

HEALTHY
DOSE OF
FEAR

A LESSON ON SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

MODUPE KUMAPAYI



Healthy Dose of Fear

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DEDICATION

This book is lovingly dedicated to Christian youths all over
the world.

CONTENTS

06 ANCHOR VERSE

07 INTRODUCTION

Don't Play with Fire!

09 CHAPTER 1

*The Man After God's
Own Heart*

33 CHAPTER 2

The Decadent Sea

50 CHAPTER 3

The Desperate Plea

68 CHAPTER 4

*Consequences,
More Consequences!*

93 EPILOGUE

Be Upright!

ANCHOR VERSE

“Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?”

Proverb 6:27-28.

INTRODUCTION

DON'T PLAY WITH FIRE

I WOKE UP that morning panting heavily. I had just taken a short nap, a really short nap after my morning prayers and nothing could have prepared me for what I dreamt about. There were many elements in that dream and chaos was the order of the day. But there was one image I couldn't forget, even if I tried to. It was that of a young lady of my height and perhaps even same age who was staring right at me as if she was looking into my soul. She had the right side of her face on fire; it was not necessarily melting away but burning still, turning dark and breaking into flakes so that I could see through her face.

Her screams were loud, really loud, but I couldn't go to help her. The bridge that led to where she was I had recently crossed, and couldn't return to. But maybe I wasn't supposed to go back to her, I thought to myself; but then a voice interrupted my thought. It was the voice of an elderly man speaking to me from behind, someone sinister, someone familiar, someone I had met with before in the past, it seemed, but I didn't particularly care to meet again.

He said to me, “We meet again!” Before I could say anything to him, the cry of the young lady turned my attention back to her. Then suddenly it dawned on me. She was my warning. She was what I had escaped. She was who I absolutely could not become. When I got the idea for this book I knew the theme was a familiar one – sin and its consequences. It’s a theme I have explored in some of my recent books. But, I was a bit unsure about continuing to explore that theme.

After the dream I had that day I knew of a surety that if God could continue to warn me about the presence of evil and never ending temptations to sin, even the consequences of sin that ensue, who am I not to sound the alarm again and again to warn others?

So here we go, another book on sin and its consequences. It’s a lesson, a warning! Non-believers and Believers alike can read it. The message, however, is majorly for the Believer, male and female alike, who have escaped the consequences of their past sins on earth, and the fires of hell once, by running to Christ for salvation and redemption but who is still at risk of losing their salvation, and be fit for judgment on this earth and suffer for all eternity should they dabble and continue in sin.

As always I implore you to read with an open heart even if you’re familiar with the main character of this book, David, and the events of his life and family life that are explored here, more so if, as you read, you hear the gentle whispers of the Holy Spirit nudging you to alignment. Please do not harden your heart.

1

THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

“The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people...”

1 Samuel 13:14.

THE EYES OF GOD ran to and fro the land of Israel and among its people in search of a man whom He would choose and make king over His people. His eyes settled on David, the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite. Of David, He testified, on him a burden of expectations was laid, and to him a command was given.

God's Testimony about David

THE things that God knew about the character and desires of the heart of the young man called David, He kept to Himself. But when the time came, He began to make it known to Samuel His servant, a Prophet in Israel, and also to Saul whom David would eventually replace as king, even though He didn't release David's identity to either of them at first. Yet through the mouth of the Prophet Samuel and in the hearing

of Saul, God testified of an unknown man (David), calling him a man after His own heart and thereby declaring that he (David) had His approval.

How did David get God's coveted approval? Was it because he was the youngest of the eight sons born to Jesse? Was it because he had the responsibility of keeping his father's sheep and was faithful at it, even courageously continuing in it when confronted with danger? Was it because of his appearance or height of his stature? Or was it because he was a skilful harpist? Could it be because he was considered by a few to be a mighty valiant man, a man of war, one who is prudent in matters? Or was it because of his disposition as a comely person? The answer is none of these suppositions. Rather, it lies in the testimony God gave concerning David. It was simply because he was after God's own heart.

What does it mean to be after God's own heart? Even though some may take this to mean God was exceptionally fond of David, that David was dear to Him; and they might even be right in this assumption. But I also believe it reveals the object of David's (heart) desire – it was God, God's own heart, as opposed to Saul whose (heart) desire ranged from pleasing self to pleasing man and receiving the praises of women.

David constantly desired God – had a yearning, longing for Him. David believed in God and worshipped Him. But that's not all. He also had a relationship with Him. In fact, he had an ongoing relationship with Him – which he nurtured via his respect and affection for God, his trust/faith in God, a never-ending curiosity about God, and his obedience to God's laws. David was chasing (earnestly seeking) after God!

Growing up in a typical Israelite home and community, David would have heard about God and learned to worship Him, and then being relegated to the back side of the desert where he kept his father's sheep and was often confronted with danger, David had the privilege of crying out to God for help every now and then, and receiving God's help/deliverance. Not only would that have left him in awe of God, it would also have ignited in him a certain likeness/affection for God, those experiences would have been building blocks of trust for him in God. Igniting in him also a curiosity about God, not to mention a desire for God. I imagine he longed to know Him more, to relate with Him, to please Him, to be on His side, which is the right side. And all of these desires of his, I believe God satisfied.

So when God testified about David, sure He was saying David had His approval. But He was also saying they had a relationship, a new and budding relationship which was being nurtured by both parties. I presume that when God observed both Saul and David, He decided He would rather take on an eager and malleable novice who would be more than willing to be a blank canvas that He could paint on and create a masterpiece from, than continue to deal with a skilful/experienced rebel who wouldn't submit or even genuinely repent.

God's Expectations of David

"THE man fit to be king over My people, ought to be a man who desires Me, who desires My own heart, who is eager to please/obey Me," God seemed to be saying to Saul that day when He

testified of David in his hearing after announcing to him that his kingdom will not be established. And I believe I rightly imagined God's unspoken words too, seeing that the position of a king was a leadership position, an influential one, a very serious role. It's a position not to be occupied by one who was rebellious, and actively rebelling towards God, for if a rebellious king rules and reigns, how do we think the people will fare spiritually and morally, even physically? Not only will there be a spiritual decline, there would be a moral one too, making the people fit for God's judgment which often manifests in plagues, famines, destruction and even death.

But Saul wasn't the only one declared a misfit for the throne; so too were all of David's older brothers, even the eldest three that followed Saul in the military. Though they appeared physically fit for the position, spiritually they weren't; their hearts weren't right. In my own interpretation, they didn't desire God nor have a relationship with God, neither did they possess godly character traits a leader of God's people absolutely needed to possess. And if people who didn't even desire God, let alone have a relationship with Him, become king, they will abandon God, and a state of apostasy was bound to be the order of the day very soon.

And so, when God testified of David, He was also revealing His unspoken expectations of David – the young man who had His approval. He expected David would continue to do God's pleasure throughout his lifetime, and would influence the people to do this as well. He wanted His people to desire Him, seek His pleasure, worship Him, reverence Him, trust, serve/obey only Him. God was looking forward to a different rule and reign, even a different attitude

from the people under David's rule. But He wasn't just looking forward to it, He was going to be with David in Spirit to help him achieve it all too, at least for as long as David chose and continued to choose to receive His help (instructions, teachings and counsel).

David was declared a better man than Saul; he was also more honourable than his brothers before God. But he would also have to prove himself a better king than Saul. And whether he would succeed or not was something only time would tell. But, did David know of God's testimony and God's expectations? We aren't told that he knew. But judging by his relationship with Samuel, it is safe to assume that all were told him over the course of time.

God's Command to David

ASIDES from testifying that David was a man after His own heart, God announced that He had commanded David to be captain over His people. I find this amusing because at this time David hadn't even been anointed yet to be king or informed about God's plan and purpose for his life. In fact, this was the first time God was even mentioning He had found Himself a replacement for Saul.

Plus, who knew what David's ambition was? I'm sure he had his own dreams and goals. Which young man doesn't? Surely David had dreams and goals. And if I am to guess, perhaps he wanted to be a musician – seeing that he was really interested in music, gifted at writing songs, and skilful in playing musical instruments. Some might say his music could heal the soul.

I'm guessing someone else might say, David perhaps was content as a shepherd, since he was very passionate about the job, or rather the sheep he kept, risking his life every now and then to protect them from danger.

Well, regardless of David's personal ambition, when God said he had been commanded to be captain and king, it meant first and foremost that there was a demand on David's life. He was being conscripted into God's service, and was expected to obey. In fact, he had been commanded, and had even obeyed; only he didn't know it yet. And obeying will mean sacrifice and work.

You see, contrary to popular opinion, being king might not be every young man's ambition/goal/dream. I don't even believe it was David's either. So when God said He had commanded David to be captain over His people, I believe God wasn't saying that because it would be a position that David had been dreaming of, or an opportunity he would jump at. I believe God was again testifying of David, this time his spirit, that it was the right spirit, one that would yield to His demand over his life and simply obey the command as soon as he heard it despite what it would mean – even if it's a disruption of his entire life – the end of the old, and the beginning of a new life.

Did David yield to God? Of course he did. When the time of his anointing eventually came and he became aware of God's demand, or rather command, over his life, he simply yielded – allowed Samuel to anoint him. No resistance, no questions asked. God's testimony concerning David's spirit had proven true. Pleasing God, obeying God was indeed important to David. Making room in his life to accommodate

God's command/demand proved him to be the man God had said he was, a man after His own heart truly. You can read all about it in 1 Samuel 16:1-13.

Yet it would be a long time before David would be king over all of Israel; in time, he would be anointed twice more – first over just the two southern tribes (Judah and Benjamin formed the southern kingdom of Judah); then later over the ten other tribes up north, thus completing his rule over all of Israel. Moreover, in the course of time, and before becoming actual king at all, he would first be taken in as Saul's personal therapist (musician), even enter into his service as his armour-bearer. He would even be on the run from Saul due to the king's attempts at killing him and the unceasing hunt for David in order to take his life.

David was later to go on to be king over Judah, with headquarters at Hebron, before eventually emerging as king over all of Israel – enough time for God to train him, yes, even build a stronger bond with him through the challenges he faced than the one He had formed with him while he was keeping his father's sheep. But it would also be enough time for his opponent to attempt, and hope to succeed, at taking his life or declaring him unfit for the throne.

David's Life-Long Opponent

BEING a man after God's own heart didn't exempt David from having enemies and troubles. As a matter of fact, he had one enemy in particular who was the chief of them all. Scripture details in 1 Samuel 18:1-9 how Saul became David's enemy. It all started after David's defeat of Goliath, or even

subsequent victories over the Philistines, when the men of war were eventually returning home, Saul and David inclusive. And the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. In their mouths was a song, a song with a refrain that exalted David over Saul.

To be precise, it revealed that Saul's victories paled in comparison to David's. The lyric was a trigger for Saul who became very angry and began to feel threatened – especially regarding the throne. Sure he voiced his displeasure; but he also (jealously) eyed David going forward. Not only was Saul jealous of David, he was David's enemy continually, and remained so until he died eventually by suicide.

Well, something else the Scriptures reveal in 1 Samuel 16:13-14 is that prior to Saul and David meeting, even for the first time, the Spirit of the Lord that came upon David on the day of his anointing had equally departed from Saul on account of his continual disobedience to the Lord, and in His place was an evil spirit permitted by the Lord to trouble Saul. One of the constant themes of Saul's actions during those times, after he met David, even after his slaughter of Goliath and subsequent victories was to attempt and plot to kill him.

In my humble opinion, Lucifer – also known as Satan, the fallen angel and tempter/opponent/enemy/adversary of all God's true children and servants – not just Saul, was David's original opponent. Satan was David's lifelong opponent/enemy; only he worked through Saul who was very much a willing vessel by reason of his anger, insecurities and jealousy. And when Satan wasn't using Saul, he used other people who were yielded to him by reason of the negative contents of their

hearts/weaknesses. And when he wasn't using other people, he played games with David's own mind, giving him ideas, encouraging him to act out his desires in a way/manner that displeased God.

God was determined to be David's lifelong ally, but Satan was more than interested in being David's lifelong opponent. The role of an opponent is to take an opposite position as in a contest. He was to be a hindrance in David's advancement (spiritual growth, maturity) and in his accomplishment of God's expectations and command over his life, and for all of his life. It was why, even after Saul ceased to exist, David's chief opponent was still very much alive and active. Unfortunately, he was sometimes successful in his attempts to lead David to sin.

David Struggles with Sin

CAN a man (or woman) who has God's approval, a budding relationship with God, and who strives to please God struggle with sin and even lose to sin? Well, regardless of all his nice credentials, the man after God's own heart was no less just human. David was a human with flaws, imperfections and weaknesses. He wasn't perfect; and as such, his lifelong opponent continued to engage him in a tussle throughout his entire life. Rather curiously, God permitted this as a way of testing David's character, ensuring his growth and development.

I want you to imagine David's continual struggle with Satan/sin as a wrestling match; it really looked that way. For the struggle was real. Sadly, in the very first wrestling match

with his opponent, David lost. Let me refresh your mind with what happened.

We've already established how Saul became David's enemy; but Saul didn't stop at jealously eyeing David going forward. Whenever the evil spirit permitted by God came upon him – like it often did since that moment the Spirit of God departed from him – Saul becomes frenzied and turns murderous. On one such occasion, with David around playing a musical instrument in order to make Saul feel better, in a sudden quick movement, sponsored by the evil spirit, Saul cast the javelin he had in hand at David; the intention was to smite David even to the wall with it. But in a counter swift move, David successfully evaded the javelin. This happened twice. See 1 Samuel 18:10-11.

But Saul's two failed attempts didn't deter him from his goal of killing David; it only made him afraid of David. Saul must have reckoned that for David to evade his attacks twice, it must be that the Lord was with David, but gone from him. Next, with the evil spirit's help, Saul came up with another strategy. In an attempt to not only send David away from his presence but to also get rid of him completely via war, Saul made David captain over a thousand men to face off with the Philistines in a war.

