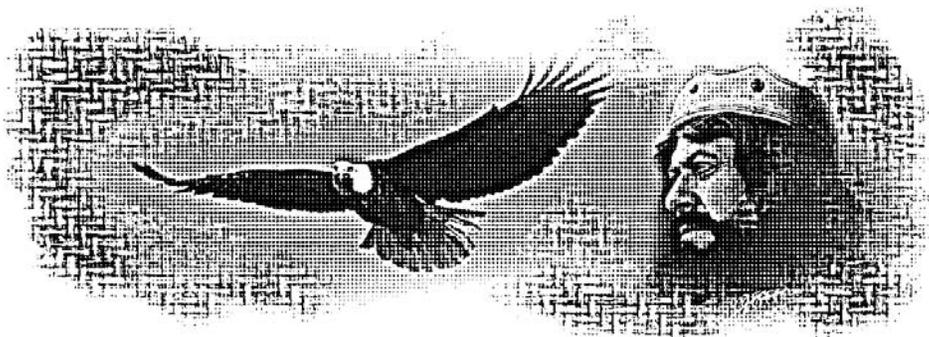


In the Shadow of His Wings



SABBATH—MAY 7

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Psalm 63:7; Exodus 19:4; 2 Samuel 11; 2 Samuel 12; Psalm 32:1; Psalm 17:8; Psalm 36:7; Psalm 51:2; Psalm 57:1; Psalm 61:4.

MEMORY VERSE: “Because you have helped me, I sing in the shadow of your wings” (Psalm 63:7, NlrV).

“Three things are too amazing for me. There are four things I don't [do not] understand. The first is the way of an eagle in the sky” (Proverbs 30:18, 19, NlrV).

THE EAGLE IS A LIVING JET FIGHTER. It is armed with a hooked beak and razor sharp claws. It is loaded like a jet fighter too. The eagle is wind and wing, bone, sinew (body tendon), and blood. The eagle is a scavenger (flesh eater), fisher, and thief. The eagle dives from clouds toward water with the speed of a cyclone. The eagle walks on balled-up claws in its nest to keep from cutting up its young. The eagle is majesty, power, and grace. The eagle is all these symbols, yet greater than all of them put together. It is a small wonder, then, that the Bible writer failed to understand the fierce (wild) beauty of the eagle flying in the sky.

David uses a similar (almost the same) symbol as the eagle in his psalms. It is the symbol of wings. He uses the symbol of wings to describe being protected by God. This week, we will think about how God protects us and covers our sin. But first we will look at the events that showed David's need for these coverings. Then we will try to understand why we need to be protected under those same wings.

SUNDAY—MAY 8**THE NAKED TRUTH (2 Samuel 11)**

Eagles can fly as high as 10,000 feet, higher than most birds. Like the eagle, David “flew” high. The shepherd-king reached the level of greatness few kings ever reach. David was clothed in the spoils of military victory. David was covered with honor and glory. But David forgot that his kingly robes were a gift from God. Even though David was a king, his robes could not hide his sins from God.

David’s garments (robes) were both kingly and also priestly in a spiritual sense. He was the head of Israel’s government run by God too. David’s bitter sins that stained these garments inspired Psalms 32 and 51. It is important to fully understand the symbols used in these psalms as a covering for sin. It is also important to understand how the symbol of God’s wings is used in other psalms to mean that God is watching over, or covering us. It will help us to look at how the events of David’s life inspired these symbols. As we study the spiritual lessons of garments, we notice how the sad story of David’s fall begins without the protection of these garments.

At the peak of his greatness, David faces his toughest battle. The war is not going on the bloody fields of Rabbah but in David’s mind. Satan chooses his “weapon” well. Goliath failed to defeat (overthrow) David with his extra-long spear. But a bathing woman, seen from the king’s roof-

top, does. Clearly, David forgets the lesson of his sling. The lesson is how easily a “giant” is felled by one small stone—or one small look.



David’s kingly robes could not hide his sins from God’s sight.

