



**A**ND the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. <sup>2</sup> The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: <sup>3</sup> But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. <sup>4</sup> And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. (2 Samuel 12:1-4)

With the above text begins one of the most precious and tender parables of the Bible – and, surprisingly, from the Old Testament. Everyone who has ever loved a cherished pet can relate to the storyline. Although a parable, it is filled with dramatic truth and reality. The greed of the wealthy man is contrasted with the humility and pure love of the poor man for his love for an innocent and beloved pet – ONE LITTLE EWE LAMB! There are many, many ewe lambs, but even ONE is important if loved and cherished. I can imagine the depth of love the poor man has for this little ewe lamb. After all, he had nourished it and raised it up with his own children – an obvious sacrifice for him since he was a poor man. He invested much love in this little creature of God and considered it as a daughter even. This is unconditional love at its zenith. The lamb could offer no material profit to the poor man – it could only reciprocate the vast reservoir of

love showered upon it by the poor man. It reminds me of our own poverty in giving anything to God that does not already belong to Him – even our love of which He is the bountiful Source. *Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?* (Luke 12:6) God forgets not the sparrow, the Ewe Lamb, nor our cherished pets.

I have two pet cats – Benjamin and Anna. I love both equally as members of my family; but Anna is my special pet. Not long after coming into my home as a kitten, Anna made it a practice to climb into my lap and go to sleep as I studied for my devotions or watched the evening news. These two pets communicate with me using eye contact. Benjamin believes that sitting before the door and focusing on the door knob will cause me to get up and open the door to the outside – it always works! If I am sitting on the sofa in the evening, Anna will climb up beside me and begin to nudge me with her head. She is telling me to get up and sit on the accustomed recliner where she feels most comfortable. That effort also results in success for Anna. I love these two. They depend upon me and my wife in the same sense that we depend upon God. So, I can relate fully with the contrast of evil and love of the few short verses above. It is a joy for me to know that God relates in love toward animals in the same way by using the above example to reveal a combination of sinister sins by His chosen vessel – King David!

When Nathan approached David with this story, David was moved with righteous indignation demonstrating that he, too, shared a sense of the value of a beloved pet being treated with such cruelty! It reinforces my belief that no life created by God will end in the waste basket of time.

What occasioned Nathan's coming to David with this sweetly sad account? It was occasioned by the egregious sins of David. Though a parable, this story may have basis in an actual event; but it also makes broad illustration to David of the depravity of the sins he has committed himself. It starkly brings to the forefront of David's tortured conscience the enormity of his transgressions with both Bathsheba (adultery) and the deliberate murder by David of her husband, Uriah.

Just what led David to commit such a sin as deliberate adultery and murder? Perhaps David should have remembered his first Psalm as a warrant against his own actions: *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.* (Psalm 1:1) This one verse sets the stage in meaning for all that David later wrote in the Psalms. In fact, it summarizes the righteous counsel against sin and temptation given in Holy Writ.

First of all, David placed himself in the WRONG PLACE! *And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.* (2 Samuel 11:1) Just as Eve should never have gotten up and went to the wrong tree, so David failed in his duties as King to lead his armies. He stayed home! We cannot be sure why he did so – it was out of character for David to shirk his duty. But the beginning of sin is to shirk our duty to God. Was the seed of sin already in David's heart to walk on the roof (which he obviously had often done before) to spark a fire of passion that would lead to adultery and murder?

*And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.* (2 Samuel 11:2) It may have been the knowing chains of lust that caused David to arise at 'eveningtide' – a time when most men fall into the deep sleep of night. Instead, David arose and walked on the roof. Was David already aware of the bathing habits of Bathsheba and knowing that her husband was away at war? Sin is a progression of evil. It does not end at the lesser points of evil.

Step #1: *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.* One should ignore the ungodly counsel of the heart to act on the impulse of temptation! David walked in darkness that eventful *evening tide*. Just as Eve had stopped before the ignominious tree, so did David stop to feast his eyes upon the bathing Bathsheba. He lusted! He presented his soul before the throne of temptation.

Step # 2: *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners.* The progress of sin begins with a spark, and ends in a raging fire. *And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.* (2 Sam 11:3-4). David's sin began with his eyes wide open, and continues in the same vain. He knew precisely who Bathsheba was, and he knew her husband! By every measure of deceit, David tried to cover his sin of adultery with Bathsheba, including feasting her husband and trying to send him home to sleep with his wife so that her pregnancy would belong to Uriah – not David! But Uriah was a better man. He refused, on principle, to go home to the comfort of his wife while his comrades were yet on the field of battle. Sin is far more easily exposed than it is to be concealed.

Step #3: *And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die. And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men were. And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell some of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also.* (2 Samuel 11:14-17) In this latter act, David fell to the very depths of sin. He sent Uriah forth to his execution bearing the very warrant for his execution. *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.* King David began by walking in the council of an ungodly conscience; he continued by walking in that council to a place he should not have done; and, finally, he made himself at home in an adulterous relationship with Bathsheba. He wrote that Psalm, but how strong and pervasive is the will to sin! David FORGOT his own words which were, incidentally, inspired by God!

So, in hearing of the unmentionable sin of the rich man in stealing the darling Ewe Lamb of the poor man, there remained a spark of divine conscience in David which revealed an ability to repent. He was astonished when Nathan said: *Thou art the man!* (2 Samuel 12:7)

David repented of his sin and God forgave him; however, sin leaves scars. His first born of Bathsheba died in infancy, and David's kingdom was in constant wars. Why did God forgive David? Was David not more evil in his deeds than Saul? . . . *when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* (James 1:15) Yes, David was a sinner greater than Saul; but David was capable of repentance – *I have sinned against the Lord* David proclaimed. But David believed in a great God whose Mercy and Grace were greater than sin. Here is a marvelous truth: The Providence of God rules in the hearts of men according to His foreordained purposes. Nathan had previously spoken the Word of the Lord to David in this wise: *Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the shepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel: And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth.* (2 Samuel 7:8-9) What a great joy to know that God is unchanging in His plans for us. He will even use our gross errors to change us and turn us to the performance of His Will and Way. He did for the great sinner, David, and He will do so for you and me.