

Sermon - 07-25-2021
Ps 14; 2 Sam 11:1-15; Eph 3:14-21; Jn 6:1-21

How often do we hear about someone of high position in government or business or Christian ministry caving in to temptation and indulging their greed or passion or dishonesty? Too often, though there are many more faithful servants than those who cheat, lie or steal. The good guys do not make the news headlines. Today's OT Scripture features the sad story of King David's fall from grace. He sins and then he sins to cover up his sin. God did not stop loving David, and God lovingly punished the sins. David regretted what he had done – and confessed, repented and was forgiven by the Lord. This is a cautionary tale.

The story is not given to us to encourage us to sin as we wish and just get God's forgiveness later. The story supports obedience to God's Word. How do we do it? Or more exactly how does God do it in us? You know that Jesus can work wonders.

No human being is sin-proof. We all have temptations in our lives. We have perfect guidance in the Bible verses for today, and we have our dear Lord Jesus to lead us and to help us when we stumble.

We must keep in mind that “We are created in the image of the Creator—created to create—but we (in the church often) use the organizational system as an excuse not to address or solve a problem. We choose to make people conform to comfortable systems backed by policy, without providing helpful solutions or entertaining exceptional problems. The Safe Sanctuary Policy is a good example. We slap it in place, dust off our hands and proceed as though we don't have to work for or to serve both those in recovery from sexual abuse – and to serve those who have committed acts of abuse.. We say ‘no’ and require all others to fit in the box, rather than assist people in need outside of the box. In all these habits, rather than produce work we engineer excuses.

Sometimes we produce personal explanations to justify corporate neglect. We are like the invitees who declined the Master's banquet offer in Luke 14:16-24: ‘I'm sorry, I've just bought an ox, so the service provided by my position will stop until next week.’

(Again) It surely seemed like a harmless thing as the Israelites kept a few pagan treasures after the walls of Jericho came tumbling down. The divine instruction in Josh. 6:18 probably seemed overstated:
“But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them, you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it.”

The divine consequence in Josh. 7:13 probably seemed overstated: ‘You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove them.’” (W Brian Shelton, Organizational Holiness, *Firebrand Magazine* July 20, 2021)

This sin in the body of Christ is not murder, as described in our OT passage for today. However, we also have to keep firmly in our heart and mind how much God hates the sin of idolatry.

When we understand – hear me, understand, not just “know” that 1) we are created in God's image and 2) God hates idolatry – **and when we obey**, we receive the wonder of *Christ in us – the hope of glory*. It is something that the Lord does in us. God does wonders in us and then does wonders with us. This if for the sake of His kingdom.

Listen, King Saul got nervous when the prophet didn't show up on time, so he began the animal sacrifice himself. It was not for him to perform this priestly work. He justified his wrongdoing. After he made his excuses, “...Samuel replied: “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. (1 Samuel 15:22)

We often major on what is wrong with the church without doing our part to see that she is holy in her inner being. God has a special divine view of His church – she is a person with a soul and a spirit to Him. It is important to keep the bride of Christ pure and holy. Then God is free to do wonders in us and through us. That is God's delight. It is God's perfect

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will.

We have explored the utter sinfulness of human beings this morning. This discussion is not very uplifting until we realize just how powerful is God in Christ. We do not remain pagans or unbelievers with a thin coating of Christianity. No! When we own what God has clearly laid out for us, we become a new people – new individuals – a new community in Christ – His church.

Let me repeat the path – the way to experience wonders inside and outside:

- 1) You are created in the image of God – that's who you are!
- 2) Hear and obey the Word God has given us all – that's what you do
- 3) Open the door of your life and invite Jesus in

Not as a Guest, but a Permanent Resident – this is you in Christ and Christ in you!

Hear the Apostle Paul's prayer he sent to the church at Ephesus from prison:

I ask him (the Lord) to strengthen you by his Spirit—not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength—that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in. And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.

²⁰⁻²¹ God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.

Glory to God in the church!

Glory to God in the Messiah, in Jesus!

Glory down all the generations!

Glory through all millennia! Oh, yes!

(Eph 3:14-19 MSG)

Amen.