**“In the storms of life-Remorse.”**

Today, the third in our series “In the Storms of Life” looks at Remorse. David and Peter both came a terrible cropper morally, committing major sin-David adultery and murder-Peter disowning his Lord. When faced with wrong doing two possible responses occur-remorse or to dismiss or minimise it, at which politicians are adept!

I’m reminded of Robert Clive-a conflicted personality-who after his victory at Plassey in 1757 controlled the rich province of Bengal. He made an absolute fortune there by corruption, bribes and ‘cooking the books’ The local elites participated in this , too. The English disguised this thirst for dishonest gain- calling it” shaking the pagoda tree.” The pagoda was a local currency in parts of India. In 1773 Clive was confronted about his huge and notorious exploitation by a Parliamentary committee, claimed, despite the evidence, “Mr Chairman, I am astonished at my own moderation.” What a breathtakingly arrogant attempt to dismiss or minimise his crimes!

Not so for David and Peter when faced with their wrongdoing-their response was different, accepting their guilt-showing remorse and godly sorrow, which as Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 7: 10 ”brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret.” Three further points are: firstly, both were a bit cocksure about their relationship with the Lord. David had this strong faith and commitment. When dallying with Bathsheba there was religious fervour about the Ark coming to Jerusalem and greater prosperity. Likewise, Peter was very close to the Lord Jesus. Paul warned in 1 Cor. 10: 12 “So if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall. No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” We have a choice, therefore, whether to take God’s way out of the temptation or not. Sadly, neither David nor Peter made the right choice-how often do we find ourselves in the same place as them.

Secondly, we are all human and frail, so it’s no surprise we will often fall short of God’s standards. Thirdly, David and Peter, after realising their wrong doing, repented, turned from their sin, were forgiven and restored in their relationship with the Lord. David, however had to live with the consequences of his wicked actions.

David, on closer examination, did seem a bit cocky, not recognising his adultery for what it was. Perhaps, he imagined it did not matter-he was behaving like a tyrant, grabbing what he wanted. His cover up plan seemed to go well. Joab had not spilled the beans that on David’s orders he had arranged for Uriah’s untimely death in the siege. Nathan, however, brought David up short.

Nathan’s parable about the rich man taking the poor man’s only ewe lamb to feed a guest outraged David-“…the man who did this deserves to die. He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.” 2 Sam. 12: 5-6. Nathan confronted him-“You are the man.” v. 7. He did not mince his words-he showed God’s take on David’s actions. “Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes?” v. 9. “You despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be you wife.” v.10. Do we not, sometimes, need reminding how greatly we ignore and despise God, when we sin?

Nathan continued by outlining God’s judgement in verses 10-12-there would be violence within David’s dysfunctional family–three of his sons were murdered and “out of your own family I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you…in broad daylight. You did it in secret…” Absalom did exactly that while his rebellion was successful. This revelation of David’s sin, God’s view and judgement of it would be bad enough, but a further element contributed to this Storm of Life for David.

Nathan showed David to what extent he had failed the Lord, who had given him so much. David repaid Him by flouting his standards. David, described by the Lord as “a man after his own heart” in the Psalms showed his humility, his deep trust in the Lord, thanking Him for his victories and was able to tell Him exactly how he felt. Nathan outlined in vv 7-8 how the Lord had favoured him-“…anointed him King over Israel and delivered you from the hand of Saul.” David had carefully negotiated the volatile relationship between them. “I gave your master’s house to you…I gave you the house of Israel and Judah.” David had, under God, united the twelve tribes! What a fall!

David responded, at once, with total honesty. “I have sinned against the Lord” v.13. His anguish of remorse can be seen in Ps. 51: 3-5. “For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and are justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” Later this godly sorrow led to repentance in v.10 “Create in me a pure heart and renew a right spirit within me.” “Renew” suggests that he had deviated from the right spirit and had turned away from his sin-the meaning of genuine repentance.

After such a heartfelt response Nathan could assure David “the Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.” 2 Sam. 12: 13 He had been forgiven, his relationship with the Lord was restored, but he would have to live with the consequences of his sin-his dysfunctional family would suffer violence and “the son born to you will die.” v 14.

A post script follows in vv15-23, when David’s servants are confused about his reactions before and after the child’s death. At first, in vv16-17 he “pleaded with God for the child”-he fasted, mortified the flesh and seemed inconsolable. When David realised the child had died, he accepted that, got up, washed, changed his clothes and asked for food. He accepted this death and went to “the Lord’s house and worshipped”. v. 20. He explained to his puzzled servants “While the child was alive, I fasted and wept. I thought ‘Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me and let the child live.’ But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him (this suggests some hint of life after death), but he will not return to me.” Vv.22-23. Such an acceptance of the Lord’s sovereign will shows that the trusting David of former days is back. In faith he cope with the troubles ahead such as Absalom’s revolt. Perhaps, the Bathsheba episode was an aberration! He has returned to worshipping the Lord, while his weeping for the child and comforting of Bathsheba v. 24 shows a sympathetic side to a man who was something of a heroic tough guy in Biblical times.

Peter’s story follows a similar pattern. He seems rather cocksure, when he boasts just before Jesus’ arrest “Even if all fall away, I will not.” Mk. 14: 29. He was the impulsive leader of the disciples, who had discerned that Jesus was the Messiah. Sadly, Jesus prophesied “today- yes, tonight- before the cock crows twice, you will disown me three times.” Mk. 14: 29. He did disown the Lord Jesus with three lies in the High Priest’s courtyard. He claimed not to” know Him”, not to be one of the disciples and not to know what they were “talking about”, when they described him as a Galilean, so must have been with Jesus. Lk. 22: 57, 58 and 60. How often have we been guilty of disowning Jesus like Peter?

Peter’s sin was brought home to him, when ”the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter” v. 61 What a telling moment that was! And like David, Peter, also, grasped to what extent he had let his Lord down. Peter the leader, on whose faith the Lord would build His church, had been present at the Transfiguration. What a turmoil he must have been in! Yet he repented at once-“ he went outside and wept bitterly.” v. 62.

He was forgiven and restored-the angel at the empty tomb explained that “He has risen. He is not here…But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee.’” Mk. 16: 6-7. Peter is highlighted just in case he feared that he was no longer counted as one of the disciples. A reassuring touch, completed by the conversation on the beach, when the Lord Jesus asked him three times “do you truly love Me.?” Jn. 21: 16 and gave him the job of feeding his lambs and caring for his sheep. There had been a hiccup in Peter being transformed into greater Christlikeness, but he was now back on track-what encouragement for us!

We are all human and frail, so we are bound to fall short from time to time this side of the grave, but, firstly, if we repent, we will be forgiven, restored and continue to be transformed. Secondly, we may need a Nathan to point out our sin and should recall “…if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall.” 1 Cor. 10: 12. Lastly, if “godly sorrow” has brought us to” repentance that leads to salvation” 2 Cor. 7:10, we may have to live with the consequences of our wrong doing like David did, but we should follow his example get on with worshipping and serving the Lord. It’s like falling off a bike, we should get on again before we lose our nerve!! So the Storms of Life for David and Peter give us both a warning and an encouragement!