

August 13, 2023

**A MESSAGE OF CORRECTION** (The Story of Nathan – 2 Samuel 12:1-13)

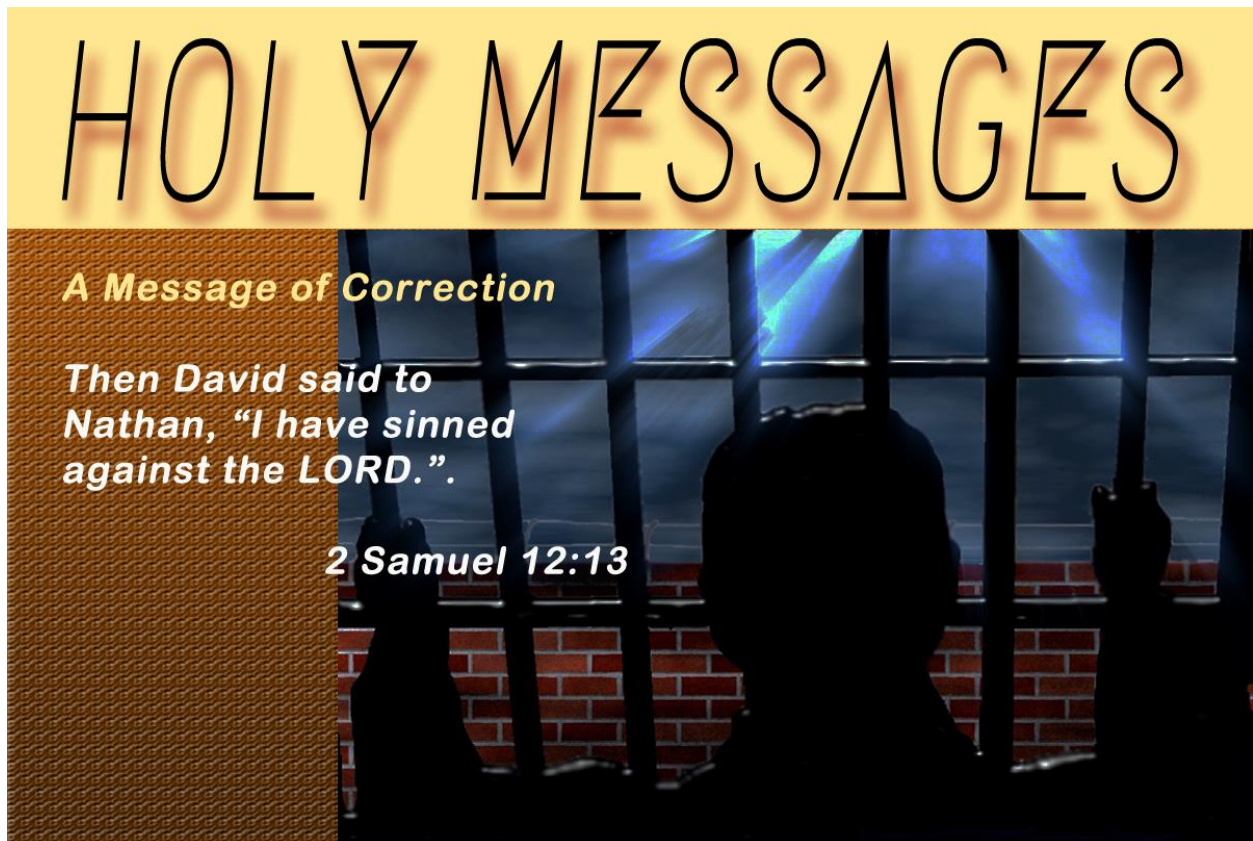
**2 Samuel 12:13**

**Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.”**

Special Music: “Forgive Me, Lord”

Surgenor Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-1-oVxeu4>



## **COVERUP**

Mark had finally done it. He had managed to start laying the new floor in the living room. Brenda had been nagging him for years to get it done. But, with each passing year, Mark had impulsively moved it down on the priority list when it came to getting things done around the house. His neglect and the wear and tear on the floor had finally reached a point where he could ignore it no longer. Recently it had begun to bother him just as much as Brenda.

