

November 13, 2016
Sunday Morning Service
Series: *The Life of David*
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from 2 Samuel 12:1-25.

1. In what ways did Nathan's story uncover David's sin?
2. How many times in this chapter does the "word of the LORD" show up and what significance does that have?
3. Do you think that David's confession should have been more sincere or verbose?
4. How would you feel about David's confession if you were Uriah's brother?
5. Was it fair for God to bless David and Bathsheba with Solomon?
6. How much sin has God forgiven you and how much has He blessed you?

TRUTH, CONSEQUENCES, AND GRACE
2 Samuel 12:1-25

"Familiarity breeds contempt." No doubt you are familiar with that statement that is usually applied to personal relationships. It means if you and I grow too familiar with others, we might tend to show disrespect when respect is in order. The same principle is true regarding our familiarity with God's Word.

It is possible to love the Bible, read the Bible, meditate on the Bible to the point that we become very familiar with the Bible. It just becomes part of life for us. But at the same time, it is possible to become so familiar with the Bible that its message no longer convicts us of sin.

Sin is such a subtle destroyer. It creeps into our lives little by little. Without our noticing it, sin can take up residence in our lives right alongside our reading of the Bible without causing undue agitation or conflict. That is a most dangerous condition. It is like developing a fatal disease without realizing the symptoms, and when the doctor asks how we are doing we say, "Fine." And we mean it.

David experienced this tragedy in his life. He loved God. He served God. He was concerned to know and do God's will. He wrote many songs and prayers about his relationship with God. He had received a most astonishing promise from God. God promised that David's family would reign in Israel for a long time, even to the extreme of one day an eternal king ruling over an eternal Israel (2 Samuel 7). God's messenger, the prophet Nathan, had brought that amazing promise to David introducing it as, "Thus says the LORD of hosts."

Some time after David had received this promise, he acted toward Bathsheba and Uriah as though he was totally unaware of the LORD and His word. He was so familiar with God's words that they didn't matter. Therefore, in light of David's rejection of God's truth, God sent His messenger Nathan with another message. This time the promises were not pleasant at all. Again, Nathan told David that this was the word of the LORD.

The good news is that upon hearing God's word again, David was crushed. He immediately confessed his sin and repented. That is the work God's Word is supposed to do in our lives. The Bible message ought to crush our rebellion and independence from God. When we understand from the Bible, God's perfect holiness, His justice against sin, and yet His willingness to pardon our sin and forgive us, we should be overwhelmed by His grace. Grace with consequences is an idea human wisdom has difficulty grasping. It is God's nature. David's life teaches us what it looks like and how it works.

Confrontation and Promised Consequences (vv.1-12).

God's messenger told a story that pictured David, but David didn't get it (vv.1-6). David's LORD sent the "preacher" to tell David a story. *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"* (vv.1-4).

Nathan didn't show up at David's house because it was his own plan or desire. In some way God informed Nathan about the problem and sent him with authority to confront David about his sin. This was probably a very difficult task for the prophet, one about which he might have argued with God. Nevertheless he went and told a parable that could have happened, but probably didn't. It is just an example, a hypothetical situation, a very pointed illustration. But the story was full of innuendo and meaning that David should have caught.

It was a story about two men, one who was rich in material goods but poor in character; and one who was poor in possessions, but rich in relationships. The rich man had experienced God's blessing to the extreme, owning many flocks and herds. The poor man had purchased one little lamb. He treated the lamb like a daughter (Hebrew - *bath*). The lamb lay in his arms.

Obvious in the story is that David was pictured by the rich man. God had blessed him immensely. He even had multiple wives. He stole Uriah's lamb who was also Eliam's "bath" (daughter) named Bathsheba. According to the story, David the rich man *prepared* the lamb which implied killing, murder. But David missed all these indicators.

As one would expect, David the hypocrite got angry with the wicked rich man. *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, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity" (vv.5-6). We should conclude that David was angry because this situation supposedly took place in his jurisdiction. How dare people over whom David ruled be so covetous and wicked! Such a selfish, covetous, rapacious man deserves to die! Upon hearing this story from a trusted source, David immediately fulfilled his responsibility as the chief justice of his kingdom.

However, David was not quite accurate in his sentence. Stealing a man's lamb did not deserve capital punishment according to God's law. It required a four-fold restoration (Exodus 22:11). Adultery and premeditated murder, on the other hand, required capital punishment. When David sent for Uriah's wife, he showed no pity. Likewise in this harsh sentence against the hypothetical rich man, David showed no pity. The word David used which is translated *pity* (*khaw-mal*) means to have compassion. It is equivalent to mercy which withholds punishment that we deserve because of our sins. The rich man certainly didn't show mercy to the poor man, and David sure didn't show mercy to Uriah.

