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**YOU
ARE
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DENOMINATIONAL BROADCAST
OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES
OF AUSTRALIA

YOU ARE THE ONE

"You are the man."

2 Samuel 12:7

Two stories. One happened yesterday. The other happened . . . oh . . . about . . . somewhere around 2900 years ago. But it could have happened yesterday, too. First, the story that happened yesterday. It's the story of Harold White. That's a fictitious name.

Harold White's wife is getting older. So is he, but he's a lot more impressed with his wife's age than with his own. They were married when they were both in their early 20's. Now they are in their early 40's. And Harold White has discovered that he still likes women in their early 20's. They make him feel as if he is really alive. His wife makes him feel as if he's really dead, and his family is a bother and a bore.

So Harold White left his wife for a young lady in her early 20's, her very early 20's. He has made enough money to make it possible for him to make the switch. He is now a very, very happy man. He feels as if he has been reborn. That is, he is usually very, very happy. Occasionally, though, things happen that upset him. Like the other day when he read Bob Greene's column in the newspaper. When he read that column he was very unhappy, and he wrote Bob Greene and told him so.

The thing that Bob Greene wrote that made Harold so unhappy, was about a young girl, somewhere around 16, whose own father had left his wife and his home for a younger woman. The girl spoke very movingly about the way she felt about this. Frankly, she felt her father had made a grave mistake, a selfish and self-centered mistake. She talked about how it was to live in a home where the mother had been crushed by her husband's desertion. It was a very moving story; it was enough to make anybody feel very sorry for the poor girl.

Even Harold White felt sorry for the girl when he read the column in the newspaper. Not only that, he also started to feel guilty because of what he had done to his wife and to his daughter. And that's what made him mad.

So he wrote Bob Greene and told him that he shouldn't write things like that—he shouldn't write them because they made people like him feel guilty. And said Harold White, "I shouldn't be made to feel guilty." Then he went on to explain how hard it had been for him to leave his wife who made him feel dead and go and live with the girl who made him feel alive. But he had to do it. He had simply figured things out and had calculated that if he were to stay with his first wife and family, he just wasn't going to have a very enjoyable time of it. "And so, Bob Greene," he had said, "You should be ashamed of yourself making people like me feel ashamed."

That's the story of Harold White. Somebody made him feel guilty, and he didn't think it was very nice, because he didn't think people like him should be made to feel guilty. This story is true. It gives me a very funny feeling. Either I'm all mixed up about what's right and what's wrong, or Mr. White is.

Story number two. It's the story of a king. His name was David, and he was the king of ancient Israel. He was at the peak of his career. He could have anything he wanted, and one day, when he looked down from his palace roof, he saw a beautiful woman bathing. He wanted her. He called her to the palace. She obeyed. Later she sent David a message and said, "I am with child" (2 Samuel 11:5).

Now the woman's name was Bathsheba, and she was married to Uriah, an officer in David's army who was away at the time that David and Bathsheba were together. And the Bible tells how David tried various tricks to make it look as if Uriah were the father of the child, and having failed in that, he sent a communication to his general Joab and arranged to have Uriah put in the most dangerous place of battle so that he would surely be killed. That worked, and after Bathsheba had mourned for her husband for the required time she came into David's house and bore him their son. And this, the Bible says, "displeased the Lord" (2 Samuel 11:27).

Now it's very interesting that David, who had committed adultery and murder, didn't want to feel guilty either. He just went along and acted as if everything was all right. After all, he was the king,

and the king could do as he pleased. And then God did something. There were no newspapers in those days, so David couldn't read a newspaper column as Harold White had done. But there were prophets, special spokesmen of God. And God used a prophet to break through all of David's defenses. This is what happened according to the opening verses of 2 Samuel 12:

And the Lord sent [the prophet] Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his morsel, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared it for the man who had come to him." Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

Nathan said to David, "You are the man" (vv.1-7).

So the accusation of the man of God fell like thunder on the king's ears. And the prophet hurried on and told him exactly what he meant. He said—

"You have smitten Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have slain him with the sword of the Ammonites."

So the prophet laid David's sordid sin out before his eyes so that there could be no mistaking it. And then he swept on and pronounced the judgment of God that would fall on David because of what he had done. He foretold the death of the child who had been born to David and Bathsheba, and he told of

unspeakable indignities that would be heaped upon him. Through it all, David was brought to his senses. And God gave him the grace to put his life back together.

You are the man. . . . It was the very finger of God that achieved the terrifying identification. There was no place to turn. There were no longer any psychological defenses that could be used to brace David against the overwhelming rush of guilt that swept into his soul. Suddenly he saw his conduct for what it was.

That is David's story, and in many respects it is similar to the story of Harold White. But there's more to David's story, and I hope there is going to be more to Harold White's, too, one of these days.

