
Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."
2 Samuel 12:13 (NIV).

I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.
Ephesians 4:1

Have you ever experienced ‘conflict’ in your life? How have you set about ‘resolving’ that ‘conflict’? There are many ways of ‘resolving conflict’, and these may range from overlooking what someone has done, to seeking some form of ‘restitution’.

It is said that the United States has one of the highest rates of lawyers per capita in the world (around 1 lawyer for every 320 people). Someone has said that all these lawyers need something to do, and as a result, the United States leads the world in lawsuits. You may have heard the story of a lady named ‘Stella’, who sued McDonald's in 1992 after spilling coffee into her own lap. Stella was awarded \$2.9 million in damages, and ever since then, McDonald's has had to warn people that their coffee is hot. (By the way, there is more to this story, including the fact then 79-year-old Stella needed 2 years of treatment for her burns. And we may also note that Australia has around 1 lawyer per 390 people – so we aren't that far behind!).

This is not to bash lawyers. But we have to ask the question: Is there a better way to resolve conflict than to drag someone to court? For those of us that follow Christ, how do we respond to our brothers and sisters in Christ when we are wronged?

There is no person who lives without some conflict in his or her life. Whether differences are happening in your marriage, with your kids, with a co-worker or with a friend, there is no permanent escape from conflict in this life. Yet God calls for Christians to live a life of harmony with each other. Does this mean we are going to get along with everyone we meet? No. However, it does mean that we are supposed to live a life that strives for reconciliation. But what does this ‘reconciliation’ actually mean?

Relationships matter to God. He desires unity for us and wants us to resolve our problems, not walk away from relationships over conflict. Reconciliation is the act of bringing harmony back into a relationship. It may take time for some of the emotional wounds to heal and to trust again, but God calls us to work towards this. The ability to forgive and to love each other through our sinfulness is one of the most beautiful aspects of the Christian faith.

When it comes to 'conflict' there are various ways of seeking to 'resolve' this 'conflict. (See also "Peacemaking Principles": If on-line, for resource [CLICK HERE](#)). These responses can range from 'Overlooking an Offence' to 'Accountability'. In other words, there are times when people say and do things, and we know that it is not appropriate to dwell on these things. People get tired. Things happen. And people sometimes do 'act out of character'. And so we strive to live according to that word in our Second Reading this day (Ephesians 4:1-3): "Walk worthy of the calling you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

But when we come to the First Reading this day (2 Samuel 11:26-12:13), we see another level to 'conflict' altogether. We hear the account of the 'fall-out' from King David's abuse of power that saw not only his adultery with a married woman, but the murder of her husband. And Samuel says that "The thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the LORD." (2 Samuel 11:27). There is a 'conflict' here that needed to be resolved. It was a 'conflict' between David's 'desire' and God's call for holy living.

And so, because Uriah (Bathsheba's husband) is dead, and Bathsheba herself had been taken into David's household, the one who was called to 'resolve' this 'conflict' was Nathan the Prophet. Sometimes it is not appropriate for one who has been harmed to directly confront the one who has harmed them. (For example, a person who is experiencing domestic abuse, or wherever there is a 'power imbalance'). But sometimes it is not possible for one who has been wronged to confront the one who has wronged them. In this case, Uriah was dead. And yet, as the blood of Abel cried out to the LORD (Genesis 4:10), so "The thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the LORD." And so Nathan the prophet comes to 'mediate God's word' to David.

Nathan comes to David. And he does so in a way that will ultimately 'win David over' (think about that for a moment – see also Ephesians 4:15: "speaking the truth in love."). When Nathan the prophet confronted David with his sin of adultery and murder he used a 'lamb' story. It is with this story (that would have resonated with David, having once been a shepherd-boy) which exposed to David the immensity of his sin. And it is with the story of the slaughter of The Lamb of God that God exposes to us the immensity of our sins.

Isn't it amazing that David was so blinded by his own sin that he could not see it? It was by means of the story of the slaughter of a poor man's pet lamb that David was gripped with the immensity of the sin which was his own. That is precisely what the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ also does for us. We were dead in our trespasses and sins (Eph.2:1-3). We were blinded to the immensity of our sins (2.Cor.4:4). The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ – with His perfect life, His innocent and sacrificial death, and His resurrection from the dead – has changed life for us all.

