



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Lessons from the Life of David

2 Samuel 12:1-2

“David Rebuked, Repentant, Restored; Yet Disciplined” TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We’re turning to 2 Samuel chapter 12, and reading for our Scripture reading the first 25 verses. Chapter 11, as you remember, records David’s great sin of adultery with Bathsheba, and now the story is continued.

“Then the Lord sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him, ‘There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had exceedingly many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him.’”

You know, in the East, dogs are generally regarded as unclean, which may be one of the reasons that Paul refers to false teachers as being dogs. But other kinds of animals were not. And, consequently, this is rather true to life. It was customary for individuals to have a personal pet of a fawn or a lamb. And they did, precisely, what this text describes. They lived with the people, lived in their home, and you’ll notice that it is

suggested by the author that it ate his own food. And so what might seem strange to us was very true to their lives. He goes on to say.

“‘And it was like a daughter to him.’ And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man’s lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.” So David’s anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, ‘As the Lord lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity.’”

You might think that this is rather strange because he says that “He shall surely die,” and then adds, “that he shall restore fourfold for the lamb.” That would be rather difficult for a man who is dead to restore fourfold. And so you might suspect that there is something about the text that perhaps should be corrected and there is. And the statement, “As the Lord lives, the man who has done this shall surely die!” is an expression in the Hebrew, which means is a son of death or ought to die. And so, that’s the force of it. Verse 7,

“Then Nathan said to David, ‘You are the man! Thus says the Lord God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I would also have given you much more! Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the

wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.’ Thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.’

So David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” [A very simple statement, *chatta’ab ’eth Adonai* I have sinned against the Lord.] And Nathan said to David, ‘The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. However, [The Authorized Version has, I think, “How be it.”] However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die.’ Then Nathan departed to his house. And the Lord struck the child that Uriah’s wife bore to David, and it became ill. David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. So the elders of his house arose and went to him, to raise him up from the ground. But he would not, nor did he eat food with them. Then on the seventh day it came to pass that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead. For they said, ‘Indeed, while the child was alive, we spoke to him, and he would not heed our voice. How can we tell him that the child is dead? He may do some harm!’ When David saw that his servants were whispering, David perceived that the child was dead. Therefore David said to his servants, ‘Is the child dead?’ And they said, ‘He is dead.’ So David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house; and when he requested, they set food before him, and he ate.”

Now, this was the precise opposite of normal custom. Normal custom was, if someone had died, then, of course, they would weep and fast over the loss. But David does it in reverse. And so that raises some questions. And we read in verse 21.

“Then his servants said to him, ‘What is this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive, but when the child died, you arose and ate food.’ And he said, ‘While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, ‘Who can tell whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?’ But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.’ Then David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in to her and lay with her. So she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. Now the Lord loved him, and He sent word by the hand of Nathan the prophet, so he called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord.”

I won't say much about that in the message, but evidently Solomon was something like an official name. It means or has relationship to the term for peace, Shalom, Solomon, man of rest. Jedidiah means, beloved of the Lord, perhaps a personal name. Both of these names suggest, however, the fact that Solomon is the divinely chosen seed of David, through whom the promise is continued.

May the Lord bless this reading of his word and let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we turn to Thee through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the great seed of David, the great Son of David, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for all that we have through him and for the privilege that we have of approaching Thee and knowing that in Christ we have acceptance. We remember the words that the apostles spoke to the Ephesians, that believers are accepted in the Lord, and we thank Thee for all that he has accomplished for us as our representative, our mediatorial head, the one who stands for us in Thy presence. We are grateful, Lord, and we worship Thee, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in thanksgiving and in praise for how Thou has lifted us up out of the miry clay and set us up on a solid rock.

We thank Thee for the whole Church of Jesus Christ, wherever its individual members are located today, and pray Thy blessing upon the whole body. Build us up in our faith and increase our number as it should please Thee. And bring us, Lord, to the completion of the work of redemption. We pray that our Lord may come quickly if it should please Thee.

We thank Thee for this body of believers and pray Thy blessing upon them, Believers Chapel, its elders and its deacons, its members, the friends and the visitors who are here with us we ask especially for them. And may the ministry of the word of God be edifying for each one of us, building us up in our faith, or bringing us to know him whom to know is life eternal. We pray for the sick, for the struggling and for those who are perplexed and, particularly, for those who have been bereaving. We ask, Lord, that Thou wilt, by Thy grace, minister to them as only the Great Shepherd can do.

Bless the ministry of the word today, wherever it goes forth. And, in our meeting, Lord, may the Lord Jesus Christ be exalted.

And we pray in His name. Amen.

[Message] The hymn that we have just sung has the expression, “It is mine but to believe,” and that, of course, is true. It is mine but to believe. But, often, in the way that we express that and, perhaps, some times in the way in which we sing it, we sing it as if it is a work of ours. Whereas, Scripture makes it very plain that the responsibility that we have is a responsibility that, ultimately, finds its resolution in the gift of faith to us, for by grace have we been saved through faith, and that not of ourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

So that all of the aspects of our salvation including the faith to believe are things given by God. But, at the same time, our responsibility is to believe. It is ours to believe, but it's helpful to remember that apart from the work of God the Holy Spirit and effectual

grace, not one of us would believe. Our salvation as our hymn expresses it, is all of grace. Let us not forget that.