Before talking about the rest of David's story I would like to pause for just a moment and notice his blindness. This blindness is very significant because apparently it frequently accompanies especially serious sin. Remember the story of Harold White that we looked at earlier. He was angry with a newspaper columnist because the writer made him feel guilty. He was so skilled at self-justification; he had his situation completely figured out, and he was certain that no one had the slightest right to point out to him the fact that maybe, just maybe, he might be hurting some very important people because of his selfish action. Well, Mr. White's reaction and his blindness to his own wrongdoing are not unique. Such blindness is apparently a part of serious, gross, people-hurting sin.

Anyone who knows the full story of David, the king of Israel, finds it almost unbelievable that he fell into sin as he did. This is the same man who as a young soldier had experienced the deliverance of the Lord again and again, often in circumstances that were extremely frightening. Throughout the years he had written marvelously beautiful statements that still stand as some of the classic expressions of faith and trust in God. He was the specially chosen king, and as such he knew the will of God. He read the law of God often, and he knew how much God hated injustice and adultery and murder. The record of his exploits as a soldier and the story of his feelings

about the men who were close to him show that he was very sensitive about other people's needs and welfare. How he could actually plot to have a soldier who was loyal to him killed is beyond comprehension.

That David could fall as he did is extremely important for each of us. It shows that even those who are very close to the source of moral power are not necessarily protected from severe moral collapse. It shows that the power of evil, of the lust of flesh, and of the corruption that resides in the human heart is enormous. Many years after David fell, the apostle Paul talked about the failure of the entire nation of ancient Israel that had the opportunity to receive so many special blessings from the Lord, and Paul said, "Let any one who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

So it should be no surprise that today there is not only a great deal of sin around, but there is a great deal of blindness and stubborn resistance to correction as well. David was very close to the will of God and he knew it perfectly; today most people have little understanding of God's will for their lives. Men who abandon their wives and families for one reason or another, and women who do the same kinds of things, are surrounded by any number of examples of people who do the same. So it's no wonder that they become very irritated when other people try to make them feel guilty. They feel no guilt.

So it takes a special action of God before a person who is disobeying the moral law suddenly opens his eyes and confesses that he has done wrong. I know that this is true. Anyone who has lived in the church for more than two years will be able to tell you of cases when serious fall into sin occurred in the lives of Christians and the persons involved were entirely unwilling to admit their wrong. But then finally God comes, and the people change.

That's what happened to David. A prophet came. And he told a simple story, and David fell into the trap that God had prepared for him. It was the trap of God's grace, because when he fell into it his own blindness suddenly disappeared, and he saw what he had done. The prophet spoke: "You are the man."

And that's what I'm saying to you right now. You are the man. You are the woman. Maybe it's you are the boy. Or you are the girl. But if you are one of those who has convinced himself that the sin he is committing each day is entirely all right—there's nothing wrong with it—I can't help but hope that maybe something I have said, possibly something in the two stories we have been looking at, has been used by God to jolt you and bring you to your senses.

To get back to the case of Harold White for a moment—the man who left his middle-aged wife for a woman who won't become middle-aged for another 15 years—it's no trick at all to convince oneself that there are advantages in the new arrangement. As Harold White put it, his first wife made him feel dead and his new wife, or whatever she is, makes him feel alive. We all know what he's talking about. But the truth is that he has done something that brings death into society. If men abandon their wives when for some reason their wives don't quite suit them anymore, marriage becomes a mockery, and the family is headed for big trouble. And we all know that many people have convinced themselves that doing what they want to do, doing the things that make them feel very much alive, is their perfect right, and no one should try to make them feel guilty about it. Now I say if you are in a situation something like that (it may be entirely different, but there may be real similarities), for the sake of your soul's welfare I must plead with you to open your eyes and see the true situation. I know you may not want to feel guilty. But you have to. Feeling guilty is not the end of the road. Feeling guilty can be the beginning of renewal and repair in your life.

The story of David—we saw what miserable sin he had fallen into—murder and adultery—and we saw how the prophet came and looked the king straight in the eye and said to him: "You're the one. You are the despicable, low down, vile, blind, selfish, heartless sinner I've been talking about." That's what the prophet said to him—"You're the one." Oh, what a bleak moment that was in David's life! He had to look up to see bottom. But you know, once the

blindness was taken away, and David saw his guilt, everything changed for the better for him.

There is a psalm in the book of The Psalms in the Old Testament that comes out of the time of David's confession of sin and his return to God. He has been so far away from God! People who stubbornly refuse to admit that they are doing wrong or that they have done wrong hurt themselves most of all because they put up a barrier between themselves and God. But when they confess and turn around and come back, God is there to welcome them.

