

Nathan the Prophet Confronts David

2 Samuel 12

2 Samuel 12 - "Then the LORD sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him: "There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. ² The rich man had exceedingly many flocks and herds. ³ But the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him. ⁴ And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."

⁵ So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! ⁶ And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity."

⁷ Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. ⁸ I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more! ⁹ Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. ¹⁰ Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' ¹¹ Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. ¹² For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.'"

¹³ So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. ¹⁴ However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die." ¹⁵ Then Nathan departed to his house.

And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it became ill. ¹⁶ David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. ¹⁷ So the elders of his house arose and went to him, to raise him up from the ground. But he would not, nor did he eat food with them. ¹⁸ Then on the seventh day it came to pass that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead. For they said, "Indeed, while the child was alive, we spoke to him, and he would not heed our voice. How can we tell him that the child is dead? He may do some harm!"

¹⁹ When David saw that his servants were whispering, David perceived that the child was dead. Therefore David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" And they said, "He is dead."

²⁰ So David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house; and when he requested, they set food before him, and he ate.

²¹ Then his servants said to him, "What is this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive, but when the child died, you arose and ate food." ²² And he said, "While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' ²³ But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

²⁴ Then David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in to her and lay with her. So she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. Now the LORD loved him, ²⁵ and He sent word by the hand of Nathan the prophet: So he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD.

²⁶ Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the people of Ammon, and took the royal city. ²⁷ And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, "I have fought against Rabbah, and I have taken the city's water supply. ²⁸ Now therefore, gather the rest of the people together and encamp against the city and take it, lest I take the city and it be called after my name." ²⁹ So David gathered all the people together and went to Rabbah, fought against it, and took it. ³⁰ Then he took their king's crown from his head. Its weight was a talent of gold, with precious stones. And it was set on David's head. Also he brought out the spoil of the city in great abundance. ³¹ And he brought out the people who were in it, and put them to work with saws and iron picks and iron axes, and made them cross over to the brick works. So he did to all the cities of the people of Ammon. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

Background Notes

Hollywood loves a chapter like 2 Samuel 11! In their opinion, King David's sins of adultery and murder make for a great movie, and of course they do everything they can do to play up the drama and intrigue. But from the divine perspective, 2 Samuel 11 is not an exciting chapter – it's a very sad chapter, and a terrible transition point in David's life. From this point on in David's life, for the rest of his days, he suffered the consequences of his terrible sins.

David thought that he had covered up his sin, and that he had "gotten away with it" by marrying Bathsheba as soon as the official time of mourning for Uriah was over. But the sin was not covered from the all-seeing eyes of the Lord. At the end of 2 Samuel 11 we read, "*but the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.*"

Probably about a year went by between 2 Samuel 11 and 12. If we didn't have the book of Psalms, we might think that David had covered up his sin so well that even *he* had forgotten about it. But we know from the Psalms that David's conscience was overwhelmed with guilt and "the hand of the Lord was heavy" upon David during this time. In Psalm 32:3-4 David wrote, "*When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer.*" So even before the prophet Nathan confronted David in 2 Samuel 12, David was overwhelmed with the knowledge of his guilt.

Doctrinal Points

1. There are consequences to sin, even when it has been forgiven.

Nathan the prophet presented David with an account of a rich man who had many sheep, yet who robbed a poor man of his one little lamb so he could kill it for a meal. Nathan, of course, was using this story as a parable. At first David thought that it was a real case and was very angry: *“So David’s anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, “As the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die...”* With this exclamation, David judged himself: *“and he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity.”*

We can just imagine the shocking moment when Nathan looked David straight in the eye and said, **“You are the man.”** David realized that no cover-up had hidden his heinous sins from the eyes of God. The good news here is that David immediately confessed his sin, and God graciously forgave him (v13).

However, there are still consequences that follow forgiven sin. Just as David had pronounced that there should be fourfold restitution for the rich man’s sin, so there would be fourfold consequences to David’s forgiven sin.

1. The sword would never depart from David’s house (v10). We will see the violent deaths of several of David’s sons in coming chapters.
2. David’s own son Absalom would usurp the throne (v11).
3. David’s wives would be taken from him and violated in public.
4. David and Bathsheba’s child would die (v14).

There are consequences to sin, even when it has been forgiven. You can’t “sin in a vacuum”! Other people always get hurt. There is always bad fallout and ripple down effects from sin. David had to live for the rest of his life with the consequences of his sin, even though God had forgiven him. And so will we! There are consequences to sin, even when that sin is forgiven.

2. There is hope for infants who die.

The child who was born as a result of David and Bathsheba’s sinful union became very ill. David prostrated himself on the ground and fasted prayed before the Lord, pleading and hoping for the child’s life to be spared. However, just as Nathan had prophesied, the child died.

When he heard that the child was dead, David got up from the ground, washed and anointed himself, put on clean clothes and went to worship the Lord. When he returned to his own house, he requested food, and he ate. His servants thought his behavior was inconsistent, but responded that there was no need to continue fasting now that his child had died (v22-23).

What did David mean when he said, *“I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me...”* Is this a proof text in the Bible that children who die at a very young age (before the “age of accountability”) will go to heaven? In the context, David may mean that he would eventually join the child in death. Psalm 23 indicates that David was looking forward to “dwelling in the House of the Lord forever” – he was looking forward to Heaven after his death.

So when David said, *“I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me”* he was probably meant that he would eventually join the child in Heaven. Thus, this verse is Scriptural support for the teaching that when very young children die (before the age of accountability), they are part of the elect company of believers and will be in heaven.

Our Lord’s statement in Matthew 19:14 certainly supports this position: *“But Jesus said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”* The work of Christ on the cross was sufficient and provisional for *all the world*. So, God can save unborn children, infants, or very young children who die. There is hope for infants who die.

Practical Application

You’ve got to move on!

In verses 24-31 we see David moving on in his marriage with Bathsheba, and in his defeat and subjugation of Israel’s enemies. David moved on in his life as king of Israel. He didn’t commit suicide because of remorse for his great sin. He didn’t leave the throne because of the guilt of his sin. He had confessed his sin, and he had been restored to fellowship with the Lord. He recovered from his grief and he moved on with the responsibilities that God had given him. God was picking up the pieces in his life, including the birth of Solomon. Even though David would still have to face future consequences as a result of his forgiven sin, he was able to move on in his God-given responsibilities as a husband, a father and as king of Israel.

Do you see the application for us? You’ve got to move on! Don’t ruin your life by living in the rehashed scenarios and guilt of your past. Recognize that you have sinned, and confess your sin. Get restored to fellowship with the Lord. Face the fact that there will be consequences of your forgiven sin, but know that the Lord will help you through them. Let the Lord pick up the pieces of your life - and move on in life as a forgiven child of God, doing the job God has given you to fulfill! The apostle Paul expressed the importance of “moving on” in Philippians 3:13-14 – *“Forgetting what is behind, and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”* God wants us to move on!