David led his troop, succeeded at the front and returned alive after a campaign. Still that didn't deter Saul. In fact, nothing could deter Saul, not even David behaving himself wisely in all his ways. Saul became afraid of David and even more hell bent on getting him killed. With the help of the evil spirit, Saul again contrived another scheme to get David killed

in a war he thought David could not win. The bait this time was marriage to his daughters, one at a time.

When his attempt with his elder daughter Merab failed to get David killed in battle, he refused to give her to him as wife. Then hearing that his other daughter, Michal, was in love with David, he saw it as another opportunity to use her as a snare to him. But fearing that David would see through his trick and refuse to go for the bait, Saul mandated his servants to convince David to be the king's son-in-law. Unfortunately for Saul, both plans failed. David valiantly fought the wars, returned victorious as in the previous time, providing twice Saul's dowry requirement for Michal. Still, despite these failures, Saul would not be deterred. His failures only succeeded in affirming what he already knew, that the Lord was with David, a situation that filled him with more fear for David and he enviously hated him the more. See 1 Samuel 18:12-29.

Later on, with more victories won by David in his battles against the Philistines, victories that made his name even more well-known, and Saul running out of personal attempts to get David killed, commanded his son Jonathan, and all his servants, to get David killed. But being made aware of Saul's plans by Jonathan, who admired and loved David so much, David had to flee the palace to hide from Saul's presence.

When he returned after a while – and that was even because Jonathan had tried to reconcile him and his father, thinking the coast was clear – David still had Saul's javelin to contend with following his triumphant return from a campaign against the Philistines. But finding Saul unrelenting, David one night finally fled the palace for good,

first and taking refuge in his own house. We can blame Saul's attempt on David's life this time also on the evil spirit that continued to stir Saul to act murderously toward David.

Even then, David's house, which he shared with his wife Michal – Saul's daughter – proved unsafe. Saul's servants had the king's command to kill him, and would perhaps have succeeded but for his wife who stayed loyal to him, rather than her father. She informed David of her father's plan to kill him by morning of the following day, helping him to escape that night through a window.

David fled and escaped to Samuel and reported his precarious state to Samuel at Ramah and even stayed with the prophet for a while at Naioth in Ramah. Even there at Samuel's place, Saul after being informed of David's location sent messengers to capture David thrice, before going there himself as well and would have succeeded on all four occasions but for the timely and miraculous intervention of God. You can read all about this in 1 Samuel 18:30 and 19. But where I'm really going is first the incident that happens in 1 Samuel 21 and the consequence that followed in chapter 22. I am only laying the foundation so you can see the situation (tribulations, distress, troubles) that led to David's defeat and his opponent's initial win.

With looming threats to his life, David became a fugitive, constantly on the run. After leaving Samuel, before melting away into the wild, he met with Jonathan who informed him of his father Saul's continual interest in killing him. Then David went to Nob, a location that was home to God's priests. There he met Ahimelech, the priest, for help (food, a weapon and spiritual guidance/direction). Unfortunately for David,

he not only met the priest, he also met one of Saul's servants there – Doeg, an Edomite, Saul's chief herdsman whom Scriptures reveal was detained before the Lord, in what manner we however do not know. David saw Doeg, and Doeg saw David. And that day would be David's post-anointing's first official wrestling match with his true opponent, Satan. I see this too as David's post-anointing first official wrestle with sin; only he didn't know it.

His opponent, Satan, must have thought he had David exactly where he wanted him – in a supposedly safe location where he would unexpectedly meet face to face with Saul's servant, creating in him heightened fear/panic. For Satan, the scene was perfect for a tussle with David. How he must have hoped that David would do what the average human confronted with the same situation will do – act out of desperation, take matters into his own hands, try to save himself by compromising his way out of danger.

Oh, how David too, in that moment, while in the tussling ring, must have felt cornered! And who would blame him? He had been on the run and in hiding; and sighting Doeg there, he must have felt exposed. He became anxious, afraid, and more desperate to save himself from Saul to whom Doeg would relay his whereabouts and doings. He was sure Saul was bound to hunt for him afterwards. He felt the urgency to save himself this time by himself, unlike the times prior when God had miraculously saved him in different ways, even using Saul's son and daughter.

In that moment he had a very crucial decision to make: rely on God again as in the past, or take matters into his own hands, even though I'm sure it didn't seem like that to David

who must have felt like he had no options to choose from – as he simply needed to survive. He was truly in survival mode; for when David opened his mouth, he sinned – he told a series of lies to the unsuspecting priest who held him in high esteem and believed everything he said. David yielded to the temptation to lie, as he must have reasoned, to save himself, seeing Doeg was there and listening. It would seem David did not aim mainly to deceive the priest, but to mislead Doeg to think Saul approved David's mission at Nob. David was hoping Doeg would believe his lies and wouldn't go and report his sighting to Saul.

That day, things didn't play out eventually as David expected, though he got all the help he needed from the priest, even a chance to flee. Yes, he successfully misled the priest, but not Doeg, who eventually reported the matter to Saul. The vengeful king promptly summoned Ahimelech; and despite his accusations and Ahimelech's truthful response, he passed a death sentence on the priest and everyone related to him. When Saul's footmen refused to carry out his orders because the condemned were priests, Saul gave Doeg the Edomite the order to kill the priest alongside eighty-four other priests who resided at Nob – an order Doeg carried out with military precision, resulting in the deaths of innocent residents of Nob: men, women, children, even infants and animals alike. Only Abiathar, Ahimelech's son escaped, thankfully. And it was he who told all that happened to David, who in his lament openly admitted he was inadvertently responsible for the killings, a reason he felt obligated to give Abiathar shelter.

Imagine all that bloodshed on his conscience! Was David guilty? He didn't give the order for the killings; he didn't slay the innocent. But he did lie and deceive Ahimelech the priest who believed him and helped him. And it was on account of the help Ahimelech rendered David that Saul gave the order for the killings. So, David indeed played a role, and was right to take responsibility for the role he played which led to the massacre.

But that's not all David ought to be concerned about. He had picked up lying and deceiving, none of which were God's ways nor his prior to now. It was clear his relationship with God, more specifically his godly character/conduct was under attack. But did he realize it? No. So the man after God's own heart lied and deceived, and sadly would also deceive others again, that, alongside another wrong decision he was to make.

After leaving Nob that day, having met with Ahimelech and Doeg, even before the account of the priests being killed alongside the residents of Nob, and while still being fearful of Saul, David got a "bright" idea from his opponent, Satan, though still unknown to him, to go to Gath where (some of) the Philistines – the chief enemies of Israel resided – to seek help. Did David stop to think of what he was doing, or rather, who was steering him in this direction? Because, it clearly wasn't God.

Like I mentioned earlier, David was on survival mode. Worse still, he was fearful; and in that mode, even bad ideas are easily accepted and perceived as good ones if they promise a chance at survival. So, David went to seek help from a Philistine, Achish the king of Gath – a desperate move borne out of fear, and another move inspired by his opponent so he

could defeat him again. And defeat him he did, at least spiritually.

For when David got there, he found himself backed into a corner again! At Achish's house, his servants recognized David. They even called him the king of the land (Israel), repeating the song the women of Israel had sung in his honour. David heard them and was very much afraid, especially of Achish. He was in his territory; it was enemy territory. If Achish was to consider him an enemy and turned on him after listening to the words of his servants, David could die – he was clearly outnumbered. Again, David was faced with decisions he needed to make on the spot: face the situation head-on and in honesty, thereby leaving room for God to miraculously save him like He had done countless times in the past, or act out of desperation again, take matters into his own hands, and try to save himself by attempting to deceive again.

He chose the latter, to deceive once again, in hope he would once again save his life. What did he do? He changed his behaviour before Achish and his courtiers, acting like a mad man; scrabbling on the doors of the gate, and letting his spittle fall down upon his beard so the king would suppose he was mad, and dismiss him, thus enabling him to escape. It worked, or so it seemed. By his deception, David was immediately removed from the presence of the king, and was able to flee Gath and escape any physical harm. But did he flee Satan and the spiritual harm he was inflicting on himself? No. Did he notice that lying or deception was becoming a lifestyle? I doubt he did. Anyways, David now had suffered

two defeats at the hands of his archenemy – Satan. Sadly, David would again fall for the next temptation.

After David left Gath, he escaped to the cave Adullam. Scriptures record that when his brothers and all his father's house heard of his location, they went to him, they and many more people, made up mostly of the distressed, those in debt, and those discontented (perhaps with Saul's rule and reign); and he became their captain. In all, David now had with him at least four hundred men – a bunch as desperate to survive as David was, all men desperate enough to fight their way just to survive. But where I'm going with this is what happens next.

What happens next is that David, still fearful, leaves himself open to his opponent, who gifts him another "bright" idea, this time to turn to Moab (Mizpeh of Moab, to be precise) to meet with the king of Moab – a pagan ruling over an idolatrous nation – in order to ask for help. Again David didn't hesitate to embrace this sort of idea. He didn't question it or even its source; and just like that, he followed through with Satan's suggestion – leaning on his own understanding of the situation at hand and choosing to preserve the life of those dear to him, and by so doing secured for Satan another win. Should we blame this sinful move of David on fear, or on responsibility (duty)? In my opinion, it's both. David was fearful. He also wanted to fulfil an obligation to his parents.

Anyways, many Bible scholars believe David made this move to Moab only because he had ties with Moab. Recall that Ruth, the Moabitess, was his great-grandmother after all. There are others who even believe his parents ended up dying there in Moab, killed by the Moabites. Well, I shared the incident here to see the persistent spiritual attack on David's

godly character/conduct, his seeming ignorance of it all, and his continual defeat, partly because of it. Well, let's keep moving, for there was another temptation underway for David.

After leaving his parents at Moab, David returned to the hold, and God's word came to him through the Prophet Gad, directing him to a more secure location – away from the hold and in the land of Judah – the forest of Hareth. See what I mean? Satan, not God, had directed him towards Moab.

David did inquire of the Lord one time after the events at Nob, Gath and Moab, even after his recent move. He did so before moving to and saving Keilah from the Philistines who fought against them and robbed them, and also to confirm Saul's pursuit of him, and to know of the people of Keilah's impending betrayal that he might have a chance at escaping. But on this particular occasion, unlike the recent one in the wilderness of Maon – a location David moved to after learning that his hideout in the wilderness of Ziph had been compromised – David was almost within Saul's grasp if not for divine and timely intervention.

David, this time, found himself with the upper hand while in the wilderness of En-gedi, a location he moved to afterwards. His chief opponent, Satan, using the situation that would ensue, was hoping that David would sin again by taking advantage of the moment to avenge himself by killing Saul who upon learning of David's whereabouts and stirred by the evil spirit would no doubt be in pursuit of him. Thank goodness, David didn't do that; he spared Saul.

While the temptation to kill Saul was on, Satan had spoken to David via his men – those who were with him at the

sheepcotes in the sides of the cave which was by it, men whose hearts were vengeful against Saul who also was in the cave relieving himself. Satan, through the men, told David that that day was one ordained by God for the killing/destruction of his enemy – Saul. But David would have none of that. He refused to go ahead to kill Saul, however it seemed good an idea to his men. But, without thinking, David yet did something he should not have done – he cut off a part of Saul's skirt/robe without the king noticing.

Though the act relieved him somewhat, his conscience pricked him vehemently, even when he didn't kill Saul. He was fully convinced hurting Saul in any way at all won't be the right thing to do. He called Saul his master, even the Lord's anointed. This is the main reason he refused to allow his men to rise up against Saul. You can read all about these events in 1 Samuel 23 and 24. God must have been pleased with David sparing Saul that day. It was a major win for David. But yet another test was soon underway. This time, pitifully, David first failed in his heart. But before he would fail in his action and avenge himself by committing murder, he received God's timely help. Here is the story.

This time Satan, David's opponent, decided to move David to act via an offense, not an idea, an insult uttered by a new vessel, an individual of the house of Caleb, a man in Maon called Nabal, described as having possessions in Carmel, being very great, yet churlish and evil in his doings. Satan had hoped that David would be so infuriated by Nabal's churlish behaviour, he would avenge himself, kill Nabal and thereby become guilty of the sin of murder.

It so happened that David, while in the wilderness, had heard that Nabal sheared his sheep in Carmel. He had then sent ten of his young men to Nabal, greeting Nabal in his name and presenting a request to him. He had hoped to receive kindness from Nabal, whose great possession of sheep David's men had protected against marauders in that region. All Nabal was expected to do was reciprocate David and his men with some provisions for their kindness towards Nabal's shepherds and their flock. But Nabal showed disdain for David, and disregarded his request.

When the impolite reply of Nabal got to David, he was offended – his kindness had been repaid with evil. He was moved to avenge himself – to kill Nabal, even exterminate the males in Nabal's household. He was ready to commit the act with his men; yes, he would sin, and even lead his men, plus the youths among them to sin alongside him – something a man who had God's approval and who was chosen to be leader of God's people ought not to do. Thankfully, God intervened through the timely actions of Abigail, Nabal's wife.

When she learns of everything through one of Nabal's young servants, and what was bound to happen, Abigail intercepted David, his plans and his men with her humility, wisdom and generosity, thus preventing him and his men from sinning. Nabal did eventually die but not by David's hands. You can read about it in 1 Samuel 25. A close one, right? So far, David had truly only won once, some might argue twice. All right, let's say twice; but there was a third win too! Let's come to that.

