show you there is still a purpose and a calling on your life and God will use your mistakes, because he has a plan for your life that will come out of your crisis. Let’s pray together.

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