

Faith in Action

Week 6: Faith that Falters

2 Samuel 6 and 11

Have you ever found yourself in a place where you looked up and thought, “How in the world did I end up here?” Not like meaning to go to Chicago, but finding yourself in Cincinnati. (Shout out to Grant!)

Have you ever found yourself in a place, where, if your life were a movie, they’d show a scene and then there’d be a record scratch and a voiceover that said, “You’re probably wondering how I got into this mess...”

Maybe a situation in life got away from you, or a decision you made kept having consequences that were out of your control and you just had to ride the wave, not really sure where it was taking you.

We’re probably all familiar with the theory of the Snowball Effect. When something starts off small and seemingly insignificant, but then it gains in mass and momentum until it becomes unstoppable. Sometimes it can be good!

In our journey to financial freedom, we used the Debt Snowball method where you pay off your smallest debt, then add that money to the next, and then the next, and pretty soon you’re able to make a real dent in that credit card or car loan that seemed insurmountable.

Other times the snowball effect works against you. Your team goes into the season with high expectations, but then one loss turns into two, then into a bad week, and a bad month and nothing seems to stop it. Just ask any Mets fan and they’ll tell you what that’s like.

We can experience the snowball effect in our relationships. You get into a small argument with your spouse over something insignificant, but it touches on a wound and brings out more emotions until a week later, the gap between you feels as wide as the Grand Canyon.

Life has a way of sneaking up on us and catching us off guard. It has a way of snowballing, and our problems, that started small, gain in mass and momentum until they seem unstoppable. That’s what happens to the person in our text today. If you have a Bible or a Bible app you like to use, turn with me to 2 Samuel 11.

We’re in week 6 of our Faith in Action series that’s based on Hebrews 11, this chapter that’s full of men and women who lived with an extraordinary faith that led them to do incredible things for God. And today, we’re looking at someone who is barely mentioned as an afterthought, but is one of the most significant figures in Israel’s history.

David grew up working as a shepherd on the family farm. He was the youngest of 8 sons and when he was 14/15 years old, God appointed David the king of Israel; not because of his

appearance or experience, but because David had a heart that was completely devoted to the Lord. But even David, this mighty warrior who chased after God's heart, even David got caught up in the snowball effect. What started as something small and insignificant turned into a family that gets completely torn apart by adultery, murder, and betrayal.

How does it get there? Well, if you have your Bibles open, turn back a few chapters to 2 Samuel 6. In chapter 6, David is king and he's married to the previous king's daughter, Michal. In our text, David had just secured the Ark of the Covenant, the holiest item of worship for the Israelites, which had been missing for about 60 years. David was finally bringing it back home and there was a huge celebration. This is what we read in verse 14...(READ 2 Sam. 6:14-16, 20-22)

So, David and Michal have a little marital spat. David comes home after a really good day at work and instead of meeting him at the door to share in his enthusiasm, Michal immediately starts criticizing David and putting him down. And, instead of hearing his wife's heart and trying to empathize with her, David immediately becomes defensive. He doesn't try to validate her concerns and he even goes as far as criticizing his in-laws. Not a smart move, man!

What seems like an innocent marital fight, maybe even like one you've even had, it starts to snowball and it ends with this in verse 23...(READ) That's it. That's the last we hear of Michal. She had no children to the day of her death.

So, why did we go back to chapter 6 when we're spending most of our time today in chapter 11? Well, when I think about David's life, I kind of see chapter 6 as the moment the snow ball starts rolling down the mountain. And as it goes, it's gaining in mass and momentum. And, it takes a while, but we eventually get to chapter 11 and that's when it all starts to blow up for David. Turn there with me. As the story continues, this is what we read...(READ 11:1-4a)

The snowball is getting bigger. David is letting his guard down. Instead of seeking restoration with his wife, he kicked her out of his life. Instead of leading his country and fellow warriors into battle, David stays at home and sends someone else to do his job. Instead of looking the other way, David lingers at Bathsheba and his lust turns into longing, even after he finds out that she's the wife of Uriah *the Hittite*.

That last part is important. Uriah was a foreigner who had moved to Jerusalem and given his loyalty to David. The servant who was sent for Bathsheba put his neck out there and even reminded this king, "Hey, she's the wife of someone who has sworn to protect you and be loyal to you even to his own death." But David is overcome by this temptation and is only thinking about his own desires in the moment instead of the consequences that could come. Which is kind of what sin does. It makes us only think about ourselves and what we want.