David's third win over his opponent had to do with Saul in the wilderness of Ziph. David's location had been

compromised yet again by the Ziphites, but David still had the upper hand against Saul. Satan was hoping that David would take this as another opportunity to avenge himself by killing Saul. But again, David wouldn't do that. Like in the first instance, David's opponent again speaks to him through his companion, this time a man named Abishai, who had gone down with him to the camp of Saul and who told David that God had this time delivered his enemy – Saul – into his hands. But, since David wouldn't kill him by himself, he should permit him, Abishai, to do so; and he would smite Saul while asleep with his men, using the spear. Abishai was sure he wouldn't miss the first time.

But David refused to issue the command, insisting that Saul was the Lord's anointed. If they killed him, David argued, they would be guilty. He was right to say this. Instead of killing him, David suggested they leave Saul to God, and that Saul's own time of death would come, or he might even die in battle, David reasoned. So, instead of killing Saul, they left with his spear (which David eventually returned) and a cruse of water. This was a third win on David's account. The score so far was even: 3 for Satan, 3 for David – a tie. The account of David sparing Saul's life a second time can be found in 1 Samuel 26. But there's still yet another temptation.

Scriptures reveal that after David spared Saul and Saul seemed to have let him be, David fled to the Philistines and lived among them. How did it begin? It again began with fear. David, while still being fearful, had a conversation with his opponent Satan who by now you must know is also the tempter. He provided David with a breakdown of the situation and “the only way out” which David must absolutely

take, if he was to evade Saul, danger and live. Repeating his opponent's words to himself - in his heart, David told himself that one day he would surely die by the hand of Saul – a lie of the enemy!

We know that the promise of God was hovering over David's life, a promise yet unfulfilled, one that must, as a matter of fact, be fulfilled; and if it is to be indeed fulfilled and David would replace Saul, how will God permit Saul to take David's life? Next, David declared the only way out was what Satan had suggested. He said to himself that there is nothing better for him to do than to speedily escape into the land of the Philistines. He believed that while there, away from the coast of Israel Saul will give up searching for him, allowing him to slip out of Saul's hand. But at what cost?

Well, David didn't think of what it would cost him spiritually. He did relocate. He arose, took with him the six hundred men that were with him, every man with his household, even David with his two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail, and went back to Achish (a Philistine), the son of Maoch, king of Gath, and lived with Achish in Ziklag, the place Achish gave him after David had requested for a dwelling place.

How did David secure Achish's help this time? I strongly believe he lied to him that he and his men had defected. He most likely deceived him further by pledging his allegiance to him. And that would be the first of many other lies David would tell Achish. He had picked up lying and deceiving again just so he could survive – another win for his opponent.

Many people believe David did in fact defect because he seemed to have determined in his heart to follow Achish into

battle and act as a bodyguard to him. But I don't agree with this view. I believe that while the idea might have been whispered to him by his opponent Satan, and he might have even been tempted to, he never really would have truly defected. And had he followed Achish into battle, as it almost happened, I believe David was still carrying on with his pretence, possibly hoping God would intercept him before he really had to fight alongside Achish. Indeed, God did just that. He intercepted those plans using the princes of the Philistines who mistrusted and dismissed David and his men.

I believe David was just trying to survive by keeping up appearances, lying and deceiving. All sins, nonetheless. You can read all about it in 1 Samuel 27, 28:1-2 and chapter 29. In the end, Saul dies before he could kill David, contrary to the lies Satan had whispered to David when he moved him to flee to the land of the Philistines for safety – a location he dwelt in for at least a full year and four months. The account of Saul's death is in 1 Samuel 31.

But in all this, did you notice that David's lifelong opponent had been Saul's too? Not only had Satan initially led Saul to sin, but he continued to do so; and worse still, he was constantly trying to get him killed as well. In the end he did get Saul killed, just not by David's sword but Saul's own sword. I believe he was hoping to kill two birds at a go! Destroy David and Saul. Anyways, so far in their tussle, David was suffering losses, and Satan was in the lead. But there would be more temptations for David which, ordinarily, should serve as more opportunities for David to win. It would be at other opportune times, and his opponent would employ several other strategies. Satan would show up again; but

whether or not he wins or loses would be David's to decide. Would he continue to be the man after God's own heart or was that now a thing of the past? We'll find out soon.

2

THE DECADENT SEA

“And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her...” 2 Samuel 11:4.

DAVID HAD SECRETLY BEEN ANOINTED as king over all Israel by the Prophet Samuel at about age seventeen; but being anointed king and being enthroned as king, as David would discover, were two different things. It would be thirteen years after before David would be anointed the second time as king, not over all of Israel yet, just over the house of Judah, by the men of Judah, after the death of Saul. His base was then in Hebron – a location he had moved to after inquiring of the Lord while still in Ziklag – the Philistine city given to him by King Achish of Gath, this was after his defeat of the Amalekites recorded in 1 Samuel 30 and news of the death of Saul reached him, see 2 Samuel 1.

David would reign over Judah for seven years and six months, until, finally, while still at Hebron, he was again anointed king, this time by the elders of Israel over all Israel, and this would be after the murder of Ish-bosheth, Saul’s son

who had been crowned king over all Israel by Abner captain of Saul's army. David would eventually move to Jerusalem which he conquered, and there began a thirty-three-year reign; making his total reign approximately forty years. The initial thirteen years gap and the eventual seven years and six months before becoming king over all of Israel were all waiting periods. See 2 Samuel 2:1-7 and 2 Samuel 5:1-5.

The period of waiting for David was the time of his making; God was going to bring a worthy king out of him. But He would do so by forming him, shaping him and altering him via the challenges, even temptations he would be confronted with and the exploits he would do. Indeed, God was working on, and in the man David during those times. But not all of his members (body parts) were completely yielded to God for transformation, as we've seen so far with his lips and heart and will yet see; and those parts of him not yielded became, or rather, continued to be instruments of unrighteous deeds in David.

David's Multiple Wives

SAUL'S jealousy and hatred for David had made him bring up the topic of marriage to him while David was still living in the palace. David wasn't even looking to get married at the time. And although Saul had offered up his first daughter Merab to David as reward for waging war against some Philistines and defeating them, he eventually cheated David by giving her over to someone else after David had returned from the war and had not died in the war as Saul had hoped. Yet in the end, David's first wife still came from Saul's family. Saul gave his

other daughter Michal who was in love with David to be his wife; and this time too, David had to fight the Philistines (and returned triumphant with two hundred foreskins of the Philistines – twice as much as Saul had requested – as “dowry”) before he could be married. But Michal was not David’s only wife.

Away from Saul’s palace and presence, David, while on the run and when in Hebron where he became king of Judah, takes on more wives. Abigail of Carmel received a proposal from David and became his second wife after she had lost her husband, Nabal. Next, David marries Ahinoam of Jezreel. (Although some Bible scholars believe David might have married Ahinoam before Abigail). David’s fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh wives in no particular order were Maacah, Haggith, Abital and Eglah. And besides Michal, they all bore him children (2 Samuel 6:23). You can find the information in 1 Samuel 18:27, 25:42-43, and 2 Samuel 3:2-5. And after David left Hebron and became king over all Israel and Judah, Scriptures reveal in 2 Samuel 5:13 that he took (acquired) more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem; and they bore him more sons and daughters.

Why did David marry multiple women? There are various reasons why people marry many wives, even David would have many reasons too. David for one had gotten married to Michal just so he could be the king’s son in law. So, that marriage was for him a means to earn a political and social status. But when he had fled from Saul, Saul had given his wife Michal over to another man (See 1 Samuel 25:44), creating a void – room for another wife (even though much

later David would request for Michal, and she would return and be regarded as David's wife, see 2 Samuel 3:14-16).

While on the run, David encounters and eventually marries Abigail (Nabal's wife) when she became recently widowed. Perhaps he admired certain qualities about her (her good understanding and beautiful countenance), or felt pity for her when her husband died and wanted to provide her with companionship and support.

On the third wife, Ahinoam of Jezreel, the Scripture only reveals that David took her as wife; but a deep dive into her wealthy background proves that this union could have been for political reasons too – as proof of a treaty. But what about the remaining four women: Maacah, Haggith, Abital and Eglah? We aren't told much about the circumstances surrounding their union with David. But judging by Maacah's wealthy background, seeing that she was a princess, this could mean this marriage too was for political reasons – as proof of a treaty. As for the other women, Haggith, Abital and Eglah, it could have been for "practical" reasons only known to David. Perhaps, he did so for social status – it was a norm for pagan kings to have many wives. But was David a pagan king? Of course no.

Yet there's still the presence of the other women he took out of Jerusalem, some as concubines, others as wives; perhaps, these ones he took to himself just so he could continue to grow his family?

David's Weakness

DESPITE the reasons David may provide for why he would take on multiple women as wives, his willingness to become a polygamist, coupled with his other sins, e.g. lying and deception, as we've covered, reveals that he wasn't a perfect man with regards to adhering to God's law, even the one concerning marriage (Deuteronomy 17:17). It seems apparent that another of his weakness was sexual lust, a feature of his that would create future difficulties for him from achieving all-round success. He loved women, took pleasure and delighted in them, especially the sexual satisfaction they could give him. He never seemed ever satisfied with sexual pleasures as he moved from one woman to another, even those he was not married to.

Only one young woman – Abishag – associated with David in his old age did he not have sexual intercourse with; and that, perhaps, because he was too old to have sex, and had finally given up trying. Or, was it that he finally learned discipline/self-control to rein in his weakness, something his destiny desperately needed all his life? But the suggestion by his servants to bring her to David, and her very presence in David's life even in his old age, was proof that this particular weakness of David was open secret – his courtiers and servants knew it as part of his life for a long time. See 1 Kings 1:1-4.

David's Great Sin

DAVID had at one time been a passionate shepherd. He was a skilful harpist and a valiant warrior too. By his insatiable

proclivity for sex, he could also be described as a swimmer, a diver into the decadent sea of sexual pleasure. With such unbridled appetite for sex, David often took his plunge, with the women in his reach, as it were damning the consequences. There is no other explanation why he ended up with multiple wives and concubines, even others outside his harem.

David's unchecked and uncontrolled sexual urges, and his often deep dive into the decadent sea to satisfy his cravings came at some cost. Though it appeared unknown to him, his relationship with God suffered from his escapades. In fact, at some point he was at risk of total loss and eternal damnation forever had God not intervened and disciplined him.

Perhaps you're asking the question, as I jolly well do: Can a man (or woman) who clearly has a relationship with God, has His approval, presence and help, one chosen and anointed by God to occupy a position of leadership over the people of God, and already occupying and functioning in it, have a weakness such as unbridled sexual lust? Here's the related question: Can that weakness defeat that person of God once, twice, even time and again? Yes. Yes and yes again, as David's case shows.

As we now know, despite David's unfaithfulness – his habit of lying and deception, his collection of wives, even against all odds (Saul's persistent hunt, Abner's and even Ish-bosheth's brief contention), God – by His sovereign benevolence – remained faithful to His promise to David. He had given him a promise that he would be king when he was anointed secretly many years before, by Samuel; and He kept that promise. He made David king over all of Israel after

David had ruled in Hebron over Judah. Count that as one of David's victories.

There were other victories to follow: e.g. David conquered Jerusalem, built his palace, defeated the Philistines, successfully brought the Ark eventually to Jerusalem. God even made a fresh covenant with him after turning down his desire to build a house for the Ark of God. He had many more victories in battles, he showed kindness to Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, and had more military victories over the Ammonites.

But several years into David's reign, his opponent – Satan – resurfaced; this time, David was at ease, not on the run, not even in battle/war. I wish I can report that David trounced his enemy. But no, Satan got him, and got him squarely. As to be expected, Satan's chosen vessel and weapon against David was a woman – David's established weakness. Through this vulnerability of David, Satan was going to fulfil his threefold mission: to steal, to kill and to destroy! He succeeded against David in more than one way, and in more than one family!

Scriptures record in 2 Samuel 11 that it all happened at a time when kings went to battle. At this particular time David had a "bright" idea, one we can already imagine the source. The idea not to go to battle was Satan's scheme. He convinced David to stay back in Jerusalem, in his home. He instead sent Joab, his head of army, and all the Israelite army to battle the Ammonites. He didn't stay home to rest – if there was such a need at all – but to indulge in lustful gaze at a naked woman across the fence of his palace. It was a perfect scene for what Satan intended.

One evening, while his men were out in the battlefield fighting, destroying the Ammonite country and besieging Rabbah, David, tired of being cooped up in the house and laying on his bed, decided to take a walk. He arose from his bed and walked on the roof of his palace, most likely to receive fresh air. And there in his eager view was a beautiful woman – Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite – taking her bath within the confines of her house. David most likely watched her bathe until she was done; and even when out of sight, she wasn't out of his mind. So David sent and inquired about her, and it was revealed to him her identity, and the fact that she was married – she was wife to Uriah the Hittite.

That last information ought to have been David's way out. Bathsheba was a married woman, and should be off limits. But for a man captured by sexual lust, David needed very little prodding. Satan had him cornered once again. Satan now had David in the throes of lustful fervour. The king was bent now on satisfying his lust.

Yes, David had indulged himself with different women in the past; but he hadn't gone after and snatched any man's wife, right? This was a whole new low he was about to sink to. There are some who believe that Ahinoam, David's wife, was Saul's wife first. But that's just an assumption; two different women can bear the same name. Plus, Ahinoam is distinguished as Ahinoam of Jezreel.

So no, David had never done such a thing before. But there was a first time for everything, and this would be David's first attempt at another man's wife. The Scripture records that after David learns of this information he simply ignores the

boundary line that Bathsheba's marriage had drawn, even the line God's law had drawn, and simply sends messengers to fetch her.

It was a perfect set-up. The woman herself did not offer any resistance when King David made his move on her. He took the plunge, had a good swim in the decadent sea, till he had his fill of the momentary pleasure. Perhaps it was just that once – or did he make Bathsheba repeat her visit a few more times?