There is something that is also fascinating in this account of Nathan confronting King David – a detail often overlooked. About one year passed between the events of chapter 11 and those of chapter 12. This seems clear from the fact that God struck David and Bathsheba's child shortly after Nathan confronted David with his sin (2 Samuel 12:15). God graciously gave David months to confess his sin, but when he did not, the Lord sent Nathan to confront him. These must have been months of inner turmoil for David (cf. Psalms 32:3-4, Psalm 51:12 "Restore to me the joy of salvation'..."). God gives us time. He gives us time to acknowledge who we are. And not only does He allow this, but He then brings us healing life in Christ Jesus.

When we listen to the story of Jesus' life we hear a story even more dramatic and more amazing, and more disturbing than the story Nathan told David. When we see the way people treated Jesus – the person who is the very founder of 'the church' – we should be shocked, horrified, and angered. We should cry out, "They deserve to die!" But the Gospels are not written to show us other people's 'sin'. Rather, the Gospel is written that the Spirit of God can cry out in our hearts, "You are the man!" When we see the way people treated Jesus, we see the way we would have treated Him if we were there. And that reveals the immensity of our sin, and our great need for forgiveness.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is "Good News." The "Good News" is that the death of our Lord Jesus – which reveals the immensity of our sin – this same death is the same great, wonderful and amazing work by which God Himself gives us forgiveness.

When we come to read of God's people in the Bible we need to remember that their deeds are often described with a frankness that doesn't seek to hide their weaknesses, failures and sins. But the Bible writers don't wallow in sin and failure as we might do. This is because they know that by His innocent death Jesus died in our place. And by His resurrection Jesus has brought about newness of life.

This, in no way, excuses what David did, or ignores the consequences of what he had done. Just as if we abuse or neglect our bodies, so David's sins of deceit and violence had ongoing implications for his family. But here we also hear of God's great love for us all. God's great grace for us stands in the very life of Jesus. We hear in the genealogy of Jesus "David was the father of Solomon whose mother had been Uriah's wife" (Mt. 1.6b). Here, in Jesus, is God's grace for each one of us, even as it was for David.

Can Christians 'fall'? Yes, they can. Can Christians 'fall' far? Yes, they can. Can they 'fall' fast? Yes, they can. But the 'miracle' of 'the church' is that at its heart is the gift of life and love that God gives us in Jesus. Nathan the prophet's parable about the death of a man's only lamb isn't just a nice story to point David to his sin; it is also a prophetic word that points us to Jesus, the only Son of God, who has come into this world.

The creation is an amazing thing. Take time to look at the trees, the beauty of the earth, and the amazing people and things you may encounter every day. Your body is also an amazing thing. Take time to care for who you are, as well as the people around you whom God has placed in your care. And your congregation is an amazing thing. But just like the creation is not perfect (and we may experience storms and dangers), and just like our body experiences aches and pain and diseases, so we know that we may also experience similar things within the life of the church on earth. And what really 'brings us together' is not simply some desire for some sort of 'friendship' or 'fellowship', nor some sense of 'duty' to some person or organisation. No! What brings people together in this place is 'the death of the lamb' who is Jesus our Saviour.

The reality of the story of David and Uriah and Bathsheba and Nathan – and ultimately God! – is that anyone can 'fall', and anyone can 'sin'. If you become involved with a 'church' to 'find' a 'better way of living' – whilst you may find many words within God's Word (and many words proclaimed in this regard) – you will still find people struggling with life, and many people who are really hardly any different from anywhere else in life.

Whenever we gather in worship we hear God's word, "Your sins are forgiven". Your sins are forgiven. And we are called to 'live a life worthy of our calling', bearing with one another in Christ's love for us all. This is ultimately about seeing how in Christ Jesus we all are 'changed' and made a 'new creation (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17). Our Lord Jesus has said (John 6:35); "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty." As we come to Jesus, we see this as word not only about the benefits of hearing God's Word, and receiving Holy Communion. This is about receiving Jesus Himself. When humble sinners call upon Christ in faith, then they are filled. Only God, through his Son Jesus, can truly fill this empty spot and relieve that ache. Jesus is the one who quenches our spiritual thirst and satisfies our spiritual hunger. Come to Him. Listen to Him. Let His words and His love give you life! Amen.