

Bathsheba PW Lesson 6

Good day, Presbyterian women! Interestingly, I've heard more comments before this lesson than any other I've taught. I want to start with David for context, and then take the two views of Bathsheba.

In I Samuel 8 the leaders of the 12 tribes were losing some battles because of their inadequate size and weaponry. They asked Samuel the priest to have God send them a king. Monarchies worked better. Samuel warned them big time. He told them their sons would go to war as soldiers each spring in wars of perpetual plunder. Some sons would be forced to take care of the king's farms, vineyards, and sheep, and their daughters would have such work as cooks, bakers, and perfumers. All would end up as the king's virtual slaves! They didn't listen. Saul's modest monarchy was followed by David's incredibly successful conquest of an impressive empire, and everything Samuel told them would happen began to take place. Thus the saying "All power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Solomon was so bad that the country split shortly soon after his death.

Share how you believe absolute power corrupts absolutely. Then discuss if heavy power at the top helped or hindered women's attempts to have more equal power in employment and ownership in Old Testament monarchial times and then everyday life here today! Come up with a judgement on this question: Did women do better or worse under a monarchy? What if their family had status or wealth?

Now, Bathsheba! The story began with David's not going to war with his troops in the spring. That's not proper behavior the Bible writer observed. David's army was sieging the capital city of the Ammonites for a second time. And, like many of us seniors, David took an afternoon nap. Then, as he walked around his flat roof he noticed a beautiful woman taking a bath on the roof or courtyard next to his palace. After inquiring, he learned that she was the wife of one of his army's generals, Uriah, who was busy at war. He called for Bathsheba, who went with him to bed. The Hebrew word could be used for rape. Then David forgot her until her message arrived, "I am pregnant."

You know the story. David ordered Uriah to come home to give him a viewpoint about how the siege was going. However, Uriah didn't go home and sleep with his wife. At this point David had the highest general get Uriah killed in a pullback of which Uriah was not informed. David's comment when he heard of Uriah's death was, "The sword kills one and then another" or tough luck.

David then added Bathsheba to his harem, to look compassionate. Next the baby died, and David did the customary mourning. The Bible says this death was God's punishment on David.

Test these observations: we're all tempted to cover up our bad deeds, and some have better resources to do that. Illustrate. Now, think why we avoid Psalm 51 which David wrote after Nathan the prophet told him a story about a

person who did an equally despicable deed. When David deemed him worthy of death, Nathan said, “Thou art the man.” Had Bathsheba increased or decreased her status? Then Bathsheba was not mentioned . . . until the coup. But we need her role, character, and position to judge her.

As David aged he had not named a crown prince. Adonijah was the eldest male in line, and that was his rationale for national support. Now we read that Bathsheba was part of a “coup.” A coup is a sudden, violent, and illegal seizure of power from a government.

Who were the key players in this coup?
One group supported Solomon as king: These included: Solomon; the foreign body general Beniah who provided the king’s protection and control in the whole Jerusalem area and was connected with other military to come on board, rather successfully; Nathan the prophet, the voice of God among them; and Bathsheba whose son’s coronation would make her the king’s mother, a significant step above general’s wife. Solomon’s side won and found an excuse to kill almost all the leaders of the other side except the priest. Later when Adonijah asked for a woman from Solomon’s harem, he requested Bathsheba to plead his case with Solomon. He chose her because Bathsheba had power. This request challenged Solomon so this step cost him his life.

I don’t think Bathsheba was weak and powerless until she married David. She was the daughter of Eliam, a general, and lived next to David, which would have made her upper

class. I think she “played the power game successfully.” However, God was able to develop the genealogical line through this group of imperfect individuals. In fact, David is the king to whom all had to trace their line, and Jesus is considered the son of David. Why was Bathsheba’s name omitted?

What Do You Think? Pick and choose from these items.

Did Bathsheba have adult lifetime power?

Name women of power who became models of selflessness for great causes.

Are women of power equally corrupt as men of power?

Would you encourage powerful women to have a chaplain ?