

The Cost of Rest



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: 2 Sam. 11:1–27, 2 Sam. 12:1–23, Gen. 3:1–8, 1 John 1:9.

Memory Text: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Ps. 51:10, NKJV).

Many people seem desperate to find a little peace and quiet. They are willing to pay for it too. In many big cities there are internet-free rooms, which can be rented by the hour. The rules are strict—no noise, no visitors. People are willing to pay to be able to sit quietly and just think or nap. There are sleep pods that can be rented in airports, and noise-reducing earphones are popular items. There are even canvas hoods, or collapsible privacy shields that you can buy to pull over your head and torso for a quick workplace break.

True rest also has a cost. While the spin doctors of the self-help media would like to make us believe that we can determine our own destiny and that rest is just a matter of choice and planning, yet, at least when we consider this honestly, we realize our inability to bring true rest to our hearts. In the fourth-century, Augustine put it succinctly in his famous *Confessions* (Book 1) as he considered God’s grace: “You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless, until they can find rest in you.”

This week we look briefly into the life of the man after God’s own heart to find out how he discovered the true cost of God’s rest.

* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 24.

Worn and Weary

On a balmy spring evening, restless King David paced the roof of his palace. He should have been with his army on the other side of the Jordan. He should have been leading God’s people to defeat the Ammonites and finally bring peace to the kingdom.

Not being where he should have been opened the door to temptation for David. Read the story in 2 Samuel 11:1–5. What happened, and what great sin did David commit?

David saw a “very beautiful woman” taking a bath on her roof. His sinful impulses got the better of him that evening, and he slept with Bathsheba, the wife of a trusted army officer. Like all ancient kings, David had absolute power. As king, he didn’t have to follow the rules that governed everyone else. And yet, the painful story of David’s family following this story-changing moment reminds us of the fact that, even as the king, he was not above God’s law.

Indeed, the law is there as a protection, a safeguard, and when even the king stepped outside it, he faced terrible consequences. As soon as David transgressed the limits of God’s law, he began to feel its effects on all aspects of his life. David thought that his passionate fling had gone unnoticed; yet, Bathsheba was now pregnant and her husband far away.

Read 2 Samuel 11:6–27. How did David try to cover up his sin?

Even David’s most intricate schemes to get Uriah home to his wife, Bathsheba, failed. Uriah was a man of stellar reputation who responded to David’s subtle hints: “ ‘The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife?’ ” (2 Sam. 11:11, *NKJV*). Eventually a desperate David reverted to “remote control” assassination to cover his sin.

It is hard to believe that David, to whom God had given so much, could have stooped so low. No matter who we are, what warning should we all take from this story?

Wake-Up Call

In the midst of one of the darkest times of David's life there was good news: *God sent His prophet*. Nathan and David knew each other well. Earlier, Nathan had counseled David on his plans to build a temple (*2 Samuel 7*). Now, though, the prophet came with a different task to perform for his king.

Why do you think Nathan chooses to tell a story rather than naming and shaming David immediately? Read *2 Samuel 12:1–14*.

Nathan knew what to say, and he said it in a way that David could understand. He told a story that David, the former shepherd, could relate to. He knew David's highly developed sense of justice and integrity. Thus, in a sense, one could say that Nathan set a trap and that David walked right into it.

When David unwittingly pronounced his own death sentence, Nathan told him, “‘You are the man’” (*2 Sam. 12:7, NKJV*). There are different ways of saying “You are the man.” One can shout it, one can accuse and stick a finger right into the other person's face, or one can express concern and care. Nathan's words must have been laced with grace. At that moment, David must have felt the pain that God must feel when one of His sons or daughters knowingly steps outside of His will. Something clicked in David's mind. Something tore in his heart.

Why does David respond with: “I have sinned against the LORD” rather than “I have sinned against Bathsheba” or “I am a murderer” (*2 Sam. 12:13; see also Ps. 51:4*)?

David recognized that sin, which makes our heart restless, is primarily an affront against God, the Creator and Redeemer. We hurt ourselves; we affect others. We bring disgrace to our families or churches. Yet, ultimately, we hurt God and drive another nail into the rough beam pointing heavenward on Golgotha.

“The prophet's rebuke touched the heart of David; conscience was aroused; his guilt appeared in all its enormity. His soul was bowed in penitence before God. With trembling lips he said, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’ All wrong done to others reaches back from the injured one to God. David had committed a grievous sin, toward both Uriah and Bathsheba, and he keenly felt this. But infinitely greater was his sin against God.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 722.

