

UNSUNG HEROES

Part 4

“NATHAN: The Courage to Confront Sin” 2 Samuel 12:1-15

ENGAGING the Audience

John Chrysostom, the one-time Archbishop of Constantinople and one of the early Church Fathers once said...

“We must not mind insulting men, if by respecting them we offend God.”

In his book, *Blessed Are the Pacifists*, Christian writer Thomas Trzyna writes...

“Peacemakers are...noble when their actions bring to light problems far away from us; they are a nuisance when they point out our sins.”

Making the CONNECTION

Let's be honest with each other, there's not a single person here today that enjoys confrontation. We don't enjoy being the agent of confrontation nor do we enjoy being the recipient of confrontation.

Depending on the environment, being the agent of confrontation may mean...

- Confronting an employee's poor job performance
- Confronting a patient about a medical problem or life-threatening disease
- Confronting a parent about their child's misbehavior in the classroom
- Confronting your spouse about neglecting your emotional, spiritual, or physical needs; and...
- Confronting another Christian about a glaring sin that is shredding their personal life, their marriage, and their family.

Whether you're a business owner, a medical doctor, a schoolteacher, a husband or wife, or a member of the Body of Christ, confronting people you care about and love is a brutally hard thing to do.

Being the recipient of confrontation is just hard. Confrontation bruises our ego. Confrontation, at times, questions our motives, integrity, and ethics. Confrontation reveals our weaknesses and deficiencies at work and at home. Confrontation exposes our hidden, and sometimes public, sin.

None of us like to have our ego's bruised. None of us enjoy having our deficiencies revealed. None of us delight in having our character or integrity called into question. And...without question, not a single one of us wants our sin exposed.

Therefore, if we see confrontation coming we run and hide from it. If we see it coming from far enough away, we gather our armor along with our arsenal and we prepare to launch a counterattack. We resist it. We loathe it. We reject it. We dismiss it. We just flat out don't want to be confronted - and that's a fact.

If we know we need to give it, we look for every excuse imaginable that will help us rationalize away the inner prodding to go. We set it aside for a better day and time. Worst of all, we oftentimes dismiss it altogether in the name of being a "peacemaker," not a peace-breaker.

In the world and Church we live in, rare is the person who offers healthy confrontation. Even more rare is the mature person who receives it because they understand how strategically important it is to healthy relationships.

You see, whether we like it or not, confrontation is an indispensable part of healthy relationships - both divine and human.

From the beginning of time, humanity's relationship with God has hinged on confrontation. Think about it for a minute.

- God repeatedly confronted the Israelites in the Old Testament.
- Jesus repeatedly confronted the Pharisees, Sadducees, and His disciples in the Gospels.
- The Apostle Paul repeatedly confronted the churches he planted in Asia Minor.
- Through the Holy Spirit, God confronts you and me through His Word - the Bible.

Without the confrontational ministry of the Holy Spirit, we would never experience conviction of sin and unrighteousness. We would never experience brokenness over sin. We would never repent of our sin. We would never be liberated and healed of our sin. And, most significantly, we would never be reconciled to God. Without confrontation, we are spiritually hopeless.

Healthy human relationships hinge on confrontation too. Show me a great relationship between friends, between coworkers, between teammates, between spouses, and between the leaders of an organization and I'll show you healthy confrontation.

Doesn't the Bible tell us that...

"Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another." (Proverbs 27:17)

Iron striking iron is confrontational. God intends us to sharpen each other and such sharpening never happens without the sparks of confrontation. Becoming a sharp weapon for God's glory doesn't happen without healthy confrontation.

Exploring the SCRIPTURE

This morning, we're going to look at an **UNSUNG HERO** who definitely sent some major sparks flying. We're going to look at the prophet Nathan and see how God used him as a piece of iron in the life of King David.

Understanding the CONTEXT

Before we look at our text this morning, let's make sure we have a good grip on the context.

The context of Nathan's heroism is one of the most famous and notorious moral collapses in the history of political leadership. In fact, it's a collapse that strikes a sobering resemblance to the one South Carolinian's have just witnessed with Governor Mark Sanford.

Nathan was an Israeli prophet in the time of King David. He was respected as a prophet who spoke God's Word and was thus trusted by David as a wise counselor.

