

WIVES OF THE BIBLE

A Cross-Section of Femininity

by

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE WOMAN WHO TEMPTED A KING BATHSHEBA—URIAH'S WIFE

And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord (II Samuel 11:26-27).

WE debated somewhat seriously the wisdom of discussing Bathsheba—the woman who tempted a king. The difficulty of discussing her conduct frankly and at the same time escaping the salacious is well understood. On the other hand, we have spoken of this series of sermons as a “cross-section of femininity,” and beyond all doubt the story of Bathsheba and David is essential if that cross-section is to be either full or fair.

In order to comprehend clearly the sins of King David, and consequently to understand his deepest sorrows, one is compelled to consider this incident; and in order to judge Bathsheba justly, one must be familiar with and keep in mind her entire record as recorded in II Samuel, I Kings, and I Chronicles.

The subject of David's sin against Uriah the Hittite, and with Bathsheba the beautiful, has been discussed from many a pulpit, and the glory that belonged to David, the king of Israel, has been dimmed and damaged by this—the blackest incident of his most remarkable career. On the other hand, Bathsheba's part in this salacious transaction has commonly been passed over in silence. Consequently the lessons that might be learned from the consideration of her conduct have been too largely missed.

I propose to suggest them under the phrases—The Menace of Nudism, Murder by Indirection, and The Multiplication of Sorrows.

THE MENACE OF NUDISM

This whole sinful incident originated there. Baths should be so located as not to become public exposures. Nudity is not necessarily nature's way; much less is it approved of God. The lower animals even are well clothed as a rule.

About the only exception to that rule of nature is the reptile tribe—a loud hint, at least, of Satanic control, and now we have the modern nude menace, a new proof of total depravity.

No sooner were men fallen than God ordained clothes for them.

In Genesis 3 we are told that the **Lord God made coats of skins, and clothed them** (Genesis 3:21).

Confessedly, the age of which we are a part is an especially sinful period in human history. It is doubtful if any century ever equaled the twentieth in **the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh**. The truth of that fact is not alone in the drunkenness and adultery of the day; but in that descent of morals that has created the desire for nudism and rendered public sentiment semi-indifferent to it.

Forty-five years ago in connection with the World's Fair in Chicago there was a widespread protest against "the nude in art" as exhibited in connection with that exposition. And forty years ago Tolstoy published his volume, "*What Is Art?*" and in it that great Russian excoriated "the nude in Art," declaring that "Art in our time is a perversion of the people in the most important question of social life, namely, sexual relations."

In discussing this subject he said: "When one remembers all those novels and their lust-kindling descriptions of love with which the literature of our society overflows; all those pictures and statues representing women's naked bodies, and all sorts of abominations which are reproduced in illustrations and advertisements; the filthy operas and operettas, it seems as if existing art had but one definite aim—to disseminate vice . . . It were better that there were no art at all than to continue the depraving art, or simulation of art, which now exists."

But, alas for the twentieth century sentiment, the "nude in art" is now almost universally applauded, and the degeneracy of the day, no longer content with cold marble, increasingly demands the exhibition of living flesh.

A late magazine states that the cult of the nude had more than one hundred thousand followers in Germany, Austria, and France; while the editor of "*The Path-finder*," of Washington, D. C., says: "This trend toward the nude is not confined to the Old World. There is a marked tendency in that direction in our own"; and in the last five years that "tendency" has attracted hundreds, if not thousands, of degenerates and fools to the camps where this perversion of decency is practiced.

The employment of clothes is a Divine protection.

That is true even in animal life. The protection is against the elements—the wind and wave, heat and cold—and also natural enemies. Few forms of lower life can long exist without the covering that Nature, or God, placed upon them; and in this man is included. We notice that the North Pole dwellers have not, as yet, taken to nudist camps!

But over and above physical protection stands the question of morals which here is so deeply involved with the human race.

There is in the fifth chapter of Mark's Gospel a most interesting and instructive miracle. The demoniac was healed by the Son of Man. While under Satanic control, he had literally torn his clothes from his body; but when Jesus passed by and with a word dispossessed him of demons—and when the swine-feeders came to see what was done—they found **him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind** (Mark 5:15).

I should say there was a logical connection between the portions of that sentence—**clothed, and in his right, mind.**

The casting away of clothing is insanity; its proper employment is sane.

Heathenism often unclothes; Christianity, on the other hand, always clothes. Sin makes ragged and naked; salvation covers.