But whether he thought his secret deleterious adventure with Bathsheba was done with, Satan wasn't done with him yet. The events that were to follow became uncontrollable. Bathsheba had conceived, a dimension to the whole affair David hadn't bargained for. So began David's downward spiral in the path of murder, in addition to his adultery. But for his contrite heart when God sent Prophet Nathan to confront him, David would have been destroyed.

But we must fill in the gap! For there is a gap – the time lapse between when David learns of Bathsheba's marital status, and when he sent for her anyway. David had to have had a conversation within himself, which in reality in this instance is conversation with his opponent, Satan.

Question is, how did Satan get David to ignore the fact of Bathsheba being married to Uriah, one of his faithful soldiers, and also ignore God's law that forbids adultery? The most obvious answer is that Satan did so by declaring to David that he was king over all Israel – he was not just any ordinary person, and occupied the highest position any Israelite could – and so could take such liberties! Satan must have convinced David that he had the power to do as he pleased, that he had

freedom from any restraint or specified limits, and that he alone could enjoy such privileges without being held accountable by anyone.

Even if David wasn't completely sold to these ideas still, Satan would have simply convinced him to do it in secret, as it were, what people didn't know they couldn't judge him for. And if David thought about God and worried about how God would feel should he take this deep dive into adultery, I believe Satan would have convinced him he could always ask for forgiveness later, and fix his relationship with God, assuring him that God would definitely forgive him.

Here is Satan's trap for many people who like David wilfully take the fatal plunge into temptation. Satan tells them, it's easier to ask for forgiveness than for permission. And, so far, God had been forgiving, right? He convinces them, this would be a one-time thing, not a repetitive sin, and God would surely forgive again. But that plunge into sin can prove fatal, irrevocable, and damnable in hell.

After such conversation with Satan, David heeded Satan's voice and sends for Bathsheba, his messengers took her and brought her to David – secretly of course. When with her, his lust becomes predominant, clouding any sense of reasoning left, stifling the voice of God's Spirit whom I believe would have still attempted to restrain him. David had wanted only to satisfy his sexual urge/desire with the beautiful Bathsheba. He wasn't in love with her or anything like that. So, there was no promise of marriage; it was pure lust! Sinful indulgence. That's what it was, just to lay with her and satisfy his sexual desire. It appeared to be consensual, for if it was a rape

situation, Scriptures would have revealed it. And afterwards she returned to her house.

There are many, including myself, who believe Bathsheba wasn't just one hapless woman who had to yield to the king's command or face dire consequences. Her grandfather was Ahitophel – one of David's wisest counsellors whose loyalty David would have prized, someone David wouldn't have wanted to offend by threatening/hurting/harming his granddaughter!

Bathsheba, I believe, was perhaps the sex-starved wife of a soldier that had been away for a while. She was even possibly an ambitious woman who was yielded to Satan's influence and who was more than willing to play the role of the seductress in order to elevate her status. Why settle for a mere soldier when you can get the king, right? I have many theories of how she could have been taking that bath in the evening time when David was likely to be up on that roof, one of such is being in cahoots with one of David's servants who could have given her information on David's weakness and his usual doings, even his plans to relax on the rooftop that day. But, let's move on.

Again responding to David's invitation without putting up so much as a fight despite being married, and even at a time when she was fertile – after her menses – raises more doubts about her in my mind. And if she indeed put up a fight, Scriptures would have recorded it as was done for Dinah, Tamar and others who were forced and raped. Bathsheba was not raped. All of these back up my theory of Bathsheba being an ambitious seductress.

What even seals my prognosis is how she goes on to send news to David that she was pregnant, upon missing her period and discovering signs of pregnancy! It might have been the most devastating news for David. But for Bathsheba, I believe she was making a happy declaration! She knew it would only be a matter of time before she became one of the concubines, if not the wives of the king. She would leave the matter of her husband Uriah for David to handle.

The Domino Effect

DAVID had committed one sin, just one sin, with Bathsheba – adultery. And it had resulted in conception of a child. But that wasn't all. That sin would lead to yet another sin – murder! Please keep reading.

The news of expecting a child ought to be a good one, and received happily, but not in this situation, especially because it meant David's presumptuous and hidden sin would be discovered – made public, even to Uriah. I reckon that upon hearing this news, David must have been in extreme emotional distress! Is someone wondering how quickly a woman can discover she is pregnant? Believe it or not, as early as ten to eleven days after conception, research says! But the most popular way is when the next menstrual period is late.

If it's the case of the latter with Bathsheba, then it meant the one-night encounter had happened several weeks before. Anyway, while Bathsheba would be revelling in the news, David was in distress, forced to continue to tumble down the path of sin and destruction. And what he does next proves this.

Upon hearing the news, David's next step was to attempt to continue to cover his sin via deception. Feeling cornered and frantic to make sure that that one night of pleasure doesn't ruin his reputation, he sends a message to Joab asking him to send Uriah to him. Joab obeys. And when with Uriah, David begins to hatch his private plan which is to pass off Bathsheba's pregnancy as Uriah's.

After asking about Joab, the soldiers and the war, and whether it was in their favour, David gives Uriah a command, or rather, permission to go to his house and refresh himself. David even sends him off with a present – a mess of meat (quantity of food). “A mess of meat” indeed! How ironic, for he had made a mess of his marriage!

But, unfortunately for David, Uriah was an outstanding soldier. He had his priorities right. His heart was on God, the nation, and even with Joab his commander, and the other men at the warfront. He couldn't go home and refresh and indulge himself with food and drinks, then lay with his wife. He opted to stay at the door of the king's house with all the servants of David. When David learned of this, and after he spoke with Uriah, he realized he was in real trouble than he thought! This wasn't going to be an easy cover-up. But he was determined to try again.

After that day, David permitted Uriah to stay back in Jerusalem for at least one more day. Later on he called Uriah to a feast, a private meal just for the two of them. There David made sure Uriah ate and drank so much till he was thoroughly drunk, hoping that would do the trick, make the soldier easily pliable and made to go home to be with his wife. And when he dismissed him thinking he would surely go home, Uriah

even in his drunken state remained a true and loyal soldier. He went out to lie on his bed with David's servants, refusing to go home still!

In the morning when David learnt of this, he was worse than frantic. He became desperate, and wanted a quick end to his unfolding nightmare! It had been just one night of pleasure, just one night! But he seemed trapped in the harrowing aftermath. He so wanted to wake up from the nightmare but didn't know how. It was at this point of his desperation and willingness to do just about anything to keep this sin hidden that his opponent, Satan the tempter, shows up.

While David had been on the run he had tried thrice to get him to commit murder, whether directly or indirectly; and David had evaded him on all three occasions. But, he hadn't forgotten; he remembered very clearly those incidents. One quality about Satan is his memory. There is also his persistence. He is ever determined to win, and have his way. He would try as many times to try come tops in any encounter. This time around, he had David so cornered, he was sure David would finally commit and be guilty of murder! His hands would be stained with the blood of the innocent. He was in the right emotional state this time to fall into this sin!

So while David sat on his throne, thinking about what else he could do, and while he knew he couldn't hold Uriah back any longer from returning to the battle/war without raising further suspicion, Satan, the tempter, David's lifelong opponent, approached and sat on the arm of David's throne and took on the role of adviser. In their private meeting, he

asked why David was frantic? Did he forget he was king? He was the one seated on a throne; his word was law!

The plot, as Satan drew it. Since Uriah was going back to the battle/war, anyway, why did he have to return? It was simple, really. David only needed to issue the command for Uriah's death, and that would settle it. This way out was better than no way at all! Well, I reckon that was what David thought, feeling cornered, backed against the wall and desperate to survive yet again – this time a scandal! Even though this time it would be at Uriah's expense, as it would cost Uriah his very life, it seemed the only option, as David saw it. And just like that, David did the unthinkable. He committed the murder of Uriah!

Well, he didn't put a knife to Uriah's throat, but it would have been better if he did that, at least Uriah, at his last hours, would have known David was his enemy – a cheat and a murderer, not just his king or a familiar and friendly face.

The method was cruel. Coupled with sleeping with Uriah's wife, David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by Uriah's hand. Using Uriah's good qualities against him in this manner was simply diabolical. The content of the letter was the order for Uriah's death. He was to be positioned at the forefront of the hottest battle, while Joab and his men withdrew from him, exposing the loyal soldier to enemy fire alone. The design was so Uriah would surely die.

Not surprisingly, Uriah didn't open the letter. He was that kind of a man. He respected David's authority, minding his business. Had he been a little curious, perhaps he would have lived, giving himself a chance to escape. But he wasn't curious, neither did he break his character of being true and loyal. He

respected David's authority even in his absence and presented the unopened letter to Joab. He was undiscerning till the point of death! HmMMM!

As for Joab, he did exactly as David had ordered, and Uriah did die in battle along with other servants of David. At that moment, David, I imagine, must have felt he had won over Uriah, but David's opponent, Satan, had also succeeded over David! I assume when David was informed of the news of the war, and the news about those killed, including Uriah, he must have sighed with relief internally, specifically at the mention of Uriah's demise. But to the messenger, David must have appeared disturbed and struggling to be positive even when sending a message back to Joab.

Bathsheba, now Uriah's widow, also learned what should be the sad news. I imagine though that David was not the only one who was relieved; she too was relieved! Not only does she not have to face Uriah's wrath should her adultery and pregnancy be discovered by him, but now she could conveniently become one of the king's women – fulfilling her ambition! What the Scriptures record is that after she learned of her husband's demise, she "mourned" her husband as culture and tradition expected. But no sooner the mourning period was past, David sends for her, this time to become his wife; and she being one never to deny David anything, accepted, and eventually bore him a son.

I'm sure someone is wondering why David had to marry Bathsheba; after all, Uriah who might have raised hell was dead. But yet he did. Why? Scriptures didn't provide us with an answer, and many have speculated on why. In my humble opinion, David was still trying to cover up his sins by doing

this one “good” thing – which was more of an attempt to deceive the people than a noble act. Bathsheba, now a widow, had become vulnerable, but was also now free to re-marry.

So, rather than leave her all by herself until her pregnancy becomes obvious and begins to raise suspicions (remember her husband had been away at war for a long while, and even when he was back he didn't go home), David marries her to douse any suspicion and to provide her a covering against ridicule and victimization. The people will remain ignorant of their affair, even consider David a noble man still for marrying the slain soldier's widow. And when her pregnancy shows, I doubt many people would be interested in doing the math!

But David was only fooling himself and the people, not God. In fact, Scriptures record that the thing, including all the atrocious things David had done, including marrying Bathsheba and she bearing him a son had displeased God! According to God's law in Leviticus 24:17, even the one in Leviticus 20:10, both David and Bathsheba were to be punished, and the befitting punishment for the sin of murder and their sin of adultery was death.

We know David wasn't put to death, neither was Bathsheba. But how would God handle the matter? Overlook it and completely exonerate him as David had presumed, or make him face some discipline/punishment? Let's remember that this was a man God approved, one whom He testified of as one after His own heart, one whom He had chosen as leader over His people, whom He had been with for several years and had helped: protected and preserved – a man He loved! Indeed, David was a man who knew, loved and served God. Would he then by reason of all these be exempted from every and any punishment?

3

THE DESPERATE PLEA

“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions” Psalm 51:1.

DAVID HAD BEEN TEMPTED and he had fallen into sin at least twice; he had committed adultery with Uriah’s wife, attempted to deceive Uriah twice, and had also masterminded the death of Uriah. To make it plain, he had killed Uriah as well. But he had also married the pregnant widow of the slain, who eventually bore him a son – his son.

And with no one questioning the king about his affair with Bathsheba, Joab being quiet about Uriah’s murder, and the recent addition of a wife and a son to his family, David must have been convinced that he had successfully covered his sins, that he had righted his wrongs even, and had gotten away with adultery and murder – with no consequences whatsoever! But, David was only deceiving himself, all by himself, or was his opponent, Satan, still hanging around?

David's Self-Deceit

HOW does one go from lying and deceiving to committing adultery, attempting to deceive the wronged party twice, committing murder, marrying and having a child with the wife of the slain! And all of that without any scruple, no feeling of guilt, no remorse, much less repenting and reconciling with God! How?

The answer is simple. It's because there's self-deceit going on! It's the same reason many Christians go about committing sin habitually and not feeling guilty, or not guilty enough, not remorseful enough, not repenting and seeking reconciliation with God. They are fully convinced that all is well with them, and life will continue to go on, and should as a matter of fact continue to go on, as usual.

Self-deceit is a ploy of Satan to get one to remain in sin! It's his tactic to hold us captive in sin, keep us guilty and condemned before God and fit for His judgment. It's Satan's very clever underhanded means to fulfil and complete his three-fold mission in our lives: to steal, to kill, and to destroy! And as we can clearly see in David's case, Satan was very much around still, and was the one encouraging this self-deceit, and succeeding at it too since David, sadly in those times, cared a little too much about his reputation – how people saw him, when he ought to have been concerned with how God saw him.

The barrier between David and repentance, even reconciliation with God, was self-deceit. A voice – a sinister one, the voice of David's opponent – was loud and clear in his ears, taking root in his heart, and bearing fruit in his inaction.

Satan was reassuring him that everything was okay, that there would be no consequence for his action, that he didn't have to do anything other than all he had already done, that life would go on, and he should move on too.

That voice, however, was lying to him, deceiving him, intent on destroying him, because nothing was okay. As a matter of fact, David had made a mess, a huge mess, and all his attempts at cleaning it up by ordering the death of Uriah, and even marrying his widow, hadn't cleaned up the mess. It had in fact made it worse, leaving him more deeply guilty before God!

God Rebukes David

WHEN 2 Samuel 11 closed, it reminded us that Satan was not the only invisible being present on the scene all the while, that God was too. While Satan had been busy tempting, and David had been falling, God had been observing from the very beginning like a Teacher who had given His student a test would, hoping that David would pass and not fail. In the end God had been disappointed, utterly displeased when David failed woefully. Yes, the man that initially had God's approval now had His disapproval on account of sin – sin covered up, sin not confessed, sin not renounced.

