

Dr. Robert Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 22, 2 Samuel 12

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This is Dr. Bob Chisholm in his teaching on 1 and 2 Samuel. This is session 22, 2 Samuel 12. Your Sin Will Find You Out.

The Lord confronts his sinful servant. In 2 Samuel 11, we see that David has sinned greatly. He has committed adultery and then murder.

He tells Joab, don't let this thing be evil in your eyes, the fact of Uriah's death. That's the way things work out on the battlefield. The sword devours one as well as another.

There's going to be collateral damage. At the end of chapter 11, we read that the matter was evil in the eyes of the Lord. Here in 2 Samuel chapter 12, we're going to see the Lord holding David accountable for his sin.

I've entitled this chapter, Your Sin Will Find You Out. Your sin will find you out. Then subtitled, The Lord Confronts His Sinful Servant.

We're going to see that the Lord disciplines his sinful servants, but he also extends forgiveness and mercy. This particular chapter, which is going to be very painful to read in many ways, there is a silver lining. There is a light at the end of the tunnel and we're going to see God's forgiveness and mercy as well as his severe discipline of David begin.

In chapter 11, David did a lot of sending. He sent for Uriah in an effort to cover his sinful tracks after sending for Bathsheba. He is exercising his royal authority.

But here in chapter 12 verse 1, someone else can do some sending because there is someone else who has greater authority than David. In fact, he has authority over David. And the Lord sent Nathan to David.

And when he came to him, he said this. And what Nathan is going to do, he's not just going to barge in here and say, David, you are guilty. You've done this and this and this.

He is going to entrap David. He's going to get David through a little story to see just what an awful thing he has done. David is so calloused, that he's not going to see himself in the story initially, but getting David to actually pronounce his own punishment.

And then Nathan is going to tighten the noose, as it were, around David's neck and say, thou art the man. So, he comes to David and he tells a little story. David thinks that it is a true story, an account of what has happened somewhere in the kingdom, and he needs to rule, and make a judicial ruling about it.

We're not sure if it's just something that Nathan made up or whether it really does have some root in reality. We're not sure. But he tells it to David because he wants David to see that he has committed a great crime.

He says, there were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle. So, the rich man has all kinds of livestock.

But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup, and even slept in his arms.

And there's that word, sleep. That's what David did with Bathsheba. It's what Uriah refused to do with his own wife.

And so, there's an echo of David's crime here. It's very subtle. It was like a daughter, a bot to him.

That's echoing Bathsheba, Bathsheba's name. So, this little lamb that the poor man has, he's not raising this lamb for food. This is the family pet.

It's a part of the family. And if you're an animal lover and you have a pet like a cat or a dog, I have four dogs, these pets become family members really. And there's an emotional bond there.

So that's the background here for the story. And now a traveler came to the rich man. And so, the rich man is going to try to show hospitality.

But the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Even though he's got all this livestock, he could have easily prepared a meal from one of his own animals. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man.

He stole the man's pet and prepared it for the one who had come to him. He steals the poor man's pet lamb, kills it, and then eats it with the traveler. You're probably feeling pretty angry about this yourself as you're hearing Nathan's story.

And David was pretty upset. In verse 5, David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, he takes an oath, as surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die. He deserves to die.

The text literally reads, a son of death is the man who has done this. This is a phrase to indicate that someone deserves to die. And David feels this is like a capital offense.

And I think that's exaggerated, that's overstated. He's not pronouncing a death sentence on this individual, but he deserves to die. And then David makes a ruling.

He says he must pay for that lamb four times over because he did such a thing and had no pity. Now, you know and I know, David is the rich man. And notice how David is characterizing this.

He did a horrible thing that's worthy of death and he had no pity. He had no pity for the poor man. He was calloused.

No pity whatsoever. And David says four times over. Where's he getting that? Is he just making it up? No, he's not.

David knows the law. Ironically, he has just violated four of the Ten Commandments, but he knows the law, the technicalities of the law. And the basis for the legal background for David's statement four times is in Exodus 22.1, where we read, if a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, that's what the rich man did in this story, he must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.