Forgiven and Forgotten?

After David had unwittingly pronounced judgment on himself (2 Sam. 12:5, 6), Nathan confronted him with the enormity of his sin. David's heart was broken, and he confessed his sin. Immediately Nathan assured him that "The LORD also has put away your sin" (2 Sam. 12:13, NKJV) and that he was forgiven. There was no waiting period for God's forgiveness. David didn't have to prove that he was really sincere before forgiveness was extended.

However, Nathan, who already had predicted the consequences of David's sin in 2 Samuel 12:10–12, went on to state that the child to be born would die.

What does it mean that God had taken away David's sin? Did He just wipe the slate clean? Does everyone just simply forget about it? Read 2 Samuel 12:10–23 as you contemplate these questions.

David also must have wondered about these questions as he saw his world crumbling—the baby dead, his family in disarray (the stories of Amnon and Absalom are two good examples of real-life family troubles), and his future uncertain. And yet, despite the consequences of his sin, which had affected innocent people such as Uriah and the newborn baby, David also began to understand that God's grace would cover this and that someday all the consequences of sin would be done away with. In the meantime, he could find rest for his troubled conscience in God's grace.

What does David feel he really needs? What does he yearn for? Read Psalm 51:1–6.

With Psalm 51, David went public as he opened his heart and confessed his sins. David's cry for mercy appealed to God's unfailing love and His great compassion. He yearned for renewal.

When we consider the cost of rest in Jesus, we need first to recognize that we need outside help; we are sinners and need a Savior; we recognize our sins and cry out to the only One who can wash us, cleanse us, and renew us. When we do this, we can take courage: here is an adulterer, a manipulator, a murderer, and someone who violated at least five of the Ten Commandments who called for help—and claimed the promise of God's forgiveness.

If God forgave David for what he did, what hope is there, then, for you?

Something New

After David had confessed his sin without trying to excuse it or gloss over it, he went on to petition God. What did he ask God for? Read Psalm 51:7–12.

David's reference to cleansing with hyssop utilized terminology known to every Israelite who had ever visited the sanctuary. As he referred to the ritual acts of cleansing described in the Law of Moses (*Lev. 14:4*), he recognized the power of a sacrifice—the Sacrifice—who would come in the future to take away the sins of the world.

David also went on to ask for “joy” and “gladness.” In the face of the enormity of his sin, wasn't this a little audacious?

Perhaps it may be helpful to listen to this paraphrase: “Tell me I am forgiven so that I may enter the sanctuary again where I can hear the joy and gladness of those worshipping you.”

When Adam and Eve sinned, they hid from God's presence (*Gen. 3:8*). Why do you think David's request, even after his sin, is so different? Read Psalm 51:11, 12.

David did not want to lose the consciousness of living in God's presence. He realized that without the Holy Spirit he was powerless. He knew that as easily as he slipped into sin with Bathsheba, he could slip into sin again. His self-confidence was shattered.

David understood that future victories would not come from him; they would come only from God as he depended totally on God.

The victorious Christian life is not all about us. It is all about Jesus. We yearn for *His* presence; we crave *His* Spirit; we want *His* joy of salvation. We recognize our need for renewal and restoration. We need His rest—a divine act of re-creation. Creation rest is not far from forgiveness. “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (*Ps. 51:10, NKJV*) uses Creation terminology. In the Old Testament only God can “create” (*bara'*)—and once we have been re-created, we can rest.

If you haven't experienced the joy and gladness of liberation from a guilty conscience, what is holding you back? If it is guilt, what could you learn from this story that should help you?

Reflectors of God’s Light

Probably the most natural thing for us to do after working through an embarrassing failure and experiencing forgiveness is to try to forget that the event ever happened. Memories of failure can be painful.

What does David want to do with his painful experience? Read Psalm 51:13–19.

When a bowl or a precious vase falls and breaks into pieces, we normally sigh and throw the useless broken pieces away. In Japan there is a traditional art called *kintsugi*, which specializes in re-creating broken pottery. A precious metal, such as liquid gold or silver, is used to glue the broken pieces together and to turn the broken item into something of beauty and value.

Every time God forgives our transgressions and re-creates us again, something changes. God’s precious forgiveness glues our brokenness together, and the visible breaks can draw attention to His grace. We can become God’s loudspeakers. “My tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness” (*Ps. 51:14, NKJV*). We don’t attempt to self-repair or auto-improve (even incrementally). Our broken spirits, our contrite hearts, are enough praise for God—and they are beams of light that the world can see surrounding us. Our experience of being forgiven attracts others who are searching for forgiveness.