The subject for today is something that follows very naturally after the great sin of adultery in chapter 11, and so we have as our title, “David Rebuked, Repentant, Restored; and Yet Disciplined.” This chapter spotlights the believer’s path from sin to forgiveness. Rebuke, penitence, restoration, but chastisement. Along the way, it has something to say about the question, are dying infants saved? It also underscores the difference between what may be called eternal forgiveness and family forgiveness.

A Christian is not a person from whom the possibility of sin has been removed, but a person from whom the penalty of sin has been removed. Let us remember that. A Christian is not a person from whom the possibility of sin has been removed but a person from whom the penalty of sin has been removed.

There is such a thing as eternal forgiveness when a person, through the act of faith given by God in the Lord Jesus Christ receives a forgiveness that is eternal. And, as a result of that, we have the gift of eternal life. But believers continually sin, do they not? The apostle tells us that the sin principle dwells within us, as long as we are in this flesh. And so, consequently, there is a necessity to deal with sin of believers. And when a believer has been brought to conviction concerning his sin and has confessed the sin, he receives what may be called family forgiveness; being a member of the family through faith in the atoning work of Christ his relationship as a son to the father within the family is maintained through confession of sin.

Now, this chapter has something to say about that, very plainly. John Owen was, perhaps, the greatest of English theologians, and Mr. Owens says that he often preached forgiveness without really knowing what it meant in his heart, until a certain conversation that he had. And then, God brought to his attention, Psalm 130 in verse 4, “There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.”

Now, there is forgiveness with the Lord for those who do not know forgiveness, but there is forgiveness also for those who know eternal forgiveness that the Lord may be feared. And, when we have received eternal life, that's the beginning of Christian life, and the Christian life is a life of fear and trembling. Don't forget that. Work out your own salvation, Paul told the Philippians, “with fear and trembling.” We're dealing with the eternal God, the Father of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

To pardon sin, someone has said, is one of the *jura regalia* one of the royal laws or rights, the flower of God's crown, forgiveness of sin, and forgiveness of the sin of believers. Usually when an individual comes, through confession of sin and repentance, to a relationship to the Lord that is pleasing to him, the inward assurance that follows is gained through struggles and prayers, personally realized by faith in the promises of the word of God that declare mercy and usually that forgiveness is attended by peace and by rest and by joy. In this case, of course, David's restoration is one concerning which we have some other important words in Scripture.

For example, David wrote two Psalms, the 51st and the 32nd. And in the 51st Psalm, written evidently shortly after he had confessed his sin, describes how he confessed his sin. And then, the 32nd Psalm is a psalm in which he discusses how he felt during those almost twelve months in which he lived in the conscious sense of having sinned against the Lord but had not yet come to penitence. But when he finally came to penitence or repentance, and confessed his sin, he says in the 32nd Psalm, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones grew old, through my groaning all the day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me: my vitality turned into the drought of summer.” He says, until he acknowledged his sin before the Lord.

So we want to take a look at this great chapter. It's one of the greatest chapters in the Old Testament, in my opinion. And, first of all, we look at Nathan's rebuke of David.

Almost a year David spent in the agony of self-reproach, in the agony of guilt. It was ripening toward repentance, but if you had looked at David you, perhaps, would never have noticed it. I imagine most of us would never have noticed it. Outside everything appeared marvelous and beautiful. He was the King of Israel, had now ruled and reigned as the appointed and elected messianic king, a type of the one, the greater one, who would come. Everything appeared lovely but inside David's heart there was desolation. The charm of purity which had characterized him to this point, not total purity mind you, but generally purity, was gone. The secret of the Lord, which he himself writes about later on in one of his psalms, the 25th Psalm, where he says in verse 7 or verse 14, “The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him; and he will show them his covenant. The secret of the Lord is now lost; the salt has lost its savor, and the result is a joyless, sunless, godless year.” But very few people realized it. David was suffering within the reproach of the agony over the sin he had committed.

I think it was an evidence of great courage on the part of Nathan to approach the king. After all, David had absolute authority and Nathan, the prophet of the Lord God, is one of his closest friends. Nathan is now called upon by the Lord God to go to David the King, who has absolute authority and tell him that he has sinned against the Lord and is guilty of not only adultery, but also of murder.

Can you imagine one of Saddam's revolutionary command council of knaves, determining to approach him and tell him what he has been doing? I wouldn't want to lay any odds on how long he would live, as long as that man has the kind of authority that he has and has the history that he has had over the past years. But, nevertheless, in spite of that Nathan goes as the prophet of the Lord God and comes to David and lays the truth out before him. And he does it by means of a parable. In fact, it is one of those, what ones have called exquisite gems, one of the most exquisite of the whole of the Old Testament, someone has said it's one of those little gems of divinity that are scattered so

plentifully through the sacred Scriptures that “sparkle with a luster pure and brilliant in the light of heaven and attest the sacred origin of the wonderful book that contains them.”