God's messenger promised dire consequences because of David's sin (vv.7-12). The messenger left no doubt about the task God sent him to do and clearly expressed God's assessment of David and his sin. *Nathan said to David, "You are the man!"* (v.7a). David was guilty, caught red-handed by God. God's anger was kindled against David. What David did was no small matter in God's eyes.

Doesn't the man after God's heart illustrate for us how easily we forget how God feels about sin? God ought to be angry about sin. Sin wrecked God's perfect creation. Sin causes people who God creates in His image to deface His image and despise Him. Sin required God to turn away from His beloved Son and allow wicked sinners to torture and kill Him.

In his angry reaction against the rich man who showed no mercy, David had pronounced his own guilt. Indeed, though the rich man in the story did not deserve capital punishment, David deserved to die. God's law was clear enough on the matter. *If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death* (Leviticus 20:10). So too was God's law clear about the penalty for premeditated murder.

But before we begin to feel a bit smug because we are not murderers or adulterers, let's not forget that all sin carries the penalty of death, both physical and eternal. Adam didn't believe that stepping over God's boundaries results in death – until it was too late. God had warned him and Eve, *“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die”* (Genesis 2:17). What did Adam think God meant? How did he forget or why didn't he care? Sin leading to death (physical and eternal) is God's unchanging principle. God told the prophet Ezekiel, *“Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die”* (Ezekiel 18:4). Paul wrote about the same truth when he taught, *“For the wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23a).

David had called for death and repayment as sentence for the rich man's crime. But David himself could not make repayment like he had demanded from the hypothetical rich man. Uriah was dead and David could not bring him back to life. David could not restore Uriah's wife to him, and he certainly could not give Uriah four new wives! Even if Uriah was still alive, David could not do anything to assuage his offense. Solomon taught his son, *He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself. Wounds and dishonor will he get, and his disgrace will not be wiped away. For jealousy makes a man furious, and he will not spare when he takes revenge. He will accept no compensation; he will refuse though you multiply gifts* (Proverbs 6:32-35). And so it was and is, and David was in a dilemma.

Nathan the messenger not only illustrated the problem, but the messenger explained God-ordained consequences. He declared the word of the LORD. David had despised God's Word in spite of God's blessing. Therefore, *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”* (vv. 7b-8). The LORD is the source of all blessing. When the LORD speaks, we do well to listen.

David's worse sin is that he despised God's blessing. *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 (v.9). The Word of the LORD is His law, it is Scripture, it is His message to us, and it is very clear about matters like lying, coveting, adultery, and murder. In his mad pursuit of fulfilling his lust, David ran roughshod over all of God's rules.

Likewise, when we break God's commands, it is not a matter of making a mistake and generally not a matter of ignorance. We break God's rules because we want our way. At those times, we prove that we despise the Word of the LORD – the Bible. A life that is characterized by despising the Bible is a life that is destined for eternal separation from God and eternal suffering.

Because David despised God's Word, his rebellion brought dire consequences on himself and others. He would experience murder in his own family. *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* (v.10). As we know from the history of Israel, Absalom would grow up to kill his half-brother Amnon. Amnon was David's eldest son and, therefore, the likely heir to the throne. Amnon killed him because he raped his sister Tamar. That these were all David's children, and yet children by different wives, illustrates the problem of his unbridled lust. Then later, Joab, David's commander, would kill Absalom in the heat of a coup attempt. And Solomon would kill his half-brother Adonijah. Yes, God's word was true. The sword was very well known in David's house.

Second, David would also experience rebellion against his authority in the same way he rebelled against God's authority. *Thus says the LORD, “Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house”* (v.11a). Absalom shrewdly undermined his father's authority. He took over the kingdom temporarily.

And true to God's judgment, David's wives would be ravished publicly. *“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”* (vv.11b-12). This judgment actually involved David's concubines who were virtually equivalent to wives. In an effort to humiliate his father, and publicly indicate that he was king, Absalom did a horrible deed. *Ahithophel said to Absalom, “Go in to*

your father's concubines, whom he has left to keep the house, and all Israel will hear that you have made yourself a stench to your father, and the hands of all who are with you will be strengthened." So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof. And Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel (2 Samuel 16:21-22). Notice that this wicked scheme was the invention of Ahithophel, Bathsheba's grandfather. Sin certainly carries consequences.

Blessing and Consequences (vv.13-25).

It is good that David confessed his sin, but even after confession he faced painful consequences (vv.13-23). On the one hand, we rejoice with David in the blessedness of sins forgiven. Confession flows out of conviction of sin. Conviction of sin comes from being crushed by God's Word. God's word to David through the prophet was, "You are the man." David's response? *David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD" (v.13a).* The only right response to conviction of sin is confession.

While the words are few, this confession is not trite or too simple. In Psalm 51 David gave a more complete description of how deeply he sensed this confession. *"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment" (Psalm 51:1-4). "Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities" (Psalm 51:8-9).*

Our sin often does involve others, causes pain for others, and needs to be confessed to those who we have sinned against. But ultimately, our sin is against the Lord. Confession requires that we say the same thing about our sin that God says about it. We need to do that. You and I need to acknowledge that our sin is rebellion against God, a rejection of His authority in our lives, a rejection of His truth which is supposed to be our guide.