So, David knows the law. A sheep has been stolen and so the rich man needs to give the poor man four sheep back as payment, as reparation. And David has just pronounced his own sentence.

And David says, and as the story progresses, you can count them up, David is going to lose four sons. In this chapter, the child who's anonymous, we don't know his name. The chapter gives him no name because he's not going to stay around very long.

The baby that is born through this adulterous relationship is going to die. So that's child number one. In the next chapter, David's son, and at this point in time was his favorite son, Amnon.

He's going to be murdered by his half-brother Absalom, another of David's sons. That's two sons. Later, Absalom is going to be, as he tries to take David's throne and foments a rebellion in Israel.

Absalom is going to be killed in battle by, guess who? Joab, the instrument in Uriah's death. So that's three sons at this point. If we can call the first one anonymous, we all start with A. Anonymous, Amnon, and Absalom.

And this happens after David dies. As Solomon is taking the throne, another of David's sons, Adonijah, gets on Solomon's bad side by sleeping with one of David's wives, and Solomon sees that as an attempt to take the throne. In fact, Adonijah wanted to be king, and so Solomon executed Adonijah.

So, the consequences for David's crime, the four-fold payment, go beyond his lifetime. All four of these sons died prematurely. The last three, by violence and murder.

And David is going to discover that, yes, the sword does strike down one and then another. And so, David is going to make this four-fold payment, and the rest of the story from this point on, in part, is the account of how David paid a very, very severe price for his crime. It's all about God's discipline of David.

Then Nathan said to David, so Nathan has entrapped David. He has gotten David to be angry at the rich man, really at himself, and he's also gotten David to pronounce his own sentence. And at this point, Nathan says to David, you are the man.

In other words, you're the rich man in the story. Don't you see it? This is what the Lord God of Israel says. And those are interesting words.

This is what the Lord God of Israel says. The last time David heard that formula, at least according to the storyline from Nathan, was when the prophet announced to him the Lord's promise of an enduring dynasty, back in 2 Samuel 7, verses 5 and 8, which included provisions for how rebellion would be handled. So, the time had come for those provisions to be implemented.

And so, these words are going to echo, I think, in David's mind. And so this is what the Lord the God of Israel says. I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul.

And so, the Lord is rehearsing what he has done for David and why David should be grateful. I gave your master's house to you, and this is referring to Saul. And this kind of shocks some people, and your master's wives into your arms.

So apparently when David became king, he inherited all that was Saul's, including Saul's wives. And apparently David took them into his harem. And the Lord says I gave you those wives.

I think that's what disturbs people because they're thinking, would the Lord really do that? I think the Lord is just referring here to his sovereignty. He's the one who gave David Saul's throne and Saul's royal court, as it were, and everything that that entailed. I don't think this should be understood as the Lord is endorsing this kind of thing.

The Lord is just operating according to the cultural model, I think, in this case. I gave you Saul's house and everything that went with it. And women and wives were viewed as property in this culture.

I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. So, I've given you so much.

Why are you so greedy? Not satisfied, I think is the implication here. Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? So, the Lord accuses David of despising the word of the Lord, which is the same as despising his very person, as we'll see in verse 10, where the Lord is going to say, you really despised me. When you despised my word, you despised me.

And this verb that's used here, *baza*, also appears in 1 Samuel 2:30 in the Lord's denunciation of Eli. Those who despise me will be disdained. This association with Eli and his sons, which doesn't bode well for David here, doesn't bode well at all.

The Lord goes on, you struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword. And if you wanted to be real technical here, you could say, David didn't kill him with the sword. From the Lord's perspective, he did.

And you took his wife to be your own. So, we've got murder and theft here, in addition to the adultery and the coveting that took place prior to that. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.

So, the Lord makes it very clear here what he's talking about. You did evil in the eyes of the Lord. That's an interesting phrase, an expression that's been used earlier.

It occurs on one other occasion in 1 and 2 Samuel. Samuel accused Saul of doing evil in the eyes of the Lord when he failed to wipe out the Amalekites. If you go back to Judges, you see it used frequently to characterize sinful Israel.

