



# FEED MY SHEEP

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## True Confession

**D**avid's fornication with Bathsheba is now being confronted by God's "point-man" prophet, Nathan. Nathan has approached the king and says, Your majesty, I would like to tell you about an incident that happened recently in your kingdom.

**2 Samuel 12:1b** There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.

**2** The rich *man* had exceeding many flocks and herds:

**3** But the poor *man* had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

This is a parable and as such, it is not a perfect match with reality. In fact, I think Nathan deliberately designed it *not* to be a perfect match with David's sin situation so that David would not catch on too soon that the parable was about himself. We realize that the little ewe lamb represents Bathsheba. For all the non-farmers, a ewe is a female. This one ewe lamb was all that the poor man had. In other words, Uriah had only one wife. This contrasts with verse 2 which says the rich man, who represents David, had exceeding many flocks and herds. This is a further indication that David indeed had a sizable harem, although very few of them are actually recorded by name.

**4** And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb,

and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

**5** And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As YHWH liveth, the man that hath done this *thing* shall surely die:

Wait a minute! David knew God's laws, statutes and judgments probably better than any monarch the nation of Israel ever had. Taking another man's animal is theft, but it is not a capital crime. God's law *never* calls for the death penalty for theft. (By the way, those who teach that charging usury is a capital crime are mistaken. We can prove it; but that topic is for another time.) The point here is that David's temper exploded at hearing such injustice. He was still in a state of unrepentance and an unwillingness to confess his sins. Sin perverts judgment. A person who is lacking in a realistic sense of his own sinfulness is apt to be a severe, harsh or cruel judge of others. This is what David has just demonstrated. Moreover, a guilty conscience is apt to make the temper irritable and quick to flare, sharp to strike, and mean and bitter in its attacks. A guilty conscience sometimes finds temporary relief in the inflicting of cruelty on others. But it is only temporary, and woe be to the next person who has the misfortune to be in the path of a person with a guilty, torturing conscience. Upon hearing of this injustice in the story that Nathan had just told him, David has called for the perpetrator of this evil to be executed, but then he adds the true biblical penalty for the theft.

**6** And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

Because he had no pity... It's a case of look-who's-talking. David can see the fault in someone else but his own heart has become as cold as ice so that he is incapable of seeing, or he is deliberately refusing to acknowledge the same sin in himself. Nathan now comes to the do-or-die moment. He must shock David into reality. When he does, will the king react with murderous rage, even as Saul had done when he tried to pin David to the wall with his spear? Or will the ice melt?

**7a And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man.**

Boom! Can you imagine how this must have hit David!? It must have felt like he had grabbed hold of a 110-volt electrical line. In an instant, the entire meaning of the parable was revealed to him. The parable was like a mirror before his face and he saw with loathing and disgust the blackness of his soul and the hardness of his heart. Nathan could see in David's countenance that the words had penetrated the ice and were now commencing to melt the hard heart. But instead of continuing with a litany of David's sins, Nathan began on a more positive note by reminding David of Father's great goodness to him.

**7b Thus saith YHWH God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;**

David pictures in his mind the scene that day when Samuel came to his father Jesse's house and they called him in from the pasture, and how he was anointed with oil in the midst of his brethren as the future king of all Israel. He recalled being called to Saul's throne, to serve him as armorbearer, then as a commander in his armies, how Saul had turned on him, how he had to flee Saul's armies and hide in the rocks and crevices, how Yahweh had delivered him through all those attempts by Saul to murder him. He recalls how he was anointed the second time as he was acclaimed king over Judah and how seven and a half years later he was anointed the third time as he was acclaimed king over all the tribes of Israel. Nathan continues...