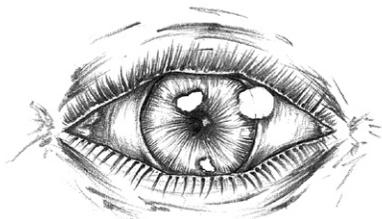
One small stone and down falls a giant. One small look and down falls a king. David did many things to “cover” his sin of adultery¹ and avoid being discovered. What were they, according to 2 Samuel 11? We often try to cover sin to avoid getting caught. But this only leads to falling into greater sins. Why? How do the details of David’s story make this point more clearly?

One wrong look leads to events that end in murder and near civil war. David’s story tells of one cover-up leading to another in order to avoid results. The real problem of sin is that trying to cover it up, without being sorry for it, only leads to worse sin and cover-up.

1. adultery—sex outside of marriage.

David's adultery happened under the cloak of kingly power. He had a man murdered and tried to cover that up too. But God's eye sees through the outer garments right to the heart.

It has been said, "Adversity [difficulty] has slain [killed] its thousands. But prosperity [success; power] has slain its ten thousands." With David's life in mind, how does prosperity lead the soul to danger? Why does adversity (difficulty) often bring us closer to God? How can we avoid prosperity's pitfalls (traps)?



God's eye sees through the outer garments right to the heart.

MONDAY—MAY 9

NATHAN TELLS ALL (2 Samuel 12:1–12)

For a whole year, David hides his sin under a veil of lies. It seems as if the king has gotten away with murder. But sin hardens David's heart to stone. And God sends Nathan to break it. Nathan does not talk about David's sin directly. Doing that might make David angry enough to have Nathan murdered. Instead, Nathan clothes the truth in a parable.²

². parable—truth shown by a story.

Read Nathan's parable in 2 Samuel 12:1–12 and its interpretation (explanation). Remember that Jesus also used parables. What are the advantages of using parables? What was it about David's condition that made clothing the truth the best way for Nathan to reach him?

Nathan's parable is only a few verses long. But his parable holds important lessons for reaching the sin-hardened heart. First, Nathan does not come to David as an accuser. Instead, Nathan humbly asks for David's help. David's heart may be hardened by sin, but his sense of justice is still alive. Second, by clothing the truth in a parable, Nathan breaks down David's defenses. Third, Nathan's method of telling a parable invites David to listen without feeling judged. The result? David judges himself as guilty.



Nathan clothes the truth in a parable in order to break down the defenses that David has put up around his heart.

Nathan's sentence, "Thou art the man," rips through the veil of David's false cover-up. David's answer, "I have sinned against the Lord" also is followed by Nathan's assurance (promise) that "the Lord also has put away your sin" (verse 13, NKJV). Why was the Lord able to put away, or cover, David's sin? Read also 1 John 1:9.

David's sin is covered. But the child born to David and Bathsheba must die. For David, this tragedy must have been more bitter than his own death. He removes his kingly robes and puts on the mourning sackcloth.³ David openly repents⁴ to God. He pleads for his child's life. David's reaction to the news of the child's death puzzles his advisors. He rises. He bathes. He changes his clothes. He, the anointed (chosen) of God, anoints (puts oil on) himself anew and worships God. These actions show how those who have mourned for their sins must let God restore⁵ them: First, God raises the grieving sinner and receives him to Himself. Next, He washes away the guilt of our sin and clothes us in His righteousness. He anoints us with His Spirit so that we may worship Him. David's fall into sin begins and ends with a bath. This final washing is a sign of a clean heart.

We are given what hope by David's bathing, garment change,

and anointing? Why can we who have been washed clean by Jesus have full assurance (promise and knowledge) that we may come to worship Him?

TUESDAY—MAY 10

BLESSED IS HE WHOSE SIN IS COVERED (Psalm 32:3–5)

For a whole year after his sin against Uriah, Bathsheba, and God, David refuses to confess his sin, even to himself. But as Psalm 32 tells us, he suffers deeply because he is silent for a year.

Read Psalm 32:3–5. In what ways does David use symbols in poetic language to describe what happens to him when he refuses to confess his sin? According to verse 5, what does David do to end his suffering?

With lies and bloodshed David covers his sin of adultery. But the weight of his own guilt crushes him. As Psalm 32 shows, David becomes humble and truly repents and asks for God's mercy. In his cry for forgiveness, David does several things that teach us how to ask for God's covering of forgiveness. (1) David makes no excuse for his sin. (2) He does not try to find a "good" reason for having done the sin. (3) He does not find fault with God's law for pointing out

3. mourning sackcloth—rough cloth worn as an outward sign of sorrow and repentance (sorrow for sin).

