

Why David's Infant Son Died

2 Samuel 12:13 - 14

Nutshell: God took away David's sin and said that he didn't have to die, as he deserved. But David was not allowed to keep the son he'd had. But how does that square with Deut 24:16?

I. Context: David's murder and adultery found out .

II. Text

2 Sam 12:13 And David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against Yahweh." And Nathan said to David, "Yahweh also has caused your sin to pass over. You shall not die."

Literal Standard Version with modifications

The next four outline items, III. - VI., are based on the 4 uses of Scripture listed in 2 Tim 3:16 AND the 3 depictions of preaching in 2 Tim 4:2.

III. Teaching

Review

- A. The Book of Kingdoms, our 1 & 2 Sam + 1 & 2 Kings, is the story of Israel's kings, beginning with the prophet Samuel, who anointed both of the first two kings, Saul and David
 1. Samuel warned Israel vs. having a king, 1 Sam 10:19, Hos 13:11
 2. **Saul** demonstrated *man's* kind of rule. God previewed *His* version of king through **David**, 1 Sam 13:14
- ✿ B. 1 Kings 15:5 tells us that David kept God's commands *except* in the Bathsheba incident. This dramatically shapes our approach to each incident in David's life.
- C. The chronicler presents David as God's chosen king, a *picture* of Messiah, but *not* the Messiah; a *reference point* for all subsequent kings of Judah, e.g., 2 Kings 14:3; 2 Chron 34:2
- D. David was anointed king over **Judah**, 2 Sam 2, then **Israel**, 5:1- 5. Trouble between the two begins in 2 Sam 2:12-32.
- E. **DAVID'S WAITING BUSINESS AS KING***
 1. David finally vanquished Jebus (Jerusalem), 2 Sam 5:6-10, where he had taken Goliath's head, 1 Sam 17:54
 2. David retrieved the Ark from its 'wanderings', 6:1-19;

- tragically wrongly, 1 Chron 15:2; then rightly & joyfully
3. Now David wants to build a permanent form for the Tabernacle. His son Solomon will build Temple.
 - ★ 4. God chose *Abraham* to bless all nations. Now He chose *David's* line to bring forth the King of all nations
 5. David fulfilled his oath to Jonathan through his son Mephibosheth, 9:1-13. *ALL OBLIGATIONS CAUGHT UP.
- F. The Ammonites incited war, but Israel won, 10:1-19.
- G. In 2 Sam 11, the battle with Ammon was resumed
1. David stayed in Jerusalem, as he did in 10:7
 2. David ignored warnings and fornicated with the wife of Uriah, one of his 30 top warriors. She conceived.
 3. Bathsheba, like David, had been holy up to this point. This changed everything, especially as David tried to cover himself, eventually having Uriah killed in battle.
 4. David married Bathsheba. She gave birth. Maybe David got away with it? No, 11:27.
- H. 2 Sam 12, Nathan tells a story. David abominates its villain. "You are the man."
1. So all unbelievers' consciences will convict them on the last day- by their own testimony!
 2. Note: "You took Uriah's wife," not "You raped Bathsheba."

Kid-speak: Nathan told David a story about a rich man with lots of sheep taking a poor man's one, dear sheep for a meal. David was so mad! But who was the story really about? **David** stealing Bathsheba from Uriah.

3. God had picked David, watched over him, and settled him in as king, willing to give him even more, 12:7-8
 4. David's sin was essentially against God, v 9
 5. Now violence would visit David's household, v 10
 6. Family members would turn against him. His wives would be publicly taken, v 11.
 7. The sun would shine on all David had tried to hide, v 12
- I. 12:13-23, David confesses, once again centering his world in God, returning to reality; but his son will be taken.

Outline:

- I. David confesses, 12:13

- II. God forgives, 12:13
- III. But there is a consequence, 12:14

- J. 2 Sam 12:13, “And David said to Nathan,”
 - 1. Nathan had just been quoting God speaking in the first person (“I”), but David responds to Nathan
 - 2. He is too ashamed to address God directly yet (?)
- K. 12:13, “I have sinned against [toward] Yahweh”
 - 1. There was nothing more he could say
 - 2. Clearly he had sinned against Uriah, Bathsheba, and Israel. “Sin against a neighbor” was real, e.g., 2 Chron 6:22.
 - 3. But God said David “disrespected His words,” v 9. That he had disrespected Yahweh Himself, v 10!
 - 4. David agrees. The sin was essentially against God.
 - a. **God** was the one who said not to do those things to Uriah, Bathsheba, and Israel
 - b. Sin’s final reference point is always God, since *He* puts up the barriers of protection against us harming others

Kid-speak: If a thief stole all your stuff and killed you, did he sin against you? Yes, but who did he sin against most? God, because God is the one who said not to kill or steal.

