

# The Life of David

## Long Live the King

### Study 13 | 2 Samuel 12

#### News and Needs

##### *Upcoming Events:*

- David Stancil, intern at Resurrection Pres., will be ordained at the July 4<sup>th</sup> worship service at Resurrection Pres. in Williamsburg. All are invited to attend. Service starts at 5:30, reception after.

- July 11<sup>th</sup>, Potluck picnic in Prospect Park following morning worship.

- Philharmonic in the Park, July 16<sup>th</sup>

##### *Opportunities to Serve:*

- As you close out the community group year, please continue to discuss with your groups the need for more community group hosts and community group leaders.
- Also, be sure to put something on your community group's calendar for July and August and get those events to Amy **ASAP**.

#### *The Rebuke of the King*

The sermon text will be 2 Samuel 12:1-15. For your group's discussion, I recommend reading the entirety of chapter 12.

**1. Is God's sending Nathan to rebuke David a story of God's wrath or a story of God's grace? What did David deserve and what did he get? Did David sin against God's justice or against God's grace? How do the punishments David receives factor into answering this question, wrath or grace?**

The verb sent occurs twelve times in the previous chapter. Lots of sending and being sent. David being the primary mover of the action. So not surprising that chapter 12 begins with another sending, but this time, it is the Lord who is doing the sending. In that short opening sentence, you can feel the weight of the shift in action. David was in action. Now the Lord moves into action. We expect that retribution, punishment, judgement, wrath are coming for David and we prepare to sit back and watch the smack down.

Sin is always tragic. The acute pain of sin's tragedy is that when man sins, he sins not simply against God's holiness, but also against God's grace. Adam and Eve had everything they could have imagined, and yet, they still reached out for the one thing they had to wait for. Verses 7-9 spell this tragedy out for David. The Lord launches into an itemized list of examples of his faithfulness to David. You can hear the pain in the Lord's voice in verse 9 when he says, "Why?" After all that the Lord had done for David, why in the world did David feel the need to reach out and take something that was not meant for him? That's the tragedy of sin. "For sin to appear as lurid as it should it must stand in the blaze of grace. Treachery may only appear hideous when viewed against the fidelity it has despised." (Dale Ralph Davis, 2 Samuel Commentary)

We expect David to get smacked, and smacked hard. And we know from reading ahead in the chapter, he does. But is wrath and punishment the only thing the Lord comes to take out on David? Is getting smacked the only thing going on in this chapter?

"Yahweh sends Nathan to David. Of course we know what that will mean, for we have cheated and read the rest of the story. But we must not run ahead too soon; we need to dally on those opening words for they speak of the vigilance of grace; they show us that grace pursues and exposes the sinner in his sin. They teach us that Yahweh will not allow his servant to remain comfortable in sin but will ruthlessly expose his sin lest he settle down in it. You may succeed in unfaithfulness; but Yahweh will come after you. What immense and genuine comfort every servant of Christ should find in the six words of this chapter! Not

that God's pursuing grace is enjoyable. But what if grace did not pursue? What if Yahweh abandoned us when we succeed at sin?" - Dale Ralph Davis, 2 Samuel commentary

"And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." - Heb. 12:5-11

Sometimes this is often hard for us to wrap our minds around. When we are rebuked for our sin, when we are disciplined for continuing in sin unchecked, it is actually an assurance that we do in fact belong to God and he loves us deeply. It's often hard to accept this, because as the author of Hebrews says, it is not a pleasant experience of grace in the moment. Yet, this is something we know and have experience from the time we are children. Our earthly parents discipline us when we are wrong in order to protect us from destroying ourselves. Sometimes quite literally (e.g. when we want to stick that metal object in an electrical socket). Sometimes when we are going to destroy our character, integrity, hearts, and souls (e.g. when we want to persist in being deceitful and liars). And they do so because they love us and care for us.

Some of you unfortunately know what it's like to grow up without parents. Or even if they were physically present, they were functionally absent in involvement and engagement with you as their child. Often kids hear a situation like this and they say, "Yes! That's what I want. To be free to do whatever I want and not have a parent telling me what to do and correcting me when I do wrong." But you can usually ask a child who has absent parents, or parents who don't care enough to discipline them, and they will tell you they long for a parent who actually sets rules and enforces them. Why? Because it shows them that they are loved and cared for. That they are in fact sons and daughters worth protecting from our own self-destruction. That in being disciplined by a parent there is actually more love and freedom, not less.

The Lord rebuking David is in fact an act of grace to David. God's wrath is the removal of his presence from his creation. If God would have given over David to his sin, that would have been wrath (see Romans 1). That's what hell is, the removal of God's presence forever. If God would have removed himself and allowed David to be executed for his adultery and murder as he deserved, that would have been simply God's wrath. Instead, God treats David as a son and calls him out for his sin. God disciplines David and graciously gives David a chance to repent for his sin.

All that being said, is the fact that David does pay dearly for his sin a refutation of the argument I am making that David's rebuke from the Lord is actually grace and

not wrath? I don't believe that it is. Just because there are consequences for sin doesn't mean that there is no graciousness in God's discipline for sin. Again, our experience as children and parents shows this. Discipline involves both rebuke and consequence if we are to learn as children or teach as parents that there are blessings with obedience and curses with disobedience.

Now don't get me wrong, it's not as if the Lord takes pleasure in taking the life of David's child with Bathsheba or the lasting consequences of strife and bloodshed that will mark the house of David in the future. He doesn't delight in it, but in this fallen world, there are consequences for sin. And those consequences never only affect individuals. Our sin affects everyone, especially our children, unfortunately for generations in some cases.

For David's sin, an innocent son dies. For the sake of all of humanity's sin, another innocent Son will one day die.

**2. How do we respond when we are rebuked for our sin? Why is it often so difficult for us to take rebuke? Why is it often so difficult for us to offer rebuke? What does our struggle with rebuke have to say about our understanding of God's justice and God's grace? What is the goal of being disciplined for our sin?**

In a culture that values highly individual freedom and autonomy in conjunction with the relativization of moral standard, it is often difficult for us to imagine anyone ever calling us out for sin in our life. Our initial response is often, "Who are you to tell me I'm wrong?" On the flip side, for the same reasons, we say to ourselves, "Who am I to tell you you're wrong?" Both in receiving and giving of rebuke, we as a church community often struggle with the idea of holding one another accountable and confrontation of sin when needed.

The goal of accountability, rebuke, and discipline is not just to slap the sinner around. The goal is always restoration. The goal is always to keep us faithfully keeping the covenant that God has graciously made with us in Jesus Christ. To keep us under the shower of God's blessing, rather than removed from it. If we struggle with the idea of accountability, rebuke and discipline, perhaps we're struggling to grasp just how pervasive and heinous our sin really is. Perhaps we struggle to grasp just how horribly, frighteningly terrible God's holiness truly is. Perhaps we fail to acknowledge how richly God has blessed us by his grace. And therefore we can't see that when God lays his heavy hand upon us when we persist in sin, he is not cramping our style, he's passionately caring for us. If a brother or sister in Christ ever confronts you on your sin, before the defensive walls shoot up, remember God could give you over to your sin. He could have sent this person into your life and just let you remove yourself from his presence, and therefore his life and blessing. Do not harden your heart. True fathers discipline their children because true fathers love their children. Sure, it's not enjoyable in the moment, but the goal of discipline is to return you to your Father's side.

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