

2ND SAMUEL

Week 19, chapter 12 continued

We will continue to go slow as the crucial God patterns and principles absolutely gush out of the pages of 2nd Samuel as it concerns the David and Bathsheba affair. And in order to understand them we're necessarily going to have to connect them with earlier and later Scripture and events.

When we last met, David had just received news from the prophet Nathan of the judgment from God on account of his terrible sins of adultery and murder; and yet, ironically, at the same time David was given the good news that he was forgiven and also was promised that he would not die for those sins. How can that be? There seems to be a conflict between the notions that God is punishing David with consequences for his sin at the same time He is forgiving those same sins. And this conundrum has caused both Judaism and Christianity the greatest of troubles in trying to sort this out for what it means to us in our time. Judaism basically sees it as special divine favoritism towards David, and Christianity sees what happened as an abolished and no longer valid practice of God from times past.

As humans are wont to do, we tend to take a troubling matter like this and make an overly simple doctrine to cover it; one that works well within the hierarchy and context of other faith doctrines that govern our particular sect or denomination. Thus especially in the more contemporary evangelical branch of the Western Church (although by no means is it limited to that branch), the theological thought generally is that since the Father has forgiven our sins (based upon our trust in Jesus) then whatever divine punishment **might** normally have been expected to accompany it, in the end we will not suffer any punishment at all (salvation in Christ equals remittance from sins, which equals exemption of punishment, wrath or retribution).

I would argue that the Holy Scriptures (Old and New Testaments) give us a little different picture. I would argue that the Biblical pattern from beginning to end is that while trust in God

indeed opens the door for grace and forgiveness, it does not automatically pardon us from the earthly consequences of our wrongful actions (actions defined as sins). The Biblical pattern and direct commands from Yehoveh make it clear that sin always demands a payment; and that sin and punishment occurs on two levels: spiritual and physical. There is little better illustration of this principle of duality than what we read here in 2nd Samuel chapter 12.

So let's re-read a portion of chapter 12 and then we'll discuss this a little more.

RE-READ 2ND SAMUEL 12: 9 – 23

In our last lesson we learned that there is a vast gulf between belief in God and trust in God and so there is also an equally vast gulf between forgiveness of sins and pardon of earthly consequences or punishments for those sins (one may call them “natural” consequences I suppose). Last week we learned that **belief** is the level of relationship between God and His created beings that even the demons possess. Belief is merely acknowledgment of Yehoveh's existence (and perhaps even of His nature and sovereignty) but belief does not include appropriate worship of Him or response to Him. **Trust** is when we allow belief to turn to God-centered inner transformation of our hearts (Paul calls this a circumcision of the heart) that then produces obedience. Obedience opens the door to grace, which is God's means of forgiveness.

It is the same idea in drawing a distinction between forgiveness of sins and what the consequences are for those sins (if any). Forgiveness of sins takes place in the spiritual realm. It is what Believers think of as the eternal or heavenly. However sin itself (especially when we think of it as wrongful behavior) occurs on two levels simultaneously; the physical level (the actual behavior and its effect upon others or ourselves) and the spiritual level (sin, even wrongful behavior, is first and foremost a trespass against God and His holiness).

Thus notice what happens to David. He is told that his sin has been forgiven and he will not die. However as consequence of his sin his infant son will die and the sword will never leave his household. And just so we don't misunderstand about WHOM it is that is bringing about these punishments upon David, verses 11 and 12 say: **“....I (God) will generate evil against**

you out of your own household.....”

I don't know how much more directly it can be said. God generating evil against you in consequence for your sins is divine punishment.

So what does it mean, then, when God tells David that he will not die? Certainly it is not a promise that he is going to become physically immortal and never go to the grave. And equally as certain this is not talking about David being executed for his crime by means of civil procedure according the Law. The Hebrew word for die is ***muth***, and it absolutely means to die physically. Here is the sense that we are to take this statement: it is that David will not die as a wicked sinner in God's eyes and thus descend to ***Gehinnom***. Instead he will certainly die of old age (as all men, wicked or righteous, are appointed to do once), and he will go to ***Sheol*** (the grave where all men go). David will NOT die in unrighteousness, and thus his eternal essence will NOT come to an end upon his physical death (an end to ones' eternal essence is what Hebrews thought happened to the wicked dead).

Now of course there is no mention of either dying and going to heaven or dying and NOT going to heaven. And this is because there was no concept of connecting death with heaven in this era. And that makes sense because until Messiah came and through the sacrifice of His own blood sufficiently cleansed the righteous dead as well as those who were living and believed upon Him, even the righteous could not be allowed into God's holy presence in heaven. Instead they would reside in Abraham's Bosom (a sort of safe and pleasant holding chamber for those who died in righteousness) until that moment that the Messiah finally came and freed them.

