HUDSON'S HOPE CHAPEL

The King Who Took

November 8, 2026 · Series: After God's Own Heart · Luke Hughes-Bunger

Main Passage: 2 Samuel 11:1-5, 14-17, 26-27; 12:1-15 (ESV)

Big Idea: Our sin is serious, and our Saviour is sufficient. God calls us out of self-justification and into truthful repentance, with our hope resting in Christ's finished work.

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Introduction

The yellow Livestrong wristband recalls a story that reaches beyond cycling. Lance Armstrong's survival of cancer and return to competition made him a hero to many people. The foundation he established brought practical support to people affected by cancer. Its staff, volunteers, and supporters did real good.

That good did not make his wrongdoing harmless. Armstrong used banned performance-enhancing drugs and denied it. Emma O'Reilly, who worked with his team, spoke about the doping and faced attacks on her reputation. His public influence gave weight to his denials and made speaking against him costly.

When Armstrong admitted doping in 2013, he described it as creating a level playing field. That was his explanation, not a reason we must accept. His story raises a question for ordinary life: what happens when defending ourselves becomes more important than telling the truth?

We do not need fame to recognize that temptation. We can point to past service, difficult circumstances, or another person's behaviour to excuse our choices. Something good in our lives can become part of an argument for avoiding responsibility.

For Christians, this does not mean our new life in Jesus is false. His Spirit really changes us. Sin no longer defines who we are, but temptation remains. We still need help, honesty, and forgiveness. David's story calls us to take sin seriously while placing our confidence in the Saviour who is sufficient for us.

The King Who Begins to Take

2 Samuel 11

David remains in Jerusalem while his army is at war. From his roof he sees a woman bathing. He asks about her and learns that she is Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, a soldier in his army. David has enough information to stop. Instead, he sends for her and commits adultery.

We are not told what Bathsheba thinks or how freely she can respond to a royal request. We must leave that question open. Even if another person willingly participates in wrongdoing, their responsibility does not remove ours. Another person's temptation or failure cannot excuse

the choices we make. The passage directs our attention to David's use of power.

God established David as king for His people's good. Now David uses people to serve his own desires. The authority entrusted to him becomes a means of taking what he wants.

Bathsheba tells David that she is pregnant. He could confess and seek the mercy he has known before. Instead, he calls Uriah home and sends him to his house. If Uriah sleeps with his wife, the pregnancy could appear to be his. But Uriah refuses the comforts of home while his fellow soldiers remain in the field.

David tries again, getting Uriah drunk. Still, Uriah does not go home. David has another opportunity to stop concealing his sin. Instead, he writes instructions to Joab, his army commander, arranging Uriah's death. Uriah carries the letter himself. David uses the loyalty of a man he should protect to bring about his death.

Other soldiers die too. David tries to protect his reputation, but other people bear the cost. When the news comes, he speaks as though these deaths are simply what happens in war. A general truth about battle becomes a way to hide his responsibility.

Bathsheba mourns Uriah. David then marries her, and a child is born. The concealment appears successful. Yet the chapter ends with God's verdict: the Lord is displeased with what David has done. Arranging circumstances cannot change the truth before God.

This challenges the bargains we make with our guilt. A betrayal inside an ordinary home still harms a real person. A lie remains serious even if it never becomes public. God sees both the person hurt and the responsibility of the person who does wrong.

There is also encouragement for someone fighting temptation. Resisting sin and asking for help are acts of obedience. They are different from defending wrongdoing. We can thank God for real progress while remembering that past faithfulness never removes our present need for Jesus. His mercy gives us reason to come into the light.

The God Who Brings the Truth

2 Samuel 12:1-12

David has sent people to carry out his plans. Now God sends Nathan, a prophet who speaks His word. Nathan tells David about a rich man with many animals and a poor man with one treasured lamb. When a visitor comes, the rich man takes the poor man's lamb rather than use one of his own.

David recognizes the cruelty. He is angry at someone with plenty taking what is precious to a person with little. Then Nathan tells him that the story exposes his own wrongdoing. The king who readily judges another person must now hear God's judgment of himself.

God has been generous to David. His calling, rescue, and position are gifts. Those privileges do not place him above God's word. They deepen his responsibility. David uses what God gives him in ways that dishonour the Giver.

He cannot move the blame onto Joab or the enemy soldiers. Although others carry out the killing, God names David's part plainly. Being distant from the battlefield does not make him innocent. The consequences will reach the household he tries to protect.

Nathan's story helps David recognize wrongdoing without the excuses attached to his own life. Stories can help us in a similar way. We may readily identify cruelty or dishonesty when another person does it, while accepting explanations that protect us from facing the same kind of fault.

