

Message #26

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Life of David

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DAVID AND GOD'S PLAN FOR DEALING WITH SIN

2 SAMUEL 12

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

Our world continues to be riled by protests and riots and statue topplings and political divisions. There is a clash of world views involved in this. What is our understanding of the primary problems facing our country? Is it unjust social and government institutions? Is it hierarchies of power which, if changed, would lead to a just society? Will changes of leadership and political parties lead to a just society? Certainly our world may be better or worse if certain leaders or policies are put in power. But what is the foundational problem facing humanity? Is it institutions and power structures and poverty and lack of education, or is it a problem with us human beings ourselves?

Consider this argument from a famous lawyer. He says, **"...there is no such thing as a crime as the word is generally understood... I do not believe that people are in jail because they deserve to be. They are in jail simply because they cannot avoid it on account of circumstances which are entirely beyond their control and for which they are in no way responsible."** (Colson, *How Now Shall We Live*, p. 181) His worldview appears to be that people are basically good and that the problems of our world relate to unjust institutions and lack of education and poverty.

I came across a survey just last night which found that almost 70% of American adults believe that people are basically good. (American Worldview Inventory 2020) If people are basically good, then perhaps we can defund the police, we don't need to discipline our children, and our Founding Fathers did not need to create three branches of government to serve as checks and balances upon each other.

This lawyer whom I just quoted could well be a representative of the Defund Police movement, right? In actuality the lawyer is Clarence Darrow, famous lawyer for the defense in the Scopes monkey trial, who was addressing the inmates of the Cook County Jail in 1906.

A contrasting point of view is expressed by Ishmael in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Ishmael is the sailor and narrator of the story who signs on to sail on the whaling ship *The Pequod*. At one point Ishmael declares, **"Heaven have mercy on us all, Presbyterians and Pagans alike, for we are all somehow dreadfully cracked about the head, and sadly in need of mending."**

The Bible indeed says that we are all cracked about the head and in need of mending. We have this sin nature which bends us toward selfishness and pride and draws us away from the God who made us. What we need most is not more education but transformation.

Even when we get connected to the God who is really there, we still must battle this sin nature which continues to tempt us and threaten us. The evidence of this is King David. Though he is described as a man after God's own heart, we have seen on the last couple of Sundays that he has fallen victim to sexual temptation. He committed adultery with Bathsheba and followed that up by murdering her husband Uriah. Outwardly it appears in #11 of 2 Samuel that he has succeeded in covering his tracks. But in the last part of the last verse of that chapter we are told, **"But the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the Lord."**

Today we shall examine #12 and see what hope there is for justice in this world and what hope there is for us sinners as well.

I.

From the first 12 verses of 2 Samuel #12 (which is found on p. 263 of the black Bibles under many of the chairs) we are going to consider GOD'S RESPONSE TO SIN: CONFRONTATION AND CONSEQUENCES. (PROJECTOR ON--- I. GOD'S RESPONSE TO...) We read in the first four verses: **"And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, 'There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.'"**

Later in this chapter we will find that this confrontation happens around the time of the birth of David's son by Bathsheba, or perhaps a bit later. So it would seem that it is nine months after David's adultery with Bathsheba that this incident occurs, or shortly after that.

David has attempted to cover up his wrongdoings. The text of 2 Samuel gives no indication that he has felt any guilt about his evil actions. But in the Psalms we find out that David's conscience plagued him terribly. Psalm 32, written by David, describes his inner turmoil. (PSALM 32:3-4) In vv. 3 & 4 David says, **"For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer."** This man described as being after God's heart could not ignore his genuine guilt, his adultery and lying and murder. His conscience and the convicting power of God's Holy Spirit plagued him.

But the Lord did not directly intervene right away. He allowed this inner turmoil to go on for months. Then He took the initiative in calling Nathan. He was the right guy at the right time. Nathan was both a prophet and a friend to David. Eventually David would name one of his sons after him (2 Samuel 5:14).

