

“YOU ARE THE MAN!”

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Readings: 2 Samuel 12:1-10; Matthew 7:1-5

In His Word the Lord tells us what is right and what is wrong. Sometimes the message is given very plainly, as in the Ten Commandments. But in other places the Word simply tells a story about some person who acted wrongly and what happened to that person. Today, we will look at a story about how King David sinned and was punished.

Now, as a matter of fact, David was a great king. He had been very brave; he had slain a giant and won many battles, and finally he had become a king over all the land of Israel. And yet he wanted the Lord's help, and wanted the Lord to rule, and so he brought the Ark of the Lord into the Tabernacle in Jerusalem, and he worshiped the Lord, and the Lord made him very powerful. David's people liked him and obeyed him. He had many faithful soldiers, so he could do almost anything he wanted, for his command was law.

But then David committed a great evil. He took away the wife of one of his faithful soldiers, and had that innocent soldier killed in secret by a deceitful trick.

Yet, in ruling his country, David was a just king. If anyone killed someone else, or stole his wife, King David would see how wrong that was and would punish the evil person. So when the Lord sent Nathan, the prophet, to David to tell of a rich man who had stolen the only lamb of a poor man, David said, right away, that that thief should be punished—should be put to death!

Imagine David's feelings when the prophet pointed his finger straight at David himself and said, “You are the man!” (2 Samuel 12:7). David had not stolen a lamb, but he had stolen Uriah's wife—one of the worst sins he could have done. David had judged and condemned himself. He should have shunned or turned away from his evil desires.

The Lord once told His disciples, “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged” (Matthew 7:1-2). If you have a great big splinter in your eye, you should not be pointing out little specks of dust in somebody else's eye. You should first, try to get the splinter out of your own eye, and then maybe you can see clearly to help get out the grains of dust you notice in somebody else's eye.

Now we seldom—if ever—see anybody with a great big splinter in his eye. But it is very common that people who have some big fault are very quick to see that

same fault in others, and yet they cannot see that they are in the same evil, or in even greater faults.

For example, it is usually when we are being selfish that we accuse our friends of being selfish. It is usually when we are being “mean” ourselves that we call others “mean.” When you are angry with someone else, you cannot see how ugly you look—how badly you are behaving, how wrong you are. You see only the faults of others, not your own.

At times like these, it is good to think about King David—about how the prophet Nathan came to him and pointed his finger at him and said “You are the man.” It was very useful for David that there was a prophet of God to come to him and tell him the truth. David had been blind; he had not seen how terribly he had sinned. But now he had a chance to repent, to be sorry for what he had done, and to make sure that he would never do such a thing again.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if, whenever we had done or thought something wrong, a prophet would come to us with a message from the Lord, to help us repent, to make us better! (When we get to the spiritual world, spirits will give us warnings when we do or think what is wrong. But this does not happen on earth.) Do we have nobody, then, to tell us—to remind us when we have done some wrong?

We do have something to help us. The Lord has shown His love to us in a special way, so that we will be able to get to heaven. He has given us His written Word—with its commandments and its stories which warn us to shun evils. The purpose of this written Word of God is to form a conscience in our minds, which can tell us when we are thinking of doing something wrong. When we read the Word it comes to our conscience, just like the Lord's Word came to Nathan the prophet. Then our conscience lets us know when we are wrong, just like Nathan told David that he had sinned.

So we do not need a prophet to come to us, as long as we read the Word. The Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church tells us that we should read one or two chapters from the Word every day. In this way we let the Lord come to us, to strengthen our conscience!

But sometimes conscience seems to be silent. Then it is useful that other people sometimes let us know when we are in the wrong, because we are not always able to recognize evil in ourselves. And when somebody shows us that they think we are wrong, let us remember what David said to Nathan: “I have sinned” (2 Samuel 12:13). David repented because he was a brave man, not a coward. He became humble. So when someone blames us, we should consider: “Perhaps I was wrong. Yes, I did wrong. I won't do that again.” It was because David said, “I have sinned against the Lord,” that he did not lose his throne. Heaven could still be with him, and give him good fortune.

We, too, are kings of our own little realms. If, when we learn of having done wrong, we get offended and excited and begin to excuse ourselves, then we lose our kingdom—we lose the power or control of ourselves which we have abused. We should try to listen humbly when our wrongs are pointed out to us. We should read the Word humbly to see what our faults are. For there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just people who think they need no repentance (see Luke 15:7).

In your own life, remember David, who was brave enough to be humble and to say, “I have sinned.”

Amen.