Yet, even though God was displeased, He said nothing at first. He was quiet for what I believe to be a couple of months seeing that the child that had been conceived was carried to full term, and was already born when God eventually said something. The period of God's silence, which David mistook as getting away with sin, in my humble opinion, was not

because God didn't have anything to say, or that He had overlooked the matter; rather it was because of His great love and fondness for David; or, could it be that He was slack (slow, sluggish) in handling such cases?

I believe God was silent because He was giving David time to come back to his senses by himself, and realize that he had done something terribly wrong. God wanted him to realize his dual sins: adultery and murder, and be remorseful about them. God wanted him to confess his sins, renounce them, beg for His forgiveness and be reconciled with Him. For all the time it took, God waited in vain. David wasn't forthcoming. Out of His great love for David, rather than punish him straightaway and condemn him forever – watch him lost in sin forever – God sought David through His prophet, Nathan, whom He sent to him. Samuel, had he been alive, might have been the one God would send. But Samuel had been dead a long time now even while David had still been on the run from Saul, and before he became king, even as king of Judah (1 Samuel 25:1). It's on this point that 2 Samuel 12 opens, with God sending Nathan to David.

When Nathan got to David, the private meeting they had was not for Nathan to make the king comfortable; it was for the prophet to issue God's rebuke to David. He first told a story – a very clever approach, if you ask me, because David would let down his guard long enough to hear the entire story. And it was even better that in the story were elements that would remind David of his days as a Shepherd – a passionate shepherd who placed so much value on even one lamb, so much so that he often risked his life for it. David was far from

being a passionate shepherd now; he was now more like the predators he often fought off back then.

In Nathan's story, he painted a picture of two men who lived in one city; one rich, the other poor. These two men would represent David and Uriah, with David being the rich man and Uriah the poor. As expected of the rich in Bible time, this rich man in Nathan's story also had exceeding many flocks and herds – symbolic and representing David's multiple wives and concubines. As for the poor Uriah, Nathan said, he had nothing except one little ewe lamb – symbolic and representing Bathsheba, Uriah's only wife.

In Nathan's story the little ewe lamb had been bought and nourished up by the poor man; and it grew up together with him and his children; it ate of the man's own meat and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. Next, Nathan introduced a traveller in the story. The traveller came to the rich man (as a guest), but the rich man refused to take of his own flock and of his own herd to dress, cook and prepare a meal for his guest; instead he set his sight on, and took (unlawfully) the poor man's (only ewe) lamb, and dressed (killed, cooked/prepared) it to nourish his guest. Okay, Bathsheba didn't die in real life after the affair; but tell me, wasn't she converted into food, and used to satisfy another kind of appetite?

Before we proceed any further, permit me to ask a question. Who do you reckon is the traveller, the guest in Nathan's story? Beloved, that traveller, the guest whose presence urged and resulted in the unlawful actions of the rich man is none other than Satan, the tempter, David's life-long enemy, whose influence he had come under.

After Nathan told the story, David, having listened attentively till the end, erupts in great anger. Perhaps the passionate shepherd in him resurfaced. He sensed the injustice and wanted to right the wrong. He didn't seem to realize that the story was told him for a reason, that in it was a message for him. Instead, he promptly directed his anger at the fictional rich man. He swore that as the Lord lived, the callous and pitiless rich man must be put to death. How quick an impenitent sinner could be at judging others for the same evils they do! In one swift burst of anger David, with his own lips, declared what was indeed befitting punishment for himself, only he didn't know it yet.

David also said concerning the rich man, that before he was put to death, he will be made to restore the lamb fourfold, i.e., pay for the lamb four times over because of what he had done and because he had no pity on the poor man. Did David even consider what he himself deserved for all that he had done wrong? Didn't he deserve to be held accountable and made to pay for his sins?

Seeing the reaction from David, and his vehement declaration of the befitting judgment and punishment for the rich man, Nathan wisely seizes the opportunity to rebuke David as God had instructed. Speaking boldly and making things clear to David, Nathan confronted him with the reality of the fictional rich man! It was David himself! Indeed, wasn't David a rich man? God had anointed him king over Israel, delivered him out of the hand of Saul, gave him Saul's possessions and transferred his rights to him, made him ruler over Judah and the entire nation of Israel. Those were a lot of blessings on one man!

Even if David considered all his riches too little – which he seemed to have done by his actions – God still would have blessed him with more! Yet, despite all he already had, David had gone ahead to despise (disregard, neglect) God’s commandments regarding adultery and murder, to do evil in God’s sight – he caused Uriah’s untimely death in battle, took his wife Bathsheba to be his own wife, and killed Uriah with the sword of the Ammonites!

How do you think David fared in that very moment after hearing about all of his sins, which apparently he had unsuccessfully attempted to cover up, and which he did as a matter of fact believe he had successfully covered and got away with! Now exposed in this manner by the prophet of God, who wasn’t even present when any of these things had happened, David realized it was God that had exposed him, not just the doings of the Prophet!

Well, I don’t know how David fared – the emotions he felt, but I guess they must have been strong enough to make indelible marks on David’s conscience. The lessons he learnt ought to be imprinted in our own hearts, so we never forget. David learned two hard lessons in that very moment: first, there’s nothing hidden (sin especially) that will not be revealed, regardless of how hard you try to cover it up. Second, perhaps even more importantly, God is always watching! Nothing, absolutely nothing, is hid from Him; and we can be sure He will always hold the sinner, especially the unrepentant sinner among God’s people, accountable. But those won’t be all David would learn. He was quickly going to also re-learn that sin always attracts consequences, even severe consequences.

God's Judgment on David

EVEN though David was one approved by God, testified of by God as one after His own heart, chosen by Him as leader/king, helped by Him, protected and preserved, even enthroned, blessed and greatly loved by God, he was not to be exempt from being held accountable and chastened (corrected by punishment or suffering) by God!

Please, beloved, read that paragraph over and over until it fully sinks in. David had over time picked up the habit of sinning, even sinning without scruple and repentance. He lied, deceived, acquired many wives – all heinous sins – and had graduated to adultery and murder, what would he do next?

God, not willing to watch David continue to self-destruct via habitual and hidden sins, was going to correct him one way or another as a loving Father ought to. If He didn't chasten him, then He didn't love him. If He didn't scourge him, then it's safe to conclude that He had rejected him. But God still loved David and hadn't rejected him.

After God had used Nathan to expose David's sins, revealing the consequences of those sins, He outlined what His judgment and punishment on David would be.

● For despising God (treating Him and His command with disrespect) in taking Uriah's wife to be his wife, David would suffer: "...*the sword shall never depart from thine house,*" God told him in 2 Samuel 12:10. What does this mean? In simple/clear terms, God is informing David of the departure of peace from his house, and the emergence of perpetual conflict and deaths within his family. You see, the sword is

symbolic; it is both a weapon of war and an instrument of destruction.

● Next in verses 11 and 12, God says: *“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. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.”* What does this mean? Again in clear and simple terms, God is informing David that He will permit an emerging opponent (an antagonist, a contender) from his own family. And, just like he, David, took Uriah’s wife and lay with her, God was going to permit someone too to take David’s wives (this could also mean concubines) and lay with them, and even do so in public – so that David would have public humiliation (as a reward of his secret sin). True, he had humiliated Uriah privately, but his would be a public spectacle!

David, upon hearing his judgment, immediately admits his sin and guilt! He declares in the hearing of Nathan that he had sinned against the Lord. And, seeing David’s genuine penitence, the prophet comforted him. *“The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.”* Yes, it was true that David sinned, but God had also shown him mercy. He put away David’s sin, i.e., forgave him, although David was really deserving of death. Now, he would not die.

However, David’s sins of adultery, murder, even taking Uriah’s wife to be his wife and having a child by her, had brought irreverence to God and all things sacred. You see, even though no one might say anything to David’s face, people would talk behind him, since the news will/ must have

already spread one way or another. And the things people, especially the ungodly, would say against David – the man who ought to be their leader and a good and godly example – even David’s God, wouldn’t be good. And for that reason, there was still one more judgment that David must know about, and should be prepared for. So Nathan said to him:

● The last judgment was that the child born to David by Bathsheba shall surely die. This judgment was clear enough. And Scriptures record that as soon as Nathan departed from David, the Lord struck the child that Uriah’s wife bare unto David, and he became very sick.

And David, now very concerned for the child than for himself, spent time pleading with God to spare the child’s life, hoping that God would be gracious to him in that regard too. He fasted, went into his house and lay all night on the ground, refusing to get up from the ground when the elders of his house (older servants) attempted to raise him up. He refused to eat bread with them. Yet, despite David’s pleas, on the seventh day of the illness, the child died, just as the Lord had declared – David would have to add that to his list of burdens of guilt.

However, when David sensed and eventually heard the news that the child had died, he got up finally, washed and anointed himself (perhaps with oil or balm), changed his apparel, and went to the house of the Lord and worshipped. When he returned to his house, he requested for food and ate, leaving his servants wondering about the sudden change in behaviour. But David’s reasoning was sound. It was when the child was alive that there was hope for his healing and restoration to health. It was the reason he pleaded with God,

fasted and humbling himself in hope of God healing the child. But now that the child was dead, he couldn't bring him back to life by any of the actions he had done before, and so life simply had to go on. David then proceeded to comfort Bathsheba, his now acquired wife and bereaved mother of the child.

At this juncture, it's important we talk about God's judgment on David – as consequence of his sins. What are your thoughts about that? If you're like me, then you likely have a ton of things to say about it. Someone might even say that the punishment was harsh, if not somewhat disproportionate. If you're thinking this way, then I'm glad you're reading this book, because what I'm about to write next will help you realize a great truth.

Please understand that anytime you're tempted to sin, and actually yielded to that sin, you've collaborated with Satan, and have lost. The consequence that follows committed sins can leave you with a scare you won't like. You don't get to decide what the nature of the consequences of your sins are, or the degree and length/duration of the punishment. That is the scary part about sin.

You may complain all you want about the nature of God's judgment on sin, that it's too great, severe, disproportionate or whatever, complain about the type, degree and length of the punishment all you want; none of those will make you right. You sinned, and you are punished. Penitently learn from the situation like David did, and begin to fear sin; learn to avoid sin; even more importantly, have a serious reverential fear for God who can and will hold everyone accountable for their sins!

David Repents

WE have read of David admitting to his sins before Nathan. We have even read of him pleading with God on behalf of his son; and I'm sure at least one person is asking, did David repent to God for his sins? And if he did repent, how did he go about repairing his broken relationship with God?

Well, from Psalm 51, we know that David didn't just admit his sin and guilt before Nathan, he truly repented before God. The Psalm proves it. David authored that Psalm to capture his repentance before God after Nathan the Prophet confronted him with his sins. The immediacy of the Psalm also means David didn't delay/ put off his repentance after being confronted and convicted; this is a very good thing and our expected response when the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin.

The Psalm expresses David's desperate plea to God for forgiveness. Through it, we come to see how David went about repairing his broken relationship with God. From that we can learn a thing or two.

First Step for the Penitent: Now that we've established that no one is above temptation and anyone can fall into sin and even lounge in self-deceit, and that repentance is an absolute requirement for everyone, especially anyone who despite having a relationship with God finds themselves defeated by sin, even repeatedly, it is now important that we learn the steps David took towards genuine repentance. The first step for the penitent is the right heart posture.

In the heart of the penitent, like it was in David's heart, there ought to be sorrow (regret) and remorse, and, very

importantly, **readiness to admit one's sin and guilt before God**. From the opening verses of this Psalm, David states plainly that he had transgressed, and sinned (verses 1 and 2). In verses 3 and 4, he continues to admit his sin and guilt: *“For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.”*

In verse 5 he reveals that he (now) understood how sin becomes a part of the innermost nature of a person. It starts right from the moment of existence – and might I add – continues to be a part of one's nature and life till the very end, except one truly repents and by faith in Jesus becomes converted and cleansed! David's heart's posture was terrific! Not only was he admitting sin and guilt; he clearly had done some deep thinking too, such that would prove most beneficial.

I must also add that although Nathan had assured David that God had put away his sin upon admitting his sin and guilt, yet he sought God's confirmation. Commendable, isn't it? David wasn't pretending anymore to be innocent; he held himself accountable not just before Prophet Nathan, but before God Himself, and was willing to take responsibility for his actions. David's heart was truly a broken and a contrite heart (feeling and expressing sorrow, remorse and admitting one's sin and guilt).

Beloved, penitence, confession of sin and willingness to take responsibility for your actions are absolutely necessary for anyone who is genuinely repentant and seeking to be reconciled with God. It's what David did.

Second Step for the Penitent: David's heart posture was right, seeing he was sorrowful, remorseful and humble enough to admit his sin and guilt. One more thing he did right was **turn to the right Person for forgiveness.** He turned to God, revealing at least two things to God and to us too. The first is that he remembered now that God was sovereign of all – the highest Authority there was, and is, and shall ever be – One he, as king of all Israel, was subject. Second, he believed that God alone could offer the forgiveness, healing and restoration that his heart desperately craved. And he was right to think and believe all these.

The entire Psalm 51 is proof that David turned to the right Person – God (for forgiveness). Let's read his plea in verses 1 and 2, then verses 7, 9 and 14a: *“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.... Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.... Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.... Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation....”*

Back in David's day Jesus was yet to be born, and His blood was yet to be shed for the remission of sins. But today you can turn to God and ask Him, using your own words, but in all sincerity of heart, to show you mercy, forgive you, cleanse you from the defilement of sin and restore you spiritually while leveraging on the blood of Jesus and using the name of Jesus if you are a Believer, and even if you are yet to become one.