The Apostle Paul recognized the importance of confrontation in regard to serious sin but also the need for having the right person and doing it in the right way. (GALATIANS 6:1) In the New Testament in Galatians #6 v. 1 Paul wrote, **"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted."**

Nathan is very clever in his approach to King David. He tells a story that David may have taken as an actual event that required his intervention. The king was the top justice official in the country, and he was sometimes called upon to render judgments in legal cases. (PROJECTOR OFF)

In reality Nathan was telling a parable. The rich man was intended to represent David, and the poor man was intended to represent Uriah. The flocks and herds of the rich man would appear to represent David's wives and concubines. The little lamb is Bathsheba. In that culture it was common for a family to set aside one lamb as a pet. David, of course, is the rich man who is taking away the lamb from the poor man. Nathan is setting up David for the confrontation. One commentator observes, **"Nathan's sword was within an inch of David's conscience before David knew that Nathan had a sword."** (Alexander Whyte, *Bible Characters*, Vol. 2)

Verse 5: **“Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, ‘As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die...’”** Another translation (NASV) says, **“David’s anger burned greatly...”** Sometimes people come down extra hard on those who are guilty of the same kind of sin which they also have committed. Most of you will remember Jim Bakker of PTL fame. When his adultery with Jessica Hahn became public, one of his fiercest critics was Jimmy Swaggert. A few months later it was discovered that this fellow Pentecostal evangelist was hanging out with prostitutes.

David’s reaction to this story is that the rich man ought to die. The penalty of the Old Testament law was not that severe for this crime of stealing. But David recognized the evil of the rich man’s deed. David was guilty of adultery and murder. The penalty of the law for both of those things was death.

Nathan continues in v. 6: **“...and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.”** That was indeed the penalty for theft of a lamb. (PROJECTOR ON--- EXODUS 22:1) According to Exodus #22 v. 1, **“If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and kills it or sells it, he shall repay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.”**

David, in a sense, is declaring the sentence for his own crime. We will discover as the story goes along that four of his sons will suffer untimely deaths. His son by Bathsheba will be the first. (PROJECTOR OFF)

According to the first part of v. 7, **“Nathan said to David, ‘You are the man!’”** The trap is sprung. David has convicted himself. There was a certain risk in this confrontation for Nathan. Kings had killed people for less cause than this. Confrontation always involves a certain risk. In one of the earlier churches in which I served, there was a pastor prior to me who was running around with several women in the church. He was confronted in what sounded like an appropriate way, and he proceeded to deny and cover up. He threatened to bring a lawsuit against his accusers. Such is the risk that may be involved in confrontation.

In this case, David’s long connection to the Lord, his guilt-plagued conscience, and his friendship with Nathan all work together to produce a right result. His reaction stands in contrast to that of Saul when he began to mess up.

Nathan proceeds to explain the gravity of David’s wrongdoing. We read in the second part of v. 7 and in v. 8, **“Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and**

gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more.”

David earlier described himself as a poor man. In 1 Samuel #18 v. 23 (PROJECTOR ON--- 1 SAMUEL 18:23) we were told, **“And Saul’s servants spoke those words in the ears of David. And David said, ‘Does it seem to you a little thing to become the king’s son-in-law, since I am a poor man and have no reputation?’”** This poor man has become the rich man, and he has treated the poor man Uriah horribly.

Verse 9 back in our text (PROJECTOR OFF): **“Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.”** Nathan summarizes God’s indictment against David. First and foremost, he has despised the word of the Lord. In the original Hebrew Nathan proceeds to list the direct objects first: Uriah the Hittite you struck down. His wife you took. Him you killed. David has ruined people’s lives.

Verse 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.”** Just as David used the weapons of death in the hands of the Ammonites to kill Uriah, so also the Lord will see that his family will suffer untimely deaths.

Verses 11 & 12: **“Thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of 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. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.’”** David’s two-fold consequences will reflect a judgment of reciprocity. David took another man’s wife. Someone will take his wives. He did his deed in private and tried to cover it up. The taking of David’s wives will be in public.