What relationship is there between Psalm 51 and 1 John 1:9?

First John 1:9 is a short summary of Psalm 51. As David knows that “a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise” (*Ps. 51:17, NKJV*), John assures us that “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (*1 John 1:9, NKJV*). We can take God at His word.

Again, David could not repair the tremendous damage that he had done through his acts and example to his family. He suffered the consequences of his decisions and actions. And yet, David knew that he had been forgiven. He knew that he needed to trust by faith that one day the true Lamb of God would come and stand in his place.

How can you learn right now to apply the promises of 1 John 1:9 to your own life? How should you feel after you do so and know that the promise is for you too?

Further Thought: “David’s repentance was sincere and deep. There was no effort to palliate his crime. No desire to escape the judgments threatened, inspired his prayer. . . . He saw the defilement of his soul; he loathed his sin. It was not for pardon only that he prayed, but for purity of heart. . . . In the promises of God to repentant sinners he saw the evidence of his pardon and acceptance. . . . ‘The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.’ Psalm 51:16, 17.

“Though David had fallen, the Lord lifted him up. . . .

“David humbled himself and confessed his sin, while Saul despised reproof and hardened his heart in impenitence.

“This passage in David’s history is . . . one of the most forcible illustrations given us of the struggles and temptations of humanity, and of genuine repentance. . . . Through all the ages . . . thousands of the children of God, who have been betrayed into sin, . . . have remembered . . . David’s sincere repentance and confession . . . and they also have taken courage to repent and try again to walk in the way of God’s commandments.

“Whoever . . . will humble the soul with confession and repentance, as did David, may be sure that there is hope for him. . . . The Lord will never cast away one truly repentant soul.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 725, 726.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 How can we find the balance between recognizing our inherent sinfulness and need for forgiveness and, at the same time, living like the forgiven sons and daughters of the King of the universe that we are?
- 2 Why is all sin, ultimately, sin against God? What does it mean to sin against God?
- 3 What can we say to someone, not a believer, who struggles with the suffering of innocent people, such as Uriah or the newborn son of David and Bathsheba? How do we explain the love and justice of God in such a situation? How does the perspective of the great controversy offer a helpful outlook?
- 4 Why would God devote two full chapters of the Bible to the sordid story of David and Bathsheba? What purpose does the recounting of this story serve?
- 5 Dwell on the idea that sin separates us from God as expressed in Psalm 51:11, 12. What has been your own experience with how this happens? How would you explain to someone what this separation feels like and why it’s so uncomfortable? Why is the promise of grace the only remedy?

Thanking God for Life

By ANDREW McCHESENEY

Fifteen-year-old Giselle didn't feel well when she woke up one morning. She prayed before getting out of bed as she always did.

"Dear God, thank You for everything You have done for me, especially that I am still alive," she prayed.

She thanks God for life every day. She and her family immigrated as refugees to the United States from Rwanda when she was 12. She faced a difficult life in her African homeland, where her parents struggled to find work and the family had little to eat. She often went hungry.

After praying, Giselle slid out of bed in the bedroom on the second floor of the family's small home in the U.S. state of Georgia and carefully walked down the stairs. She felt so weak.

"I don't feel well," she told her mother.

Mother was talking on the cell phone, but she interrupted her conversation.

"Go back upstairs and go back to bed," she said. "Maybe you'll feel better."

Giselle turned around to climb up the stairs and collapsed. She heard Mother call out her name as she fell down the last three stairs and crumpled onto the hard floor below.

"Giselle!" Mother cried. "Are you OK?"

Giselle was unable to reply. She couldn't breathe, so she couldn't speak.

Mother hung up the phone and ran over.

"Giselle! Giselle!" she said.

Giselle still couldn't answer.

Mother touched her forehead to see if she had a fever. No fever.

Mother called Giselle's 19-year-old sister to bring an electric fan to provide some air.

The cool air felt good on Giselle's face. She began to breathe.

"Are you OK?" Mother asked.

"I'm fine now," she said.

Mother wanted to take Giselle to the hospital, but the girl insisted that she was fine. Mother gave her some water to drink. Giselle later learned from the physician that she had collapsed because she wasn't eating properly.

The night after her fall, Giselle prayed before going to sleep. She prays every night before bedtime.

"Dear God," she said, "thank You for this day, and thank You for everything that You have done for us, especially for keeping me alive."

This quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help refugee children like Giselle obtain scholarships to study at Seventh-day Adventist schools in the North American Division. Giselle received financial assistance from a 2011 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering to study at an Adventist school in the U.S. state of Georgia. Through the influence of the school, she gave her heart to Jesus in baptism.

Part I: Overview

This week's lesson focuses on one of the saddest chapters in David's life. The king of Israel abused his God-given authority and led the wife of one of his soldiers into sin. Uriah was a warrior in David's army, fighting in a battle for his king. David took advantage of his absence.

When Bathsheba became pregnant because of David's lustful adultery, the king tried to cover up his sin. He called Uriah back from the fierceness of the battle to spend time with his wife. Uriah revealed his sterling character when he refused to enter his house while his army was fighting the enemy.

When David's initial plan did not work, he urged Joab, the captain of the king's army, to place Uriah in the front line of the battle so he would face certain death. David's lustful look led to a lustful act, which led to a deceptive plot to kill an innocent man. The devil's temptations are designed to meet each one of us at our weakest point. If there is a vulnerable point in our character, the devil will exploit that point to lead us into sin.

David recognized his guilt through a parable that the prophet Nathan told him. Brokenhearted, the king made an agonizing confession. His repentance was deep, genuine, and heartfelt. Psalm 51 is his earnest plea for forgiveness and a changed heart. God answered David's prayer. The king was forgiven, but forgiveness did not result in avoiding the tragic consequences of sin. In one way or another throughout his life, David experienced the terrible consequences of his sinful act. As a forgiven child of God, he entered Heaven's rest—but still experienced the anguish of his sinful act.

Part II: Commentary

One of the questions that immediately comes to mind when we study the experience of David's illicit, adulterous affair with Bathsheba is why God placed such a sordid story in the Bible. Why reveal the intimate details of David's life? Why not just say he sinned and was forgiven and end the story? Let's explore what God is teaching us through this narrative.

There are at least four deeply significant lessons here. Second Samuel 11:1 is a telling verse. In a few short words, Scripture points out a flaw in David's character. It was the spring of the year, and Israel was in a serious conflict with its enemies. Kings lead their armies into battle, but David sent Joab, the general of his army (*1 Chron. 27:34*), to the fight.

The text states, “But David remained at Jerusalem.” Courageous kings fight alongside their armies. They inspire their weary, battle-worn forces to continue fighting. David chose to remain in his palace, enjoying the delights of royalty, while his men suffered and died in a war. Here is the first lesson from David’s fall. When you fail to do your duty, when you indulge in pleasurable desires at the expense of doing what is right, you become vulnerable to Satan’s alluring temptations.

The second lesson follows swiftly on the heels of the first. Satan’s attacks come when they are least expected. David did not expect that when he walked on the roof of his palace that night that he would be captivated by the beauty of another man’s wife. The New Life Translation renders Proverbs 4:23 this way: “Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.” Solomon, David’s second son by Bathsheba, wrote these words. As an adult, he must have known about David’s sin. When we let our guard down, Satan attacks. Therefore, Jesus said to His disciples, “ ‘Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak’ ” (*Mark 14:38, NKJV*). This was precisely David’s problem. In an unguarded moment, the weakness of the flesh led him into a sin that would change the entire course of his life.

Sinful Thoughts Lead to Sinful Acts.

Sin begins in the mind. David’s lustful look led to the next step, indulging his lustful fantasy. He ventured onto Satan’s ground when he acted on his thoughts and sent his servants to inquire about Bathsheba. His impulses, uncontrolled by the Holy Spirit, led to an inappropriate inquiry in order to indulge his desires by a sinful act. This leads us to our third lesson. Although David tried to cover up his adulterous affair with Bathsheba, sin can never be covered up for long. The words of Moses to the Israelites centuries before came true in his experience. “ ‘But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out’ ” (*Num. 32:23, NKJV*). Sinful acts done under the cover of darkness will one day come out in the blazing light of the day. For “all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (*Heb. 4:13, NKJV*).

David’s sinful act would not be concealed for long. Bathsheba was pregnant. Uriah was dead. Nathan the prophet confronted David with the sinful course of his actions. Sin done in darkness one day will come out in the open. Echoing and reechoing down the centuries are Moses’ words: “Your sin will find you out” (*Num. 32:23, NKJV*). The fourth lesson that we discover from this first part of the story is that although David wept, confessed his sin, repented of his evil deed, and was forgiven by God, the consequences of sin would remain.

