

Journey back to joy

Rediscovering repentance

Dai Hankey

Journey back to joy

Rediscovering repentance

Dai Hankey

Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION (Anglicised Edition). Copyright © 1979, 1984, 2011 by Biblica (formerly International Bible Society). Used by permission of Hodder & Stoughton Publishers. All rights reserved. 'NIV' is a registered trademark of Biblica. UK trademark number 1448790.

Copyright © 2017 by Dai Hankey

First published in Great Britain in 2017

The right of Dai Hankey to be identified as the Author of this Work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher or the Copyright Licensing Agency.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-911272-81-6

Designed by Steve Devane

Printed in Denmark by Nørhaven

10Publishing, a division of 10ofthose.com

Unit C, Tomlinson Road, Leyland, PR25 2DY, England

Email: info@10ofthose.com

Website: www.10ofthose.com

	Introduction	7
1.	Tragedy – sin committed	13
2.	Agony – sin exposed	25
3.	Humility - sin confessed	37
4.	Ecstasy – sin covered	51
	Notes	63

Introduction

On Monday 9 July 2001 the Croatian wildcard Goran Ivanisevic defeated Pat Rafter in five epic sets to win the men's Wimbledon championship. It was one of the most memorable matches ever played on Centre Court. The following day Goran returned to his home town, Split, where thousands of rapturous fans welcomed their hero back. This is how the BBC reported it: 'When Goran finally appeared on stage the crowd was euphoric. Smiling and crying for joy they yelled: "Goran, we love you." Initially he simply looked bemused at the adulation, but going with the spirit of the moment he had soon stripped down to his underpants throwing his clothes into the ecstatic crowd.'¹

Wow! There's joy ... but then there's a whole new level of joy that prompts dancing with the masses in the streets in your underpants! Those

iconic scenes in Split were unforgettable – it was truly amazing to see how one man’s joy could impact an entire nation, but that’s what joy does.

As crazy as it sounds, Goran’s homecoming celebrations remind me of the character we will be studying in this little book: King David. More often than not we tend to think of David as the shepherd boy who defeated giant Goliath with a slingshot, and then a warrior poet skilled with sword and harp. But as we begin our journey with King David we find him ‘doing a Goran’ and dancing through the streets in his underwear:

David went to bring up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing. When those who were carrying the ark of the LORD had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the LORD with all his might, while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets (2 Sam. 6:12–15).

Why did David dance? Because after its capture by the Philistines and temporary stay in Kiriath Jearim, the ark of God was finally coming home to Jerusalem, the city of God. It is impossible to overstate the value and significance of this portable, gold-plated chest to the people of Israel. The ark represented the blessed presence of God among His people (Ex. 25:22) so it *really* mattered to them. The arrival of the ark signified that God’s glory was returning to Israel. He was once again drawing close to His people. As David famously put it, while addressing God, ‘you will fill me with joy in your presence’ (Ps. 16:11). Indeed as the ark entered the city, David was so overcome with joy that he simply could not keep it in, so he cut loose, partied hard and all Israel partied with him. The people were sucked into the vortex of David’s delight because that’s what joy does.

Mercifully we do not need an ark to know the joy of God’s presence today; we just need Jesus (aka Immanuel, which means ‘God *with* us’). Jesus came to live among us, to die for us and to rise again in order that we might have life, abundant and eternal. He came to save us. No wonder the angel announced His birth as ‘good news that will

cause great joy for all the people' (Luke 2:10). Furthermore, by the power of the Holy Spirit who indwells His people, Jesus is able to keep His promise to be forever present with us, even to the end of the age.² So if true joy is found in God's presence, then to know Jesus *is* to know joy.

Do you have that joy? If you don't, then my prayerful hope is that this book will help you to attain it, and so to discover and experience first-hand the sweet joy of Jesus. If you do know that joy, then by all means cherish it and revel in it. However, like Han Solo warned Luke Skywalker, 'Don't get cocky!' because, as we are about to learn from King David, it is painfully possible to lose that joy ...

Tragedy – sin committed

1

David's journey from humble shepherd boy to King of Israel is heady stuff. The defeat of Goliath might have made him front-page news, but that was only the beginning. In the years that followed, against a backdrop of great hardship and vicious opposition, David's qualities shone through: anointed musician, valiant warrior, shrewd tactician, merciful servant, faithful friend and inspiring leader. He was clearly a man after God's own heart. By the time David had been crowned king and jitterbugged the ark back into Jerusalem, he was both a national hero and a spiritual heavyweight. The Bible chapters which immediately follow the ark's return only enhance that view: stunning military victories and epic grace shown to his former enemy's family, not to mention God's great covenant promise that the Messiah – Jesus Christ – would be born from David's line. *Boom!*

David was at the peak of his powers and the summit of his success. What could possibly go wrong? Cue 2 Samuel 11 ...

In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.

One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, 'She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.' Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home. The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, 'I am pregnant.'

So David sent this word to Joab: 'Send me Uriah the Hittite.' And Joab sent him to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab

was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, 'Go down to your house and wash your feet.' So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house.

David was told, 'Uriah did not go home.' So he asked Uriah, 'Haven't you just come from a military campaign? Why didn't you go home?'

Uriah said to David, 'The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!'

Then David said to him, 'Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back.' So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. At David's invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master's servants; he did not go home.

In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. In it he wrote, 'Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so that he will be struck down and die.'

So while Joab had the city under siege, he put Uriah at a place where he knew the strongest defenders were. When the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of the men in David's army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died.

