

12/20/20 - 2 Samuel 11-12 - "The Tapestry of Bathsheba"

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. It's a blessing to be here together again to worship God through reading his word. Before we jump into the sermon, I do want to just give a couple of quick announcements.

As you can see, we have a pile of presents, and so this afternoon we're going to be distributing those to the local area on the north side of Youngstown. And so thanks to everyone who provided those. And that'll be a blessing, so please join us if you would like to be a part of that.

Also, we'll have a Christmas Eve service the 24th at 6 p.m., so please join us here for that. If you'd like to be a part of the Christmas Eve service, that'll be a blessing.

We'll have a portion of that candle lit, so it should be a blessing, so please join us for that. But as you heard in the passage, we're going to continue today with our series on the tapestry of Christmas and God's unfolding tapestry of his grace.

And so we're going to be speaking today about the story of Bathsheba and David that many of us are familiar with. But before we jump into that, I want to kind of set the scene with a kind of odd illustration.

[1 : 27] I guess it's a bit of a fascination of mine, and so I took advantage of the opportunity to put it into my sermon. But I think it's fitting. So probably not something you think about often. Maybe you do.

And if you do, then we can sit down and talk about it sometime. But within quantum mechanics exists a concept which essentially means that true randomness can't happen in our universe. Right? Once the universe was set in motion, it's a deterministic system, meaning that its outcome is determined only by its initial state.

Right? And so in this system, free will doesn't exist. Every choice has already been made and the outcome already determined. And so you probably think I'm crazy, right?

What am I talking about up here? But the reality is, if you study this topic, you'll find that a lot of the world's scholars believe this to be the true understanding of quantum mechanics and general relativity.

[2 : 28] They believe that we live in a deterministic system. And so because of that, our outcome is already determined. And so our thoughts and our actions have little or no effect on that outcome.

Right? And as such, life has no real meaning. Right? Nothing we do will really affect the outcome. And so the only meaning we can find, according to that interpretation, is the meaning that we make out of our lives.

So you may be wondering, why am I telling you this? Am I telling you it so that you can scoff at the agnostic and the atheist and scoff at the bleakness of their reality? No, rather, I'm telling you so that you can appreciate the reality that they face.

Right? So you can have an appreciation of the world they live in. A world where they're left searching for their origin. Right? That seems to be the chief pursuit of the sciences is figuring out where we came from.

However, living without any real purpose and with only one certain destination. Right? That only certain destination is, as they would say, the heat death of the universe some hundred billion years from now where nothing we've done makes any real difference.

[3 : 41] And so that's pretty dark if you think about it. It leaves them in a pretty dark place. But then how does that relate to us? There's a little bit of a ringing.

I don't know if you guys can hear it, but it's distracting. So I apologize. We may have to turn the game down a little bit. Bring the volume up. Sorry. But anyways, how does this relate to us? And in order to see that, I want to reflect on what we Christians believe. Right? Most importantly, we're created in the image of God. We're created for his purpose and for his glory. So in that we find meeting. And we were created to spend eternity with him. And so within Christianity, we find the only complete and coherent origin, purpose, and destination. Within Christianity, we find a solution to sin, to the evil in the world. And through Christ Jesus, we find a promise of eternal life. And I think that's pretty awesome and pretty encouraging. [4 : 40] Right? Through this, we see a glimpse of God's view of our universe. Right? We see from God's perspective that he's weaving a tapestry. Weaving a tapestry. He's rescuing fallen humans from death to life.

And through the atoning sacrifice to Jesus of Christ, he is rescuing us from death to life. And this was a plan, according to 1 Peter 1, Ephesians 1, that was set in motion before the foundation of the world.

Right? And it was made manifest in the last time for the sake of us who, through him, are believers in God. But then again, this answer, any time I have given this answer to the skeptic, always seems to leave them with one last question.