This intertextual linking between David and Saul and with idolatrous Israel of the Judges period doesn't bode well for David. David is looking like Eli and his sons. He's looking like sinful Saul.

This is not good at all. Even the struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, strike down with the sword, that expression occurs one time before this in 1 and 2 Samuel.

Guess where? 1 Samuel 22.19, where Doeg the Edomite, acting on Saul's orders, slaughtered the inhabitants of Nove.

So, David is looking like some bad guys from the past, Eli and his sons, like sinful Saul. And he's actually looking like Doeg and Saul. Saul, remember, commanded Doeg to do this.

That doesn't bode well for David. He is being associated here with some really sinful people and that doesn't bode well at all. And David really killed Uriah.

Yeah, the Ammonites were involved. They killed him in battle, but it was the Lord. I mean, David himself who wielded the sword and the Lord is calling him on that.

Verse 10, now, therefore, in the Lord's punishment, there's always this, the punishment fits the crime. What goes around comes around. Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth.

That's the way God's justice works. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house. So, you wielded the sword, as it were, of the Ammonites to kill Uriah.

Now the sword is never going to depart from your house. You use the sword improperly, you're going to see the sword in your own house because you despised me, the Lord says. You despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.

And there are some translations that go in a different direction here. They talk about you causing the enemies of the Lord to despise or something like that, but the text is best understood as you will, you despised me. And so, I'm going to hold you accountable for your sins.

And actually, it's verse 14 where that alternate reading occurs. So, I got ahead of myself a little bit as we sometimes do. So, this is what the Lord says, out of your own household, I am going to bring calamity on you.

Before your very eyes, I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you. So, there was a sexual dimension to David's sin and now he is, the Lord is going to take David's wives and give them to one who is close to you and the fulfillment of this is going to come when Absalom violates David's concubines later in the story and we'll point that out when we get there. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.

Absalom is going to set up a tent and David's concubines are going to be inside that tent and Absalom is going to go in and have sexual relations with them as if to say, I'm in charge now, I'm the new king, I just inherited my father's harem. That's the

way this is going to play out. And of course, there are always innocent people in these things, and those concubines are going to be collateral damage, innocent people who are victimized by the power of others, David and Absalom.

So, David doesn't really try to defend himself. To his credit, in verse 13 he says, I have sinned against the Lord. And those words, I have sinned, have shown up a couple of other times in the former prophets prior to this.

Achan, after he had sinned, stealing the loot from Jericho that belonged to the Lord, confessed, I have sinned. Saul confessed that he had sinned a couple of times. In chapter 15 when Samuel confronted him after he hadn't obeyed the Lord and wiped out the Amalekites completely.

And then in chapter 26, he confessed to David that he had sinned when David confronted him. So here is David, lumped right in with Achan and Saul. But to David's credit, there's no attempt to defend himself.

He acknowledges his sin on this occasion. And of course, he wrote a famous psalm about this that you can read, Psalm 51, where he just pours his heart out before the Lord, makes no attempt to justify himself. And I think there you see the heart for God that David has.

Note Nathan's response, the Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. David had murdered a man.

David had committed a capital offense. And so, Nathan pronounces forgiveness here. He says the Lord has taken away your sin.

And what that means is you're not going to receive the full punishment that you deserve. You are not going to die. But notice he doesn't say, and all of the consequences that I just outlined are vetoed.

That's not going to happen in your experience. No, no, no, no, no. Verse 14, but because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the Lord, the son born to you, the son born to you will die.

You're not going to die, but this child will. And this is the verse that I was thinking about earlier. Verse 14, I think should be translated, you have treated the Lord with utter contempt.

Some translations have, you have made the enemies of the Lord show utter contempt. I think that's an attempt to soften what's going on here. Because the Hebrew verbal form that's used here, elsewhere, means to treat an object with contempt.

It doesn't mean making someone else treat that object with contempt. And there's a whole bunch of verses where you can see the word used this way. So, I think what we have with the addition of the enemies is a euphemistic addition that has been made.

