

eDevotions for Growing Christians

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2 Samuel 12:13-14 ¹³Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” Nathan replied, “The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. ¹⁴But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt, the son born to you will die.”

2 Samuel 12:22-23 ²²He answered, “While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, ‘Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and

let the child live.’ ²³But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.”

2 Samuel 12: 29 ²⁹So David mustered the entire army and went to Rabbah, and attacked and captured it.

Read all of 2 Samuel 11-12

COMFORT IN THE MIDST OF GUILT AND GRIEF

Hollywood loves a Bible chapter like 2 Samuel 11, because King David’s sins of adultery with the beautiful Bathsheba and David’s calculated and cold-blooded murder of her loyal husband Uriah make for an exciting and colorful movie. And, of course, Hollywood would do everything possible 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 tragic transition point in David’s life. From this point on, for the rest of his life, David suffered the consequences of his terrible sins.

2 Samuel 12, however, is an encouraging chapter in several ways. After David was confronted by the prophet Nathan, he immediately confessed his sin. As a result, we see God’s plan and purpose of restoration at work and David was comforted in the assurance that his great sins were forgiven. Because David’s sins had reflected disreputably on the Lord, God’s plan included severe discipline. Discipline is always part of God’s work of restoring a sinner to fellowship with Himself. But even in the death of David and Bathsheba’s child, we find that David was comforted. This is certainly an indication that God will comfort grieving parents today, and that believers can be drawn closer to Him through the grieving process. And near the end of the chapter, God’s grace is clearly seen in the birth of Solomon. What a comfort the birth of this child must have been to David and Bathsheba.

Let’s examine this chapter in a little more detail, and appreciate the biblical teaching that God can comfort and restore us in the midst of guilt and grief.

Background Notes:

David thought he had successfully covered up his sins, and had “gotten away with it” by marrying Bathsheba as soon as the mourning period for her murdered husband was over. But the sin was not hidden from the all-seeing eyes of the Lord. We read at the end of

chapter 11 that “*the thing David had done displeased the Lord*” (v27).

Probably about a year went by between chapters 11 and 12. If we didn’t have the book of Psalms, we might get the impression that David had covered up his sin so well that even he had forgotten about it! But from the Psalms we learn that David’s conscience was overwhelmed with guilt, and the hand of the Lord was heavy upon him during this period of time. Listen to David’s words in Psalm 32:3-4: “*When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me, and my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.*”

Psalm 51 is David’s psalm of confession, as we see from the title: “A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.”

Here are some of the lines from this psalm: “*Have mercy on me O God, according to Your unfailing love, according to Your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, and You only, have I sinned, and done what is evil in Your sight*” (v1-4). “*Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create within me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me*” (v 9-10). “*Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of Your righteousness*” (v14).

So even before the prophet Nathan confronted David, God was working in David’s heart. David was overwhelmed with the realization of his bloodguilt before a holy God, and that his sins were responsible for the separation that had come between him and the Lord.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points:

1. God comforts us in our guilt.

The prophet Nathan presented David with an account of a rich man who owned many

sheep and cattle. When a guest came to his home, however, the rich man robbed a poor man of his one little lamb, a family pet, and killed it for a meal. Of course this story was a parable, but at first David believed it was a real case and became very angry. David’s anger burned against the man, and said to Nathan, “*As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die!*” (v5). Little did David realize that he was judging himself when he pronounced that the guilty man should make fourfold restitution! “*He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity*” (v6). You can imagine David’s shock and horror when Nathan looked him straight in the eye and said: “You are the man!”

The good news here is that David immediately took responsibility and confessed his sin, and God graciously forgave him (v13-14). Think of the comfort that David must have experienced in the midst of overwhelming guilt when God declared that his sins were forgiven. And what a comforting truth for us. God comforts us in our guilt. In no way does the comfort of God condone our sin, nor does it remove the consequences of our sin. In reference to the consequences of David’s sins, 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. Nathan outlined God’s fourfold discipline in verses 7-14:

1. “*You struck down Uriah the Hittite [Bathsheba’s husband] with the sword...Therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised Me and took the wife of Uriah to be your own*” (v9-10). At least three of David’s sons, Amnon, Absalom and Adonijah, met violent deaths. See 2 Samuel 13 and 18, and 1 Kings 2.
2. “*Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you*” (v11). In chapter 13 we read of the rape of David’s daughter Tamar by her half-brother Amnon, and

the murder of Amnon by Tamar's brother, Absalom. Later on, David's son Absalom rebelled against his father, and attempted to usurp the throne of Israel from David. See 2 Samuel 15-18. And in 1 Kings 1, at the end of David's life, yet another son attempted to take the throne which David had promised to Solomon.

