

1Samuel 7:1-14 – David & the perversion of power

1. The abuse of power...

The abuse of power – is both shocking and not shocking.

Shocking because when it happens, we are shocked at the nature of the abuse.

And yet, not shocking because it happens all too often.

If I asked you tell me of recent abuses of power that have been publicized in the media,

There would too many to recount...

King David abused his position of power and influence in the calculated pursuit of a young, individual, woman.

The terrible and tragic events unfold in our reading from Samuel today.

But today, I want to focus on the characters that were involved in the story.

2. Bathsheba & the consecration from uncleanness (vv. 1-5)

The first character is Bathsheba.

Now, we bust some of the myths surrounding Bathsheba.

Myth 1) She somehow seduced David by flaunting herself on a rooftop. << Ppt >>

Truth is it was common place, during that time, to bath on the roof, because it gave privacy.

Truth is that Bathsheba could've simply been using a bowl to wash, and wasn't naked at all.

Truth is we project our 21st century sex-saturated visual culture onto the text.

Truth is she was performing a normal task, in what she thought was the privacy of her own home.

But notice what the text does say about Bathsheba – “she was very beautiful”.

Now, it is written, in kind of matter of fact, way, not in some salacious manner.

But can you remember the last time that a comment was made about someone's appearance?

- Goliath looked at David – and despised him for he was ‘handsome in appearance’ 1Sam 17:42
- Before that – God says to Samuel – “do not look at his appearance’ – 1Sam 16:7

So when David looks and sees the physical beauty of Bathsheba,

It should warn us, not because of Bathsheba,

but because the king is following the footsteps of Goliath, in judging by outward appearance.

And yet, when God's king, judges according to external looks, what will be the consequences?

Myth 2) Bathsheba was purifying herself after her monthly cycle. << Ppt >>

This is what the text actually says – << Ppt >>

“Now, she had purifying herself from her uncleanness and she returned to her house”

We project onto to text that she was in the prime fertile part of her cycle,

And we project that the author is telling us that pregnancy was just around the corner.

But, her purification relates to her encounter with David

She was purifying herself directly as a result of David having ‘slept’ with her. <<Reflexive verb >>

That is, the two actions that Bathsheba take,

in the aftermath of the encounter with David are honorable.

- 1) Bathsheba purifies herself.
- 2) She reports to David the facts – “I am pregnant”

Bathsheba acts in a more honorable, than God's appointed king.

In fact, the contrast is stark – the person in the position of weakness acts honorably,

Whereas the person in the position of power acts in dishonor and disgrace.

➔ **The Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:22-28)**

By way of contrast, many years later, another woman approaches,
God's ultimate king, and acts in honour.

The Canaanite woman comes to Jesus, concerning her own child

Like Bathsheba, this woman declares a simple message,

– “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David: my daughter is tormented by a demon”

After a very interesting interchange Jesus answers,

“Women, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.”

Jesus, the Son of David showers grace upon this outsider, and restore the child

➔ **The in-grafted branches (Romans 11:19-20)**

And so for us, we are the people of the nations,

We are the ones who have no standing before God, we are the outsiders,

And yet Paul tells us, we have are the ingrafted branches.

We have been brought into the vine, through this Son of David.

3. David & the perversion of power (vv. 6-25)

And so, we turn our focus to David, and the perversion of power.

There are three attempts at covering up his abuse of power.

a. Attempt 1) The cover-up (vv. 6-12)

Attempt 1) – the cover-up.

Get Uriah back home, get him back into the arms of Bathsheba, and then pass the baby off as his.

There are a couple of aspects in this attempt to point out.

First, the false pretences of David's need for Uriah's report.

David asks Uriah – about the “peace”, “the shalom” of the battle. << 2Samuel 11:7>>

And yet David is bringing upon Uriah the complete opposite of “peace” or “shalom”.

Second, when David commands Uriah to “Go down to your house and wash your feet”

The phrase “wash your feet” is a euphemism for something else.

It would be like saying “dip your toe in the water” if you know what I mean...

