

**2 Samuel 12**  
**October 15, 2023**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Q: When we sin, what is your understanding of how to get right with God? [Let people engage – Confession of sin (not covering our sin); Submit to God’s dealings with us;

**Transition:** There are several camera angles I could take to approach this lesson like how to confront someone who has fallen into sin. However, I want to look at how we can get right with God when we’ve done wrong. I think it will become evident in today’s text that to get right with God when we’ve sinned is by **confession and submission to how God wants to deal with us!** Let’s begin.

**BOOK:**

**Nathan Rebukes David**

**12** The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, “There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. <sup>2</sup> The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, <sup>3</sup> 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. It was like a daughter to him.

<sup>4</sup> “Now a traveler came to the rich man, 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. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him.”

<sup>5</sup> David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, “As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die! <sup>6</sup> He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.”

<sup>7</sup> Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man! 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. <sup>8</sup> I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. <sup>9</sup> Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. <sup>10</sup> Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.’

<sup>11</sup> “This is what the LORD says: ‘Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. <sup>12</sup> You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.’ ”

<sup>13</sup> Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.”

Nathan replied, “The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. <sup>14</sup> But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt, the son born to you will die.”

<sup>15</sup> After Nathan had gone home, the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and he became ill. <sup>16</sup> David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and went into his house and spent the nights lying on the ground. <sup>17</sup> The elders of his household stood beside him to get him up from the ground, but he refused, and he would not eat any food with them.

<sup>18</sup> On the seventh day the child died. David's servants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they thought, "While the child was still living, we spoke to David but he would not listen to us. How can we tell him the child is dead? He may do something desperate."

<sup>19</sup> David noticed that his servants were whispering among themselves and he realized the child was dead. "Is the child dead?" he asked.

"Yes," they replied, "he is dead."

<sup>20</sup> Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate.

<sup>21</sup> His servants asked him, "Why are you acting this way? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!"

<sup>22</sup> He answered, "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.' <sup>23</sup> But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me."

<sup>24</sup> Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and lay with her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. The LORD loved him; <sup>25</sup> and because the LORD loved him, he sent word through Nathan the prophet to name him Jedidiah. (Means "loved by the Lord.")

<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile Joab fought against Rabbah of the Ammonites and captured the royal citadel. <sup>27</sup> Joab then sent messengers to David, saying, "I have fought against Rabbah and taken its water supply. <sup>28</sup> Now muster the rest of the troops and besiege the city and capture it. Otherwise, I will take the city, and it will be named after me."

<sup>29</sup> So David mustered the entire army and went to Rabbah, and attacked and captured it. <sup>30</sup> He took the crown from the head of their king (of Milcom)—its weight was a talent (about 75 lbs) of gold, and it was set with precious stones—and it was placed on David's head. He took a great quantity of plunder from the city <sup>31</sup> and brought out the people who were there, consigning them to labor with saws and with iron picks and axes, and he made them work at brickmaking. He did this to all the Ammonite towns. Then David and his entire army returned to Jerusalem.

### **Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

### **LOOK:**

If we don't confess our sin, we become slaves to our guilt. But there's no need to do that. The Lord is gracious and compassionate, ready to forgive our sin. In His righteousness, He may deal with us severely even after He has forgiven us. But we can trust that He always has our ultimate good in mind.

### **Close in Prayer**

### **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

***Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (2 Sam 12). Victor Books.***

### **III. David and the Lord (12)**

A. *David's confession (vv. 1–14).*

At least a year passed, during which time David covered his sins. Read Ps. 32 and 51 for descriptions of David's feelings during that difficult period. He became weak and sick

physically; he lost his joy; he lost his witness; he lost his power. God gave David plenty of time to make things right, but he persisted in hiding his sins. Had he come to the Lord on his own, in sincere repentance, things might have been different later on. Finally, God sent Nathan, not with a message of blessing as in chapter 7, but with a message of conviction. How easy it is to be convicted about other people's sins! But Nathan fearlessly told David, "You are the man!" We must commend David for bowing to the authority of the Word of God and confessing his sin. He could have slain Nathan. (Note that David even named a son after Nathan, 1 Chron. 3:5; Luke 3:31). God was ready to forgive David's sins, but He could not prevent those sins from "bringing forth death" (James 1:15). God's grace forgives, but God's government must allow sinners to reap what they sow. See Ps. 99:8. "He shall restore fourfold!" David had declared punishment concerning the man in Nathan's story, so God accepted his sentence. The sword never did depart from David's household: the baby died; Absalom killed Amnon, who had ruined Tamar (chap. 13); then Joab killed Absalom (18:9–17); and Adonijah was slain by Benaiah (1 Kings 2:24–25). Fourfold! Add to these trials the awful ruin of Tamar, the shameful treatment of David's wives by Absalom (12:11; 16:20–23), plus the rebellion of Absalom, and you can see that David paid dearly for a few moments of lustful pleasure. He sowed lust and reaped the same; he sowed murder and reaped murders, for "whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