Psalm 51 is the psalm that expresses the response of David in recognition of his sin. I'm going to include part of it for you here. Read it carefully, and please understand that if you are starting to feel uneasy about your sinful conduct, God wants you to use words just like these in your own life.

Be merciful to me, O God, because of your constant love.

Because of your great mercy wipe away my sins!
Wash away all my evil and make me clean from my sin!

I recognize my faults;
I am always conscious of my sins.
I have sinned against you—only against you—
and done what you consider evil.

So you are right in judging me; you are justified in condemning me.

I have been evil from the time I was born;
from the day of my birth I have been sinful.

Sincerity and truth are what you require; fill my mind with your wisdom.

Remove my sin, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Let me hear the sounds of joy and gladness;
and though you have crushed me and broken me,

I will be happy once again.

Close your eyes to my sins and wipe out all my evil.

Create a pure heart in me, O God,
and put a new and loyal spirit in me.

Do not banish me from your presence;
do not take your holy spirit away from me.
Give me again the joy that comes from your
salvation,
and make me willing to obey you.
Then I will teach sinners your commands,
and they will turn back to you.

Spare my life, O God, and save me,
and I will gladly proclaim your righteousness.
Help me to speak, Lord, and I will praise you.

You do not want sacrifices, or I would offer
them;
you are not pleased with burnt offerings.
My sacrifice is a humble spirit, O God;
you will not reject a humble and repentant
heart.

Psalm 51 continues for a few sentences more, but I am going to stop here and underscore the last words: *"You will not reject a humble and repentant heart."* That says it all: God will not reject a humble and repentant heart. This is the great fact that dominates the Bible. We are sinners, yes, but when sinners repent of their sin God receives them with open arms.

When I read Psalm 51 I find words that I can speak from my own life and experience. We have been talking about those who commit especially grievous and public sins, and surely Psalm 51 is for them. But Psalm 51 contains the announcement that all men are sinful, from their very birth onward. Sin is a contamination that has attached itself to our persons so that every element of our being has been touched: our emotions, our wills, our actions, our thoughts, the imaginations of our minds. We must all take this psalm on our lips. No matter who we are. No matter what we've done.

And the great encouragement that comes to us is that God will receive us when we come to Him in confession of sin and with a heart full of sorrow for what we are and for what we have done. Remember the man who was angry because a newspaper writer wrote something that made him feel guilty? He didn't want to feel guilty. What he forgot was that when we

feel our guilt, that is exactly the time when there is hope for us. Guilty people can call out for forgiveness, and God will hear and answer.

David, the great sinner, the murderer and the adulterer, knew that; so he threw himself on the great mercy of God. He did it. If he did it, think of how much more reason we may do the same today. We know so much more about God's mercy and His lovingkindness than David knew. God has revealed His love and forgiving grace in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son who came into our world and died on Calvary's cross so that sinful people like us could be forgiven and saved.

Did you know that God shed the blood of His most precious Son so that your sins could be wiped away? David prayed, "Because of your great mercy, Lord, wipe away my sins." You can pray the same, and God will do it because of Jesus' sacrifice. Jesus paid for human sin. Now sinners can come to God with all their guilt, with all the depression of their hearts, and they can know that God has forgiven them.

If you confess your sins to God and turn away from your sin in sorrow and repentance, God will forgive you. I'm serious about this. Yes, that's right—I don't care what you've done; I don't care what sin it has been that you have committed. There are some bad ones. There are some that just about tear your heart in two every time you think about them. I know. Whatever your sin, come to Jesus now, and ask Him to forgive you.

He will forgive you. And He'll make you over into a new person. Harold White, do you hear me? Whatever your name is, do you hear me? If you're guilty, admit it. Not to me. But admit it to God. Say something like this: "Be merciful to me, O God, because of your constant love. Because of your great mercy wipe away my sins! Wash away all my evil and make me clean from my sin!" Pray to God that way. He'll listen. He'll forgive you. And He'll help you clean up your life. He'll show you what living really is... for Jesus' sake.

PRAYER

Lord, we've talked about the blindness that often accompanies sinful conduct, and I know that many people are stumbling around right now because they refuse to see that they have sinned. They think they are living, but they're not. They are dying.

So, Lord, I pray that you'll open the eyes of some of these people so that they will admit that they've done wrong. Encourage them so that they won't be afraid of their guilt; help them to see that their guilt is the place where the road back to God begins. Turn them around. Give them sorrow for what they've done. And through your powerful Spirit, let the words of confession come from their hearts and from their lips.

Today we praise you for making forgiveness possible through Jesus at the cross. We know that there wouldn't be any use repenting of our sins if Jesus hadn't died and if He hadn't risen again. Hear us in His blessed name. Amen.

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