He knew that just needed to focus and get it done. So, he bought the laminate planks that looked like wood and the glue to adhere it in place, removed all the furniture and whatnot from the room, pulled out his chop saw, tape measure, and hammer, and went to work. He was inspired by a vision of the smile on Brenda's face when he finished. She was out of town visiting her mother for a week, so time was not an issue. After all, it wasn't that big of a room.

He got into a rhythm. Measure, cut, glue, and set in place. Each piece of planking interlocking with the next. Measure, cut, glue, and set in place, tweaking each plank to make sure that it married correctly with the previous plank. Over the next three days, he made great progress as he worked on the floor for a little while each day. Each day left him a little more satisfied with his accomplishments as the project neared fruition

On the morning of the fourth day, he cut the final piece and laid it in with a sigh of satisfaction. His knees were sore, and his back was paying the price for his labor. He realized that his age was becoming a factor regarding projects of

**this magnitude. The task had proved to be more strenuous on his body than he had been prepared for. He turned and looked about the room. The floor looked great, exactly as he had imagined it. Brenda was going to be so happy. He decided to let the floor set overnight and would move the furniture back into the room the next day. He picked up his tools to take them back to the garage. Then he returned to get the can of glue. He didn't realize that the top for the can was not completely secure. He probably should have taken time to seal it with the hammer.**

**As he walked across the room with the can, headed for the garage, he stumbled in the middle of the room and dropped the container. Although thankful that the can had stayed upright, the top had come off. Carefully, he put the cap back on the can, gave it a few whacks with hammer, and took it to the garage to store in the cabinet. He had a cleaning rag that he used to wipe his hands with as he came back to the living room. Job well done.**

**And then he saw it. Right there in the middle of the room where he had dropped the can was a dollop of glue. "Well, we can't have that," Mark said to himself and walked over to the blob of glue and attempted to wipe it up with the rag in his hand. But it just smeared the glue around. He rubbed harder but then he noticed that the threads of the rag were adhering to the glue, making the mess even more obvious with little fuzzies and threads. "Water," he thought in a panic. "I need to get the rag wet in order to clean up this glue." But the glue on the rag had already caused the cloth to get hard and the fabric was sticking together. He threw the rag in the sink and grabbed paper towels, wet them from the kitchen**

faucet and tried again to get the glue off the floor. Doing so only managed to spread the glue around even more. And to top it off, pieces of the paper towel had become attached to the glue in places.

“What to do? What to do?” Then Mark thought about Brenda’s fingernail polish remover. Running to the bathroom, he began to look through the cabinet where she kept such things. He felt relief when he found it and also some cotton balls. “This should do the trick,” he thought. He started back to the living room only to discover that somehow, he had stepped in the smeared glue and had left a trail of goo and dirt all the way down the hall. “That will have to wait until I get the floor taken care of.”

Back in the living room, Mark went to work on the floor with the polish remover and cotton balls. But it was soon obvious that he was taking away the finish on the laminate and now there were several white areas in the middle of the gooey mess.

By this time, Mark was beyond panicked. He sat down on a chair, head in his hands. He did not know how he would ever fix this before Brenda got home. It was then that he remembered that Brenda did not know what the floor was supposed to look like. Maybe he could just buy a rug to cover it up. But then, why spend that money when he could just paint over it? She would never know the difference and it shouldn’t take him long to paint the room.

