

The Life of David

David's Child Dies

2 Samuel 12:15-31

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Scripture

Pastor James Emery White tells about a book he once read called *The Book of Failures*. It was filled with all kinds of failures that people have made. For instance, the book introduces Arthur Pedrick, who patented 162 inventions, but not one of them was ever taken up commercially. These inventions include a car that could be driven from the back seat, a golf ball that could be steered in flight (I like that one!), and a plan to irrigate the deserts of the world by sending a constant supply of snowballs from the polar region through a massive network of giant peashooters!

His favorite story in the book was about an elderly lady in South London who called a group of firefighters to rescue her cat from a tree. They arrived with impressive speed and carefully rescued her cat. The lady was so thankful that she invited them in for tea. So they had tea, received another round of thanks from the woman, and drove off, waving goodbye. But, as they backed out of her driveway, they drove right over her cat!¹

Most failures are not funny. They are often painful and grievous. They leave scars that stay with us for decades. People want to know how to rebound after a failure. Even believers want to know how to come back after egregious sin. How do I recover after I fall flat on my face? When I cheat? When I steal? When I get a DUI? When I lose my temper and get angry? When I have an affair? When I watch pornography? When I gossip, slander, or hate?

Thankfully, we don't have to guess. David sinned atrociously by committing adultery *and* murder, and the Bible shows us how he rebounded after those heinous sins.

Let's read 2 Samuel 12:15-31:

¹ See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/sermons/sermons/2013/march/who-is-god-after-i-sin.html>.

¹⁵ And the Lord afflicted the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick. ¹⁶ David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. ¹⁷ 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. 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." ¹⁹ 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." ²⁰ 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. ²¹ 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." ²² 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?' ²³ 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."

²⁴ 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 ²⁵ and sent a message by Nathan the prophet. So he called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord.

²⁶ Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the Ammonites and took the royal city. ²⁷ And Joab sent messengers to David and said, "I have fought against Rabbah; moreover, I have taken the city of waters. 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.”²⁹ So David gathered all the people together and went to Rabbah and fought against it and took it.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.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. (2 Samuel 12:15-31)

Introduction

Second Samuel chapters 10 to 12 describe David’s battle with the Ammonites. In the middle of these chapters is the shocking account of David’s dreadful sin against Bathsheba and Uriah. Months later, the Lord sent his prophet Nathan to confront David about his sin. The Lord used Nathan to bring David to a conviction of his sin, for which he repented. Then the Lord forgave David for his terrible sin.

Though David received forgiveness for his sin, he was not released from the consequences of his sin. Forgiveness of sin does not absolve us from the consequences of sin. Just because believers receive God’s forgiveness for sin does not mean that God also erases the consequences for that sin. Believers have to endure the consequences for sin even though we have been forgiven. Understanding this truth helps believers know what the Lord is doing in our lives and how to rebound after we sin.

Lesson

Second Samuel 12:15-31 shows us how to rebound after personal moral failure (that is, sin) in our lives.

Let’s use the following outline:

1. Seek God in Prayer (12:15-16)
2. Acknowledge Your Sin (12:17)
3. Submit to God's Will (12:18-23)
4. Receive God's Blessing (12:24-25)
5. Return to Duty (12:26-31)

I. Seek God in Prayer (12:15-16)

First, to rebound from moral failure, seek God in prayer.

David's moral failure, that is, his sin, was adultery and murder. David was convicted of his sin and he repented of his sin. God then forgave him for his sin. But the Lord carried out the consequences upon David for his sin, as we read in verse 15b, **“And the Lord afflicted the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick.”** David knew that the Lord was severely chastening him for his own sin. Commentator Gordon Keddie writes, “In reality it was David's sin that was dying, for we may be confident that the child was in the gracious hands of God.”² God, in his wisdom, mercy, and grace was severely chastening David.