4. repents—feeling sorry for your sins and turning away from sinning with the help of the Holy Spirit.

5. restore—to bring someone back to an earlier and better condition.

his sin. (4) He blames only himself for his sin. (5) He truly hates the sin that separated him from God. He turns from that sin. And God covers it.

David hides his sin (Psalm 32:3, 4); God covers it (verses 1, 2). What is the difference between our attempts to hide our sin and God's covering it? Before the righteousness of Christ can cover sin, what must be done to it?

God does not overlook sin. But sin is covered. This means its guilt is no longer brought against the sinner when he or she truly repents of it. Confession alone is not complete without repentance.⁶ We must be sorry for our sin and turn away from it in God's power. God can forgive and cover all sin. His grace⁷ both forgives sin and accepts the repentant (sorrowing) sinner as though he or she had never sinned! That is the power of Jesus, our Substitute, who accepts the sin put on Him. In this way Christ's righteousness (holy life) is credited (given) to the repentant sinner.

How readily do you confess your own sin to God? If not, in the end, are you deceiving God or yourself? Think about what your answer may suggest.

WEDNESDAY—MAY 11

**WHITER THAN SNOW
(Psalm 51:2)**

Psalm 51, like Psalm 32, is a psalm of repentance, written after David confesses his sin. Psalm 32 uses garments to symbolize (show) the idea of God's covering for sin. In the same way, Psalm 51 uses garments as a symbol of sin covering. But Psalm 51 also points to the washing and whitening agents (bleach) used to clean garments "spiritually." In other words, Psalm 51 uses the symbol of David doing his "dirty laundry."

In Psalm 51:2, David asks God to wash him completely. What does this washing involve? How do the symbols of making David "pure by sprinkling me [him] with hyssop plant"⁸ and "whiter than snow" (verse 7, NIV) help us to understand this kind of cleansing?

The word *hyssop* that David uses here for washing is used elsewhere in the Bible to mean the washing of a garment (read Genesis 49:11; Exodus 19:10). The word *purge*⁹ (Psalm 51:7, KJV) suggests the idea of making atonement (forgiveness) for sin. Hyssop, a gray-green marjoram (herb) plant, was used as a spice

6. repentance—the act of feeling sorry for your sins and turning away from sinning with the help of the Holy Spirit.

7. grace—God's gift of forgiveness and mercy (kindness that is not deserved) that He freely gives us in order to take away our sins.

8. hyssop plant—a plant with a strong smell, used as medicine, or for healing a person, such as a leper, and making him or her pure.

9. purge—to cleanse, remove.

and medicine. So, it was both a food and medicine. Hyssop had a long history in Israel. It was used during the first Passover¹⁰ (Exodus 12:22), in the day of cleansing a leper or a house (Leviticus 14:6, 49), and in the offering of the red heifer (calf) for making men and certain things pure after touching the dead. Moses used hyssop at the service for making the covenant (agreement) with God (Hebrews 9:19, 20). See “Hyssop” in *The SDA Bible Dictionary*, page 497.

All these uses show that hyssop was a powerful cleanser. David’s use of hyssop shows he understood that only the best cleanser could cleanse and cure him from sin. And that cure is the forgiving blood of our Savior.



David’s mention of hyssop shows he understood that only the blood of Jesus could cure him from his sin.

In Psalm 51:10, David prays for God to create in him a clean heart.

What does having a “clean heart” mean?

God does not just cleanse the heart from sin. He creates in His forgiven child a new heart. A new heart is a new mind. Paul advises us: “Don’t [do not] live any longer the way this world lives. Let your way of thinking be completely changed” (Romans 12:2, NlrV). In another place, Paul explains that we are changed “by washing away our sins. We were born again. The Holy Spirit gave us new life. God poured out the Spirit on us freely because of what Jesus Christ our Savior has done” (Titus 3:5, 6, NlrV). Prayer for forgiveness always should go with prayer for heart renewal and holy living. David wants to be clothed with a new mind and spirit of right living. He prays to be always obedient to God and not be without the leading of the Holy Spirit.