At the same time, during David's life and then even after his death, David's family has been ordained, as a direct divine punishment upon David, to suffer calamities. And of course his family's calamities grieve David perhaps more than any other family member because he is acutely aware that the disasters that will be befall his wives, children, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, and others are the result of his sin. And all of this is in the name of God's justice, which can NEVER be averted. All sin demands a payment on TWO levels; the physical and the spiritual.

God gave spiritual grace to David (forgave him) and so David will not suffer the spiritual effects of his sin (the eternal effects, the effects that come after physical death). God does this because the spiritual part of sin is the part whereby we have wronged God. But at the same

time spiritual grace doesn't necessarily extend to the physical consequences of sin (God's earthly justice), because this is the part whereby we have usually wronged a fellow human being (by means of cheating, stealing, murder, adultery, bearing false witness, deception, and so on).

Thus by all means God will punish Believers for our sins; but that punishment doesn't include "death". And the kind of death it doesn't include is of the same kind as David avoided: death in our wickedness, which disqualifies us from eternal life. A Believer (as did David) will of course physically die at some point; but David did NOT suffer a judicial death (cut-off due to his criminal behavior). A judicial death (Biblically speaking) means death as punishment for wrong doing (breaking the Law of Moses) at the hand of human government. And that death is often called the death of the unrighteous in the Bible; Yeshua did NOT do anything to end that kind of physical death nor did Messiah's crucifixion end God's physical consequences upon us for behavioral sin on this earth. Rather Christ's death paid the price for our trespasses against God, not against man per se. Here is a way to picture this: His death paid the price for our sin on only one of the two levels, the part that settles our heavenly account with God for sinning against Him. However the part whereby our sin includes wrongful behavior to our fellow man is NOT pardoned but rather demands an earthly payment. Punishment is due us; oh, we may well receive mercy from the Lord and the consequences (punishment) may never equal the damage we did to another or that we deserve; but there will be consequences and they may come at a time and in a way we might never expect. At other times the punishment might be far greater than what it seems that our crime merited (at least in our eyes).

Open your Bibles to Acts 4:32.

READ ACTS 4:32 – 5:11

Here is a perfect example of two Believers among the Messianic Community who committed a sin and instantly lost their lives for it. The sin and their death for it cannot be wished away. Can anyone among us say that this was divine "discipline" and not divine "punishment"? And they lost their lives over an issue of deceit and material possessions (it really had more to do with stealing Holy Property....but that's too much to go into here and doesn't change its effect). And this episode scared the daylights out of the Messianic Community because I suspect they may have had some thought (as does some denominations' doctrines) that God's grace brought with it not only eternal forgiveness for sins but it abolished all earthly consequences as well. In fact we find in Romans 6 Paul addressing this issue, which means apparently some of the Believing community did think that once you were saved you could sin freely with no divine consequences whatsoever.

^{CJB} Romans 6:1 ***So then, are we to say, "Let's keep on sinning, so that there can be more grace"? ² Heaven forbid!***

How about the 2 criminals that died with Messiah that dreadful day at Golgotha?

Turn you Bibles to Luke 23.

READ LUKE 23:32 – 34, and 39-43

One of the criminals who admitted that he deserved to die for his criminal act, but who recognized that Yeshua was exactly who he claimed to be, was forgiven (in verse 43) by Yeshua. But he still died for his crime. The spiritual component of his criminal act was pardoned, but not the earthly part. And nowhere do we see Yeshua saying that the criminal no longer deserved to die, nor did something happen to save him physically, nor do we ever find a record of this story that explains that God's forgiveness thereby erased the earthly justice due that forgiven criminal.

I must tell you (and risk offending some I imagine) that I cannot accept the doctrine that insists that God's punishment upon His worshippers is abolished or the consequence is actually "discipline" (and discipline must not be viewed as punishment). Oh yes, it is said, I did indeed commit a terrible sin and as a direct result I lost my wife or I lost my job or I lost my ministry, but because God loves me then I won't call those consequences punishment, but discipline. Fine; but truly that is a flawed argument of semantics and I think, unfortunately, it is but another attempt to uphold a manmade doctrine in order to displace God's truth because we prefer our comfortable doctrines that are more to our liking than His more difficult truth. God loved David, but punished him. God loved Ananias and Sapphira, Believers, but punished them severely.

Oh, but it gets even more dicey. In verse 15 we read that ***"....Adonai struck the child that Uriyah's wife had borne to David....."*** Why did God kill David's innocent child? Sin always demands a payment and since David's sin included blood-guilt, and since Yehoveh decided

that David would not lose his own life to pay for that blood-guilt (and by the way David was quite glad for that) then only another human life could satisfy God's perfect justice. Further the condemned child was a product of David's adultery. The child was a physical result of his contempt for God and thus God decided it could not remain.