Joab sent David a full account of the battle. He instructed the messenger: 'When you have finished giving the king this account of the battle, the king's anger may flare up, and he may ask you, "Why did you get so close to the city to fight? Didn't you know they would shoot arrows from the wall? Who killed Abimelek son of Jerub-Besheth? Didn't a woman drop an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you get so close to the wall?" If he asks you this, then say to him, "Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.'"

The messenger set out, and when he arrived he told David everything Joab had sent him to say. The messenger said to David, 'The men overpowered us and came out against us in the open, but we drove them back to the entrance of the city gate. Then the archers shot arrows at your servants from the wall, and some of the king's men died. Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.'

David told the messenger, 'Say this to Joab: "Don't let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another. Press the attack against the city and destroy it." Say this to encourage Joab.'

When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD (2 Sam. 11:1–27).

These verses are as staggering as they are tragic. Is this even the same man?! How could David fall

from passionate worshipper to ruthless adulterer and murderous conspirator in such a short space of time? How could he so shamelessly love his God one minute, then so shamefully lust after Uriah's wife the next? While this passage doesn't take us all the way into David's thought process, it does provide a glimpse into what was happening in his heart on that dark, devastating day.

The text tells us that this all played out 'at the time when kings go off to war' (v. 1) – it seems that ancient kings had a war season just like we have a football season. However, David was not where he should have been. The king should have been up

...as the old saying goes: 'The devil finds work for idle hands.'

front and central at this royal rumble, leading his army to yet another victory, but instead he chose the palace above the battlefield and stayed at home – combat boots off, slippers on. Had he got comfortable? Complacent? Cocky, even?

Whatever the reason, David was now in grave danger, for as the old saying goes: 'The devil finds work for idle hands.'

David's guard was down and, as he looked out from his palace rooftop one restless evening, he walked straight into the devil's trap. He saw an attractive woman bathing and, rather than bouncing his eyes away and focusing on something, *anything* else, he allowed his thoughts to run wild. Just as the fruit of Eden looked too good to resist, David saw, took and ate the forbidden fruit – though even in his darkest dreams he could not have envisaged the cataclysmic chain of events that this tryst with Bathsheba would trigger. But isn't that just what we do? We choose momentary gratification, regardless of long-term consequences, time and again.

Now, the temptation at this stage would be to look at David's laziness, his dereliction of duty and his roving eye, and conclude that because he was lacking discernment and any meaningful accountability, he made a series of bad decisions. While there may be some truth in that, though, I think this passage points to a much deeper issue ...

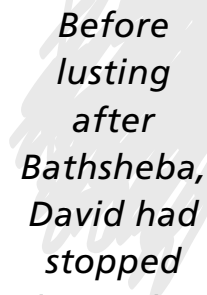
Upon learning that his adultery had led to an unwanted pregnancy, David quickly sought to cover his tracks. He recalled Bathsheba's husband,

Uriah the Hittite, from the frontline and tried every trick in the book to get him to sleep with his wife, but Uriah just wasn't buying it. Had he clocked that something was going on? Either way, Uriah refused to go home to his wife. His last recorded words reveal as much about where David had gone off the rails as they do about the character of this noble man: 'The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!' (v. 11).

You have to wonder what happened in the heart and mind of King David as Uriah spoke these words. Surely they cut deep? Even in the midst of fear, pain and confusion, the ark – the symbol of God's glory and His blessed presence among His people – was at the forefront of Uriah's mind. Perhaps the king's worship of God had once rubbed off on him. Maybe he had been present at that unforgettable street party in Jerusalem when his commander-in-chief had cavorted through the streets before the ark, singing, sacrificing and celebrating. But the ark was no longer on David's mind and his passion

for God's presence was a distant memory. As for the men of war – those brothers in arms, many of whom had found in David a captain and king to live and die for – Uriah was mindful of them too, but David wasn't.

David gave no thought for the glory of God or the good of his people. David had changed and his wicked actions were merely the overflow of a wayward heart. Before forsaking his army, David had forsaken his God. Before lusting after Bathsheba, David had stopped loving his LORD. This man who had once lost himself in divine joy now found himself at the epicentre of an illicit, murderous affair. The image of King David sending the honourable, mighty Uriah back to the frontline of battle carrying his own death warrant in his hand is beyond harrowing. Little wonder that this chapter closes with the words: 'But the thing David had done displeased the LORD' (v. 27).



***Before
lusting
after
Bathsheba,
David had
stopped
loving his
LORD.***

How had it come to this? It's easy to speculate, of course, but it's perhaps more important to try to relate. Ask yourself, have you ever capitulated in such a way? I certainly have. My Christian life has been a rollercoaster of soaring highs and sordid lows. Indeed the journey from close, joyful proximity with the Father to feeding with the pigs³ has sometimes taken just a few mindless moments ... or a couple of clicks ... or a single catastrophic decision. What about you?

Perhaps you've read this and are feeling more like the Disco Dave of the introduction than the king of carnality in this chapter.

... you know that your love for God is not what it should be – you have drifted into cold apathy...

If that's you, then take this episode as a warning shot across the bow because if it can happen to David, it *can* happen to you! Or perhaps you've read this and, while you have not plummeted to quite the same depths that David did, you know that your love

for God is not what it should be – you have drifted into cold apathy and God seems distant. If that's

you, then take this as an encouragement to come back from the edge before you fall and to seek the Lord with fresh passion. Start running hard after him again. Or perhaps this chapter paints a picture of where you are at right now? You are trapped in a miserable, stinking pit of your own making and true joy now seems both a distant memory and an impossible dream. Maybe you feel wretched, alone and so far gone, so spiritually numb, that you literally don't care anymore. If that's you, then you have only one hope: grace!

The good news is that God *loves* to give grace to the humble. The bad news is that humility can hurt, as David was about to find out ...