David is making very clear what he wants Uriah to do.

b. Attempt 2) The inebriated endeavour (vv. 12-13)

Well, this attempt fails because of the uprightness of Uriah.

He won't go down to his house,

because it would be inappropriate for a soldier to do so in a time of war.

So David tries the good old fashioned – get someone drunk to achieve your ends with them.

Stay another day, and then return David says.

David manages to break down the barriers with Uriah – he does get him drunk,

And yet David fails in his second attempt, for Uriah will not return to his house.

The more David tries to cover up, the more David abuses his power,

And yet, the more David's abuse of power fails in achieving its objective.

c. Attempt 3) Murder by proxy (vv. 14-15)

And so matters escalate to David's third attempt at covering up the situation.

Murder by proxy.

David will use Joab to execute a command that will result in the death of Uriah.

And here, there is irony layered upon irony.

Uriah will carry the very letter back to Joab that spells out the execution order.

Not only has Uriah been cuckolded, shamed in his drunkenness, now he is betrayed in murder.

Furthermore, David has experienced being put at the front line of battle by the king himself!

King Saul required David to give him 100 Philistine foreskins in order to have the worthiness to marry his daughter, Michal (1Sam 18:25).

David willing went to the frontline, sent by the king Saul and executed the Philistines.
Here, Uria is sent to the frontline by the king David, not for glorious victory, but for bitter betrayal.

Here we see the devastating impact of the escalating abuse of power.

It starts with commanding the return of one man from the battle front,
It ends with command the execution of the same man on the battle front.

So how do we break the cycle? How do we end the cover up?
How do we free ourselves from being victims or perpetrators of such acts of power?

Confession. Confess. Speak out.

→ David's confession (Psalm 51)

David shows us in the Psalm that he wrote about these events. << Psalm 51:4 >>

→ Our confession (1John 1:8-10)

So too, we confess.

We confess before God, as we do every Sunday, for our failure to treat him as God. << 1Jn 1:8-10>>

However, if you have been the victim of an abuse of power,

Then you need to speak up, then you need to be heard, then you need to be protected.

4. Uriah & obedience betrayed (vv. 16-17)

So, we turn to Uriah – the obedient and yet betrayed.

Uriah meets his end in the most horrendous way. << 1Samuel 11:16-17 >>

Uriah is the faithful one. Uriah shames David in his obedient trust, and his steadfast faithfulness.

→ The Messiah & obedience betrayed (Matthew 26:14-16)

Uriah gives us a window of insight into another biblical figure who was betrayed.

For the contrast helps us grasp the magnitude of the betrayal.

That is, Uriah did not know his betrayal, even when he was carrying his own death warrant.

And yet, Jesus did know his betrayal, especially when it came from a close friend. << Mat 26:14 >>

We feel the sense of injustice, the deep sense of trust being violated with Uriah,

And yet, Jesus knew that he would be betrayed by Judas.

Jesus knew that one of his closest friends would take the price of 30 pieces of silver for the life of the messiah.

→ Obedience in spite of suffering (1Peter 2)

What the apostle Peter writes about Jesus, and his abuse and betrayal is staggering.

<< 1Peter 2:23-24 >>

Peter then instructs us to do likewise – following his footsteps even when we are betrayed.

5. Living between sin and salvation (1John 2:1-2)

So what are we to make of this sordid tale of the abusive of power?
What is the application for us today?

Well, rather than simply point the proverbial finger at David,
And rather than tutting his abuse of power,
As we do with the many abuses of power in our society.

A more helpful approach is to reflect upon these events,
Then turn to God in prayer – for we all have fallen short of his glory.

What should we pray? In light of the horror of the events in this passage?

→ **A.C.T.S (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication)**

Adoration – God is the faithful. The God who rescues us from the muck of our lives.

Confession – We are humbled before him, and therefore it is right to confess our sins.

- Ours might not compare to David's in magnitude from our perspective,
but we all have failed to treat God as God in our lives.

Thanksgiving – thank God particularly that Jesus was a king so radically different to David

Supplication – Ask God to deliver us from temptation and trial as we continue this week.

So let's pray.