But David did not assume that God's declaration that the child would die was so settled that he just sat back and waited for the inevitable to happen. No, verse 16 says, **“David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground.”** David believed that God sometimes reverses his pronounced declarations. That was the case with Hezekiah who was sick and dying. Even the prophet Isaiah told him to set his house in order for he was going to die. But Hezekiah prayed to the Lord and asked for his life to be spared. Isaiah 38:4-5 says, “Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah: ‘Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer; I have seen your

² Gordon J. Keddie, *Triumph of the King: The Message of 2 Samuel*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1990), 117.

tears. Behold, I will add fifteen years to your life.’ ” So, David prayed and asked God to spare the life of the child. In this case, however, God did not spare the child.

Though we may have sinned grievously, and the consequences may be severe, we are not prohibited from praying that the Lord will relent from the enactment of the consequences for our sin. God hears prayer and he is pleased when his children come to him in prayer.

My grandsons are staying with us for several weeks. We love having them with us. However, because they are little children, they sometimes do things wrong. (Yes, I know that it is amazing that *my* grandchildren do things wrong, but they do!) We sometimes threaten them with consequences for their wrong actions. And sometimes they plead with us to relent. And sometimes we do. Well, if we who are sinful sometimes relent, how much more will our Father in heaven sometimes relent when we go to him in prayer.

So, when you have sinned and want to rebound from that sin, first seek God in prayer.

II. Acknowledge Your Sin (12:17)

Second, to rebound from sin, acknowledge your sin.

Verse 17 says, **“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.”** David did not hide himself from others. Frankly, it is likely that many others already knew about his adultery with Bathsheba and possibly even his murder of Uriah. David had been utterly exposed by Nathan, and he no longer tried to hide his sin from his elders or even the nation.

What usually happens when a believer’s sin is exposed is that he leaves the church. He refuses to face the very people who want to come alongside and help him. Last week a pastor called me to

ask about the proper procedure according to our denomination's *Book of Church Order* for disciplining a church member. Apparently, the church member has already been disciplined but continues to be contumacious, that is, he is "stubbornly or willfully disobedient to authority."³ I was surprised to learn that he was still attending worship services. I was surprised because what so often happens is that people leave the church when they are under discipline.

David's example shows us that the way to rebound from sin is to acknowledge it. Don't hide it or refuse to face those who are in a position to help and who want to help.

III. Submit to God's Will (12:18-23)

Third, to rebound from moral failure, submit to God's will.

David sought the Lord for the life of the child for seven days. He prayed and fasted and mourned for seven days. But, **"on the seventh day the child died"** (12:18a). David's servants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead because his mourning prior to the child's death was so severe, and they were afraid that David might harm himself once he heard that the child had died. But once David heard that the child had indeed died, he responded with an astonishing submission to the will of God.

David's servants were confused by David's actions. So they 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"** (12:21). David's response is important. 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"** (12:22-23).

³ Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, eds., *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

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David's prayer for the life of the child was not based on a "name it and claim it" theology. He did not know whether God would spare the life of the child. But, now that the child had died, God's will was known. David knew that his prayers would not now bring the child back. David knew that death is a one-way street, as he said, **"I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."**

David's acceptance of the child's death shows his submission to God's will. He trusted that God was in sovereign control.

My wife Eileen and I visited South Africa in 2014, primarily to spend time with my Dad, who was dying of lung cancer. We spent a precious month with Dad in Port Elizabeth. During our time there I worshiped one Sunday at St. John's Methodist Church, the church at which God saved me on Easter Sunday in 1976. There was a visiting preacher when I worshiped there in 2014. He was Bishop George Irvine. During his sermon I got the sense that he knew the congregation well. I intentionally made sure that I was the last person to greet him after the service. I asked him if he was the pastor at St. John's Methodist Church in 1976. He said he was the pastor at that time. I told him that I was converted under his ministry on Easter Sunday evening in 1976. We were both thrilled to meet after so many years. He took me to all the people having coffee in the fellowship hall and told them that I was converted under his ministry! But what was so precious to me was when I told him about my dying Dad. I said that Dad had apparently made a profession of faith in recent months but I was not sure where he really stood with the Lord. I loved what Bishop Irvine did next. He took both my hands in his and looked me straight in the eye and said, "Freddy, you can trust your Dad to the loving care of God."