At the time Nathan comes on the scene in 2 Samuel 12, King David stood on the pinnacle of political leadership. He was widely successful as a military and political leader, having defeated Israel's enemies repeatedly. He was loved and revered by the people of Israel. He was a brilliant poet. He enjoyed immense wealth and fame. Most importantly, he was a deep lover of God - so much so that God Himself called David "a man after His own heart."

David had everything a man could dream of - power, fame, wealth, a successful army, national loyalty, beautiful women, and the divine favor of God.

And then, one fateful evening at dusk, David did the unthinkable. Overtaken with lust, David committed adultery with Bathsheba. From that point forward, David's downward spiral was swift. Bathsheba became pregnant and when David learned of Bathsheba's pregnancy, he devised an elaborate cover up. When his cover up failed - which involved Bathsheba's husband Uriah - David had Uriah murdered. In just two short days, David went from "a man after God's own heart" to a lustful, conniving old man who was an adulterer and murderer.

By the way, have you ever noticed that our elaborate schemes to cover up sin never work? David had all the resources you could possibly want at his disposal and he still couldn't cover up his sin. Learn from King David! You can't cover up your sin from God - no matter how hard you try.

Anyways...

This is where Nathan comes into play. David's cover up failed and left him with a pregnant woman whose husband he'd just murdered. David had the blood of another man on his hands and things were about to get worse with the arrival of Nathan. The sparks of confrontation were about to fly.

Let's look at what Nathan does in light of David's moral demise.

[Read 2 Samuel 11:27c - 12:1-15]

The Courage to Confront Sin

Why is Nathan a spiritual hero? Why is Nathan a hero we should strive to be like?

Nathan is a spiritual hero because he confronted sin!

For Nathan, it was irrelevant that David was King of Israel. It mattered not that David was famous, wealthy, and powerful. The fact that David was so highly revered by the people of Israel had no influence on Nathan. Nathan thought nothing of the fact that David had the authority to fire him for insubordination. In fact, David had the authority to have him killed.

Nathan refused to stand in awe of David - he stood in awe of God. Nathan was a piece of iron in the hands of the Almighty God.

The Church of Jesus Christ needs more men and women who are willing, like Nathan, to be pieces of iron in the hands of God. The Church of Jesus Christ needs Christians to confront sin in the lives of other Christians. What the Church of Jesus Christ needs are spiritual heroes.

Would you like to be a spiritual hero for the glory of God?

If so, then understand this...

Spiritual heroes confront sin in the life of Christians - no matter who the person is!

Now, let me stop here for a minute. I hear Christians say all the time - **"It's not my place to judge."**

Oh yes it is!

Did you know that Christians are commanded in God's Word to judge one another's lives? That's right! If you are a redeemed follower of Jesus Christ, you are instructed to examine the lives of those who profess to be disciples of Jesus.

Some of you are skeptical right now. So, let's look at what God says through the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:9-13.

"I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people - not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy or swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world."

But now I am writing to you not to associate to anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler - not even to eat with such a one.

For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. Purge the evil person from among you."

Now...those are some strong words from God.

God's Word is clear. Our responsibility is not to judge people who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In the Gospel of John, the Bible clearly teaches us that the judgment of the lost is the responsibility and ministry of the Holy Spirit. (John 16:1-7)

However, it *is* our responsibility as Christians to confront those who claim the name of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It is our duty to examine their lives and, at times, purge the Church from those who are unrepentant and continue to live in habitual sin.

Listen carefully Church...

It is our duty, it is our right, and it is our calling to confront people within the Body of Christ who are choosing to live in sin.

If you love Jesus Christ; if you love the Bride of Christ, the Church; if you love your brothers and sisters in Christ, then you will confront sin in their life.

Therefore, the question is this - **"How do we confront sin in another Christian's life?"**

Four Principles of Confronting Sin

When confronting sin in a Christian's life, we'd all be wise to learn from Nathan. In looking at how Nathan confronted David, we see four principles that we should apply when confronting another Christian.

First, **Nathan teaches us the importance of PRESENTATION.**

When confronting sin in a Christian's life, it is imperative that we give diligent thought and attention to our presentation. Here's why. Most people don't reject confrontation because of content. Rather, they reject confrontation because our presentation is poor. Our content can be right on the money, but if our presentation is off, the results are rarely favorable.

When our tone, our timing, the environment, and our nonverbal communication are off, confrontation rarely produces the desired results. When it comes to confronting sin, don't underestimate presentation.