Verse 4...(READ vs. 4b-5)

Oof...maybe you've been there. Now David knows he's in trouble. Bathsheba is pregnant and everyone was going to know the baby wasn't Uriah's because he was off to war. He wouldn't need Maury Povich to tell him he's not the father. He'd know. When David gets this news, instead of confessing his sin and seeking forgiveness from God, Bathsheba, and Uriah, David, again, does what we often do. He tries to hide his sin. He makes a plan to cover it up...(READ vs. 6-9)

David's Plan A is to bring Uriah off the battle field and create the atmosphere for him to sleep with his wife. After making some small talk, David says, "Listen, Uriah, go home, get cleaned up, and let whatever happens happen. I'll even send over some flowers and wine for the two of you to enjoy." But Uriah didn't go into his house...(READ vs. 10-11)

Uriah showed more respect for the Lord, the Ark of the Covenant, and his fellow soldiers than what King David did. Plan A was a bust, so for Plan B, David got Uriah drunk and sent him back home, but again, Uriah's integrity was too strong and he refused to go in. And this is where the snowball hits its critical mass and momentum. It's out of control, and David is so intent on covering up his sin that he devices a Plan C, that only makes it worse...(READ vs. 14-17)

Uriah is sent back to the battlefield with his death warrant in hand. And his only crime is that he got in the way of David's lust and power through no fault of his own. David's sin escalated and his pride caused an innocent man to lose his life.

And, I imagine that if David had it to do all over again, if he could have somehow seen into the future and watched all that was going to come from his one act of lust, I imagine he would have gotten back in bed that night and never sent for Bathsheba. He would have squashed the snowball before it picked up steam.

You see, at the point when he saw her, it was only a temptation, and temptation doesn't equal sin. Temptation doesn't equal a woman taken advantage of by someone in authority over her. Temptation doesn't equal a pregnancy and a murdered husband.

That kind of brokenness is only caused by sin and the more David tried to cover it up, the worse it got. His pride, that started as a simple argument with his wife, led to abuse, adultery, a cover up and a murder. That's quite the fall for a man once described as chasing after God's own heart. In fact, if you remove the familiarity of this story that many of us have, it's almost unbelievable.

When we were in Rhode Island, our church plant met in a movie theater. We served in an area where most people didn't grow up going to church, so they weren't familiar with a lot of the accounts in Scripture, which made teaching a whole lot of fun. Well, one Sunday, I was preaching this same text and about half way up was a young lady in her late 20's named Nicole. Nicole was new to faith, had just recently been baptized and this was the first time she'd heard this story.

And, I was preaching this text as a part of a series on David's life, so all she'd heard up to this point was the good stuff about David. How God chose him to be King, how he walked in faith and integrity, how he was a man after God's own heart. So, when we got to chapter 11, Nicole's mind was blown by what was happening. As I was reading the text, I could hear her giving commentary on it. She was going, "No! No way! What is he thinking?! This is crazy! He is not a good man!" It was great!

You see, Nicole couldn't wrap her mind around David, this pillar of the faith, being so selfish and deceitful. So why do we continue to celebrate David's faith and point to him as a mighty warrior for God when he has such a dark spot in his story? The same reason those of us who have blown it can find hope when our sin snowballs out of control. **Your failure does not have the final word; grace does.**

Jesus has the final word in your life, not your failures or your faults. Jesus declares who you are, not those moments you wish you could take back. There might still be consequences for those actions, but God's grace is big enough to remove the stain of sin in your life, period. His grace speaks love and forgiveness over you. He wants to give you new life and a fresh start.

And you can find it through **confession and repentance**. Owning up to your sin and then turning from it. And those two actions not only restore your relationship with the Lord, but they help you restore the relationships with those you've hurt, too. Instead of hiding or blaming or covering up, the only way to stop the snowball from growing out of control is to bust it up through confession and repentance. It's the only way.

...Years later, David reflected on this time in his life and wrote about it. His words are captured in Psalm 51 and they continue to show us today what true confession and repentance looks like. This Psalm has given voice to my soul in the depths of my sin. Listen to what he writes...**(READ Psalm 51:1-4, 10-12)**

While this moment in David's life shows us the brokenness our sin can cause, Psalm 51 shows us how God can put that brokenness back together. David wasn't faultless, but he was forgiven. And even when his faith faltered, David knew that God's grace would have the final word over him, not his failure.

What about you? As you think about your life today, is there a sin snowballing out of control? Is there an addiction you keep going back to again and again, even though you know the damage it causes you and the pain it causes others. Is there something you just can't overcome and it's taken control? A sin pattern that's become a stronghold in your life?

Maybe for you this morning, the answer isn't trying harder or promising to do better. Maybe the answer is confession and repentance. Being honest with yourself, with God, and with a friend you can trust or a counselor. Instead of ignoring it, covering it up, or hoping it'll go away, maybe today's the day that you acknowledge your guilt so you can experience the fullness of God's grace.

Before we move into our response time this morning, I'm going to give us just a few moments of silence to reflect. For you to spend some time praying, asking the Lord to reveal anything in your life that is, or has potential, to snowball out of control.

I believe during this time, the Lord wants to do some work in our lives. He wants to heal some broken hearts, broken relationships, and broken lives, but it starts with being honest with ourselves and with Him. He already knows, and Jesus has already made a way for you to be forgiven through his life, death, and resurrection.

Your failure does not have the final word; grace does. And right now, God wants to speak his love and grace over you if you're willing to be honest with him.