But really what's happened is David has treated the Lord with contempt. And there are going to be consequences that have to be paid. Maybe not the ultimate consequence, but there are going to be consequences.

Once again, we have an echo of earlier texts. There's an echo of the narrator's description of Eli's sons. They treated the Lord's offering with contempt.

And that's a serious charge because if we go elsewhere in the scriptures where someone treats the Lord with contempt, they're evil enemies of God and they receive severe punishment for doing so. And so will David. So, what we see here is something about the nature of forgiveness.

I think a lot of people have the idea that forgiveness, even God's forgiveness, is just wiping the slate clean. In other words, God forgives us and he just forgives and forgets and there are no consequences to be paid. I just confess my sins.

God says I forgive you. No consequences. That's not true.

If you study the idea, the concept of forgiveness in the Old Testament, you'll see that sometimes forgiveness simply means a reduced sentence. And that's the case here. And so, God is just and justice has to be realized.

And so, God is going to make David pay some consequences for his crimes. And in fact, David's self-pronouncement, the fourfold payment, is going to play itself out. And this child who's going to be born is going to be installment number one.

But nevertheless, the Lord forgives David in the sense that he doesn't cause him to be executed. But going back to the covenant promise, yeah, the Lord is never going to cut off David as he did Saul, but he will discipline him severely using the rod of men was the metaphor, the image, because it's a father-son relationship and a father is going to discipline a son. And so having pronounced that the child will die, notice what happens next.

After Nathan had gone home, the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David and he became ill. The Lord struck the child. Earlier the Lord struck Naval, wicked Naval, fool, Abigail's husband.

Remember him? The Lord struck him. And David anticipated the possibility at least when he was talking about Saul that the Lord might strike Saul. And the Lord did take Saul out of the picture.

But now it's David's own child whom the Lord strikes. In verse 16, David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and spent the nights lying in sackcloth on the ground.

And the elders of his household stood beside him to get him up from the ground, but he refused and he wouldn't eat any food with them. So, David is beseeching the Lord, Lord, please let the child live. I think David realizes he's going to have to make a fourfold payment, but I think he's praying, please let this child not be the first installment.

And Nathan said the child would die, but there was no indication that that was necessarily an unconditional decree. And so, David's not sure and he knows that the Lord will sometimes relent from sending punishment and so he's begging the Lord to spare the child. But on the seventh day, the child died.

And David's attendants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they thought while the child was still living, he wouldn't listen to us when we spoke to him. How can we now tell him the child is dead? He may do something desperate, maybe suicidal, who knows. So, their reasoning is he's this upset when the child is ill, what will happen when the child actually dies? He'll flip out, he'll go over the edge, so we can't tell him.

But David is very observant and he notices that his attendants are whispering among themselves and he realizes the child is dead. Is the child dead, he asked. Yes, they replied, he is dead.

And then David surprises them. David got up from the ground and after he had washed, put on lotions, and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the Lord and worshipped. David, as we know from Psalm 51, his heart has really been impacted by this and he's back on the right track in terms of his attitude toward the Lord.

And he does something here that we're going to see elsewhere in the story. When these judgments come, he's going to be very emotionally distraught at points, but nevertheless, he eventually accepts the discipline of the Lord. And then he went to his own house and at his request, they served him food and he ate.

And his attendants asked him, why are you acting this way? He must have had a fairly close relationship with some of these people for them to be able to ask him these kinds of questions. While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now the child is dead, you get up and eat. We don't get it.

And so, David is going to give them an explanation in verse 22. 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.

Because even though the prophet had said the son was going to die, there was no indication in that statement that that was fixed. And so, David knows how it works. Sometimes the Lord will relent and so he prayed for that.

But now that he is dead, why should I go on fasting? What good is that going to do now? It's obvious that the Lord had decreed. He wasn't just announcing conditionally that the child would die. He had decreed that the child would die and the decree has come to pass.

Can I bring him back again? No. Implication. And then David says, I will go to him, but he will not return to me.