- L. 12:13, “And Nathan said to David, ‘Yahweh has caused your sin to pass over/ by.’”
 - 1. A unique pairing of “pass over” + “sin.” But “pass over” + “transgression” and “iniquity” are common enough
 - 2. Blessed pronouncement! It is God saying that David’s sin would not have its natural consequence of separating him from God.
 - a. God does that for all His people in redemption!
 - b. Ultimately, only through Messiah
 - 3. But with his sin passed over, he still might face the death penalty. However, God said,
- M. “You will not die”
 - 1. Death was the normal consequence for both murder and adultery, Num 35:31-33; Lev 20:10.
 - 2. How did David avoid this consequence?
- N. Examples of capital punishment not being enforced
 - 1. Cain, Gen 4. But this was before any specific laws.
 - 2. Simeon and Levi, Gen 34:25; 49:7

- a. This was after Gen 9:6
- b. Gen 9:6 implies government. Perhaps as a family outside of existing governments, it was not appropriate for Jacob to enforce the death penalty on his own family.
- c. Gen 49:7 contained no small consequence for them
- 3. Paul (Saul). Of course, Israel normally needed Rome's approval for capital punishment.
 - a. In Saul/Paul's case, it looks like God just withdrew the punishment. Or multiple restitution was exponential, making Saul the source of innumerable conversions.
 - b. God did spend Paul's life, though
- O. In David's case, David was the highest court in the land. God was the only authority over him.
 - 1. God is the one who imposed capital punishment. He could **vary** (not reverse) the application of it by the same wisdom.
 - * 2. Consider: the sword wouldn't depart David's house. THAT'S CAPITAL PUNISHMENT, only distributed. That's what a leading figure deserves, since others' lives hinge on his.

Kid-speak: God said that a killer had to be killed. So why wasn't David killed for killing Uriah? God did worse. He put a "sword" in David's house that *kept on* killing!

- 3. As we said last time, every death in David's house was executed by a willing hand. God simply allowed the murderers to be themselves.
- 4. So, in answer to our previous question, David did *not* avoid capital punishment
 - a. God just applied it differently- actually *more* consequentially and painfully
 - b. David's death would have been an easy out
- P. "You will not die" (not doubled)
 - 1. The Satan-led serpent said something similar to Eve, Gen 3:4, negating very precisely God's strong, "Dying you shall die," Gen 2:17 (doubled verb, as in 2 Sam 12:14)
 - 2. Now God tells David that he won't die
 - a. God had justly imposed mankind's death upon disobedience (and all men continued to disobey)
 - b. God is the only one who can rescind death, but the very involved Tabernacle/ Temple service shows what deep complication God's "You won't die" actually entails!

- c. Ultimately, Christ on the cross
- Q. “You will not die”
 1. What a blessed pronouncement that is *spiritually*! We who were headed for the Second Death, Rev 20:6
 2. But even more blessed: “You shall live,” Deut 30:6, because God circumcises our hearts
 - a. “Hear, and your soul shall live,” Isa 55:3
 - b. “I’ll cause breath to enter you, and you shall live,” Ezekiel prophesied to the dry bones, Ezek 37:5, 14
 - c. Which the Spirit works in us through Christ’s resurrection, Rom 8:11, 13 (Note the “if”)
 - d. At glorification, we will fully, finally live, Jn 5:25

Kid-speak: What does God say to sinners? “You will die.” But what does He say to those who believe in Jesus with all their hearts? “OK. You will LIVE now!”

2 Sam 12:14 Nevertheless, because you have made the enemies of Yahweh to scorn scornfully by this matter, the son who is born to you dying shall die in consequence.

- R. 2 doubled verbs for emphasis: scorn and die. The twin grammatical doubling gives us the key to understanding why the child had to die (See III.X.) (← A numeral and a letter.)
- S. “Because you... son... shall die”
 1. A possible theological problem, considering, for starters, Deut 24:16, a *seemingly* clear statement
 2. However, the actual ‘starters’ were Exod 20:5 and Deut 5:9
 - ◆ a. The caveat of Exod 20:5 and Deut 5:9 (10 Words) is “of those hating Me.” Children *not* hating God as their dads did would *not* have the father’s sins visited on them
 - b. For sons who *carry on* their dads’ hatred of God, there is a natural, cumulative affect of the family sin and therefore of the punishment
 - c. However, (the point in the 10 words), God *cuts off the dad’s negative consequences* after the 4th generation
 - ✦ d. In contrast, God shows *mercy* to “thousands” of generations (understood by ellipsis) of God-lovers. We’re all awash in mercy from many godly forefathers!
 - e. Lev 20:5, punishment *only* for those sinning “with” dad
 - f. Lev 26:39-40, “Yes, we adopted our fathers’ sins.”

3. Taking a broader, longer view, there are only TWO CATEGORIES of people in all history. Everyone aligns on one side or the other. Those who are *against God* become part of that legacy *and* its inheritance, Matt 23:34-35

Kid-speak: If a man killed somebody, and the court said that he had to die, is the man's **son** supposed to die with him? No!