Also there will be evil in David’s own house. Three of David’s sons will prove to be unfit to rule by their mistreatment of women. Such continues to be an issue frequently in the news today because of the behavior of powerful men.

Thus it is that God responds to David’s sin. He takes the initiative and uses the right person at the right time. Such is a model of proper confrontation that is available to us, reinforced by the words of Paul in Galatians #6. There is a risk involved for the confronter, but it is more important to do the right thing.

II.

In vv. 13-17 we encounter DAVID'S RESPONSE TO CONFRONTATION: CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE. (PROJECTOR ON--- II. DAVID'S RESPONSE TO...) In the first part of v. 13 we read, **"David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord.'"** No rationalization. No minimization. No excuses. In Hebrew it is two simple words. But it reflects a terrible internal struggle that has been racking his soul. Psalm 32 tells us that he had no peace, no rest, and no joy. The man after God's heart had to get right with God. What is necessary is a simple confession. Such is what he requires from us when we mess up. Notice also that sin is always primarily against God.

In Fyodor Dostoevsky's masterpiece *Crime and Punishment* the author describes a young man by the name of Raskolnikov who is caught in the philosophy of his day. He determines that the end justifies the means. Crime, and even murder, is justified when it leads to a better society. His thought process is similar to that of the most radical protesters of our day. So Raskolnikov kills a relatively wealthy pawnbroker and proceeds to use her money in what he perceives to be better ways. But Raskolnikov, like David, is plagued in his soul with the reality of the evil which he has done. He finds relief only in confession, first to his prostitute girlfriend, and then to the police. The police no longer regard Raskolnikov as a suspect. But he goes to the police station and simply declares, **"It was I killed the old pawnbroker woman and sister..."**

Such is the remedy required of us when we mess up. In 1 John #1 v. 9 (1 JOHN 1:9) the apostle says, **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."** Such is the beautiful promise of grace from the God who is there. But getting right with God must begin with confession.

Look at the Lord's response in the rest of v. 13 in our passage: **"And Nathan said to David, 'The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.'"** Death was the just penalty for adultery and murder. Yet David receives grace and forgiveness as the result of his confession. Such is the grace that God offers to us through faith in Jesus Christ. Confession produces forgiveness.

According to v. 14 forgiveness does not mean no consequences. The Lord speaks through Nathan: **"Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die."** The prisoners and ex-offenders who are connected with our congregation have learned this principle. "If you do the crime, you have to do the time." Yet there is still a certain freedom which comes from confession.

The son who results from David's union with Bathsheba is not rightly his. So the Lord says that he will die. It is as if the son is dying the death that David should rightly die. Eventually David will have a son, a descendant, who will die a death that all of us should have rightly suffered. When we place our faith in this Jesus, our sins are likewise forgiven.

The evil deeds of David were a lousy testimony to the true God. They gave His enemies cause to blaspheme. To let David off without any consequences would be to teach a wrong lesson.

Verse 15: **"Then Nathan went to his house. And the Lord afflicted the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick."** It is unclear how old this son is--- he is later referred to as a "he." The illness occurs after David's confession and perhaps shortly after his birth.

Verse 16: **"David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground."** David probably laid outside of the palace, even as Uriah had laid outside of the palace when he refused to see his wife.

David's behavior here is not only evidence of concern for his child but also evidence of his genuine repentance. He is humbling himself before God. Although the Lord has declared that his son will die, David holds out hope that He might relent. There are indeed examples of God turning back from announced judgment when people repent. This is what He did when Jonah went to Nineveh and declared that God was going to punish that city. In Jeremiah #18 v. 8 (PROJECTOR ON--- JEREMIAH 18:8) the Lord says, **"... and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it."**

In v. 17 back in our passage we read, **"And the elders of his house stood beside him, to raise him from the ground, but he would not, nor did he eat food with them."** (PROJECTOR OFF) These top royal advisors are witnessing David's concern for his child and his repentance. The basic meaning of repentance is turning to God from sin. It involves faith in God. Confession is the foundational step. Such is what is needed from us when we mess up badly. Spiritual healing is impossible without confession. Genuine confession will be evidenced by a turning to God from sin.