Confession is a good thing because God's response to confession is forgiveness. *And Nathan said to David, "The LORD*

also has put away your sin; you shall not die" (v.13b). And it was just that simple? God put away David's sin! Only God has the authority to make this judgment. Fellow humans are interested first and foremost with punishment for the deed. That attitude was illustrated well by the Pharisees who brought the woman taken in adultery to Jesus (John 8). God's first interest toward the penitent sinner is mercy. Mercy, the thing David didn't want to show the offender, withholds the punishment that is deserved. David really did deserve to die. But God has the right to change the consequences of breaking His law. And yet that amazing forgiveness does not guarantee that all consequences for sin will disappear.

Nathan pointed out the looming pain of sin's fruit. He warned, *Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD, the child who is born to you shall die (v.14).* The word *nevertheless* means that in spite of the fact that God has forgiven sin and foregone the rightful capital punishment for the crime, still there would be consequences. Probably the child conceived from David's sin was already born at this point. It is likely that this confrontation took place within a year after the sin. It is God's prerogative to show mercy; it is God's prerogative to let consequences come to bear.

That seems tough. But the reality is even tougher. God Himself brought His judgment to pass. *Then Nathan went to his house. And the LORD afflicted the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick (v.15).* The wording is clear. Nathan had delivered God's word. David responded well to God's word. The messenger's work was done. Then the messenger turned around and went home. And things began to happen. It was not coincidental that the child became ill. This was a specific judgment God initiated.

In response to God's judgment, the suffering servant cried out for God to change His mind. *David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. 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 (vv.16-17).* This kind of response should be expected from people who trust God. Perhaps God would relent of this judgment as He had in the past in His dealings with His people. David knew that God told Moses He would kill the Israelites, but then He did not in response to Moses' interceding (Exodus 32:12). Sometimes trials are tests to help

us repent and turn to God and then God's responds by removing the trial. That is what God meant when He said through Jeremiah, *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 (Jeremiah 18:8)*. But sometimes God does not relent, and the consequences are unavoidable.

The suffering servant accepted God's will. *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." 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 (vv.18-20)*.

This paragraph reveals the confusion of those people who were close to the king and the king's explanation for his actions. The king's servants were confused. *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" (v.21)*. Consider what the king said and what he didn't say. He explained that he fasted and prayed thinking that maybe God would see his repentance and be gracious. *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?'" (v.22)*.

That was a possibility. There are examples in the Bible of how God had relented in the past. Obviously that was not God's will this time. Therefore, David concluded, *"The child died and so will I." 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" (v.23)*. And just like that, David accepted a very difficult judgment from God. Restored fellowship with God is evidenced by great faith in God's will.

An important lesson for us is that even if God does not supernaturally and specifically punish a sin, which often He does not, sin bears fruit generally. That was true of Adam's sin that resulted in

death. Consequences are the nature of sin. That is still true in the matter of sin's rebellion against social authority that can result in indictment and incarceration. Or it is true in the sin of lying that can result in being exposed as a liar. The same principle reigns in the simple sin of gluttony that can result in obesity and poor health. Or the sin of drunkenness that often results in addiction as a consequence.

But with forgiveness also comes blessing. God forgave David and David comforted suffering Bathsheba. *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 (v.24a)*. In the process, God created another son for Bathsheba and David. This son was the next ruler on David's throne that God had promised (2 Samuel 7). The name Solomon means "the LORD's restoration and peace."

Even as David comforted his wife, God comforted suffering David. *And the LORD loved him and sent a message by Nathan the prophet. So he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD (vv.24b-25)*. The LORD loved Solomon. Not because of what Solomon accomplished or had done, because he was but a baby. God loved Solomon because God wanted to love Solomon. So God said his name was Jedidiah which means "Beloved of the LORD."

Human nature struggles with the reality that God actually blessed David and Bathsheba. Why would He bless them when they actually deserved punishment? Is that fair? Is it fair for God to bless and comfort David and Bathsheba? Is it fair for God to give them Solomon whom He loved? Of course not! God is not fair. God is merciful. Mercy is why God gives us eternal life simply because we trust His work through Jesus Christ instead of giving us eternal condemnation that is fair. What an amazing, kind, forgiving God. What an amazing divine balance He strikes between sin and forgiveness and mercy and consequences and blessing!

The lessons for us should be plain. God warns us not to sin because sin carries with it dire consequences. But if we do sin, appreciate the crushing of God's Word and be quick to say the same thing about your sin that God says. Confessing sin brings God's favor and blessing even in the context of dire consequences. That is what John taught us when he wrote, *"My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have*

an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). God loves, forgives, and shows mercy. But the law of sin often brings consequences. God’s grace helps the penitent sinner through the consequences.