**8 And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that *had been* too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.**

David is now weeping as the ice in his heart has melted in a torrent. It is escaping through the tear ducts in his eyes. "Yes, Father," he is agreeing with the words from Nathan, "Yes, Father, you were so good to me, elevating me—just a lowly shepherd—of all people, to be king over your people, Israel. You placed great trust in me and I have blown it. I have betrayed your trust. I have betrayed you. What have I done!" The words of Nathan; i.e., the words of Father, are piercing his conscience like a hot poker as he finally faces the reality and horror of his sins.

**9 Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of YHWH, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife *to be* thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.**

Nathan now pronounces the Father's punishment, the disciplinary correction for a straying son whom He greatly loves.

**10 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.**

You see, in David's reaction to the parable, he had pronounced the judgment on himself. David, in his wrath, had decreed that the man who had stolen the ewe lamb deserved death. God's righteous judgment upon David was that first of all, there is a sword which will never depart from David's royal dynasty. For the murder of Uriah—and the other warriors with Uriah, don't forget—God announces there will be deaths and murders in David's own family. And for the theft of a wife, it will be a *four-fold* penalty. These two judgments were combined and fulfilled in the subsequent deaths of Bathsheba's firstborn who was conceived in fornication, then in the slayings of David's sons, Amnon, followed by Absalom and finally Adonijah, some of them by other members of David's family. Four deaths in David's immediate family. What utter tragedies!... and all because David did not avert his eyes upon seeing Bathsheba in the bath.

**11 Thus saith YHWH, 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.**

This was fulfilled by Absalom when he tried to usurp the throne from his father, which story we will come to later on, along with the other deaths.

**12 For thou didst *it* secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.**

**13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against YHWH. And Nathan said unto David, YHWH also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.**

Here, finally, after having committed these dark deeds almost a year ago, and having been living in great inner turmoil and torment for all these months, finally David confesses. Notice: David does not try to mitigate or otherwise excuse his guilt. He does not say: I have sinned, but...if Bathsheba had taken more care to close the curtains, I wouldn't have sinned, or... if Uriah had not been so stubborn in refusing to go home to his wife... or... if Joab had only refused to do it, and instead if he had only come to me and told me I was doing wrong...No, David did the right thing. He owned his sin. He took full responsibility for it. He did not blame others. He did not blame it on circumstances. He admitted that he alone was guilty.

My dear readers, even in less serious sins, just looking at interpersonal relationships among Christian brethren, and how we sometimes offend one another... it would go a very long way towards restoring good relationships if we all could simply do what David did when we acknowledge our sin to the one whom we have offended. For example, when you come to realize that you have offended someone in word or deed, and you want to make it right and be reconciled with that person, use David's model when you offer your apology. Say: "I have sinned," or "I have offended you, brother, and I very deeply regret it." Not "I have offended you, brother, and I am sorry, really sorry; but if you hadn't said what you said, I wouldn't have responded like I did."

It is almost funny to hear it put like that, but I can assure you from my own observations and I am embarrassed to admit it, but also from my own experience, that this sort of blame-shifting and excuse-making occurs all the time. *It will not heal the rift*. It will not restore damaged relationships. Instead, it reveals that the person supposedly apologizing actually has a pride problem; that he or she refuses to humble themselves before another. It means they want their cake and to eat it, too. They want the benefit of a re-

stored relationship, but in truth, they really don't want to admit error. Or they will admit it was *partly* my fault, but it was your fault, too! No, that does not work. Even if the other person *was* partly to blame, we need to learn to simply admit our own sins without trying to shift or share the blame. Then let the Holy Spirit prick the conscience of the other person, if indeed there is fault in the one we have offended.

Now once again we see the contrast between David and Saul. Notice how David reacted: "I have sinned..." versus how Saul reacted when he did not wait for Samuel to come to Gilgal and offer the sacrifice. Remember how Saul then went ahead and offered the sacrifice on his own authority? And then when Samuel confronted Saul with his sin, here is how Saul reacted:

**1 Samuel 13: 11 And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash;**

**12 Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto YHWH: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.**

You see, according to Saul, he was not in error. It was *the people's* fault—they were scattering. Plus, it was *your* fault, Samuel—you didn't get here in time. Also, it was *the Philistines'* fault—they were headed our way. It, it...it wasn't MY-Y-Y fault! Because of this refusal to repent and confess, Samuel announced the kingdom would be taken from him. There is no excusing David's transgressions, but when he confessed, he made a proper confession...no blame-shifting. He accepted full responsibility on his own shoulders.