III.A.

In vv. 18-31 (PROJECTOR ON--- GOD'S RESPONSE TO CONFESSION...) we learn about GOD'S RESPONSE TO CONFESSION: RESTORATION. In the first part of this section, vv. 18-23, we learn about THE HOPE OF HEAVEN. (III. GOD'S RESPONSE... A. THE HOPE...) According to v. 18, **"On the seventh day the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, 'Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spoke to him, and he did not listen to us. How then can we say to him the child is dead? He may do himself some harm.'" Actually the text says that David "may do harm."** It is not clear whether it is harm toward himself or someone else.

The name "Bathsheba" means "daughter of seven." We know that David was chosen above his seven brothers. Death now comes on the seventh day for this child. Whether this is the seventh day of the sickness or the seventh day after birth is unclear.

The story continues in vv. 19-21: **"But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David understood that the child was dead. And David said to his servants, 'Is the child dead?' They said, 'He is dead.' Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. He then went to his own house. And when he asked, they set food before him, and he ate. Then his servants said to him, 'What is this thing 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.'" Normally mourning happened after a person died. David has exhibited behavior of mourning before his child died.**

Verses 22 & 23: **"He said, 'While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, "Who knows whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?" But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.'" David displays an acceptance of the Lord's decision to take his son. Notice also that David prayed for his son before his death and not after his death.**

This is one of the few texts in the Bible which give us some idea about the fate of infants who die. Theoretically David could just be saying that the baby cannot come back. He is dead and buried. Some day I will go to him. I will die and be buried and will join him in the grave.

There seems to be more here than that. There is an indication of hope. David now has a reason to stop mourning. If the fate of this infant was something bad and horrible, it would be difficult to understand

why there was not cause for mourning. But David has stopped mourning. He appears to have hope for a reunion after his own passing.

There are at least a couple of additional passages which provide some support for a good end for deceased little ones. In Romans #7 v. 9 (ROMANS 7:9) the Apostle Paul writes, **“I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.”** In other words, death and accountability came only when there was some knowledge of the law and awareness of sin. That would be impossible for infants.

Then also in Romans #1-3 the Apostle Paul argues that judgment and death come when people reject the revelation that God has made available to them and act contrary to the conscience which God has given to them. (PROJECTOR OFF) This would be impossible for infants who do not have the mental capacity to make such a rejection. So it is that theologians have developed the idea of an age of accountability. That age might well vary according to the capacity of each individual. The issue has relevance to many of us who have lost infants in death, and to others of us, like my wife and I have lost infants in the womb through miscarriage. Part of our hope is also in the character of a gracious God.

B.

In vv. 24 & 25 of our text we also find evidence of restoration in THE REASSURANCE OF COVENANT LOVE. (PROJECTOR ON--- III. GOD’S RESPONSE... A. B. THE REASSURANCE...) According to vv. 24 & 25, **“Then David comforted his wife, Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her, and she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. And the Lord loved him and sent a message by Nathan the prophet. So he called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord.”** Despite the wrong way in which this relationship began, the Lord accepts this new couple. The birth of this child and God’s love for him is evidence of forgiveness and restoration.

The exact meaning of Solomon’s name is a bit debated. The root word is shalom, which means peace and well-being. So perhaps the name is meant to be understood as “Man of Peace.” These are also the root consonants for “Jerusalem.” Perhaps there is a hint here that Solomon will rule over the city. Perhaps there is a hint in this name that his father and mother recognize that there is now peace with God. Perhaps this birth also happens around the time of the end of the fighting with Ammon, which is the last major foreign conflict in David’s reign.