Always seems to be where the conversation goes. Why would a loving, benevolent creator allow sin to mar his perfect creation? Why would he allow the consequences of sin to plague his creation? Right? And even the theologian is often left asking and pondering, why would God allow sin? Why would he allow his son to die through what actually became history's greatest act of sin, while in a sense determining the outcome from the start?

[6 : 00] How then can God abhor sin? How can he hate sin, punish sin, and yet still allow sin? Right? All this while he is holy, righteous, and just.

Right? Well, I'm going to leave that question unanswered for now. We're going to come back around to that question in a little while. But as we continue to uncover the tapestry of God's grace that is found in the lineage of Jesus Christ, I want to focus today on the workmanship of his weaving, as seen in the life of Bathsheba and David.

And so that's where we're going to focus our attention, as in the passage that Brent read. So, as a second introduction to my sermon, I want to jump into Exodus 34, 6, and 7.

I like to jump around the Bible. I know it can get confusing and exhausting, but I really like to see how God weaves through the 66 books of the Bible, thousands of years of history, to achieve his purposes.

And so in Exodus 34, verses 6 through 7, God says to Moses, And I think in this passage we see three key things that we will find come to be in the life of Bathsheba and David.

[7 : 43] First, the books of Samuel and Kings are a testimony of God's steadfast love and his faithfulness to his covenant, to his word promise. If we search the scriptures going back to Adam and forward to Christ, we will find that God always remains faithful to his promises.

And also we'll find that God promises justice for the guilty, which he accomplishes through his judgment, and also through the completed work of Christ.

And I think we find a great answer to the concept that God does not clear the guilty, but visits the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation in Ezekiel 17, 20, and 36.

But we'd have to spend a whole other sermon if we want to really learn that. So I'd encourage you to read Ezekiel in your time of study. But as we jump into the book of 2 Samuel, we see a promise made to David that was delivered through Nathan the prophet.

And Nathan delivered the word and said that God promised to raise up a son from David, to establish an eternal kingdom, to raise and discipline him in the ways of the Lord, and never to take his steadfast love from him.

[9 : 05] And through him, through this lineage, he promised the Messiah. And that's really what this account in 2 Samuel 11 and 12 is about, God's steadfast love and his faithfulness.

And I think it holds great significance in the tapestry of God's word as it unfolds, as he remains faithful to deliver his promises. He remains faithful to his word. And so as our text for today begins, it starts in the springtime.

David sends his army on his behalf, commanded by Joab, to destroy the Ammonite city of Reba. And he himself remained in Jerusalem.

He stayed behind because he trusted his commanders and his valiant men to achieve victory on his behalf. Moving into our first section, the scandal, right?

And we're going to focus on 2 Samuel 11, verses 1 through 5. As the account continues, the author says, It happened late one afternoon.

[10:11] Right? Kind of funny that he would begin such a dark story with such an opening, right? As Bathsheba was purifying herself in the warmth of the afternoon, right?

In the late afternoon sun, in what she likely thought a private location, David was resting, as kings often do, on his couch, seeking relief from the afternoon sun.

And then he decided to take a walk on the roof, maybe to clear his mind or to meditate, right? But as he looked out, he saw Bathsheba bathing, right?

And rather than looking away in shame from what he saw, he noticed she was beautiful, right? Bathsheba, at this point, most likely unaware of the king seeing her, is described with the first of only two key details that seem to highlight her life, right?

She was very beautiful. Now, we don't really know why this detail was given, but I'm sure we can imagine a few reasons why it was given. Was it reason for David's temptation that she was beautiful?

[11:19] Do you think that's why the author put it there? Was she somehow at fault for her being beautiful? I think the detail can be a bit frustrating, right? How often are women remembered for their beauty as if it defines them or gives them purpose?

And so I don't think this detail was included by the author for any of these reasons. I think instead it was included to show that David was becoming a king after the Ammonites and the Syria king, right?

This was given to show that David was beginning his collection of beautiful wives, as the kings in the surrounding country so often did. And also, this detail was given in fulfillment to God's own word, right?