The Third Step for the Penitent: The next thing David does, and all penitent must do, is show a **willingness and commitment to learning/re-learning God's ways and practicing them going forward.** Like in previous points shared, referring again to David's Psalm, in verses 6,13 and 16 you'd come across words like, *"...thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.... Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.... For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering."*

By these words, David revealed that he was willing (interested) and committed to re-learning what God desired – what pleased God. He was reminded that pleasing God is what matters, not mere burnt offerings or empty show of religion. What God desired, what pleased God, apart from the sinner's sorrow, remorse and confession, was truth (sincerity in action, character, and utterance). He requires truth even in one's inward parts: thoughts and motive.

In David's penitence, he showed eagerness/willingness, not only to re-learning God's way, which is the way of wisdom, of righteousness, but also practicing God's ways to the point he would be so knowledgeable and qualified to help others who have fallen into sin, to find their way back to God. Beautiful, isn't it? This willingness, and commitment on David's end is worth emulation.

Here's a **Final Step for the Penitent: Don't just desire God's forgiveness and restoration, expect God's forgiveness and restoration.** In David's Psalm he expresses a desire, also anticipated God's forgiveness and restoration. If you are penitent, also expect to be forgiven and restored. David says

in the Psalm in verses 8,10-12, 14-15 *“Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Deliver me from blood guiltiness O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips: and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.*

One healthy practice when dealing with God, even in matters such as this, is to ask in faith; and that faith must compel one to expect a response; in this case, a favourable response. If David was forgiven and restored, surely the same God in David’s time is the same God now. He will forgive and restore you too! Yet I am compelled to add this. While non-believers, especially fallen Christians, are encouraged to seek God’s forgiveness when they sin and expect God’s forgiveness when they ask sincerely for it, let’s remember that although God is very compassionate and generous in His mercy and with His grace, we can’t take any of these for granted, and use them as excuse to dabble wilfully in sin impudently. God’s grace must never be seen as a license to sin. It is important that we strive to live above sin.

Now that we’ve covered all of that, I have two questions to ask. The first is this: Did the confrontation, the exposure of David’s sin, God’s rebuke, and even the declaration of God’s judgment have a good/positive effect on David’s spiritual state? Here’s the second question: Do you think God’s forgiveness of David’s sins should exempt him from God’s judgment being carried out upon him and in his family?

Well, I'm sure you'd agree with me if I say yes to the first question. I truly believe that Nathan's confrontation, the exposure of David's sin, God's rebuke, and the declaration of God's judgment had their desired effect! They succeeded in bringing David back to his senses, off his high throne and in penitence fall flat on his face to plead before God. They shattered the barrier of self-deceit and encouraged remorse, repentance and reconciliation with God. All good things, if you ask me.

But to the second question, I hope you'd also agree with my no answer. It's true that God did as a matter of fact forgive David, even before he spoke out his repentance. On many occasions, when God forgives us, we are spared all the consequences of our actions – He does let us move on without any judgment/punishment; but there are cases, like in this instance with David, when the consequence of sin is allowed to play out. Here, while David was spared from death – which should have been the ultimate punishment for his sin as required by the law, God's forgiveness didn't cancel out any of God's declared judgment on him and his household.

Unfortunately for David, this wasn't one of those times God was willing to gift him a clean slate! He had to be content with being spared from death and being restored to right standing spiritually before God. Plus, though he lost a child, he would go on via God's mercy still to have more children (sons) with Bathsheba. The rest (consequences) he would have to bear, as God went on to permit those consequences to happen as predicted. I'm hoping that gets our attention, and that it forces us to realize another truth about sin and its consequences; that is, you just never know, as a Believer who

had sinned, when God decides it's time to really let you bear the full weight of the consequences of your actions! Doesn't this send shivers down your spine? It should. I hope this bit of information motivates you to continue to avoid sin!

Is someone wondering why Bathsheba gets off the hook? No confrontation, no exposure, no rebuke, no judgment declared? Well, I should spell it out that Bathsheba didn't have a relationship with God – David did. That is one. But not having a relationship with God doesn't exempt her either from the consequences of her own sins. There might not have been a confrontation, a rebuke and even declaration of judgment directly on her, but her reputation would have been smeared, plus her son became sickly to the point of death, remember? Her ambition and immorality did cost her; ultimately it cost her a child!

4

CONSEQUENCES, MORE CONSEQUENCES!

“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” 2 Samuel 12:10.

UPON DAVID’S ADMITTANCE of sin and guilt, the prophet Nathan had encouraged him by informing him that God had forgiven him. And even after David’s encounter with Nathan, he had still gone ahead to not only plead with God for his son’s life since God had pronounced death upon the child, he pled also for the forgiveness of his secret sins, and for his spiritual restoration.

And God was indeed merciful towards David. Though the child died, David will go on to have more sons with Bathsheba, one of whom was the ever so popular Solomon who succeeded the throne as king. God also forgave David of his secret sins and restored him spiritually. Physically, though, David still had to deal with the consequences of his sins – these being the judgment God had pronounced upon him. But why is that? Shouldn’t God’s forgiveness always cancel out consequences?

Forgiveness and Consequences

I looked up the definition of forgiveness, and found it means to cease to feel resentment (anger or bitterness) towards the offender. The word 'absolve' is also a synonym for forgiveness, and it means to set the offender free from obligation or the consequences of guilt. Then there's the definition of 'consequences' itself, which means a condition or occurrence traceable to a cause.

Now that we've gotten the definitions out of the way, let's remind ourselves again why there's a need for forgiveness, and why there's such a thing as consequences. There's a need for forgiveness because, first, there's the presence of sin against fellow humans but ultimately against God. It is this same sin when present that attracts (negative) consequences both spiritually and physically. So, when we sin there are automatic consequences attached to our action or inaction; and when we are sorry for our sins, we seek forgiveness from God.

And one thing we can always expect from God is forgiveness; and this is because of His nature of mercy and grace, plus He is slow to anger. He doesn't delight in punishing us or our destruction; and even when angry, God doesn't stay angry forever. God is merciful enough to always be willing to forgive us, and His grace covers/erases our sins when we confess them sincerely and put them away. And what usually follows when God forgives is a clean slate. That's true; when God forgives as we've seen in the case of David and many more examples scattered all over Scriptures, we always get a clean slate spiritually. What this means is that we are set

free from the spiritual obligations/consequences of our sin and guilt.

Also, when God forgives, we get, sometimes, **not always**, a clean slate physically. Again, what this means is that we are allowed to escape the obligation/consequences of our sin and guilt. But I'm repeating myself, for I've mentioned this over and over. The question I'm yet to answer is, why God does this. In my humble opinion, I believe God does sometimes let us face the physical obligation/consequences of our sin and guilt to encourage a healthy dose of fear of sin and its consequences, but more so of Him as the righteous Judge.

Tell me if we all never had to deal with at least the physical consequences of our sins, do you truly believe that we will learn to not repeat them? And if God never permits the physical consequences of our sins to be our reality, would we remember what He is indeed truly capable of, even as a righteous Judge? The answers to both questions is no.

As for David, Scriptures tell of a time before his sin with Bathsheba when he began to feel (really) afraid of sin and its consequences, even of God. Before I tell us of this time, let me quickly add that this was something David watched happen to someone else, not himself; perhaps that was why the intended lesson did not fully sink in, and he still fell into sin in the manner he did with Bathsheba, automatically making himself eligible for another round of lessons on sin and its consequences.

In this time that I speak of, David had been anointed king over all of Israel, and had even conquered Jerusalem, making it his capital; and he was intent on moving the Ark of God to Jerusalem. You can find the first mention of the account in 2

Samuel 6, there's a second mention in 1 Chronicles 15-16, although the latter details only the account of David's eventual success in moving the Ark of God.

Anyway, David wanted the Ark of God close, and he had straightaway got to the task at hand – in his own way, not God's prescribed way (which can be seen in Numbers 4:4-15; 7:9 and Exodus 25:10-15). For David, it's first things first; he gathers together thirty thousand men – all the chosen men of Israel. Then together with all the people that were with him they proceeded to Baale of Judah to bring up from there the Ark of God. They had prepared a new cart and so they set the Ark of God upon it, and pulling the cart were animals – oxen. Once the Ark of God was set upon the cart, they brought the Ark of God out of the house of Abinadab in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, guided/led the new cart.

Now on their way, Ahio positions himself before the Ark of God, and Uzzah probably beside the Ark while David and all the house of Israel were playing before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals. However, when they came to the threshing floor of Nachon, Scripture records that Uzzah made an error (in judgment) – which God regarded as a sin – and he paid for it with his very life.

You see, while on the move, the oxen had shaken the cart that carried the Ark of God, and Uzzah's reflex action had been to stretch forth his hand to hold the Ark, or better put, to steady it. But, although Uzzah might have had good intentions, he was still breaking God's command nonetheless; for God had not permitted human hands to touch the Ark

(Numbers 4:15). So, God's anger kindled against him. God smote him and he died in that very moment beside the Ark of God!

And this is where I'm going with this retelling: although the whole scene, especially Uzzah's death, courtesy God's judgment had made David displeased, the whole scene had achieved a far more desired effect on David still, for Scriptures record that David that day began to be afraid of the Lord. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not implying that David didn't have reverential fear of God all this while, I believe he always did have respect for God even though it didn't always seem like that when he lost the struggle to sin. But that day, a new found fear emerged; he began to see what God was capable of, especially when judging sin! You know there's a difference between reading about it, thinking about it, and actually seeing it happen with your two eyes.

Although they had all been guilty that day of not following due order in moving the Ark of God, Uzzah unfortunately was the one that eventually did one more thing, one final thing that unleashed God's judgment. And for Uzzah the judgment had been immediate, with no room for apologies; and it had been final as well. It definitely would have sent shivers down everyone's spine! It sure did to David.

The whole episode reminds me of the judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira, when they let Satan move them to lie to the Holy Ghost. Their judgment had been immediate too and final (See Acts 5:1-11). That too had sent shivers down the spine of the members of the new Church. Fear, or rather dread of sin and its consequences, and of God as a righteous Judge, fell upon them all, even extending to those who heard

of it and weren't members of the church at Jerusalem where it happened. But I don't want to digress. So back to David.

David began to be afraid of sin and its consequences, but more of God! And the fear was good; it was a healthy dose of fear, a prescribed one because, let me tell you, it produced something beautiful, even though temporary, in David. He was especially forced to rethink the whole events later on while the Ark of God was in Obededom's house; for after the event of Uzzah's death, David didn't continue with his plans of moving the Ark to Jerusalem but moved it to Obededom's house. In the interim David had time to reflect; he realized what he had done wrong, what they all had done wrong, and then what they ought to do differently. When he had all that figured out, and was sure it was a favourable time, he did attempt to move the Ark of God once again; and this time he succeeded at it!

Uzzah died, and David began to be afraid of sin and its consequences, and of God who can't stand sin. That healthy dose of fear had helped him do things differently with the people, and for God the second time, and succeeded at it. But like I earlier mentioned, David had only been a spectator during the events of Uzzah's death. Now that he was going to have to face direct consequences for his sins, the lessons learnt sank in fully and produced a much more desired and permanent result in David's life spiritually and physically.

And not so long after God pronounced His judgment on David and his household, it began to manifest. We already know that the child born to him and Bathsheba after their sinful affair fell deathly ill immediately and eventually died seven days after. But the rest of God's judgment didn't delay either.

David's Grief

GOD had earlier said to David through the prophet Nathan, *“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.”* The foretold conflict and destruction in David's house did indeed begin with his children. He wasn't exempt from it either. And the first case was between Amnon and Tamar.

Amnon vs Tamar

AMNON and Tamar were both David's children. Amnon was David's first born son born to him by his wife Ahinoam of Jezreel while Tamar was David's daughter born to him by his wife Maacah. Amnon and Tamar were half-siblings. Scriptures record that Tamar, Absalom's full sister was fair (beautiful), and I reckon that Amnon soon began to notice her beauty. I mean really notice her like a man would a woman and he became attracted to her. He even convinced himself that what he felt for her was love, not the filial type that siblings have for one another. It was the lust a man would feel for a woman that wasn't typically a family member.

Instead of resisting the intense longings he felt for Tamar, as he should have, he did nothing to stop it. Then over the course of time his very one-sided forbidden and incestuous “love” for his half-sister Tamar vexed him – this means it distressed him, made him restless, even bringing him to the point of being physically ill. And why was this so? Tamar was a virgin, often in seclusion like the others like her. It was hard for Amnon to do anything to her, say, profess his “love” to her,

or even fulfil his lust by being intimate with her, which was what he really wanted to do.

At least that was the case until David's opponent, who is not only the tempter but also the planter of strife (conflict), and who now had open access to David's family by reason of David's sin, re-emerged on the scene. This time, he showed up alongside Amnon's friend and cousin named Jonadab (David's brother Shimeah's son) who was a very subtle (crafty) man! Clearly, he had already yielded to Satan's influence.

When Jonadab met with Amnon who has been overcome by (sexual)lust – remember this was also his father's weakness – he probes him for the reason for his daily sickly/haggard state. Amnon confided in him about his unlawful feelings for his half-sister, Tamar (For laws against incest, see Leviticus 18:9 and Deuteronomy 27:22).

The result? Satan right there shared with Jonadab who in turn shared with Amnon a very clever plan to get Tamar out of seclusion and near Amnon – giving him room to finally do anything he liked to her. All Amnon had to do was employ his father David's old habit of lying and deception. He'd lay down on his bed, pretend to be ill, his father would visit him, he'd then request for Tamar because he needs her to prepare something for him to eat. She would prepare the meal in his presence and feed him too because he was sick. It seemed a harmless request, so David wouldn't refuse it.