God calls us to truth. We do not have to accept every accusation as accurate, but we should allow Scripture and faithful counsel to challenge us. A criticism may be imperfectly expressed and still contain something we need to hear. Our first responsibility is not always to prepare a stronger defence.

The passage also speaks to those harmed by another person's power. God does not allow David's reputation to make the harm unimportant. Someone else's need for forgiveness does not make us responsible for hiding their wrongdoing. Nor does it require us to give them continued access to hurt us.

This confrontation is mercy for David as well. He is arranging his life around concealment when God interrupts him. The Lord's grace works through a word David needs to hear. God will not help him become comfortable with what harms others and damages his own life.

Receiving correction can therefore be part of receiving God's care. We may need someone to help us see what our explanations obscure. As David stands exposed, his achievements cannot defend him. His hope is the mercy of the God he has wronged.

The Saviour Who Gives Himself

2 Samuel 12:13-15; 1 John 2:1

David acknowledges his sin against the Lord. Nathan announces forgiveness. David does not pay for pardon by presenting victories, faithful service, or years of patient waiting. Even those good things are gifts of grace. He comes with nothing that can cancel his guilt.

His confession does not erase Bathsheba or Uriah. Sin against people made in God's image is also sin against God. Honest confession means giving up excuses for what we have done to them. Forgiveness must be taken as seriously as the wrongdoing it answers.

The next part of the passage is painful. Nathan announces that the child will die, and the following verses describe the child's illness and death despite David's pleas. Scripture presents this as a particular judgment on David. We should acknowledge the grief rather than turn it into an easy lesson.

This does not give us permission to explain a child's death today as punishment for a parent's hidden sin. Nor is David's child an atoning sacrifice, a death that pays for his forgiveness. God has already announced pardon. David's sorrow does not purchase it either.

Forgiven people still live in a fallen world. Earthly consequences may remain even when guilt before God is forgiven. But this raises an important question: how can God forgive serious wrongdoing and remain just? How can He pardon David without treating Uriah's life as unimportant?

The answer leads to Jesus, the righteous Son promised through David's royal house. He uses His authority faithfully, cares for His people, and obeys His Father without sin. He willingly gives Himself for guilty people.

We want God to take the wrongs done to us seriously. His justice must also take our own wrongdoing seriously. At the cross, God provides forgiveness through judgment borne by His Son. The Father gives Him in love, and Jesus willingly takes the place of sinners. Forgiveness rests on His completed sacrifice.

John writes to Christians so that they will resist sin. Yet he also tells them where to turn when they fail: Jesus is their advocate with the Father. An advocate speaks on another person's behalf. Christ's righteousness, rather than our ability to explain ourselves, gives us confidence before God.

Those who belong to Jesus do not leave His family every time they stumble. Their acceptance rests on Him. His Spirit enables real growth in obedience. We can learn to tell the truth sooner, seek help, and stop hiding. Our sin is serious, and our Saviour is sufficient.

Application and Conclusion

If you are defending something you know is wrong, name it honestly before God. Stop the harm and take responsibility. Seek to put things right without making another person's response a condition of your obedience. The next step may be a truthful conversation or asking a trustworthy person to help you change.

If you are tired from fighting sin, keep coming to Christ. His Spirit is at work as you resist temptation, receive help, and return in repentance. Your ongoing need for grace does not make His work in you unreal.

If you have never trusted Jesus, you do not need to build a record that outweighs your guilt. Turn to the Saviour who dies and rises to give forgiveness and life. Earthly consequences may remain, but He gives peace with God and strength to walk in a new direction. For those who belong to Him, failure does not have the final word. Jesus Christ does.

Discussion Guide Questions

You may answer personally or discuss together. Nobody needs to disclose private harm or another person's confidential story to participate.

1. Why can real achievements or good deeds make it harder to admit wrongdoing? What question does the opening illustration raise?
2. In 2 Samuel 11:2-5, what does David know before he sends for Bathsheba? Why can another person's possible participation never remove his responsibility?

3. Where does David have opportunities to stop concealing his sin? Who bears the cost when he continues?
4. How does the last sentence of 2 Samuel 11 change the way we understand the apparent success of David's plans?
5. Why does Nathan's story help David recognize the injustice? How can we be clearer about someone else's wrongdoing than our own?
6. What does God's confrontation say to someone harmed by a respected person? What does it say to someone resisting correction?
7. What does David confess in 12:13, and what does Nathan announce? Why can David's past faithfulness not purchase forgiveness?
8. What must we avoid claiming about the child's death and about bereavement today? How can forgiveness and earthly consequences both be real?
9. Read 1 John 2:1. How does John hold together the call to resist sin and assurance in Jesus? What does Christ's advocacy mean for a struggling believer?
10. What is one faithful step you can take this week: telling the truth, stopping harm, seeking help, or continuing to resist temptation? How does Christ's sufficiency give you courage?