Notice what Nathan did and didn't do. Nathan didn't show up at David's royal palace, shove a finger in his face, and accuse him of being an adulterer and murderer. No! David showed up as a trusted counselor and he told David a simple story. Nathan's presentation was brilliant. Nathan prepared the soil of David's heart before he ever confronted him with his sin.

When you confront a Christian, remember that presentation is critical to successfully confronting sin. Think through your presentation. Pray through your presentation. Ask yourself the question...

“How can I, like Nathan, prepare the soil of the person's heart before I confront their sin?”

Second, **Nathan EXPOSED David as a sinner.** Once David's heart was ready, Nathan looked him square in the eyes and told him he was the guilty man of his story. Look what Nathan says...

“Nathan said to David, ‘You are the man!’ (vs.7)

When you confront a Christian living in sin, look them square in the eyes and tell them they are a sinner. Do it with grace. Do it with humility. Do it with love. But...do it nonetheless. That's what Nathan did with David. That's what Jesus did in the Gospels with his closest friends - the disciples. That's what Paul did with the Corinthians. That's what the Holy Spirit does with us.

Now, at this point, most of us would stop. Exposing someone as a sinner is enough, right? Not according to Nathan.

Third, Nathan didn't simply tell David he was a sinner. **Nathan REVEALS David's specific sin.** Look at what Nathan says next...

“...you despised the Word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight. You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of Ammonites.”

At this point, Nathan holds nothing back from King David. Notice the specific sin Nathan confronted David with:

- Despising the Word of the Lord
- Performing evil in the sight of the Lord
- Stealing an innocent man's wife
- Murdering an innocent man by the sword of Israel's enemy

Nathan gets specific with David, doesn't he? Nathan doesn't hold back. Nathan hits David with full force and with both barrels. Imagine someone coming to you and telling you that you despise God's Word and that your actions are evil in the sight of the Lord. Now that's confrontational.

When you confront a Christian living in sin, don't hold back. Love them enough to be honest. Offer full disclosure. Give your brother or sister in Christ the unbridled truth. Confront their sin specifically. That's what God did with the Israelites. That's what Jesus did with the Pharisees. That's what Paul did with Peter. That's what the Holy Spirit does with us.

OK...Nathan stops here, right? Wrong!

There's a final step in Nathan's confrontation. Nathan **WARNED** David of the consequences of his sin. Look at what Nathan says in vs.10-12, 13...

“Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the Lord, Behold I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of the sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.

“...because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die.”

Nathan warned David of the consequences of sin - consequences that were severe.

I want you to see a principle that is rarely remembered any more when we choose to reject God's standards and blatantly sin against Him.

Here it is...

Sin is almost always done in SECRET - Consequences are almost always experienced in PUBLIC!

Did you catch that in Nathan's words? Look again...

“For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.”

David's adultery with Bathsheba was done secretly. David's murder of Uriah was done secretly. David's consequences would be experienced publicly for everyone to see.

- David's many wives would commit adultery and everyone in Israel would watch.
- Absalom, David's son, would lead a revolt against David - and everyone in Israel would watch.
- The baby that David's adultery with Bathsheba produced would die - and all of Israel would watch.

When you confront a Christian living in sin, warn them of the consequences.

- Warn the Christian that the consequences of secret sin almost always result in public humiliation.
- Warn the Christian that the pain and humiliation of long-term consequences greatly outweighs the pleasure of short-term sin.
- Warn the Christian that God will not be mocked. We will reap what we sow.
- Warn the Christian that sin has a generational impact on families. David's sin affected his family for generations - children, grandchildren, great grandchildren.

CONCLUSION

The good news is that this story doesn't end with Nathan "going to his house."

After Nathan confronted David, our text says...

"David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord.'" (vs.13)

Nathan's courageous confrontation convicted David of his sin. The result is one the greatest Psalms in the entire Bible - Psalm 51.

Psalm 51 is David's response to Nathan's confrontation. In this Psalm, we see brokenness over sin. We see repentance and confession of sin. We see God's forgiveness of sin. And, we see David's healing from sin.

Brokenness, confession, repentance, forgiveness, and healing - they all happened because Nathan wasn't afraid to confront his king's sin.

When confronting sin, every Christian's goal is to see the sinner experience Psalm 51.

The motive and goal of confrontation should always be brokenness, repentance, and reconciliation. Confrontation performed with any other motive is a recipe for disaster.

Be a spiritual hero for the glory of God!

Spiritual heroes confront sin in the life of Christians - no matter who the person is!