#### *B. David's contrition (vv. 15–25).*

Immediately the chastening hand of God moved, and the baby became ill. Nathan had said it would die (v. 14), but David still fasted and prayed for the life of the child. He would not even listen to his servants, but at the end of a week, the child died. David's fasting and prayers could not alter the counsel of God. He had committed a sin unto death, and it was wrong to pray about it (1 John 5:14–16). However, we appreciate David's concern for the child and mother, and his faith in the goodness of God. We appreciate too his confidence in God's Word, for he knew the child had gone to heaven (v. 23). While we abhor David's sin and all the trouble it brought, we thank God for this wonderful verse of assurance to sorrowing parents who have lost children in death. (As Vance Havner said, "When you know where something is, you haven't lost it.") "Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds!" Note too that it is wrong to pray for the dead. David stopped praying for the child.

#### *C. David's conquests (vv. 26–31).*

This tragic episode began with David pampering himself at home, but it ends with him taking his rightful place on the battlefield and leading the nation to an important victory. It is encouraging to see that God was willing to use David again in spite of his sins. He had confessed his sins; God had forgiven him; now he could fight for the Lord again. It is bad for believers to sin; it is also bad for them to live in the past and think themselves useless even after they have confessed their sins. Satan loves to shackle God's people with memories of sins that God has already forgiven and forgotten. Satan is the accuser (Rev. 12:10; Zech. 3), but Jesus is the Advocate (1 John 2:1–2).

How the grace of God shines in vv. 24–25, for God chose Bathsheba to be the mother of the next king! "Solomon" means "Peaceable"; "Jedidiah" means "beloved of the Lord." God turned the curse into a blessing, for Solomon was the fulfillment of the promise given to David in 1 Chron. 22:9.

This event in David's life ought to be a warning to all Christians to "take heed lest we fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). First Corinthians 10:13 promises a way of escape when we face temptation. However, as in David's case, we cannot overcome temptation if we allow our desires to take over. We need to beware of the beginnings of sin and take care to keep our imaginations clean. The Apostle Paul commands us to "put to death" (mortify) the members of the body that can lead us into sin (Col. 3; Rom. 6). It is necessary for all believers to watch and pray and not make provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14).

**Merrill, E. H. (1985). 2 Samuel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 1, pp. 468-469) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books**

### *B. Nathan's rebuke and David's punishment (chap. 12)*

12:1–6. Sometime after the birth of Bathsheba's son, **Nathan** the prophet told David a story of a **rich man** who, in spite of having everything, stole a **poor** neighbor's only **ewe** (i.e., female) **lamb** to provide a feast for a guest.

Enraged, **David** pronounced that **the man who** would do such a despicable thing ought to **die**. Though the Law contained no such penalty for the theft of property, kidnapping was a capital offense and it may be that David viewed the taking of a pet lamb in this light (Ex. 21:16). In addition, he said, **the rich man** must restore **four** lambs for the one stolen for not even the rich man's death could compensate the poor man's property loss (Ex. 22:1).

12:7–14. Nathan's reply to all this was a bombshell: **You are the man! The LORD**, he said, had given **David** everything, but he had taken, as it were, the pet lamb of a poor neighbor (v. 9). **David** now would suffer **the sword** as had **Uriah** and David's **wives** would be taken from him as Bathsheba had been stolen from **the Hittite**. This was fulfilled by Absalom (David's own son!) when he lay with David's concubines (16:22). But David's shame would be even greater because, in contrast with David's sin **in secret**, all these things would happen in the glare of the public eye, **in broad daylight**.

One may wonder, perhaps, why David was not punished with death as he had so sternly advocated for the guilty man. Adultery and murder both were sufficient cause for the execution of even a king (Ex. 21:12; Lev. 20:10). The answer surely lies in the genuine and contrite repentance which David expressed, not only in the presence of Nathan but more fully in Psalm 51. David's **sin** was heinous, but the grace of God was more than sufficient to forgive and restore him, as **Nathan** could testify. And yet, though David could be restored to fellowship with his God, the impact of his sin remained and would continue to work its sorrow in the nation as well as in the king's life.

12:15–23. Shortly **after** the interview with **Nathan ... the child** became terminally **ill**. Despite David's intense fasting and prayer the baby **died** within a week. Only then did **David** cease his mourning, wash, worship, and eat, contrary to custom and much to the amazement of **his servants**. David's response is classic: **While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept.... But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again?** David attested to the irrevocability of death—its finality renders further petition absurd. **I will go to him**, David said, **but he will not return to me**. This reflects his conviction that the dead cannot return to life as it was. Rather it is the living who go to the dead.

12:24–25. Eventually another **son** was born to David and Bathsheba, one who bore a double name. Called **Solomon** (“peace”) by them, **the LORD ... through Nathan** named **him Jedidiah** (“loved by the LORD”).