Amnon heeded Satan's voice through Jonadab, took his suggestion, employed his father's old habit of lies and deception, and then fooled his father about being ill, even getting him to order Tamar to come to him in order to prepare him a meal and feed him. When she got there, she saw

Amnon laying in bed and she got right to the task, kneading flour, making and baking cakes in his sight. But when she presented the cakes to him, he wouldn't eat. After ordering the men present out, Amnon orders Tamar to bring the food into his chambers/bedroom that she may feed him there.

Till this point, Tamar didn't suspect Amnon's deception or that she was a prey and walking right into the lion's den! She took the cakes she had made, brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother. Too late, he grabbed her, demanding that she lie (have sex) with him! She refused his demand, pleadingly telling him not to force her either! She knew, and recognized, that such intimacy between the two of them ought not to be done. She knew it was a foolish act and idea, that the end result for her would be shame, so for him too. He would be regarded as a fool!

In her desperation to douse his vehement desire for her and escape his grip, she asked him to speak to the king their father about how he felt regarding her. If he proposed marriage, the king would not withhold her from him – this I believe was a desperate attempt on her end to save herself. But Amnon turned a deaf ear, and being stronger than her successfully overpowered her and raped her!

And what's not surprising is that after the deed was done, Amnon hated her exceedingly, the hatred Scriptures describe was greater than the "love" he had felt for her, and he commanded her to get up and get out of his house! Tamar was besides herself with grief! Amnon had raped her and now was sending her away. To her, the latter wrong was a greater evil than the actual rape. She pleaded with him not to do that, but again, Amnon turned a deaf ear and called for his personal

assistant and demanded that Tamar whom he had earlier regarded as *sister*, but whom he now referred to as “*this woman*,” should be pushed out and the door locked behind her. That was what happened.

Tamar had gone into her half-brother Amnon’s house a virgin and pure, but came out defiled, her virginity yanked from her. She had gone in whole, but came out broken and wounded! She had gone in regally dressed with a garment of diverse colours that was worn by princesses who were virgins, but when she came out, she started feeling unworthy of adorning such a garment. She eventually tore it up! She put ashes on her head. As she left Amnon’s house, her hands were on her head as she bewailed her loss! And although what happened, happened between Amnon and Tamar, it doesn’t end with them. It couldn’t have.

Absalom, Tamar’s full brother notices her state, and immediately knew what had happened, and by whom! He took the pains of confirming what he suspected and went ahead to speak peaceably with her. He quietened her, asked her not to take it to heart, and I believe he also offered her refuge in his house because that was where she stayed going forward, although she did so joyless, downcast and sorrowfully.

Thankfully she was still alive and now had her brother Absalom’s protection. But Tamar had been robbed so wickedly of her dignity, and even her future plans, it was as though she died that day. But Absalom, though appeared to be a man of peace because he had spoken peaceably to his sister Tamar about the actions of their elder brother Amnon, he was far from being a man of peace; he harboured hatred in

his heart for Amnon for the rape and disgrace of his sister. Yet he didn't show it. In fact, he acted indifferent towards Amnon, thereby shrouding the deep hatred in his heart for Amnon. That hatred, though concealed, was bound to bear bitter fruits soon.

As for David their father, he too learnt of what had happened; and Scriptures record he was very wroth (angry), but did nothing to discipline Amnon, perhaps because he knew what role he had played a long while back – his affair with Bathsheba – and even presently – by ordering Tamar to leave seclusion. It was his action and order that resulted in Amnon taking advantage of Tamar. Asides from anger, David would have no doubt been grieved! But there was more grief to come David's way. The encounter between Amnon and Tamar is recorded in 2 Samuel 13:1-22.

Absalom vs Amnon

SATAN noticed the presence of inordinate affection and sexual lust in Amnon's life, and exploited it in order to water the seed of strife in David's family. He did so when he provided a means for Amnon to rape and violate Tamar. Next, still making full use of his now open access to David's family, Satan, set to exploit the hatred in Absalom's heart, whispered the idea of revenge to him and though he knew it would be a while before Absalom would execute the idea he had no problem waiting.

Two full years after Tamar's rape, Absalom was encouraged by Satan that enough time had passed. The time was finally ripe! He set his plot of executing his revenge on Amnon to happen during the sheep shearing festivities. If

Absalom wondered how to get Amnon in the same space as he, I believe Satan gave him a “bright” idea just as he had done previously for Amnon and even his father David many of such times in the past; and the tool of deception will also be employed! Let’s keep reading to know what that bright idea was.

At this time, Absalom’s sheepshearers were in Baal-hazor, beside Ephraim; and Absalom invited all his brothers to the festivities. He doesn’t fail to appear before his father David, to keep him informed of his plans and to pretend to extend an invitation to him and his servants. But David declines the invitation; he thought he and his servants would be too much a burden on Absalom. And regardless of how much Absalom pressed David (mind you, this was all an act), David refused to give in, but gave Absalom his blessing.

But David was not who Absalom really wanted at the event. His invitation to David and his men, even his pressing him for attendance, were all a clever ruse to throw David off should he suspect anything, especially in light of what his next request would be. He asked for Amnon to attend! I’m sure presenting his request for Amnon before his father, he was basically asking the king to order Amnon to go in his stead to his event; Amnon was after all the eldest of the sons of the family, and could represent their father. Even though David initially questions Absalom’s motive when he requested for Amnon’s presence, Absalom was persistent and eventually succeeded in making their father release/order Amnon to attend the festivities along with the king’s other sons.

With Amnon’s attendance confirmed, Absalom’s previous plans would soon materialize. Ahead of time, being sure his

deception would go unnoticed and prove effective, Absalom had instructed his servants on when and how to go about carrying out his command of murdering Amnon. When they had been scared of murdering the king's eldest son, he had encouraged them to not be afraid, but be courageous and valiant assuring them they had his support.

On the D-day, forgetful and equally unsuspecting, Amnon showed up at Absalom's event – another prey entering another lion's den, and feeling at ease. Amnon drank wine to his full. Then, when his heart was merry with wine and was drunk, Absalom gave the command for his servants to smite him. They did, and killed him, causing all the king's sons to flee the scene.

When the news of the disaster first broke, the embellished version David heard reported that Absalom had killed all his brothers. The king was distraught. He arose, tore his garments, as did his servants, and lay on the earth – the traditional way of showing grief. Eventually, Jonadab – the same friend who Satan had used to guide Amnon into raping Tamar – came in to tell David that Amnon only was dead, not all the king's sons, and that the deed had long been Absalom's plot from the very day Amnon raped Tamar their sister. Was Satan speaking through Jonadab again? Perhaps, this time as a newsman!

But a death in the family is still a death! Even though his remaining sons, with the exception of Absalom returned to him, David was still inconsolable! When his remaining sons returned, they wept, and David also, as did all his servants. As for Absalom, he fled to Geshur, where his mother was from, to Talmai, the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. So, while

David mourned for Amnon every day, Absalom was relaxing at Geshur; he stayed there for at least three years. Soon David got over grieving his dead son Amnon and began to long for his fugitive son Absalom! This equally horrific event is recorded in 2 Samuel 13:23-39. But the epic saga, also part of the consequences of David's sin, or David's grief, is just gathering momentum; there was the direct confrontation by Absalom to come.

Absalom vs David

GOD had also said to David through the prophet Nathan, *“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. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.”* This declaration came to pass through David's very son Absalom.

The story of Absalom's return and rebellion against his father David is recorded in Scriptures from 2 Samuel 14 through 18, a recommended read. The climax happened when Absalom's head, rather hair, got caught in the thick boughs of a great oak, leaving him dangling, helpless and vulnerable to Joab, David's army captain, who promptly gave Absalom three stabbings to the heart with darts while he was yet alive, and more strikes came from ten of Joab's young armour bearers until he died. His body was quickly, and disgraceful, dispatched – cast into a great pit in the wood and buried under a great heap of stones.

Someone unfamiliar with the story is probably wondering how Absalom became the “raised up evil” against his father

David? Well, you must know that after spending three years in Geshur, Absalom was recalled to Jerusalem. King David his father gave the order for his recall from “banishment” after Joab had devised a means – employing deception – to make it happen. Joab had done this to put David out of his misery – since he was longing for Absalom. But although David gave the order for Absalom to be recalled, he also added a condition that upon his return, Absalom must return to his own house, and not to the palace of the king.

This partial banishment lasted another two full years until Absalom initiated a forced reconciliation between himself and his father. Joab too had a role to play in that. But Absalom had to resort to arson to get his help. Thereafter, although Absalom seemed to have been reconciled with his father, they were not going to be on friendly terms for too long.

Scriptures record that following the reconciliation Absalom soon began his revolt against his father. And what did he do this time? He started out by preparing chariots and horses and fifty men to run before him. Rising up early he would stand beside the way of the gate – a location for business and judicial meetings. When anyone who had a controversy came to the king for judgment, Absalom would call to them, ask what city they were from, and when the person says they were Israelites, Absalom would affirm that their matter was good and right, but quickly add that the king had no deputy that could hear them out, thereby insinuating that the king was perhaps too busy to pay them any mind or that he wouldn't care enough to judge their matters fairly as he ought to.

Then Absalom would subtly express his desire to be made judge in the land, promising that if he were to be made judge every man with a suit/cause who came to him would receive justice, because he would always make out time for them, and that he cared so much for them and for justice to be served!

Long story short, Absalom was indirectly declaring to the people that he was a better man than his father David, and more qualified for the throne. And, if the people by chance took initiative and paid him obeisance (homage), he would add a personal touch by taking hold of them and giving them a friendly kiss (certainly on the cheeks). I can imagine they felt special afterwards, for this was Absalom, the king's son, the most handsome man in Israel with gorgeous weighty hair at that!

All these Absalom did in order to steal the hearts of the men of Israel. But he was only just getting started. His plan was secretly carried out for four years before he eventually revealed himself as his father's emerging opponent. Indeed, Absalom wanted the hearts of the men of Israel and got some of them. Ultimately, he wanted the throne of his father David while he was yet alive (seeing that Amnon was out of the picture and their other brother, Chileab/Daniel seemed not to be active (or perhaps not even alive). Absalom's plot was running smoothly; but for God's merciful intervention in more than one way, he would have succeeded. He got as far as employing lies and deceit to get his father David to permit him to go to Hebron – this was after all the secret groundwork he had done for four years.

He got anointed by the people of Jerusalem even while in Hebron, sent spies to all the tribes of Israel to declare him king

as soon as they hear the trumpet blow, and with him when he went out of Jerusalem were two hundred men (though these men were unaware of the nature of Absalom's invite). He even successfully poached Ahitophel, David's counsellor, who was regarded like God's spokesman for his wise counsel. But was Bathsheba's grandfather – with a possible vendetta against David. Absalom's conspiracy with Ahitophel was strong. And with his following increasing continually, Absalom seemed to have his wishes on the roll.

If you ask me, Absalom, I believe, did not harbour hatred and resentment against just Amnon for raping his sister Tamar, he harboured hatred against his father David too; and this attracted Satan the tempter to him and kept Satan right next to him for a long time.

Reading between the lines, especially the words Absalom spoke to those who sought the king for judgment, it's not hard to come to the conclusion that Absalom considered himself, or rather his sister, one who had been robbed of justice when they were in need of one. Absalom had expected his father David to discipline his brother Amnon and give his sister Tamar justice in the case of her rape. But David had done nothing to punish the offender (and we can guess why), and his inaction, some may say, earned him Absalom's hatred, and left Absalom believing Satan's words when he whispered to him that he had to take matters into his own hands and provide justice for his sister. The result had been, first, the death of Amnon; second, he having to flee Jerusalem to avoid any repercussions for the murder; and now, his rebellion against his father.

Though time had passed since Tamar's rape and Amnon's death, and Absalom had now returned and was reconciled with his father, David, Absalom didn't feel any better. Perhaps being back in the palace, seeing his father and even his sister at home reopened old wounds and brought back old feelings of resentment which he continued to nurse. So, yes, he still resented his father. I reckon he even considered him unfit to be king, unfit to be the dispenser of justice, and again believed Satan's words when he told him that he Absalom was a better candidate for the position!

He believed Satan when he encouraged him to go ahead and vie for the position even while his father was yet alive and well. Satan assured him that he would win. The result had been all of Absalom's rebellious actions against his father from start to finish, the one in private and the ones he did in public.

And if you're wondering about the other part of the judgment/prophecy against David – the one concerning his wives being taken and used publicly – you must know that Absalom also got as far as getting David to flee the palace, even Jerusalem. David fled the palace along with his household and servants after hearing that Absalom had succeeded in winning the hearts of the men of Israel. Anticipating/fearing a sudden attack from Absalom and his group, even the arbitrary killing of the people in the city, David reckoned a speedy departure from the palace, even Jerusalem, was the best next step. And that's what he did.

But David when fleeing with his household had left behind ten of his concubines to keep the house/palace! Coming into Jerusalem and reaching the palace, Absalom asked Ahitophel – this was Ahitophel, David's renowned

adviser but now Absalom's counsellor – what next to do to establish his rule/reign. He advised Absalom to be intimate with his father's concubines – all ten of them left behind to keep the house. The idea was that the news of Absalom's action was sure to spread to all Israel, and will inform the people, especially Absalom's troops, that there was no possible room for reconciliation between father and son, for which king would forgive such a public disgrace?

Ahitophel reckoned that taking over David's concubines would ultimately be to Absalom's advantage! It will indeed boost the morale of his troops, perhaps even increase his following the more. And so, a tent was spread upon the top of the house and Absalom went in and slept with his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel – this means in public! Do you remember that David's adultery had begun first in his heart on the roof of his palace?