That is why, when Brenda returned home the next day, she found Mark asleep in the living room where he had painted himself into a corner, paint roller

**stuck to the new green floor and glue tracked all the way to the bathroom and back. She didn't wake him. In truth, Brenda felt sorrier for him than angry at him as she made the call to a local handy man in hopes that the project might be salvageable in way.**

Growing up, I loved watching *I Love Lucy*. But then, I also loved watching *The Three Stooges* and *Abbott and Costello*. The premise behind this kind of comedy was about the ridiculous things people do with the best of intentions. And when things don't go well, they try to fix it, only to end up causing more calamity. The consternation to me is that what I thought was funny and entertaining to me when I was eight years old, just isn't as funny and entertaining to me as an adult. As I approached a certain stage in adulthood, I found myself feeling sorer for these people than amused by them. Maybe it is just part of my nature, but I wanted to help them, to keep them from making each mess messier. But, of course, I couldn't. Not only is it all fictional and written that way intentionally, it's also in an environment into which I have no input. I never knew Lucy Arnez, Larry, Moe, Curly or Shimp, nor Bud Abbott and Lou Costello. These were television personalities in fabricated scenarios and had no relation to real life. So, I came to a point where I found it hard to watch them make fools of themselves. Today, I am embarrassed when I see they are so oblivious to their situations, even though I know that it is just entertainment.

Still, we have all been in those situations where we try to fix something simple, and it gets away from us. Maybe we try to hide a bad decision in our lives. Usually, the mess we started with just gets bigger and bigger. Multiple trips to the hardware or grocery store adds to our frustration when we know that it would have been smarter just to call a professional to begin with. A small lie, turns into a medium lie, turns into a down-right ugly lie, which turns into multiple lies to cover up all the other lies. Eventually, we forget the made-up details and

**the untruth begins to unravel. We are left hanging with nothing to support our damaged character and find ourselves wanting to hide so that people can't find us after they know what we have done.**

**And we are never the only ones who get hurt in these instances. There are people counting on us. We say we can do some project in all innocence, knowing that we have no experience regarding the situation, and we don't come clean before the project turns into a complete mess. I've known way too many people that lie on their resumes to get a job, only to realize that can't do what is required of them in a timely manner or they kill themselves with sleepless nights while they try to learn a new skill.**

**In our personal lives, we fail to be truthful with our spouse or our children and the family unit falls apart. Even with something so important in the balance, we try to hide our lies hoping no one finds out, especially the ones we have told our significant other. Our priorities fall through the cracks, and we convince ourselves that we are sparing them the pain of the truth.**

**Why do we do this? I know we justify it to ourselves because our family needs the income, the bill collectors are at the gates, our pride becomes our masthead. Everything will be alright... until it isn't. Eventually it all catches up to us. And when it does, it makes getting another job, another spouse, another friend, all that more difficult. We can no longer be trusted.**

**We live in the web of deceit for as long as we possibly can, praying that the truth will never come to light. Because, if it does, our world will shatter beneath**

our feet and take everyone around us with it. I hate to mention it, but the more powerful or wealthy a person is, the easier it is to believe that they can live inside that bubble of deceit and remain undetected. That is a very problematic misconception. Truth has a way of coming to the surface eventually.

David had committed some absolute atrocities. Abusing his royal authority, he had used his power to engage in an adulteress relationship with Bathsheba. He had allowed himself the latitude that he was above all others and did not need to abide by the covenant between God and his people. And when his sin was about to be exposed because Bathsheba was pregnant, he made his mess even messier. He tried to hide his sin by bringing Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, home from the battlefield to sleep with his wife. But Uriah refused to cooperate. So, David made his mess even messier by having Uriah killed on the battlefield.

The truly sad part of all this is that David believed that he had gotten away with it. With Uriah out of the way, he had Bathsheba to himself, and his new son was soon to be delivered. All seemed right with the world... What could go wrong? Everything had gone according to plan. This man who was so respected by his people, this man whom God loved so dearly and had blessed so richly, had managed to defy God and his people. He was proud he had not been caught.

Until... Nathan shows up.