In 2 Samuel 8, Samuel warned that if Israel pursued a king to lead over them in place of God, that the king, a human who they chose to rule over them, would surely take from them all that pleased him.

And so we see this occurring in the life of David, and I think that's why this detail was given. And I think some will often argue that Bathsheba was in the wrong for bathing in the sight of the king.

[12:39] We don't know her motives, right? But it's not made clear in the text. And I don't think we should jump to this conclusion. We don't know why this happened, but we know she was not in the wrong for being beautiful, right?

That wasn't her fault. She certainly wasn't in the wrong for David's temptation, and she most definitely wasn't in the wrong for David failing to quash those temptations and turn to the Lord. So I don't think we should see her as the guilty one at this point. As the scene continues, right, an inquirer is sent on behalf of David to find out who this woman is.

In his curiosity, rather than attempting to turn from his temptation, he continues. And so his inquirer reports back that she is the daughter of Eliam, who if you read on in 2 Samuel, you will find is one of David's mighty men.

This makes her the granddaughter of Ahithophel, who was David's personal advisor and would go on to be the advisor of his son, Absalom. And if these two were not reason enough for David to leave her alone, right, knowing this, she was also the wife of Uriah the Hittite, a valiant man who was also one of David's mighty men, as recorded in 2 Samuel 23.

[14:01] And I think this second detail marks Bathsheba in the story as well. This is the second key detail we find about her. She is the wife of Uriah the Hittite. And I think this is a detail that will ever mark her in the lineage of Christ, as found in Matthew 1.6.

She's the fourth of only four women included in this lineage. This is not common for lineage in Judeo-Christian history to include the women. But Matthew saw fit to include these four women, including Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, as a reminder of God's faithfulness to his word, his steadfast love.

And so we find out that she was related to David's trusted advisor and his mighty men. And so this explains why her house would have been within viewing distance of the king's house, right?

These were David's closest friends, and so their house was adjacent to his. And so as he looked out, he saw Bathsheba bathing. Soon after, inquiring and finding out who she was, as if they had enough time had not passed for him to turn from temptation, he sends an invitation to her and invites her to his house, right?

The second Samuel account implies that the messenger took her, but also that she came to the king. And so it doesn't make clear if she came willingly, trustingly, or in obedience to the king.

[15:26] All we know is that she came. And I think at this point, she has every reason to trust the king, right? Being the wife of Uriah the Hittite, a valiant servant to the king, she was likely a servant to the king as well, and so she obeyed and she came to the king.

Now I want to remind you again, these events didn't take place in a matter of a few minutes or even a few hours, right? Time had passed, time enough for David to turn from his temptation, but he let temptation flourish into sin, and he lay with Bathsheba.

Now, as for Bathsheba, she knew there were consequences to this, right? She knew that this was an act of adultery, and under Jewish law, as laid out in Deuteronomy 22, 23, by not seeking help, by not crying out, even if David was the king, according to the righteousness of the law, she was guilty of adultery, right?

And this act of adultery, according to Leviticus 20, 10, required that both her and David be stoned, even if he was the king, right? And yet, knowing this consequence, they fell into sin.

And unfortunately, this is only the beginning of our story, right? This is only the beginning of the sin that would unfold. It turns out, though, that Bathsheba was purifying herself after a season of uncleanness, a detail that was given to indicate that conception was likely.

[16:58] And so a few lines later, she sends a messenger to inform David bluntly, I am pregnant, right? Words that should have evoked joy instead bring devastation.

Before we move on to the next scene, I want to see how this should teach us, how this should inform our decision making.

And I think it can be difficult to identify with the characters in this story, right? This was 3,000 years ago. David was a king. Bathsheba was a woman who was related to his trusted advisors.

None of us are kings or queens that I'm aware of, so hard to see ourselves in their shoes, right? But the reality is we still live in a world where temptation and sin exist.

And so in that, this does apply to us, right? I think rather than writing this story off as something that could never happen, we need to realize that when we're confronted with temptation, we're called to turn to God rather than letting temptation flourish into sin.