THURSDAY—MAY 12

**IN THE SANCTUARY (PLACE OF SAFETY) OF HIS WINGS
(Psalm 61:4)**

Some eagles have wingspans of up to nine feet. Under their wings they can shelter and protect their babies. Like the wings of the eagle, God shelters those who let go of their sins, no matter how far they may have fallen. The guilt of our sin may be removed. But the results of sin often may not be removed. David experienced this

10. Passover—Jewish holiday celebrating the freedom of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt.

bitter truth. David's sins were forgiven. But the results continued. For example, three of his sons died, and his daughter, Tamar, was raped by her own half-brother, Amnon.

According to Psalm 17:8; Psalm 36:7; and Psalm 57:1; what did David try to do in the shadow of God's wings? From what do those wings offer us covering?

Under the wings of God are lovingkindness, mercy, and shelter. No matter how far we fall, God flies faster than that fall. He uses our fall to teach us to fly. If we repent like David, we will be closer to God after He catches us from our fall than we were before we fell!

Maybe the eagle's flight inspired David's trust in God's protecting wings in Psalm 61. David probably wrote it while on the run during the time his son Absalom tried to steal his throne. It shows trust in the covering mercy of God. Maybe it means the mercy seat¹¹ in God's heavenly sanctuary. That is where the ark of God's covenant is kept. The angels' overarching wings protect the law. That reflects (shows) God's perfect character¹² of love. David may have been showing a desire to "live," through faith, with God in His sanctuary. David's soul is clothed in the holy light of that love.

Perhaps you have dedicated

(given) your life anew to God. But you are suffering the results of sin: separation from your friends, health problems, emotional pain. What hope of healing do you get from the shelter of God's wings?

FRIDAY—MAY 13

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, "David's Sin and Repentance," pages 717–726, in *Patriarchs [Forefathers] and Prophets [Special Messengers]*; "Bible Biographies [Life Stories]," page 157, in *Education*.

"David's repentance was sincere and deep. David did not try to make excuses for his crime. He did not ask to avoid punishment, but his desire to be free from his sin inspired his prayer for forgiveness. David saw how great his sin was against God. He saw the terrible sin of his soul. He hated his sin. He prayed hard for both forgiveness and a pure heart. David refused to give up the struggle. In the promises of God to repentant sinners, David saw the proof of his pardon [forgiveness] and acceptance. . . .

"David had fallen, but the Lord lifted him up. He was now more united with God and in sympathy with his fellow men than before he fell. . . .

"As David did, a person may have to experience God's punishment for sin even if he or she truly confesses and repents of his or her sin. Then he may

11. mercy seat—the cover of the ark of the covenant (agreement); on the ark was a lid made of solid gold with two angels looking down toward the ark. This lid was called the mercy seat.

12. God's perfect character—who God is; having and understanding the character of God is the same as being kind, loving, honest, and so on. God's law (Ten Commandments) shows us His character.

be sure that there is hope for him or her. Whoever will accept God's promises in faith will find pardon. The Lord will never turn away one truly repentant soul. He has given this promise: 'So the enemies of my people had better come to me for safety. They should make peace with me. I will say it again. They should make peace with me.' Isaiah 27:5, Nlrv. 'Let the one who is evil stop doing evil things. And let him quit thinking evil thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord. The Lord will show him his tender love. Let him turn to our God. He is always ready to forgive.' Isaiah 55:7, Nlrv."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 725, 726.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① As a class, discuss how useless it is to make our own plans compared¹³ to what Jesus willingly gives. What does He give? And why is it the only covering for sin that

can heal and save?

② Try to write one of your own psalms about God's mercy and love. Like David, write it from your own personal experience. Bring it to class and share what you have written.

③ Laundry ads for bleaching (whitening) agents (liquids) promise to whiten and soften clothes. To bleach out a stain without softening the clothes could be too harsh for the fabric (cloth). To soften fabric without taking care of the stain leaves it dirty. Why, then, do we need both the whitening power of God's justice and the softening power of His mercy to cleanse the soul's garment?

④ Forgiven sin can make us miserable, but we must not forget that it is forgiven. How can we learn that living with the results of our sin does not mean that our sin has not been forgiven?

13. compared—to look at two or more things closely in order to see what is similar (the same) or different about them or in order to decide which is better.