2 Samuel 12:9 9Why have you despised the word of the Lordby doing evil in his eyes?

It is such a sad history and yet so human a history. Here is David, shepherd boy raised up by the Lord to become king of the Lord’s people Israel. David became King because the first King, Saul, let the kingship, his royalty, go to his head. Saul sinned against the Lord and though the Lord called him to repentance, Saul does not repent. With that the Lord says through Samuel: **“Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king.”** In other words, the Lord knew that Saul was no longer a believer. His lack of faith is evident in his lack of true repentance.

It is because Saul turns his back on the Lord and faith that David is then anointed to be the next king. The exploits and faith of David are very evident. How David twice, does not take Saul’s life because Saul was appointed by the Lord and David was willing to wait for the Lord to take out Saul. How David confronted Goliath or how David became a mighty man in battle. All this and more with the help of the Lord. Once made king, David was blessed by the Lord in every way!

Yet it happened that David faced his greatest trial. Not from great and fierce enemies trying to kill him and destroy his country, but from beauty, desire and lust in the form of another man’s wife. There is no doubt that Satan was working to destroy David and David with lack of faith and foolishness fell into a deadly trap that nearly cost him his soul. Let’s look at this history of David under the theme: **FAITH AND REPENTANCE.**

As you heard our Old Testament reading you may have been astonished that such a tale of wickedness is found. Yet, that is one of the unique things of God’s Word. It doesn’t hide the wicked and evil that is among us, but rather seeks to expose this wickedness and lead us to repent and return to the Lord. Let me remind you of what happened.

One night, perhaps as the duties of being king weighed upon him, David got up and wandered around on his roof. As he did so, he saw, on the next roof, a woman taking a bath. Even though there wasn’t much to see, for it was night and there would have been curtains and barriers in place, David was intrigued. His intrigue lead to inquiries which lead to meetings which lead to an affair and a pregnancy. Once this pregnancy is discovered, David then arranges to have Bathsheba’s husband Uriah killed in battle. You need to grasp the facts. Not just adultery is involved but murder! Our text occurs perhaps as long as two years later, when the Lord finally sends the prophet Nathan to call David to repent. Let that sink in. For almost two years, David did not repent because he felt as King he was entitled to his sin. David had fallen into unbelief.

Please note that our text is how the Lord sent Nathan to David to bring to his attention his sin. The history is dramatic. The pronouncement of the Lord is sure and certain. There is no doubt that the Lord wants to make sure that David grasps the depth and horror of what he has done. Nathan says, **“You are the man.This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says.” I anointed you king over Israel.I rescued you from the hand of Saul. 8I gave the house of your master to you, and I gave the wives of your master into your embrace.I gave you the house of Israel and the house of Judah.If this was too little, I would have addedeven more. 9Why have you despised the word of the Lordby doing evil in his eyes? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword. You have taken his wife as your own wife. You have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. 10So now the sword will not depart from your house forever,because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.”**

There is no doubt that these words are a declaration of the evil that David has done. Yet I want you to notice very specifically what God says in regard to the evil done. This wasn’t just a messy earthly affair. This wasn’t just something to be considered a minor inconvenience or something that could be easily excused and tolerated. Look at what the Lord says. It is clear that the Lord is angry at his servant David but the real why is so important to grasp. God says, **“Why have you despised the word of the Lordby doing evil in his eyes?”** David’s life had worldly actions of evil, actions of evil with deep spiritual consequences. Let the truth of sin sink in. Let those words sink in: **“You have despised the Word of the Lord.”**

What those words do is show the true nature of sin. David was guilty of despising God by his actions. That’s right, David despised the Creator, the Ruler, the Savior, the Almighty God, the very being who holds in his power the difference between going to heaven or going to hell. Please, Dear people, recognize that every sin, every turning away from the wonder, truth and marvel of God, no matter how insignificant you think it is, God declares it a despising of his Word. And just to let it sink in all the more, remember that King Saul had been confronted with the same truth, **“You have rejected the word of the Lord.”** In other words, sin is serious stuff, God’s Word is serious stuff!

Might I draw your attention for a moment to the 3rd Commandment of God? That commandment says: **Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy.** Luther brilliantly explains this command with these words: **“We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and his word, but regard it as holy, and gladly hear and learn it.”**

How important this commandment is and yet how often people fail to hear and heed its meaning. This commandment was written for the sake of our faith and addresses our use of God’s Word. Through this commandment we are to recognize that the proper use of God’s Word is an important part of our lives. The easiest thing to understand is that we are to regard God’s Word as holy and that we are to gladly hear and learn it.

Now, most of us would readily admit that we consider God’s Word to be holy, that we consider God’s Bible to be the perfect, inspired Word of God which contains the revelation of God for our lives. The problem is that we often don’t go any further than that. We call God’s Word holy but often we treat God’s Word as if it were some sort of plague or disease, simply because we do not carry out what God’s Word directs.

God says that we are not only to regard his Word as holy but that we are also to gladly hear and learn it. It is here that we often fail to carry out God’s wishes. Hearing and learning is not one of our top priorities in life. That fact is evidenced by the simple reality that on every given worship weekend, half of the members of this church are absent! Half! And we have a better percentage than most! In truth, if we just look at our lives it is clear that we think, we live, as if there are more important things to do than to hear God’s Word and worship. Is there? Really?