[18:13] I think a fitting reference for this occasion is James 1.15. Desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin.

And sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. When faced with temptation as Christians, as believers in Christ, we are called to turn to God, to pray that he would lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

And we're called to be encouraged that no temptation has overtaken you that is not common to humanity. God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability.

But with temptation, he will provide escape so that you may endure it. That's 1 Corinthians 10.13. So moving into the second section, I want to talk about covering sin.

Now this next section of this passage talks a bit about David. It focuses on David for a little while. As he seeks in futility to cover his sin, right?

[19:21] To protect himself from its ugly consequences. Bathsheba becomes a witness on the sideline, right? As the man who, as we'll find out soon, would become her husband, plots and commits deception and then murder.

She's powerless to intervene. A helpless accomplice, or as what we might call it today, felony murder, right? So David in a panic, as if we continue reading the story, knowing the consequences of his actions, he falls into the age-old temptation, right?

He believes the best solution is to cover his sin. Following in the footsteps of Adam and Eve, he thinks he can hide his sin from God and cover his sin from God.

Rather than confession and repentance and restoration, he decides to try to do things his own way. In short, summarizing the section, he sends a messenger to Joab, right?

The commander of his army is requesting Uriah be sent home for some rest. And then he does all in his power to get David home with his wife, hoping that he could cover his act of sin.

[20 : 29] However, even after getting Uriah drunk, he's unable to get him to go home, right? Think about it. Uriah had been at war for three months, and yet his duty to his fellow servants, his duty to his country, his duty to God, prevented him from going home to his wife.

And I think in addition to that, we see an act of God's divine providence in which he wouldn't allow David to cover his sin. Imagine now David's frustration, right?

The king unable to work out his own salvation. His honor and life are on the line. And so now he exploits his trusted commander, Joab.

He sends Uriah, a valiant man, a trusted man, to his death. In futility, he attempts to cover his sin with more sin, right?

Sin upon sin. However, we will soon see in 2 Samuel 12 that sin cannot be hidden from the eyes of God. And so I don't want to lose sight of Bathsheba in this narrative.

[21 : 42] I don't want to skip over her. This narrative is intentionally focused on David's sin, but I want to focus on Bathsheba in this narrative. Right? She, at this point, is an unfortunate pawn in the hands of a corrupt king.

Right? As the story continues, we find her now mourning the loss of her husband. On hearing the news of Uriah's death, she laments. She genuinely mourns the loss of her husband, having suffered great loss as a consequence of sin.

However, as the customary time of mourning came to an end, a messenger arrives from the king, and she is again escorted to his house. And soon after, they're married. Right?

I think this marriage must have felt rough. Right? However, I don't think it was part of the cover-up. The reality of their sin died with Uriah.

No one knew of their act of adultery. However, I think among his servants and his advisors, right, there must have been rumors and suspicion.

[22 : 48] The word likely got out. And so Bathsheba becomes queen, but it's unlikely she did so without any shame, without any guilt, and without any fear.

Right? Despite this, she obeyed the king. She obeyed his wishes, and she moved into his house. She became his seventh wife, and soon after, she bore him a son.

Right? And then in a rare note of exposition, in this historical narrative, the author kind of breaks the fourth wall, as we might call it. And he says, the Lord was displeased.

And now, God's for son. The Lord confronted David through a parable.

Right? He sent Nathan, his prophet, to deliver a parable, which stirred David's emotion. Being he was a shepherd himself, he connected with the poor shepherd who lost his favorite ewe lamb that he raised as one of his own children.

[23 : 54] And so, in anger, he exclaimed that this rich man deserved death, and to repay fourfold what was lost. And then, the Lord's rebuke.

Nathan revealed to David, he was this rich man. He was the man deserving of death. The Lord, the God of Israel, said, I anointed you king over Israel, delivered you from Saul, gave you your master's house and his wife, the house of Israel and Judah.