It's true that eventually David wasn't defeated by Absalom and emerged victorious as Absalom died in battle, even the embarrassing and painful manner he did; yet, when it was all over, David too was left with three darts in his own heart: another loss of a child, a third one to deal with. The news of Absalom's death so moved him that Scriptures record that he didn't even consider the victory of his men that day. Like any loving father would, he went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. He mourned so much for Absalom his son wishing he had died in his stead. He didn't even remember that Absalom had vied for the throne, made him flee the palace, slept with his concubines and made plans to kill him. It didn't seem to matter to the king that Absalom had indeed set out to personally lead the troops to pursue and attack him. But,

again, the conflict in David's family was not quite over; there was still one more we need to explore.

Adonijah vs Solomon

ALTHOUGH before Adonijah and Solomon's conflict, and Adonijah's eventual death – another death among David's children – David had been gifted another “bright” idea by his life-long opponent, Satan, to number Israel and Judah – a census meant to ascertain Israel's military strength and readiness for war, a move that displeased God because it was diversionary from God, who from time had fought Israel's wars, and on whom alone lied Israel's true strength. David had allowed himself to be moved/urged by Satan to conduct this God-displeasing census. It resulted in grave consequence: a pestilence that resulted in the loss of many lives. But that's not where we're headed.

The event we're interested in is that of Adonijah, David's eldest living son born to him by his wife Haggith, seeking to be king when the throne had already been promised to Solomon – Bathsheba's son (1 Chronicles 22:9-10; 1 Kings 1:13), and he was certainly aware of it. This happened when David was old and stricken in years!

Adonijah believed the throne was his right in the absence of his three elder brothers: Amnon, Chileab/Daniel and Absalom, and sought to elevate his status by nursing a vain ambition of becoming king, thereby attracting Satan the tempter to himself, one who was still very much around within David's family and on the lookout for the next vessel to use, and a soul to destroy.

Well, Adonijah bonded with Satan who became his influencer, and who moved him to begin to make plans to declare himself king. He took a cue from Absalom's old playbook and prepared chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. He did all this fully convinced that his father David wouldn't oppose him. As one pampered from childhood, he had never been scolded by his father before! Relying on his father's compliance, perhaps his handsome physical appearance too, Adonijah continued with the task at hand. He even strengthened his plot by enlisting Joab, the army commander, and Abiathar the priest. They followed him and helped him.

There were other highly regarded persons like Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Nathan the prophet, and Shimei, and Rei and the mighty men which belonged to David he either failed to enlist or they declined to support his bid for the throne. Nevertheless, Adonijah went ahead to prepare a feast! He killed much sheep and oxen and fat cattle by the stone of Zoheleth, by En-rogel and invited all his brothers to it, including all the men of Judah who were the king's servants. There were those he omitted from his list of invited guests, those whose support he didn't secure, and those he opposed, like Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother was not involved too.

Hearing of the plot, Nathan relays Adonijah's plans to Bathsheba and David's ignorance of it all, advising her on what to do to save hers and her son's life, and ultimately secure her son's heritage as appointed by God. She did as she was told, promptly sought audience with the king, reminding David of Solomon's promised enthronement. She informed

the king of Adonijah's contention, urging David to promptly announce his successor, at least his co-regent otherwise following his death she and her son will be treated like offenders/criminals.

As previously arranged, while Bathsheba was still with the king, Nathan came in, and in her absence affirmed Bathsheba's report on Adonijah and also gently nudged David to announce his successor.

In the end God's choice – Solomon, also known as Jedidiah son to David and Bathsheba – was declared king, first by God, and by David his father, who before Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, announced his successor. David promptly instructed that they should go along with servants and let Solomon ride upon his mule, bringing him down to Gihon. He also commanded that Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet should anoint Solomon there, with the trumpet blown afterwards to signify/ announce Solomon as the next king. Next, Solomon was to be made to sit upon David's throne as king in David's place, appointed by his father as ruler over Israel and Judah.

After David's instructions were carried out, with Solomon fully appointed king, the trumpet was blown. Adonijah, that day, along with his invited guests at what he thought would be his coronation ceremony, were taken aback since they knew what the sounding of the royal trumpet meant. Of course, the anointing of Solomon as king had happened without Adonijah knowing of it. He was told of the event by Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest. Forthwith, he and his guests trembled and fled for their lives!

Knowing his action was treasonable, and what would be the verdict of the new king against him, Adonijah quickly went and grabbed the horns of the altar – a symbolic plea for mercy against judgment. Solomon had sworn not to touch him provided he showed himself a worthy man and wickedness was not found in him. But Adonijah eventually dies because of his subtle treachery, all thanks to Satan who didn't stop fanning the flames of Adonijah's vain ambition by providing him with another means to achieve his desired end, though his death would be after David's, so David was spared this heartache.

The beginning of the end for Adonijah started with his request which was intended for Solomon but had been slyly presented to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, who in turn had presented it to Solomon without mentioning it had come from Adonijah. But Solomon had figured out the source regardless.

The request? Adonijah wanted Abishag – remember her? She was the fair (beautiful) Shunammite, the young virgin that David's servant had sought for him in his old age to minister to him, the one David didn't have sexual intercourse with. Now Adonijah wanted her to be his wife. Solomon upon hearing the request discerned what his elder brother was really up to! He was still eyeing the throne! He wasn't just requesting their late father's young wife, who was now Solomon's by reason of inheritance, he was after all that David bequeathed the new king, through a backhanded request, perhaps the whole kingdom itself!

Solomon understandably was infuriated by the underlying reason behind Adonijah's request. He vows that

Adonijah will pay with his life for the request. That very day Adonijah was put to death by Solomon's command/order carried out by Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. Another conflict resulting in death in David's family, even though by it and many other actions, Solomon secured his throne. You can read all about these events in 1 Kings 1:1-end, and 1 Kings 2:10-25.

Before we proceed further, did you notice the nature of David's judgment? Everything started with his illicit affair with Bathsheba, and his murder of Uriah, Bathsheba's husband. And now his judgments involved sex and murder! His daughter was raped and four of his sons died, he really paid four times over! Well, I just thought to point that out so I could remind you of the established principle of sowing and reaping; even reaping what you sow in a multiple way is possible too (Hosea 8:7a)!

Anyway, I highlighted every single instance God's judgment fell upon David and his household so that we could get the graphics of how serious and painful the consequences of sin can be. I needed to show the diverse ways the consequences of sin generally can manifest, and how long those consequences can linger, in some cases exceeding beyond one's lifetime! It is as scary as that!

And, if you by any chance think I'm trying to scare you into being upright, you are absolutely right. I'm truly hoping that after all you've read, you've begun to develop a healthy dose of fear for sin and its consequences, and a fear for God who is the righteous Judge! I also went through this route to challenge the false teachings going on in some churches today that blatantly encourage their members to continue to lounge

in sin and believe that God's grace abounds and covers all wrong doings. They erroneously teach people that God will only be loving towards them, never letting them face the consequences of their repeated sins.

I hope after coming this far in your reading, you now can see the error in those damnable teachings. I hope you now realize that such teachings are a veil used to blind you from the truth, even the truth about God's ways. Those false teachings are tools in the hands of Satan to bind you perpetually to a life of sin, reducing you to one fit for God's judgment, even Satan's torment and oppression here on earth, till eventually you drop into hell where the unrepentant sinner will be separated from God for all of eternity.

Now that you have begun to see the light, make sure to unlearn those false teachings, and prepare to strive towards uprightness, with God providing you with all the help you require via His Holy Spirit!

One more thing. I'm sure by now you already know that whether you believe there's a righteous Judge – God – or not, there is, and your lack of belief in Him will not stop Him from judging sin and meting out the punishment deserved to the unrepentant sinner, including the rebellious Believer. So, please, allow your mind to be transformed by all you've read in this book and take all the prescribed steps to realign with God. There's no other way to escape the danger and consequence of sin than full repentance from all practices of sin, and faith in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of humanity.

EPILOGUE

BE UPRIGHT!

NOW WE HAVE COME to the end of this book. Someone somewhere reading this is rating it in their heart as mere cliché, declaring that the theme of the book is something they've heard and read over and over, and have become overly familiar with. Well, I agree with you, it is indeed a cliché of some sort – the theme isn't new. There might not have even been any new “rhema” in it for you. But, maybe, that's how it's supposed to be. Maybe you didn't read this book to learn anything new but to relearn what you've already learned.

Remember this book is based entirely on God's word; and God's word is given by the inspiration of God. It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). So, I believe this repetition is what you need, maybe not today, but sometimes soon in the future, that the retelling of the Bible accounts we have considered, would hopefully sink into your spirit, and be used by the Holy Spirit to help your understanding, and make you more aware/alert to the presence and continuous re-emergence of evil around you, and better equip you at defeating your peculiar temptations. Maybe, just maybe that's why I've written this book and you've come across it.

Now that we've addressed that elephant in the room, I have one final charge for you. Be upright! It's true that to be upright means to be erect in carriage and posture, but it also means to be marked by strong godly morals! And, even to stand, permit me to interpret that as meaning to take a stand, i.e., to maintain that position of being one with strong godly morals over time regardless of the situation or the times we're in.

What we all, as Believers, must absolutely know is that there is an ideal standard, a moral standard, for every true child of God and follower of Jesus, and we are expected to strive with the help of the Holy Spirit of God to uphold that ideal standard.

As we already know the same expectation was placed upon David, though he failed sometimes in upholding it and suffered for it, especially because he stubbornly refused to confess his sins. And what is this ideal standard? Perfection (Matthew 5:48) – to be without faults, without sin, a quality that only God has, but we, having been made blameless by Jesus' sacrifice, are expected to strive to uphold even in our adherence to God's law and moral conduct.

Is this possible in this life? Yes, it is possible if you believe Titus 2:11-14.

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for

us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Truth is, whatever God desires and commands His children to do, the Holy Spirit enables. It's the work of the Holy Spirit in the Believer to help one live upright, untainted with sin, live godly in this present world. God will help you. He will help me. He will help us all. *Amen!*

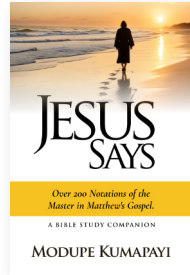
BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR



Letters In My Green Bag
A collection of ineffable, life-transforming ways to experience God.



God's Love Letter To You
A devotional guide.



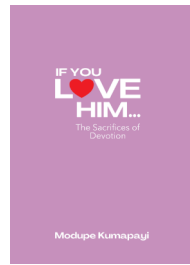
Jesus Says
Over 200 notations of the Master in Matthew's gospel; a Bible study companion.



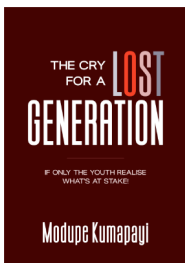
A Book For Dreamers
How dreamers transmute into achievers.



Take The Limits Off
A challenge to parents and guardians to release their wards to do what God wants and has ordained for each child.



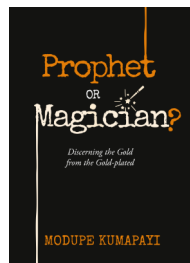
If You Love Him...
A book that answers the question, 'What is God's love?' And it presents the challenge, if you love God, then what?



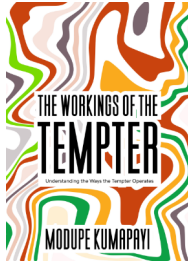
The Cry for a Lost Generation
A book that offers immediate help for anyone seeking God now and seeking to do His will regardless of their past.



Dinah's Defilement Is Your Defilement
A dramatic retelling of Dinah's story. A book that offers you a claim: You can separate yourself unto God and live free of Satan's defilement.

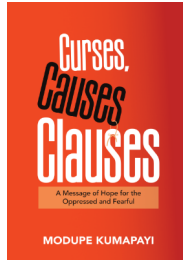


Prophet or Magician?
Prophet or Magician? Is a unique book, a mirror of sort, and reflects who God's true prophets are, and who impostors, charlatans, liars, false preachers are.



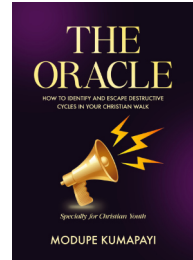
The Workings of the Tempter

The Workings of the Tempter is an unusual book; it retells Bible episodes of temptations and chronicles incidences of many who had fallen for the tempter's cunning ways of trapping those he lures into sin.



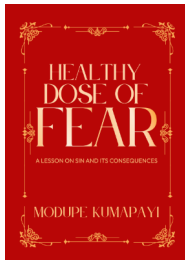
Curses, Causes and Clauses

Curses, Causes and Clauses is written to answer questions about curses, show you the way out of curses, and also teach you how to remain free from curses.



The Oracle

The Oracle reveals hidden truths about the Christian life. Opens the way to understanding why some Christians fell in the early church and how you can stand today and gain heaven at last.



Healthy Dose of Fear

Healthy Dose of Fear equips you to be a victorious, sin-overcoming, holy, upright, and heaven-assured child of God.

THE BOOK

DOES a voice often speak in your mind to warn you to cease, desist and get away from evil, from sinful and bad behaviours? That's the lover of your soul speaking to you. If you are born again already, that voice is calling you to consistent holy living; but if you're not, the question is, have you heard about Jesus? Do you know His power of salvation from sin? That voice is the Holy Spirit inviting you to give Jesus a chance to rule in your heart and life.

Healthy Dose of Fear is the echo of that inner voice in you, calling the Believer, especially, to beware of all practices of sin. It provides examples of some of those ruined by sinful indulgences, showing you how to escape and become victorious over temptations, over the tempter, and bringing to your awareness the terrible consequences of sin. In reading *Healthy Dose of Fear*, you can be equipped to be a victorious, sin-overcoming, holy, upright, and heaven-assured child of God.

THE AUTHOR

MODUPE KUMAPAYI believes strongly that God has impressed upon her heart to share through her writings the knowledge she has gained in her walk with God and the insight she has been given in her study of God's Word. Her deepest desire is to arm people with the truth; and her greatest fulfilment comes from watching people thrive spiritually.