3. "I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel" (v11). During Absalom's rebellion, David's concubines were taken from David's palace harem and publicly violated on the roof of the palace (2 Samuel 16:21-22).
4. "Because by doing this you have made the enemies of the Lord show utter contempt, the son born to you will die" (v14). Because David had brought great and widespread disrepute upon the holy name of the Lord, the consequences in David's life would be severe. The child born of David and Bathsheba's adulterous relationship became ill, and despite David's prayers and pleading, he died.

So there are consequences to sin, sometimes agonizing consequences, even when the sin has been forgiven. We cannot "sin in a vacuum." Other people get hurt. There will always be bad fallout and ripple-down effects when we sin. For the rest of his life, David had to live with the consequences of his forgiven sin, and we too may suffer lifelong reminders of the sad and long-lasting consequences of our sins. But praise the Lord for the truth of 1 John 1:9 which says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." No matter how big the sin, there is genuine and full forgiveness, and this reality brings comfort—God's comfort—to our guilt-ridden hearts.

2. God comforts us in our grief.

One of the consequences of David's great sin was that the child born as a result of his adultery would die. The Bible is not teaching her that all children conceived out of wedlock will die, nor is the Bible teaching here that we are not to grieve the death of a child. But the fact that David is comforted after the child's death is significant, and it teaches us that God can and will comfort us in the midst of grief. "David arose from the ground, washed, anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he came into the house of the Lord and

worshiped. Then he came to his own house, and when he requested, they set food before him and he ate" (v20). When David's servants asked him about his actions, which seemed inconsistent to them, he responded, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows, the Lord may be gracious to me, that the child may live.' But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me" (v22-23).

What did David mean when he said, "I shall go to him..." Does this biblical text teach that children who die before the age of accountability go to heaven? In the context, David may simply mean that he would eventually join the child in death. However, in Psalm 23 David was confident that when he died he would "dwell in the house of the Lord forever." And so when David said, "I shall go to the child," he most likely meant that he looked forward to joining the child in "the house of the Lord." Thus this verse may support the teaching that children who die before the age of accountability are part of the elect company of believers, and will be in heaven.

This position is certainly supported by our Lord's statement in Matthew 19:14 about young children, that "of such is the kingdom of heaven." The work of Christ on the cross was sufficient and provisional for the sin of all the world, so certainly God can save infants and young children, as well as unborn children who die. Nowhere in Scripture is anyone damned for ignorance. At the same time, Romans 1 makes it clear that no one with rational capability is ignorant. But babies and very young children are not yet capable of making rational decisions. Thus 2 Samuel 12:23 may possibly support the teaching that, by God's grace and love, babies and children who die before an "age of accountability" are covered by the redeeming blood of Christ.

Even if we conclude that there is not enough scriptural support here in 2 Samuel 12 for the doctrine that children who die go to heaven, this passage clearly teaches that God will comfort us in all our troubles—and that certainly includes our grief following the death of a loved one. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says that the God of all comfort can comfort us in "all our afflictions." The word "afflictions" refers to anything which presses in on our spirits—and certainly grief falls into that category, and there is no exception made about what may cause our grief. So even in cases where we are totally at fault and the grief is the result

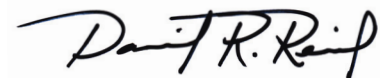
of our own mistakes or sin—or even part of God's discipline—God will comfort us in our grief if we turn to Him.

Practical Application:

1. You've got to move on!

In verses 24-31 we see David moving on in life—in his marriage with Bathsheba, in his job as king of Israel, and in his defeat of Israel's enemies. He didn't do anything drastic or dramatic, like committing suicide or leaving the throne. He didn't continue to lie on the floor in grief or do anything desperate, as his servants had feared (v18). He bathed, dressed in clean clothing and worshiped the Lord. He prepared to resume his workload as king by eating a meal. He moved on in life with the responsibilities God had given him. He had been chastened in spirit by the heavy hand of the Lord, he had fasted and prayed, he had responded to the discipline of the Lord through the prophet Nathan, he had confessed his sin, he had taken the responsibility for his awful actions, and he had been restored to fellowship with the Lord. David received the comfort that only God can give in the midst of guilt and grief. God was picking up the pieces in David's life in a wonderful way—including the birth of a son, Solomon, by his wife Bathsheba—even though David would continue to face the consequences of his forgiven sin.

Do you see the application for us? We've got to move on! If you have sinned, don't live the rest of your life in depression or despair. Don't feel that you can never be useful to God again. Confess your sin. Acknowledge your guilt before God. Ask for forgiveness and make reparation to anyone your sin has harmed, if that is possible. Get restored to fellowship with the Lord. Respond to the comfort of God in the midst of your guilt and grief. Accept and face the consequences of your forgiven sin. And let the Lord pick up the broken pieces and put your life back together. Don't live in the rehashed scenarios and the guilt and grief of your past—you've got to move on! Yes, there will be scars, but you must move on in life and get on with the responsibilities God has given you. You can do it because God's comfort is available in the midst of guilt and grief.



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