If this were too little, I would add to you as much as you desire. The Lord, in his providence, had greatly blessed David.

And then, the Lord asked, why have you despised my word and done evil in my sight? Why did you kill Uriah? Thank you, sir.

As I said, it's hard to connect with the people in this passage. It's hard not to, right? It's hard not to feel the hurt, the guilt and the shame. The Lord said, I will raise up against you from your own house and will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor.

[25 : 13] I will visit your evil upon you. What you did in secret, I will do before all Israel. We see in response to David's very public sin that God saw fit to testify before all Israel that he abhors evil to let all Israel know that this was not okay.

In judgment, God foretold and then permitted the consequences of David's sin to come to pass. His decisions came to the light. His poor choices, right?

His character was passed on to his children. His servants in his kingdom followed in his steps. If we continue reading, we will find that David's four sons were struck down by the Lord.

Indeed, he lost fourfold what he took. The books of Samuel and Kings give a historical account and bear witness to the real and lasting consequences of David's sin, right?

His choices led to incest, to murder, to a coup. The ripple of his sin passed from generation to generation through all Israel until civil war unfolded and tore Israel in half.

[26 : 25] most of the kings to come after him tended further and further away from the Lord until Israel was exiled. Many of these kings were put to death along with all of their descendants.

As prophesied, the Lord, his judgment and his word was accomplished through David's own family. So let's take a break from the story for a second and see how we might apply this to our lives today. Seeing the futility and the outcome of Bathsheba and David's response, we must combat this temptation of our nature to bury sin and to cover it, hide it from God.

The reality is the consequence of sin is rarely immediate. However, the consequences can be far-reaching and long-lasting. As parents and leaders, teachers, doctors, nurses, and so much more, our sins lead those around us, those we influence, into sin and away from God.

In addition to that, worse than that, as Christians, when we sin, we despise the Lord and do evil in his sight. We profane the name of God by living a life of hypocrisy.

[27 : 43] However, when we do fail and we do sin, we are not to hide from God and create coverings for ourselves as did Adam and Eve. We are to surrender ourselves into the hands of a loving and faithful God who forgives trespass and sin and transgression.

1 Peter 1.7, the tested genuineness that is steadfastness of our faith is to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

So as we move into the third section, I want to focus on dealing with sin, dealing with sin's consequences. First, I want to focus on David's dealing with sin.

How did David deal with sin? In response to the Lord's rebuke and before the Lord's judgment came to pass, the Lord foretold his judgment but it had yet to come to pass.

David's heart was pierced, right? His conscience awakened and he was brought to his knees in sincere repentance. he said, I have sinned against the Lord.

[28 : 54] David's immediate, genuine, and contrite repentance before the Lord is found here and also documented in Psalm 51 and throughout the Psalms. And then in a stunning, unmerited act of grace, the Lord put away his sin and said, you shall not have.

I think the only explanation for such forgiveness is the Lord's mercy and grace, his steadfast love and his faithfulness. The grace of God was sufficient to restore David to fellowship with God.

By the mercy and grace of God out of his steadfast love, his faithfulness, the final cost for sin, the cost of death, was ultimately paid by another. We call this substitutionary atonement.

The reality of substitutionary atonement is that Adam's sin Israel's sin, David's sin, Bathsheba's sin, our sin, was atoned for and paid for by the death of Christ on the cross.

God has put away sin because Christ, the child, would ultimately die in his place. Before we move on, I want to note the order of events.

[30 : 10] Right? Out of unmerited grace, God sent Nathan to rebuke David. He rebuked him of his own will. David was moved to genuine and contrite repentance and then again by grace, God put away his sin and revoked his death sentence.

Finally, God dealt with his sin. And so now I want to focus on God's dealing with sin, judgment. David had utterly scorned the Lord, as God put it, and so his just judgment required the death of the child.

This was to be evidence before David's household in a memorial of his sin. God kept his word that he abhorred sin and there was consequence for sin.