Sin Is a Cancer Destroying Everything It Touches.

“Edwin Cooper was famous across America, yet almost no one knew his real name. Coming from a family of circus clowns, Cooper began performing before audiences when he was just nine years old. After a stint with the Barnum and Bailey Circus, he became a fixture on television in the 1950s as Bozo the Clown. In addition to entertaining both young and old, Cooper had a message for his ‘buddies and partners’ every week: get checked for cancer. Yet Cooper was so busy working that he neglected to follow his own advice. By the time his cancer was discovered, it was too late for it to be treated. Edwin Cooper died at just forty-one years of age from a disease that he had warned many others to watch out for. Sin is far more deadly than the most aggressive, malignant cancer. Sin kills and destroys everything it touches. From the Fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden until now, sin takes no prisoners. This is the purpose behind everything Satan does. Jesus said, ‘“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” ’ (John 10:10)” (“No Laughing Matter,” in *Reading Eagle*, July 5, 1961, accessed February 4, 2020, <https://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/no-laughing-matter>).

David’s Sin Had Deadly Consequences.

The results of David’s sin are seen throughout his life and in his own family. The child he bore with Bathsheba, as the result of his adultery, became ill and died. His son Amnon forced himself on his half sister Tamar and defiled her. In rage, two years later, Absalom, Tamar’s brother, had Amnon murdered. David’s life was filled with grief, sorrow, and disappointment. Absalom, David’s third son, whose mother was Maacah, was a great favorite of his father. Handsome, outgoing, adventuresome, and charming, he captured the heart of Israel. Eventually he rebelled against David’s leadership and was killed in battle. David’s heart was broken. Sin, like a cancer, had plagued his life. Although he was forgiven by God, the consequences of sin rested heavy upon him. One of the great lessons of this story is that sin has tragic consequences. Yet, despite sin’s consequences, God is always ready to forgive and rebuild our lives.

Analyzing David’s Pleas for Forgiveness: Psalm 51

One of the most powerful prayers in all the Bible is found in Psalm 51, which is David’s heartfelt appeal for forgiveness after his sin against Bathsheba. As we read the prayer, we are immediately struck with the genuineness of David’s confession. He is painfully honest. He makes no excuse for his sin. He appeals to God for mercy, forgiveness, and restoration into God’s favor. Notice the verbs in the prayer. They are powerful

indicators of David's motives. He prays, "Have mercy upon me, . . . blot out my transgressions" (*Ps. 51:1, NKJV*). "Wash me . . . cleanse me" (*Ps. 51:2, NKJV*). "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me" (*Ps. 51:3, NKJV*). "Purge me," "Wash me" (*Ps. 51:7, NKJV*). "Make me hear joy and gladness" (*Ps. 51:8, NKJV*). "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (*Ps. 51:10, NKJV*). "Do not cast me away from Your presence" (*Ps. 51:11, NKJV*). "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation" (*Ps. 51:12, NKJV*). Reading David's prayer, we can almost hear his heartfelt plea. Our own hearts are touched by his sincere confession. The incredibly good news is that God honors a "broken and contrite heart" (*Ps. 51:17*). As Ellen G. White says: "Jesus loves to have us come to Him just as we are, sinful, helpless, dependent. We may come with all our weakness, our folly, our sinfulness, and fall at His feet in penitence. It is His glory to encircle us in the arms of His love and to bind up our wounds, to cleanse us from all impurity."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 50. David experienced the cleansing power of Christ's forgiveness. His relationship with God was restored. His spirit was renewed. He once again entered a life of service for the Christ that loved him, forgave him, cleansed him, and transformed him.

Part III: Life Application

Sin is a double-edged sword. It brings not only guilt, shame, and condemnation but also hopelessness and discouragement. Once the devil leads us into temptation and we fall into his trap, his next step is to make us feel as though there is no hope. Discouragement is one of his most powerful weapons. Here are three facts to remember when you have fallen into temptation:

- Christ longs for you to come to Him just as you are. If, as David, you come with an honest heart, not making excuses for your sin, you, too, will experience God's forgiveness.
- Christ has never, ever cast out or rejected anyone who has sincerely come seeking His grace. In fact, He assures us that " 'the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out' " (*John 6:37, NKJV*).
- Christ's promises of forgiveness and restoration are as certain as His eternal throne. Your feelings are not the criteria of whether you are forgiven. You may not feel forgiven. You may still have feelings of guiltiness, but you can still have the assurance based on the Word of God that your sins are forgiven and that you are a child of God.

Notes