12:26–31. In the meantime, the Ammonite war went well for **Joab**. He had all but captured the Ammonite capital, **Rabbah**, having taken **the royal citadel** and the city’s **water supply**. And now, in order that **David** might gain the credit for its fall, **Joab** urged the king to lead the final assault himself. This **David** did. He sacked the city of its wealth, including the 75-pound (**a talent**) golden **crown** of the Ammonite **king** (*malkām*, which could also be a reference to “Molech,” the Ammonite god). David also put the survivors to slave labor (using **saws ... iron picks, and axes** and working **at brickmaking**) and **returned** in triumph to **Jerusalem**.

**Mathews, K. A. (1998). *The Historical Books*. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (pp. 127-128). Broadman & Holman Publishers.**

**Nathan’s Oracle (12:1–31)**. About one year later, God sent Nathan to confront David. Nathan told a parable of a poor man’s only ewe lamb taken away by a rich man for his selfish pleasure. David, who as king was responsible for justice in the land, burned with anger against the culprit. Unwittingly, David condemned himself. Nathan accused the king, “You are the man! Nathan declared God’s judgment. Because he murdered Uriah by the sword, his household would likewise experience the sword. Since he took the wife of another man, David’s wives would be taken. And though David sinned in secret, he would be publicly humiliated before all Israel (see 15:16; 16:21–22). These curses were fulfilled by the deaths of three of David’s sons (Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah) and the strife David’s reign experienced toward the end of his life.

To David’s credit, however, he did not shirk his guilt as Saul did when Samuel accused him (see 1 Sam. 15). David confessed his guilt openly and lamented his spiritual impurity (see Ps. 51). The judgment of God began with the child of David and Bathsheba. David prayed and fasted earnestly for the child’s life. David had felt the heavy hand of God’s judgment, but he also knew God’s mercies. For that reason he prayed, believing God might deliver the child. Though the child was not spared, David believed that he would see the child again. In the midst of His chastening, God also was merciful to David and Bathsheba. God gave them another child, Solomon, whom the Lord named Jedidiah (“beloved of the LORD”). From their union came the king who would build the Lord’s temple and rule Israel during its golden age. Evidence of God’s continued forgiveness was Israel’s victory over the Ammonites—this time led by David himself.

**Tatum, S. L. (1972). *2 Samuel*. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The Teacher’s Bible Commentary* (pp. 185-186). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.**

### **The Exposure of David’s Sin (2 Sam. 12:1–31)**

*The passage*—The Lord sent Nathan, his prophet, to David to expose him as a sinner. He began with a parable. There were two men in a certain city. One was rich and the other poor. The poor man had only one little ewe lamb that had been like a member of his family. When the rich man had a guest to entertain, instead of killing one of his many sheep, he stole his poor neighbor’s lamb and killed it for his feast. As David heard the story he became angry. “The man who had done this deserves to die,” he said. Nathan replied, “You are the man.”

Nathan reviewed God's blessings upon David and exposed his sin fully. He prophesied the consequences that would follow the sins. The sword would never depart from David's house. His own family would be openly immoral. The child conceived in sin would die.

One of the most moving passages in the Bible follows. David acknowledged his sin. He asked God to pardon him. Read Psalms 32 and 51 for an understanding of the repentance of this man after God's own heart who had so grievously sinned.

Bathsheba's baby became very sick, and although Nathan had told him the baby would die, David prayed for it to get well. He would not eat, but mourned and prayed continually. After a week the baby died. David's servants feared to tell him, but David could tell by their actions that death had come. He washed himself and went to the house of God to worship.

He explained his actions by saying, "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?... I shall go to him, but he will not return to me" (vv. 22–23).

The birth of Solomon is recorded in verse 24. The history of Israel concerns itself with the struggle for the succession to the throne. The tracing of the various claims makes an interesting study.

The conquest of the city of Rabbah and the capture of the Ammonites is recorded in verses 26–31. David took the crown from the head of their king and put it upon his own head, thus symbolizing his rule over them. He made the Ammonites labor in the brick kilns and perform other difficult tasks as his slaves.

*Special points*—It would seem that Bathsheba would have been punished for her part in the sins of David. While it does not appear that she was punished with the same severity as he was, it must be kept in mind that we do not have all of the record. The Bible is seeking primarily to show God's dealing with Israel leading up to the coming of Jesus as the Savior of the world. Many of our questions must go with only partial answers. We may be sure that Bathsheba's grief over the death of their baby was comparable to that of David.

*Truth for today*—The overcoming grace of God in spite of the sin of man is seen in that God chose to use Solomon. Jesus was born of the line that came from David and Bathsheba. No one should ever feel that his background disqualifies him for useful service for God.

Sin does have severe consequences beyond the persons who are guilty. The social implications of sin should be taken into account. The death of Uriah and many others in the battle at Rabbah, the death of the infant, the immorality of the children of David, and the bloodshed for many years speak so loudly, "Be sure your sin will find you out." What David did in secret has become the most widely known act of immorality in the history of the world.

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (2 Samuel 12). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**