Just as the Lord had covered Adam and Eve's sin in the garden by the sacrifice of an animal, God's judgment was a reality that followed sinful choices. And then the household of David witnessed firsthand the impact of sin and through it the grace of God, the firstborn child of Bathsheba and David was to be taken by the Lord.

Right? And so now we return in our story to Bathsheba. Her young firstborn child becomes sick. She does all in her power to comfort him and to tend to his needs.

[31 : 38] And David, feeling powerless, he sought the Lord to heal this child. He fasted and lay in sackcloth and ash. But on the seventh day, in the Lord's providence, the child died.

David's servants were afraid to tell him, right? Realizing the child had died, David stood up, washed, anointed himself, changed his clothes, went into the house of the Lord and worshipped. He then went home and ate. His servants asked him why he would do this. Why would he mourn while the child was sick and then worship and rejoice after the child had died?

And David said, Who knows whether the Lord will be gracious to me and let the child live? But now that he is dead, why should I mourn? The word of the Lord has been accomplished. The child will not return to life, but someday I will return to him.

Applying this to us today, seeing the result of Bathsheba and David's sin, I think this is an uncomfortable reality, an uncomfortable reality of sin. The wages of sin is death, as Paul put it.

[32 : 57] As followers of Christ, we are not called to continue in sin that grace may abound. Instead, we're called and expected to put to death the desires of the flesh to turn from sin and to obey God.

God has atoned for our sins through the life and death of Jesus. And as we recognize this reality, our hearts should be pierced, our conscience awakened, and we should be moved to confession, to repentance, and to turn from sin.

I think 1 Peter 1, 14 through 15 is encouraging. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passion of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.

And so now, in the final section, as we move into the closing of the story, we get a glimpse of the tapestry in 2 Samuel 2, 12, verse 24.

We find Bathsheba again grieving. This time, her child was taken from her because of the consequence of sin. Although David made every effort to console her, I think she couldn't help but blame him in part.

[34 : 11] The cost of his sin entangled with hers was first her husband and now her child. I don't think a parent ever really moves on from the loss of a child, but she and David found comfort knowing they will see him again.

Perhaps in witnessing the Lord's forgiveness, despite all this hurt and loss, she found comfort in his promises. And so as her story comes to a close, we find some restoration for Bathsheba.

She's blessed with another son, this one named Solomon, who the Lord loved. He's not first in line to the throne, but through the Lord's providence and Bathsheba's efforts as found in 1 Kings, he is to become the king of Israel.

And as the Lord promised, he would become king and through his lineage, the Lord would provide the promised son, the Messiah. Having been at the center of David's sin, having seen the depths and extent of his depravity, and likely aware of his repentance, having witnessed it, and now a spectator to God's love, Bathsheba is witness as the Lord through her life, right?

And adulterous, honors his covenant. The throne of David established forever, God's steadfast love holding true despite sin and failure.

[35 : 40] And so Bathsheba is remembered in Matthew 1, 6, not for anything she did, but because God through her fulfilled his word, accomplished his will, and glorified his name.

God worked through the lives of sinful people to accomplish his promises despite sin. He wove her somewhat tragic life into the fabric of his tapestry, creating beauty and restoration from brokenness. Amen. As we close out the sermon, I want to encourage you by dealing with our sin and also seeing how God dealt with sin.

Right? Although there is great joy for Christians knowing that God works through broken sinners and achieves his will, God still abhors sin. Right?

He hates sin. Although he is abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, he will by no means clear the guilty. If you're living apart from Christ, you stand guilty before God.

[36 : 55] The grace and mercy of God are extended to you through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. And it is only by surrendering your life to him that you're justified and made innocent before God.

It is only through life, through faith in Jesus that your sins are put away in Christ. And so if you feel moved to surrender your life to Christ, to have your sins put away in him, then I would encourage you after the service to find Brent or myself and pray with us and we will help guide you in surrendering your life to him.