T. "Because you... son... shall die"

1. 2 Kings 14:5-6 gives us Amaziah's application of the Deut 24:16 principle. It means simply this: the sons had no part in their fathers' plot. If they had, they, too, would have died.
2. David's son had not sinned. Why did he have to die?

U. Job's children as a parallel

1. Job's children are *not a direct* parallel to our passage, but provide a pivot point for the distinction necessary to understand David's son's death in light of Deut 24:16
2. Job's children hadn't sinned. Job only made offerings for them *in case* they'd sinned *in their hearts*, 1:5. If they'd sinned, Job would have made offerings for the sins.
 - a. *Yet they died* as part of Satan's permission from God
 - b. The last resolution in Job? Restoration of children. The loss of his children was critical to the story, not a sidebar.
3. Job had not sinned, 1:1, 8, but David had
 - a. Still, Why would Job's children die in consequence of matters related to their dad? **THAT'S KEY.**
 - b. Answer: Because Job's *children* were part of his *blessing* from God which Satan claimed were Job's only reason for *worshipping* God

V. Why would Job's children's destiny be so tied to his?

1. In general answer: God decides every man's death day. He 'calls' our accounts at his own discretion. He can call any account 'early'.
2. At least Job's children *were ready* to give an account to God

Kid-speak: Did Job's children die just because Job was their dad? Yes. But had Job sinned or had they sinned? No. Who decides when *anybody* dies? God. Was He wrong to take Job's children? No, they were ready to see God.

W. "Because you have made Yahweh's enemies SCORNFULLY

SCORN in this matter, the son who is born to you DYING SHALL DIE in consequence”

1. Deut 24:16 is mainly commanding that non-participant children not be put to the firing squad with their dad
 - ★ 2. David’s son is clearly a non-participant, but he is also *not the type of son being considered* in Deut 24:16
 - a. The Deut 24:16 son was in the *range of possibilities* as a cohort
 - b. David’s son was **not** in such a range of possibilities
 3. Therefore, only the uncontexted language of Deut 24:16 presents a problem in David’s son’s case
 - a. Language-wise, David’s son indeed “died for his father’s sin”
 - b. But judicially, David’s son would never even come under consideration for the Deut 24:16 statute
 - c. It is a given that Deut 24:16 was written for *human* courts *God* had to sit in direct judgment of David’s case. (Not meaning that God could act contrary to His own rules).
- X. Why did David’s son die, then?
1. Per the language of 2 Sam 12:, it was a public reputation matter, particularly, God’s reputation
 - a. By David’s sin, God’s enemies could rightfully scorn Him (not to exclude Satan)
 - b. The 3rd Word (of the 10) is about disrespecting God’s name/ reputation
 - i. It is *from* the 3rd Word that we have considered “sins of the father”!
 - ⚡ ii. There is a close link, then, between God’s name/ reputation and family heritage

Kid-speak: Why did God kill David’s newborn baby? Because if the baby lived, God’s enemies would be right to say, “See there! God lets His people sin and get away with it!”

2. Moses had successfully argued that case with God the *other* direction: to *avoid* the enemy’s scorn, Exod 32:12
3. David had *caused* enemy scorn; hence, just as surely, “the son born to David” would not remain as a public testimony of David’s disrespect
4. This son, like Job’s children, was dealt with mainly in his relation to David

- a. With David, he was being deprived of a boast (the son who would become the public face of God’s dishonoring)
 - b. Now God’s enemies would have to acknowledge that He did not bless David’s sin
 - Y. On another note: Job’s children answered for themselves. Could David’s son answer for himself? More to consider on that point at 2 Sam 12:23.
 - Z. On a Jesus note
 - 1. Just as Caiaphas’ evil intent contained prophetically saving language, Jn 11:49-52, so the language of 2 Sam 12:13-14 testifies of the reversal of our death penalty
 - 2. What happened here? The “son (Son) of David” died for the sinner’s sin. (Thanks to Jim Jordan and Peter Leithart)
- IV. For the Walking Wounded (1 Thess 5:14, “Uphold the strengthless”) Don’t add weight to a hobbled gait. A hobble’s better than a heap.
- V. Conviction (2 Tim 4:2, “Convince, rebuke”): **What have I done wrong? How have I lost righteousness?**
Are my sins confessed in terms of God’s commands?
- VI. Correction/ Realignment (2 Tim 4:2, “Exhort/encourage”):
How will I correct my error? How will I regain uprightness?
I will learn to see just consequences for sin *in the temptation*.
- VII. Schooling in Righteousness: **How will I avoid the error and follow Christ?**
Thank You for stories that increase my fear of You, **Prov 16:6**

Wrap-up: We just caught up with Nathan and David. They already understood Deut 24:16’s proper application.

Should we fear loss of children for our sin? I think only to the degree we carry God’s reputation. David’s representation of God was the highest + his sins were most extreme. Job was God’s boast, but, most importantly, his children were ready.

In essence, we all await our Lord’s pleasure concerning death. We even teach it to our children: “If I die before I wake...”