Please go back to your catechisms for the simple lesson that is given by the Word. In question 56 we are asked: *When are we guilty of despising God’s Word?* Following that are three very pointed answers each with Scriptural backing. They say, *“We are guilty of despising God’s Word if we refuse to hear it…We are guilty of despising God’s Word if we let anything in the world crowd it out of our lives…We are guilty of despising God’s Word if we listen to it but don’t believe it or don’t do what it says.”* Yep, as we listen to all of this it is clear that David and you and I have a deep and horrid problem with sin.

Anytime we do what is evil, as God declares, we are guilty of despising the word, of really despising the Lord himself. Stealing, murder, adultery, misusing God’s name, idolatry, false witness, not remembering the Sabbath… you know, the things found in God’s law…all of these things are a despising of God himself! There is a lot more to sin, to doing evil than just doing something bad. Sinning, doing evil is to make a mockery, to belittle, to insult, to despise God himself. That tells us that we need to think long and hard before we jump from the cliff of faith and dive into sin.

It is true, careful study will lead you to see that sinning is deeper than just the outward wrong. In the case of David the sinning went even further than just doing the evil. David stopped hearing the Word. David shut himself off from the nourishment of God found in the Word. David refused to repent. Such is the way that sin can twist the mind of even the most faithful of believers. It can do this because sin leads us to stop hearing the Word and to stop believing what it says! Sin leads us to despise the Lord!

For about two years David refused to repent. But get this, David’s refusal to hear the Word wasn’t because he didn’t go to the Temple. He went to the Temple, he was exposed to God’s truths…he didn’t really hear because he didn’t do what it said to do, namely to repent.

This account of David is a most excellent history to teach what is right. Don’t fail to hear the Word, don’t fail to believe it, and don’t fail to live it. When God says, **You shall not…**don’t figure you can! When God’s Word declares: **You shall…**don’t figure it doesn’t apply to you. Such is the problem that David got into. He should have been sorry for his sins. He should have desired to stop the sins. He should have fallen to his knees in abject horror at what he had done and was doing. But somehow David figured that God’s Word didn’t apply to him. Such a lack of repentance is a horrible despising of God.

But what a marvel to see the grace of God in action. God is patient. When God saw that David was not going to repent on his own, God sent the prophet Nathan to wake David up. And just so you know, it is clear in some of the Psalms that David wrote that this time of his life deeply bothered him. For instance Psalm 6 says, **“Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger. Do not discipline me in your wrath. Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am fading away. Heal me, Lord, for my bones are trembling, and my soul is terrified.”** David in this Psalm goes on to call for God’s grace and love. That’s the other side to this history, how God’s grace and love shines forth.

In truth, David is forgiven for his sin. Forgiven because he repents at the horror of what he had done. David’s repentance was true and right. I mention that because if you read the history of King Saul you might get the impression that Saul repented too. Yet read carefully. Saul utters words of repentance only after God declares that he will lose his kingship and his soul. In truth, Saul was involved in worldly words and not true and Godly repentance.

That is something that all of us need to be aware of. The true nature of repentance. Repentance is sorrow for our sins, true sorrow because we grasp that we have despised God, exalted ourselves above him, that we have cast God away from our lives. True sorrow is heartfelt and when true repentance comes from the heart that repentance is seen in our lives. That’s why we look for the fruits of faith, the results of your faith.

I have used this illustration many times. If I slap you and tell you I am sorry, how do you know? Because I no longer slap you. But if I say I am sorry and continue to slap you again and again, even apologizing with each blow, am I really sorry? Please note, that God knows instantly the very nature of your repentance. You cannot fool God! True repentance brings the desire to stop, to no longer engage in that sin. And why do we repent?

We repent because of God’s grace and love. We repent because of the God who sent his Son to die for us and pay for our sins. This is about Jesus, who though we deserve nothing, gave his very life on the cross, there suffering the wrath and anger of God for our sins. Jesus has paid for it all, and with the resurrection of Jesus from the grave Jesus is indeed declared our Savior and Redeemer from sin. Faith grasps what God has done in Jesus. Faith grasps the gift of redemption won for us and in humility and gratefulness faith brings us to repent. Did you grasp that? We repent because of the forgiveness that Jesus has won. We don’t repent to get forgiveness, to somehow earn this blessing of Jesus! That would make faith the fruit of repentance. No, repentance is the fruit of faith. It is what faith brings to our lives because of the wonder of Jesus and his gift of grace.

Yes, David was forgiven. Unconditionally and truly forgiven his sins. Yet please, do note that there were two earthly consequences to these sins. First, David was told the sword would never depart from his house. He would not have peace from his enemies and if you know his history, he would not even have peace from his sons. The second consequence was that the child that had been born would die. Please note that sometimes sin does have earthly consequences. You commit robbery and you go to jail. You commit adultery and you may get pregnant or an STD! Just a reminder of the way things are. Please think, think with the eyes of faith, before you jump into sin!

We thank God for his grace to David and for his grace to us. Our prayer is simple. Lord, teach us to regard your Word as holy and to gladly hear and learn it! Help us Lord to always hear and believe your Word. Amen.