But for those of us who are living in Christ, who have surrendered our life to him, temptation is a reality that we face daily. And I think we're often tempted, as we said, like Adam and Eve, David and Bathsheba, to cover our sin with sin.

But this is not God's way. The wage of sin is death. The reality is not always immediate, right? We don't always face the immediate consequence of sin. And so even seeing that David, a man after God's own heart, could so easily fall into sin, I think we tend to write off sin. Right? We tend to just try and hide it. But as we read the Psalms, from Psalm 19 to 139, we see the reality of the guilt and the shame.

[38 : 32] We cannot hide our sin from God. So how then does God deal with your sin? Rather than living in guilt and shame or fear, I'm going to give you a few key things to keep in mind.

First, you are called, we are called to confess our sin and pray. James 5, 16 says, whoever, rather, that is from James 5, 16, Proverbs 28, 13 says, whoever confesses and forsakes their transgressions will obtain mercy.

A proverb written by Solomon, David's son. Second, we are called to repent when we do fail and seek God's forgiveness. For those who genuinely repent and turn from sin, as did David, the death of Christ is the substitutionary atoning sacrifice by which we are justified and made clean before God.

Third, we are called to turn from our sin. By the Spirit, Paul encourages us to put to death the deeds of the flesh, to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable before God, which is our spiritual worship.

We're called to be transformed by the renewal of our mind, so that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. We're also called to hate what is evil, to hold fast to what is good.

[40 : 00] Let the God of peace himself cleanse you completely, that your spirit, soul, and body may be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And then as 1 Thessalonians 5, 23 says, He who calls you is faithful, he will surely do it.

It's God who defends us from sin. The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing the division of soul and spirit, of joint and marrow, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

No creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Hebrews 4, 11 through 13.

And then finally, in closing, I want to answer the question that we opened with. Why would a loving, benevolent creator allow sin and its consequences to tarnish his perfect creation?

And I think through these four women's lives, I think we can see the reason, but I want to make it clear, make it plain. First, in answer to the skeptic, it was God who set the universe in motion.

[41 : 15] He upholds the universe by the word of his power. As a theoretical physicist might say, it's God who determines the path of every subatomic particle and every supermassive black hole.

Sin came into his creation through one man, Adam, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all have sinned. And because of this, we were dead in the trespass of our sins, following the courses of this world and carrying out the desires of our body and the mind.

We were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind. as Ephesians 2 bluntly puts it. And as Paul said, the wages of sin is death, Romans 6.23.

The sinner then finds themselves in a state bleaker than the agnostic or the atheist, living as slaves to sin. With death, that means eternal separation from God, the only determined outcome.

Right? God had a plan for sin and he has a plan for sin. He will cast it out of his presence and cleanse his creation of sin. However, God did not immediately rid his creation of sin as some might conclude that he ought to.

[42 : 41] Instead, as Ephesians 2.4-9 says, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved and raised us up from him with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of work so that no one should boast. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Although God clearly works through sinful people as we saw in the stories of Tamar, of Rahab, of Ruth, and Bathsheba to bring about his promised son, God does not sin.

He does not bring about sin. God allows sin. Knowing fallen humans would time and again choose to serve self over God. He had a plan for sin before the foundation of the world.

He loved us enough to create us knowing that we would betray him. And then he had a plan to work out our redemption, to atone for our sin.

[44 : 03] He wove the lives of sinful broken people into the fabric of his tapestry in such a way that ultimately all would bring him glory. This one thing I know, as John Piper said, all redemptive history pivots on the cross.

As we glimpse God's plan and creation to work out our salvation despite sin, as we celebrate the Messiah's humble birth, as we remember his death on the cross, a death which God ordained before the foundation of the world, a death that resulted from the single greatest act of sin in history, we now see God's mystery unfold as he pays the final deadly price for our sins.

God permitted the death of his only begotten son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the hope of the ages, Isaiah's great light, Abraham's offspring, blessing of Jacob, Judah's might, hope of the ages, David's true son, desire of nations, promised salvation, God with us.

Amen. Okay.