There is also another God-principle and pattern at play in the death of David's baby son: vertical retribution. Vertical retribution in fact can put the punishment for trespassing against the Lord upon descendants even several generations removed from when the trespass occurred. We discussed this at length in our study of the Torah, so if you want to review the lesson from Numbers 15 you can get a more detailed explanation. This is something that might sound strange to us, but it was real, God-ordained and practiced by the Hebrews. Modern Believers occasionally talk about generational curses that are the result NOT of what the affected person might have done, but of something that person's father, mother, or grandparent, or an even earlier ancestor might have done. And there are those who pray fervently on the behalf of others that these generational curses might be lifted.

But this is NOT the same thing as pinning the father's sin on the son, and vice versa, which is something prohibited by the Law of Moses (and further expanded upon in the New Testament). This is called transgenerational punishment. The difference between the law AGAINST transgenerational punishment and Vertical Retribution is that Vertical Retribution is NOT part of the civil or criminal law code. Vertical Retribution is decided on and carried out supernaturally by God, at His prerogative, and men play no role in it. The law banning transgenerational punishment, on the other hand, has to do with humans carrying out the justice system the Lord has established. If (for example) a father committed a murder the son cannot be a legal substitute and so a court may not order the son to be executed; only the perpetrator is liable for his own capital offense when being judged by human judges. However notice that David and Bathsheba's baby got sick and died almost immediately after its birth. There was no human hand involved; the child had committed no civil offense and was under no civil punishment. Rather, just as verse 15 says: God struck the child. David had been spared the death penalty, but since sin has to be paid for in like kind, David's child lost its life at God's hand. Vertical retribution.

Verse 16 explains that when David got word that the newborn was ill, he began earnestly praying and fasting to the point that his royal court became terribly concerned. Let's be clear: every time one of David's many children got sick, he did not pray and fast and stay up all night lying on the floor. David knew perfectly well that Bathsheba's baby was marked for death because of David's sin. He hoped that perhaps by showing incredible (and very un-kingly) humility before the Lord, pleading for its life, that the Lord might relent and show mercy. The royal court was baffled by David's actions because they had no idea about this curse from God placed upon David's household.

When the baby died, David did the opposite; he got up and washed himself, ate, and went back to work. Now David's court was even more mystified since when the baby was alive he behaved as though he was mourning, and now that it has died David behaves as if no death had occurred. There is some disagreement over whether the statement about the baby dying on the 7th day means the 7th day of illness or that the baby was one week old. Either way the baby was a newborn, and the significance of the number 7 is that its death was of divine order and completeness. God had ordained the baby's death as punishment for his father's sin, and now it is done. The folks around David would have recognized the significance of the 7 days, even if they weren't sure what the divine issue was.

No mourning period was required, because the baby was not yet a month old, so David broke no law or tradition by not mourning. The tradition is that an infant of less than one month of age was not given "person" status and so no mourning was ordained if it died. Certainly there would have been much grief and sorrow expressed, but it would have been informal.

Let's re-read the last few verses of chapter 12.

READ 2ND SAMUEL 12: 24 – end

Any mother would have been grief stricken over the death of her infant child that she had carried inside of her for those 40 weeks, regardless of the circumstances surrounding its conception. Bathsheba was no different. David comforted Bathsheba and in the process she conceived and bore another child: Solomon.

We all know that Solomon would become the next King of Israel. It was apparently destined that Bathsheba was to be the queen mother. I find it fascinating that the child born to Bathsheba due to unfaithfulness was not allowed to become the son who would be the next king. Yet in God's mercy, when that baby died her next child would be David's successor. Why couldn't the baby have lived, and then the next son (Solomon) born to a properly wed David and Bathsheba been declared the successor? Despite the customary and sacred rights of the firstborn, Israel's history is rife with the firstborn being bypassed for another son as heir.

It reminds one of Abraham. Abraham impregnated Sarai's Egyptian handmaiden Hagar (as a result of unfaithfulness on Sarai and Abraham's part) and the result was Ishmael. It was a given that Abraham had to produce an heir; but for the Lord the circumstances of Hagar's pregnancy were not in keeping with His plan. So later Sarai gets pregnant, gives birth to Isaac, but the Lord determined that Ishmael had to be sent away. Thus Abraham's firstborn (Ishmael) was bypassed for his 2nd born, Isaac.

In Hebrew Solomon is **Shlomo**, meaning something like "he is peace". Very interestingly we read that God gave Solomon another name: **Y'didyah** (Jedidiah) that means "loved by God". The Scriptures make it clear that this was a name sent from God to David (through the prophet Natan). Interestingly we find that we only hear of this child ever being called **Shlomo** and not **Y'didyah**. I think the reason for that is easily explainable: the child's formal given name was **Shlomo**, but his title or reputation was "loved by God", **Y'didyah**. I have taught you in past lessons that one of the senses of the word "love" is acceptance (just as one of the senses of the word "hate" is rejection). I am fairly certain that the point here is that God sent word to David that God "accepts" this child. In other words, this is the son who God has chosen as the next anointed King of Israel (as opposed to any other).