Returning to verse 13 again...after David confesses, Nathan tells David that Yahweh also has put away your sin; you will not die. Yet, God's law called for both an adulterer and the adulteress to be put to death. So the question arises: why did God, or how could God let David and Bathsheba "get away with it?" I suggest that, number one, 400 years ago in our country, this law was applied, was it not? But look around today. Adultery and extra-marital fornication is commonplace; it is rampant in our society. And, sad to say, I have heard of surveys of Christians by Chris-

tian organizations—and the results are sobering and shameful. I don't remember the numbers, but it showed that adultery among professing Christians is nearly the same as among non-Christians. It seems to me it was somewhere in the 40-60 percent range. So number one, we have seen how in the 400 years since the days of the pilgrims that God's laws on sexual sins are no longer enforced by civil government. I am suggesting the possibility that since it was over 400 years since the time of Joshua and his pilgrims to the time of David, that perhaps the law in Leviticus 20:10 was no longer being regularly enforced then either.

A second possible reason why David and Bathsheba "got away with it," was that David was the king. As so often happens in monarchies, kings become more and more absolute in their power, so that no one is willing to call for the execution of the king. That tends to cause one's own execution.

So those are reasons why David and Bathsheba were not executed by civil government. That still does not explain why *God* let them "get away with it." I mean, God could have caused their deaths in any number of ways shortly after the act of fornication. That would have been a clear sign that God was Himself carrying out the judgment upon them. It would have been recorded in the Bible that God slew them for their wickedness, just as we have other similar cases recorded. For example,

**Genesis 38:7 And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of YHWH; and YHWH slew him.**

In that they were not slain, God was merciful to David and Bathsheba. But how could God justify letting them off the hook when his own law required it? By what law did God let them escape capital punishment. I believe it is for the same reason that God, in the form of Jesus, let the woman caught in adultery in John, chapter 8, off the hook. There, the Pharisees were trying to trap Jesus into having Him call for her to be stoned to death. But Jesus, wishing to have mercy on the woman, stooped down and wrote in the dirt. Whatever He wrote, it caused the Pharisees to slink away one by one until only Jesus and the adulteress were left standing there alone. Jesus said to her "...Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" She said, "No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

By what law did Jesus let her off the hook? By the law that says that there must be two or three witnesses. All the Pharisee witnesses had been embarrassed by Jesus into slinking off and were no longer present to witness against her. I believe we have a similar case with David and Bathsheba. There were no witnesses. Now, this does not mean that nobody knew about the affair. There were probably many people in Jerusalem who knew about it. It may have become common knowledge.

After all, David used his servants to summon Bathsheba to him. And if it were a protracted affair, well... people talk. Gossip spreads like wildfire. As for General Joab, well, he had a vested interest in keeping his part of the cover-up secret. The point is, who would step forward and testify against the king?

Nobody—except Nathan the prophet, but that is only one. The law requires two. And so Nathan declared that because he had confessed his sin, that God had forgiven him. And my friends, to any one of us who may be living with a tormented conscience because of unconfessed sin, I want you to know that this principle is so important that it was reiterated by John in the New Testament where he wrote

**1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

It is just that simple. Let that burden be lifted from off your shoulders. It feels like the weight of the world. I know; I have experienced it. We all know. We have all been there from time to time. But oh, how sweet is the restoration of fellowship with our Father! We will conclude this part of the story here and let each of us just take the opportunity at this moment to simply confess and be restored to intimate communion with the Father. This is just between you and God. Let us pray...and make a true confession.

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