But one sin seldom dwells alone! Like the demon cast out of the man, it tends to multiply itself into seven, so that the second state of the man is always worse than the first; and we find it so in the case of Bathsheba's temptation. Here lust was followed by murder, and that deed was much like many of the killings of the present century.

MURDER BY INDIRECTION

David, who desired Bathsheba for her beauty, found a very inconvenient hurdle ahead of him—she had a husband. That impediment has often been faced.

One of America's most popular of ministers tells the story of the young man who went up to the annual conference and hung about the Bishop's stand, until finally he found his chance to speak to his Bishop alone, and the following conversation occurred:

“Bishop, don't the Bible say that a preacher should be the husband of one wife?”

“Yes,” answered the bishop, “that is essentially what it teaches.”

“Yes, sir; that is the way I read it.”

“Are you thinking of getting married?” asked the bishop.

“Yes, sir; I am thinking about it.”

“Have you got a girl?”

“Yes, sir; one of the purtiest, sweetest, talentedest women in the whole county. She plays, she sings, she is jis' everything one wants.”

“All right,” said the bishop, “go along and get married.”

“But” answered the young aspirant, “I don’t know what to do with her husband!”

“Oh,” said the bishop; “has she got a husband?”

“Yes, sir; she has a good-for-nothin’ man that is her husband, and I don’t know what to do with him!”

“Well,” said the bishop; “you don’t expect me to kill him, do you?”

“No, Mr. Bishop; I don’t; but I thought maybe you could tell me what would be the quickest and most Christian way to get rid of him.”

We smile at the sinister suggestion of this covetous man, and yet it is identical with David’s problem; and doubtless David, as a believer, concluded that the quickest and most Christian way to get rid of Uriah was to send him to the forefront in the frightful battle which was pending and let him be killed by the enemies of the Lord, and then his blood would not be required, by society at least, at David’s hands.

But there are several evil principles involved in this procedure.

First, murder is often the result of lust.

The United States is making a most unenviable reputation for murder. Her brutally slain now run annually into the thousands. One of the late reports is that nine thousand were murdered in America during the past twelve months.

If one inquire as to the motive back of this wholesale slaughter he will discover two principal objectives. The first is to secure money in large amounts, and a strong second is illicit love. **The lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh**—these demoniac desires are most destructive!

Take up your morning paper. Its pages are blotted with holdups, bank robberies, and kidnappings, all motivated by the love of money, the root of all evil.

But on the same pages you will find as many and blacker blots expressing the lusts of the flesh representing animal desire, illegitimate relations, or defeated sex plans.

Murder is in the mind before it is with the hand.

David’s plan to remove Uriah was completed before Uriah himself was placed in danger.

A great many people seem to think that murder is only in the overt act of taking life with malice aforethought. On the contrary, the Scriptures make malice murder: **Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer . . .** (I John 3:15).

The murderers, then, are not all behind prison bars; are not all involved in court trials; are not all even suspected by the public. In fact, a multitude of them are respected instead; but the truth stands! The inspired John is properly interpreting his Master when he makes hate murder.

But the study of David's method of securing Bathsheba for himself brings to us another suggestion:

Murder is most often by indirection.

David did not kill Uriah. There was no blood on his hands; he did not handle the dagger that did the deed; he was not even present when it took place.

But that does not clear him of responsibility. There are thousands who are slain by indirection. The racketeers of Chicago seldom shoot their victims; they hire henchmen instead. It is fairly clear that the two editors who were murdered in this city something like a year ago were both slain by indirection, and the people who proposed to put them out of the way kept in the shadows while their hired henchmen did the deed.

But I press this point a bit further. Not all murders are accomplished by pistol or dagger. In fact, the majority of them—and the murders of the most frightful kind—are accomplished quite differently. The motion picture that sets in attractive perspective lust in all its forms and murder with all its mystery, involves its creators and directors in a wholesale slaughter of American youth. They kill not the body, but the mind and the soul!

We take a step further—the hotbeds of Communism now being multiplied in America, and the godless Universities, in which revolting teachers and teachings are not only permitted but encouraged, so that violence and strife, beatings, bloodshed, and death are the daily product—these also are properly placed in Murderers' Row!

In 1929 it was stated to Chicago's shame that she had 113 unsolved murders on the court records of the city; but our beautiful Minneapolis has a far greater number, not alone unsolved but even unsuspected—for the murder of the mind and the murder of the soul are far more serious than physical slaughter.

Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

But when we have seen the Menace of Nudism, and Murder by Indirection, we have only laid the foundation for the further part of this history of Bathsheba with David, namely—

THE MULTIPLICATION OF SORROWS

The soul of her kingly husband was smitten.

David was truly a remarkable man. He was easily one of God's greatest. His character was so outstanding that four thousand years of history have failed to dim his just popularity, much less deprive him of his place in the galaxy of the great.

However, Bathsheba puts upon him a spot, a stain that has grown no less crimson with the race of the centuries.

- It is the festering fly in the ointment of David's otherwise wonderful life.
- It is the evil odor that comes from a history that might have been like the perfume of violets;
- it is the interrogation written over all his professions of faith and love!

In his volume, *Great Books As Life's Teachers*, Newell Dwight Hillis discusses Hawthorne's "*Scarlet Letter*" and tells us how, on that night after the trial of Hester and her conviction, this daughter of suffering slept in a dungeon, and yet, because of her loyalty and love she seemed the child of liberty, while Dimmesdale, the minister who appeared a free man, became the bond-slave of sin, the prisoner of fear and remorse. Listening, he might have heard the laughter of demons rejoicing over the wreck of a man's soul. From that hour he was a target for the slings and arrows of an outraged conscience.

If one would know what this sin meant to David, listen to him when, in the closet of prayer, he imagines himself alone with God, and hear his anguished cry—

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent (Psalm 22: 1-2).

Again—

Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak.

Will the Lord cast off forever and will he be favorable no more?

Is his mercy clean gone forever? doth his promise fail for evermore?

Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? (Psalm 77:4, 7-9).

But even the anguish of David did not exceed that of Bathsheba.

Her sorrows were judgment-afflictions.

First of all, the babe of her illegitimate love died.

If one would send a dagger through the soul of a woman, there is no steel blade so poignant and grievous as the sickness and death of her child, especially of her first-born! And while David's grief was great and the record of it far more full, it is doubtful if he suffered as she suffered, for there is a sense in which a babe is more to the mother, as well as more of the mother, than to and of the father. Maternal anguish is great enough when it is an innocent bereavement; how much greater when the suffering one feels that she is smitten on account of her sin! There the trail of the serpent is over Eden's flowers and, as Arthur Pierson said, "The furrows of anxiety and anguish are scars of sin."

But this bereavement was only a beginning for both David and Bathsheba.

There were yet other darker days ahead.

The incest of the house, involving Amnon and Tamar—how it must have reminded these parents of the great truth—that **we sow to the winds and reap the whirlwind.**

The fratricide following wherein Absalom caused to be murdered his brother Amnon — how deep was that grief!

And then the final rebellion of Absalom against his father—the attempt to capture the throne which led to Absalom's slaughter!

What sorrow upon sorrow! What suffering upon suffering! What bereavement upon bereavement!

In spite of the honors that came to her as the king's wife, I suspect that Bathsheba a thousand times wished that she had been more discreet, and grieved the day when her bath on the housetop made the beginning of a history that was filled with illegitimate loves, unspeakable losses, inexpressible griefs, blinding sorrows! Sin always so results.

It is related to sorrows as cause to effect, **for sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death** (James 1:15).

Some time ago at Chester, Ill., three East St. Louis youths in the Menard prison walked one after another to the electric chair—John Krul, twenty-one years old; Edward Balling, nineteen; and B. Deadmon, twenty-five. They had attempted a holdup on a streetcar and killed W. C. Moss, a sixty-six-year-old conductor, in the procedure.

That day John Krul bade a weeping "good-bye" to his wife and two-year-old child. He said, "If I have ever done anything to anybody I want forgiveness; may God forgive me, too!"

Balling, the youngest of the company, broke down completely. His mother had failed to arrive in time to bid him "goodbye." He said, "Let me thank everybody for what you have done for me."

Deadmon, the man who fired the shot that killed Moss, delivered a somewhat lengthy speech and wound up with, "May God be merciful!"

That is the sinner's one and only hope; but blessed be God's holy name that hope always exists, for, God is love!

His justice was meted out to David and Bathsheba in the sorrows of earth-life. Those afflictions were the flames in which their penitent souls were purified, and we have no reason to doubt that one day we shall find them among the redeemed.

But that also is of the grace of God! He has pardon for the penitent!

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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