**1 The Lord sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor.**



- 2 The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle,**
- 3 but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.**
- 4 “Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him.”**
- 5 David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, “As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die!**
- 6 He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.”**
- 7 Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man!**

**2 Samuel 2:1-7**

**Woah! Don't you know David must have had the same feelings and confusion that the Woman at the Well would feel when talking to Jesus. Here was the prophet Nathan sharing with David that he knew his innermost secrets, the ones that he had been so desperately trying to hide. What he thought was invisible, was now visible. The curtain had been torn away. He was exposed.**

And David knew that it was all over. He wasn't going to be able to get rid of Nathan like he had done with Uriah. Nathan was a prophet and well known throughout Israel. David also knew that the only way Nathan could know about the predicament was if God had told him, which means that God had been watching all along as David took a mess and kept making it messier, hurting so many people along the way. There is a price for hubris and messiness.

Whether David is just tired of keeping up with all the lies and deceit, not to mention his moral failures, or maybe just finally realizing that he has no way out of the situation, he does come to a point of extreme remorse.

**Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."**

I, for one, just hate it when God feels the need to hit me over the head with a 2 X4, when he needs to send a Nathan into my life to get my attention. But the question that daunts all of us, or should I say the question that should daunt all of us, is why we feel the need to get to the point of painting ourselves in a corner before we admit to God and those we have hurt that we've messed up. When it comes to small infractions, it takes us a lot longer to get there. Mostly because we have convinced ourselves that little or no damage was done and nothing bad came out of it. But that does not make it right. And God will convict us even if it takes a long time to own up to our mistake. I want to explain to us all that praying a prayer that goes something like this: Heavenly father, I know I messed up. I am truly sorry. Please forgive me. I am grateful no one found out," is not really a prayer of confession because it has no follow-through. Just because someone

has yet to realize that we slighted them, cut them down, or stabbed them in the back, doesn't mean we don't owe that person an apology. "Father, I know that you know that I stole that money, that bicycle, that pack of gum. Please forgive me and I will never do it again." True confession requires restitution, whether it is to the people that we have taken advantage of, or God himself. In David's case, the nation of Israel was forced to pay the price for David's iniquities, even though he apologized. That is why the 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm is so important.

**10 Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.**

**11 Do not cast me from your presence  
or take your Holy Spirit from me.**

**12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.**

**13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
so that sinners will turn back to you.**

**14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,  
you who are God my Savior,  
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.**

**15 Open my lips, Lord,  
and my mouth will declare your praise.**

David reached a point where he simply could not live with himself. And it took a message from God, a parable delivered by Nathan, from clear out in left field to get him to that point. And when David truly understood the magnitude of

his sin, he found himself unable to wash the blood off of hands no matter how much he scrubbed. Only the mercy of God could resolve this mess. The fact that God was willing to forgive gives us an example of God's love and grace for us, even when we create messes that we cannot clean up ourselves.

I want us to consider that this week. What is our breaking point when we mess up? At what point are we ready to stand before our maker and confess what we have done? Are we willing to do everything in our power to provide full restitution to those we have damaged? Are we willing to fall on our knees and beg forgiveness from God and from those we have hurt? Or are we going to wait until the mess gets so out of control that we are forced to admit we can't deal with it alone?

I know that it sounds simple, but the truth is, we all mess up. When we have the courage to admit that we have caused a problem, created a mess, we should engage with God and allow him to help us clean it up before it gets out of hand, before we create a bigger mess by trying to clean it up all by ourselves, before we paint ourselves into a corner and have no way out. This should become a habit for us, seeking God's guidance the minute we create the problem. Even better, seeking God's guidance before we make that initial misstep. Doing so will make us all better people and we will be more in tune with God's purpose for us.

God bless you all.

AMEN

**Copyright © 2023 Rev. Walt Wellborn**

**Scripture references provided under copyright by:**

**THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION©, NIV© Copyright © 1973,  
1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. © Used by permission. All rights reserved  
worldwide.**