Indeed. That is what David did with his son. He trusted God with his son. And David submitted himself to God's will. And that is what God wants us to do as well.

IV. Receive God's Blessing (12:24-25)

Fourth, to rebound from sin, receive God's blessing.

We read in verse 24a, **“Then David comforted his wife, Bathsheba.”** No longer is she “Uriah's wife.” She is now David's wife and her name, **Bathsheba**, is also used again. Part of submitting to God's will was to go on with life, and David **comforted his wife, Bathsheba**. Undoubtedly, she too was stricken with grief at the loss of her baby.

And, in due course, God blessed David (and Bathsheba), **“and she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon”** (12:24b). The name **“Solomon”** means “peaceable.” But the Bible says that **“the Lord loved him and sent a message by Nathan the prophet. So he called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord”** (12:24c-25). The name **“Jedidiah”** means “loved by the Lord.”

God is so gracious! David had sinned grievously by committing adultery and murder. God allowed David to suffer the consequences for his sin by letting the child conceived during his adulterous relationship die. But, God then graciously blessed David with another son, Solomon (also known as Jedidiah), who was also an ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ. As Gordon Keddie says, “Forgiveness cancels past sin, promises future blessing, and opens the gate of heaven.”⁴

Friend, you may feel that your sin is so wicked and heinous that you could never experience God's blessing. That is simply not true. It is a lie from Satan himself! What sin is greater than adultery *and* murder? If David can receive God's blessing, so can you!

V. Return to Duty (12:26-31)

And finally, to rebound from moral failure, return to duty.

⁴ Gordon J. Keddie, *Triumph of the King: The Message of 2 Samuel*, 119.

Second Samuel 11:1 says, “In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.” Second Samuel 12 concludes with where David should have been. Joab was fighting against the Ammonites at Rabbah. Joab was about to defeat the Ammonites. But, he wanted David to receive the honor for defeating the Ammonites. Joab of course knew about Uriah’s death. He had sent a message to David about his death, and perhaps Joab also knew about David’s adultery with Bathsheba. Regardless, it was now time for David to return to duty. **“So David gathered all the people together and went to Rabbah and fought against it and took it”** (12:29). The Ammonites became subject to David and peace came upon the land (12:31).

Sin is sometimes so crushing that we become paralyzed. My dear friend, Satan wants you out of the game. He will do whatever he can to cause you to say that you can no longer be used by God. Don’t listen to the whisper of Satan that you are no longer good for anything. Instead, recognize that God forgives and redeploys you into his service. God never wants you to sit around with the further possibility of falling into even more sin. God wants you to serve him with the gifts that he has given you. He wants you to return to duty.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the account of David’s child dying in 2 Samuel 12:15-31, let us thank God for his love that will never let us go.

George Matheson was born in Glasgow, Scotland, on March 27, 1842. He had poor eyesight as a boy. Unfortunately, he became completely blind after he began his studies at Glasgow University. His sister devoted her life to help him and she herself learned

Latin, Greek, and Hebrew in order to help Matheson in his theological studies. Despite his handicap, Matheson was a brilliant student. In 1886, he became pastor of the 2,000-member St. Bernard's Parish Church in Edinburgh. He went on to become one of Scotland's outstanding preachers and pastors, and his preaching consistently attracted large crowds.

Matheson never married but his fiancé did break up with him when she learned of his impending blindness. He wrote a poem on the evening of his sister's wedding in 1882. He said that something happened to him which was known only to himself, and which caused him the most severe mental suffering. Whether it was the disappointment of a lost love or the remembrance of a serious sin, he wrote of a Savior whose love will never let us go:

O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.⁵

My dear brother and sister, no matter how great your sin, know that God will enable you to rebound from your sin. His love will never let you go. And because of that truth, let me urge you to seek God in prayer, acknowledge your sin, submit to God's will, receive God's blessing, and then return to duty. Amen.

⁵ Paul Eckert, *Steve Green's MIDI Hymnal: A Complete Toolkit for Personal Devotions and Corporate Worship.*, Electronic ed. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 1998).

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can
be found at:

1. www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons.
2. www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp.
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