

## At the Death of a Son

### 2 Samuel 12:11-25 (NIV84)

<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.

I feel out of my league to be standing before you today knowing that I am going to be talking about how Christian parents deal with the death of a son. My wife and I have never experienced this personally, which makes me wonder what I can tell you. I come before you every Sunday not to preach my message, but to proclaim to you what God says. I pray that through this sermon, if you have lost a child, that you would find comfort in the Almighty, and direction for the grieving process. If you have not experienced this, hopefully you will have words of comfort and guidance that you can share with those who have experienced such a loss.

King David was in a mess of his own creation. He had slept with another man's wife, got her pregnant, arranged to have her husband, Uriah, murdered, but made it look like he was a casualty of war. The plan worked, and David took the recently widowed Bathsheba as an additional wife. Shockingly disgusting, David has no remorse over what he has done. So, the LORD sends the prophet Nathan to David to confront him with his sin. Our verses today are the culmination and aftermath of that conversation.

"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. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'" (verses 11-12) God will not turn a blind eye to David's actions. He is supposed to be God's representative on earth, and this is what he does with that responsibility? As a consequence of his sin, David will suffer publicly with a coup, with someone who will sin against him the way that he had sinned against Uriah.

David is immediately cut to the heart realizing what he had done. "I have sinned against the LORD," (verse 13) he professed. He doesn't make excuses. He wasn't confessing to avoid the consequences. He takes ownership for his failing without reservation. The prophet Nathan replies to David's repentance, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die." (verse 13) David is immediately forgiven his sins.

Yet, even being totally and completely forgiven, the LORD lets David know that there are still earthly consequences to his sin. Nathan continued, "But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt, the son born to you will die." (verse 14) The lump in the throat gets harder. You are going to do what? How can you make my boy suffer for what I have done wrong? Why would you do this to him? Why would you do this to me? You forgave my sin.

Despite pleading with God for the child and fasting and weeping, after seven days, the child died. David's servants were afraid to break the news to him. Who ever wants to deliver the news to the parents that their child is dead? What will David do when he hears the news? What will people do when I am the one coming to their house after their son has died? How will they react when I

attempt to speak comforting words at the funeral? Should I say that the child is in a better place? Should I tell the parents that this is not their fault? Should I say that God has a plan? No matter what you say, you don't know exactly how the grieving parents will respond.

When David hears the news, amazingly, he gets up from the ground, from his mourning posture. He washes, puts on lotions, and changes his clothes. He immediately goes into the house of the LORD and worships. (verse 20) David has spent seven days denying himself food eating only his tears over the impending death, refusing to go about any of his daily work, not even bathing himself or getting off the floor, but now that the child is dead, he resumes normal life? He goes to the house of the LORD and worships God, the same God who brought this suffering into his life?!

For many of us, wouldn't our personal reaction to the death of our child be one of seclusion? "Leave me alone. I'm mourning. I don't want to talk about it. You asking me how everything is going feels like an asinine question because, really, how do you think I'm doing? I've lost a son! You have no idea what it feels like to be me!" We have the best of intentions when asking that "How are you doing?" question, but in grief, in anger, in bitterness, the one mourning tends to lash out. Leave me alone instead of bringing up all the pain and hurt again and again.

For others there's the reaction of wanting to be surrounded by people. "I have so many tears and not enough shoulders to cry on. I will tell you what I am going through, but don't feel weird about it. I don't expect you to understand my grief, but I expect you to listen." No words need to be said, *per se*; they just need someone that they can express all these emotions and heartaches to in order to get everything off their chest and have someone else help carry this burden with them.

For either or any type of mourning, the best solution is to do what David did. Get up, and worship the LORD. Come back to worship because it is only through God's Word that we have a real solution to death. Yes, you are probably going to be bombarded with "How are you doing?" questions. Yes, you are probably going to break down, maybe cry. Yes, you'll need Kleenex; you're mourning. But even in suffering the death of a son, you have a reason to worship the LORD, like David did.

David knew that his baby boy died as a consequence of his sin. David already knew the truth that the Apostle Paul would articulate in his letter to the Roman Christians, "The wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23a) David brought death to his son because he was a sinner. David was the one to blame. Knowing that truth, he needed to be in the house of the LORD. Even though he had already heard it once, he needed to hear forgiveness again and be reassured that the LORD really had taken his sins away.

Death is a reminder of the consequences of our sins. It is our fault that we die, not God's choosing. Since it is my fault, I need to hear that God has done something about this, that the LORD has taken my sin away. We hear that when we come to worship. That's why we even have that section called or our worship called Confession & Absolution.

The LORD is able to take our sin away in worship and does this for us because he himself experienced the death of his Son. To the parents who have lost a child, God knows exactly what you are going through. He's been there. As painful as it was, he chose to let his Son die. That was the plan, that God's Son would die in place of all sinners so that none of us would ever have to experience eternal death. Physical death, yes, that is still a consequence of our sinful choices. But the LORD watched his Son die so that he could say to us as we feel the blame of our sin in the wake of a child's death that the LORD takes your sin away. You are forgiven. You will not die that second death, that eternal death in hell. The LORD have rescued you from that by letting his Son die in your place.

Because he had been forgiven, David worships God and has hope in God's mercy. He expresses it this way concerning his now deceased son: "I will go to him, but he will not return to me." (verse 23) Even at the death of his son, David trusts God's mercy and believes that God has been merciful. His boy deserved nothing good. He didn't deserve to be saved because of what David had done. Yet, David has confidence in the LORD that he has taken the boy to himself. David expects to see his baby boy again in heaven. Even while we do not know God's judgment for a child that we have lost to death – whether the child was stillborn, miscarried, even aborted, we, like David, trust in God being merciful, that the LORD will do what is best and what is right. This is another reason we have to worship the LORD even while we are mourning.

David sets the tone for us again in what he does after he has mourned and worshiped the LORD. "Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba." (verse 24) David passes on the comfort and hope he has to his new wife, the very one that he committed adultery with, half of the equation of why their son died. Even in our grief, we can pass on the comfort we have that the LORD has taken away our sins and that he has saved us from the second death, from spending eternity in hell. We will go to heaven. We will see and be reunited with believers who have died before us. We will enjoy a living that no longer has pain or mourning or crying or even death. This is the hope we have as Christians because our God is merciful to us even while we suffer the consequences of our sins.

This hope is rooted in the very next child that David and Bathsheba have. "[David] went to her and lay with her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. The LORD loved him." (verse 24) Solomon would carry the promise of the offspring who would

crush the serpent's head. From his line, Jesus would be born, the Son of God who died so that we would not suffer the punishment of the second death on account of our sin. As Paul said in our second lesson today, "The power of God...has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." (2 Timothy 1:9-10)

David and Bathsheba experienced the death of their first son together as a consequence of their sin, but the LORD, in his great mercy, passed along the promise of the Savior to their next child. That descendant of Solomon, Jesus, is the reason why we can worship the LORD while mourning and have hope even at the death of a son. Because of the death of his Son, the LORD takes our sins away and spares us from eternal death in hell. Because of this next son, we all are welcomed to heaven where we will no longer have pain, mourning, crying, or death. The death of the Son takes my sins away and gives me hope for the future, a reason to rejoice even through the most painful mourning that I suffer through. And when it is all over, God will wipe every tear from your eye. Amen.

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