And a lot of people use this as a comforting verse. I think that's probably not the way it should be used. In other words, he's in heaven and I will someday go to be with him in heaven.

I'm not so sure David had that full of an understanding of the afterlife. I think David's words are simply in the context here. Can I bring him back again? No.

I will go to him. I'll die. Everybody dies.

I will die and I'll go to the place of the dead, the land where the dead go. But he will not return to me. People don't come back from the dead, David I think is saying here.

And so, the trip between the living and the dead, the realms of the living and the dead, it's strictly one way. In ancient Mesopotamian texts, the subterranean world of the dead is actually called the land of no return. And seven gates close behind the one who enters this land, preventing them from returning to the land of the living.

Remember in Jonah, in chapter two, in his Thanksgiving song, after he's been delivered by the fish as the Lord's instrument, he's describing how he was ready to die. And he said the gates were closing behind me. And so, he reflects this view.

So, in the ancient Near Eastern world, the idea is you die and you go to the land of the dead, but no one comes back from that place. I think that's really all David is saying. He's just resigning himself to the fact that this is over.

The child's not going to come back. I will eventually die and go to where he is, but he's not coming back. So, what good would it do for me to fast and pray? We need to get on with life.

Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, who was obviously going to be distraught. A mother is going to grieve over the loss of her child. And he went to her and made love to her.

And she gave birth to a son and they named him Solomon, Shlomo, whose name comes from the root for peace. So, it's a name that has that connotation. And this is interesting.

The Lord loved him. And because the Lord loved him, he sent word through Nathan, the prophet, to name him Jedediah. And the name Jedediah means beloved of the Lord, beloved of Yah, beloved of the Lord.

And so, this is the Lord's way, I think, of saying to David, you are going to have to be disciplined. You're going to have to be punished for your sin. You need to know how it feels when people are violated.

And you violated Uriah and you need to know how that feels. I am a just God and we're just not going to wipe the slate clean on this. But at the same time, I want you to know that I still love you and I'm still committed to you and your dynasty.

And this child, I want him named Jedediah. Now, they're going to call him Solomon in the story that follows. But sometimes in this culture, in ancient Israel, a child could have more than one name.

I mean, Jesus is Immanuel. But nevertheless, he's called Jesus throughout the Gospels. But there's a sense in which he's Immanuel, God with us.

And so, Solomon, peace, is also Jedediah, beloved of the Lord. And so, this is the Lord's way of reminding David, that I'm still committed to you and your dynasty. And I have attached my love, I am committed to you.

I have attached my love to this child. Meanwhile, now we kind of get back to where the story left off. Remember, Joab was down fighting the Ammonites.

If David had not fallen prey to his own power and greed, the story could have just gone on right from the end of chapter 10 or right to this point. Meanwhile, Joab fought against Rabbah of the Ammonites and captured the royal citadel. And Joab then sent messengers to David saying, I fought against Rabbah.

I've taken its water supply. Now muster the rest of the troops, besiege the city, and capture it. Otherwise, I will take the city and it will be named after me.

An expression is used here for named after. The idea is if Joab takes it, he'll rename it to show Israel's sovereignty over it. It'll be named after him naturally because he's its conqueror.

He's basically saying to David, you need to get down here. It needs to be renamed after you, the king. And so, David gets back to doing what David does best, obeying the Lord, fighting the wars of the Lord.

And David musters the entire army, goes to Rabbah, attacks it, captures it, and establishes his authority over the Ammonites. And so, David is back on track at this point. He's going and he's attacking, just like he did Goliath, just like he did the Philistines at Keilah.

He's capturing the enemy just like he did at Jerusalem and also with the Aramean king in 2 Samuel 8. So, language is being used here that connects what David is accomplishing at this point with some of his best days prior to this. And so, we can see that David is restored. He is the Lord's instrument in bringing security and victory to the Israelites.

Nevertheless, we've still got three more installments to pay on that stolen lamb. And we're going to read about one of those in our next lesson where we're going to be looking at 2 Samuel chapter 13.

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