Verse 26 abruptly ends the matter of David and Bathsheba and returns to the military situation that had been ongoing all throughout this palace intrigue. The siege of Rabbah had been in process for quite a long time (probably on again/off again according to the seasons). It had started well before David ever spied Bathsheba, but now after at least a couple of years, the end was near.

Joab sent word that he had made a significant breakthrough; he had captured the city's water supply. And with that, it was a matter of no more than a few short weeks before the people would have to surrender or die of thirst. The city of Rabbah seems to have been divided into two parts; the Royal city and the main city. The Royal city portion was where the water source existed. **Yo'av's** message to David wasn't as disrespectful as it might sound to us. It's only that David didn't have time to procrastinate or lolly-gag (as he had been doing for some years now). If David wanted to get the credit for this great battle victory, he needed to come right now. Any day the siege-weary citizens of Rabbah were going to give up and they would surrender to **Yo'av** unless David got there quickly; and thus **Yo'av** would get all the credit and "Hail to the Conqueror" would be sung to him. So wisely, **Yo'av** notifies David and gives the King the choice. Naturally David needs all the good PR he can get right now, considering the messy Bathsheba affair that was all the talk of the region. Nothing takes the citizenry's mind off of domestic problems more than a good war and hopefully a good war victory.

It was 50 miles from Yerushalayim to Rabbah, so David takes a large force and heads out for the siege. In an odd way, this shows that David had at least learned some lessons; he led the force himself and went to the battlefield as he should. On the other hand, there was an ulterior motive. The battle was already virtually won and he was going there to get the credit.

Verse 30 is a curious one; it speaks of David taking the crown off of the King of Rabbah's head and placing it on his own. That isn't what is odd; what is odd is that the crown weighed 1 full talent. A talent from that era is about 70 pounds (later, in New Testament times, the talent measurement was revised and would be the equivalent of around 120 pounds). Nonetheless it is unimaginable that a king could possibly wear a crown that weighed 70 pounds!

The solution can be found when we look at the word often translated as Malkam (the "king" of Amon who was wearing the crown) in 2nd Samuel, but translated differently in 1st Kings 11.

CJB 1 Kings 11:33 *I will do this because they have abandoned me and worshipped 'Ashtoret the goddess of the Tzidoni, K'mosh the god of Mo'av and Milkom the god of the people of 'Amon. They haven't lived according to my ways, so that they could do what was right in my view and obey my regulations and rulings, as did David his father.*

Here Milkom (Malkam) is called the "god" of the people of Amon (Rabbah was the capital city of Amon). Milkom is an alternate spelling for the name Molech (the official chief god of Amon). And Molech is but another name for Ba'al. So what we see happening in 2nd Samuel 12 is that David has taken this fabulously valuable and enormous crown off of the head of the Molech idol and he sets it upon his own head for a moment as symbolic of Israel's God's victory over the Ammonite god. Very customary for that era.

This chapter ends in a controversy. There are some serious translation issues surrounding the last verse. There are two trains of thought regarding the meaning and so the older English translations make it that David used saws, iron instruments, and axes to brutalize, torture, and kill the civilians not only of Rabbah but of every substantial city and village throughout Amon.

Further, David also burned some of the Ammonites alive (passed them through fire).

Some of the newer translations (such as in our CJB) however make it that David used all the people of Amon as laborers and put them to work USING axes, iron implements, saws, and kilns to dry bricks. In other words, David put them to work on construction projects to help build up Israel.

Such a thing as mindless bloody genocide upon helpless civilian populations is hard to fathom from a number of viewpoints. First off, every king wanted more laborers for his projects. David was a smart man; he had thousands of skilled laborers at hand if he wanted them. So why would he throw it all away? Second there is no record of such an atrocity occurring outside of the questionable English translations of this passage. Third God gave no orders to massacre conquered people who lived OUTSIDE of the Promised Land (Canaan), and Amon was in the Trans-Jordan. Fourth while one might argue that this pitiless massacre might frighten nearby nations from attempting to take on Israel, it could have just as easily roused them to band together to take righteous action against such blatant barbarism. Its one thing to annihilate the enemy army; it's quite another to slaughter a population that has surrendered. And finally, God never asks His army to make the deaths of the enemy (especially non-combatants) as painful and brutal as possible. That David would think it pious to saw people in half, cut off limbs with axes, burn people alive, and so on just doesn't fit any God pattern that we've thus far seen.

I have no doubt that David used the people of Amon as forced labor, and it accounts for why he was able to grow and expand his Kingdom so rapidly in the 2nd half of his reign.

We'll begin chapter 13 next time.