Jedidiah is the name that YHWH, the God of Israel, gives to Solomon. That name means “Loved by YHWH, the Lord.” Certainly this is evidence of restoration. YHWH had promised David in what is called the Davidic Covenant that he would have an eternal throne and an eternal dynasty. Here is the evidence that it is Solomon through whom this promise will be passed down through David’s descendants.

Notice also that Nathan began this chapter with a rebuke against David from God. Now Nathan has a message of comfort for David. The consequences of his sin are not removed. But there is assurance of God’s love and forgiveness and restoration. Such is the result of confession and repentance.

C.

Then in vv. 26-31 we come to THE REALIZATION OF COVENANT VICTORY. (III. A. B. C. THE REALIZATION OF...) This whole incident began with conflict with the Ammonites who lived to the east of Israel. This battle was the setting for David’s sin. It began when he did not go to battle with his army against the Ammonites. The story concludes with victory over the Ammonites in which David finally does go to battle.

We read in vv. 26 & 27, **“Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the Ammonites and took the royal city. And Joab sent messengers to David and said, ‘I have fought against Rabbah; moreover, I have taken the city of waters.’”** General Joab, who followed David’s orders to have Uriah killed, now sends word to David about the status of the siege of the Ammonite capital. The reference to taking “the city of waters” is probably to a fortification guarding the city’s water supply. The central part of the city is about to be captured. The surviving leaders and residents cannot survive long without water.

Thus Joab says in v. 28, **“Now then gather the rest of the people together and encamp against the city and take it, lest I take the city and it be called by my name.”** Verse 29: **“So David gathered all the people together and went to Rabbah and fought against it and took it.”** It was important for the king to be present for the final push so that he would get credit for the victory. How long the siege lasted is not stated. Sometimes sieges of cities could last for a couple of years or longer.

Verse 30: **“And he took the crown of their king from his head. The weight of it was a talent of gold, and in it was a precious stone, and it was placed on David’s head. And he brought out the spoil of the city, a very great amount.”** A talent was believed to be equivalent to 66 pounds. So this crown was not something that a king was going to wear very often and for very long.

Verse 31: **“And he brought out the people who were in it and set them to labor with saws and iron picks and iron axes and made them toil at the brick kilns. And thus he did to all the cities of the Ammonites. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.”** The defeated Ammonites are put to work on various building projects. The historians say that there was only one time in six centuries of Ammonite history when the ring of defenses around the Ammonite capital was breached and the city captured. So this was indeed a significant victory for Israel.

God had promised David and his descendants in this divine covenant that Israel’s enemies would be defeated and peace would be established. Thus we have further evidence of God’s restoration of David. Restoration is likewise the result when we confess our sins and repent of our wrongdoings.

Our forgiveness of others is also evidence of our repentance. Jesus taught us to pray, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who have trespassed against us.” It is this forgiveness of others that is in short supply in our current social climate. In June of 2015 Dylann Roof attacked the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina. He hoped to start a race war. But the opposite thing happened.

At Roof’s bond hearing Rev. Anthony Thompson told the man who murdered his wife, **“I forgive you. And my family forgives you. But we would like you to take this opportunity to repent. Repent. Confess. Give your life to the One who matters most: Jesus Christ, so that He can change it and change your attitude. And no matter what happens to you, then you’ll be OK. Do that and you’ll be better off than you are right now.”**

City and state police prepared for race riots, fearing the bloodshed and violence witnessed in Ferguson, Baltimore, and other cities. But Charleston responded with acts of love, kindness, and grace. Makeshift flower memorials grew in front of Emmanuel Church. Donors pledged thousands of dollars to help the victims’ families. Thousands gathered for an evening vigil and prayer service. More than fifteen thousand people of all colors and faiths joined hands to create a human bridge that stretched for two miles. The forgiveness Rev. Thompson and other family members offered Dylann Roof became a model the entire city followed. It is a model that is sorely missing in our current difficulties. It is a model which is sorely needed. May it be an example which we follow in our individual lives.