He tells a little story of a ewe lamb, a little female lamb. David, all the time now within his heart, is bound up with the coils of iniquity. They are tightening around him. And, at this point, as repentance is drawing to its beginning, God knowing, of course, what is going on in the heart of David, sends Nathan to him. Now, notice particularly how it's put. “Then the Lord sent Nathan.” It's not, “Then Nathan went to David.” It's “Then the Lord sent Nathan.” In other words, the beginning of this event is something that is traceable to the Lord God. The first step in David's salvation was the work of God in his heart. The first step in David's repentance and restoration is the Lord God's. In other words, he seeks us, he seeks us for our salvation, he seeks us for our repentance. David, in the 23rd Psalm expresses it when he says, “He restoreth my soul.” He restoreth my soul. So the Lord sends Nathan.

We are filled, of course, with military metaphors in these days, and we thank God for the answers to the prayers of many of us because we believed that our prayers were just. But, what we have here is a kind of flanking movement. The Lord is going to deal with David in that way.

There is one quality of David that has not changed and that's his sense of justice. That was true of David and even in the midst of his sin and in the midst of his loss of communion, he still has basically as one of the fundamental characteristics of his character a sense of justice. And so now the Lord will use the sense of justice and, by flanking movement, turn it upon himself and make him the object of the Lord's working. So he's going to turn the better quality, the sense of justice, against his secret sin so that he himself will judge himself.

You know, I think, as I look back and reflect upon the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I remember his use of parables so marvelously expressing the points of his ministry that were important, and I remember particularly as he told the parable of the

land owner, as it's described in my text that when it is over we read, “Now, when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables,” plural, “They perceived that he was speaking of them.” And so, here, the Lord speaks through Nathan the prophet, and through his parable to David, he speaks to him, and he calls upon him to judge himself.

Well, it's a beautiful little parable, I say, a beautiful little parable of a ewe lamb that lived in the house of a family and was so much a pet that the lamb slept with them and even ate of their food. And the female lamb, of course, is to remind David of Bathsheba.

You know, I don't know how to say this authoritatively. I haven't had time to check this out but, Bathsheba's father was Eliam. Eliam was one of David's thirty. Uriah was also one of David's thirty, his magnificent warrior men that may suggest since Eliam is the father of Bathsheba, Eliam's father was of course, Ahithophel, who betrayed David, his counselor, but who betrayed him and that our Lord uses as a type of Judas.

But, nevertheless, that may suggest that there was a considerable number of years between Bathsheba and Uriah, since Uriah was one of the thirty with her father. And the little ewe lamb and we read, “It was like a daughter to him,” may suggest that Bathsheba was not only Uriah's wife, but she was a young and beautiful girl, where he was a much more mature man. So, the parable itself may tell us something about the matter. And he describes how the traveler comes and the rich man, not slaying one of his own lambs, steals the lamb from the poor man and prepares it for the man that had come to him. And now, David, not realizing that this is a true story of him, we read, “His anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, and here is the justice, the innate justice of David's heart, speaking, “As the Lord lives, the man who has done this shall surely die!” He's worthy of death. He ought to be shot, to put it in our language as someone has said. “And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity.”

That's very interesting because David is quoting the word of God, in effect, because Moses had said in Exodus, “If someone steals an ox, he should restore it fivefold. But if he steals a sheep, he shall restore it fourfold.” And so here is the sheep that is stolen. David following the teaching of the word of God, mind you, this adulterer following the teaching of the word of God, said, “He shall restore fourfold,” fourfold restitution.

Well now, the application will be made. Krummacher, the German commentator, a marvelous Christian man, who's written a book on David, has said, “If ever a word from human lips fell with crushing weight, and with the illuminating power of a gleam of lightning, it was this, when Nathan said, ‘You are the man.’” *Athab iysb*. You are the man about whom we are talking. It's not a parable after all. It's a true story of you, David. And God has a further word to follow that. You're the man. “Thus says the Lord, Nathan said, the God of Israel, ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping.’ The polygamy had become so intense that even the Lord uses terms like this. “And gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more!”

Astonishing! “Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord.” No question of ignorance. He knew. He can even quote Moses about the restitution of sheep and oxen. “Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. Now therefore,” David, “The sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.’ Thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I will raise up adversity against you and your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the

sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.”

What a probing message. This is a time to tremble, when a man has to deal with the Lord God directly, as David finds himself doing. Mind you, this is the man of spiritual light. “I have anointed you” as the Messianic forerunner. He has given him the Messianic promises in chapter 7. He’s the man of both governmental authority and spiritual power. He’s the man elected by the Lord God. He’s the man who has been loved and cared for by the Lord God.

Sin is worthy of death. The wages of sin is death. The sin of adultery was a sin that had the penalty of death. But how bad is sin that is aggravated by the great promises and blessings that accompanied God’s blessing of David. Oh, the aggravation of sin! Sin is sin! But when a man has knowledge, that sin is aggravated. Sin is that which brings us to spiritual death and, as Christians, to the breaking of the communion of God. But as the blessings of God are considered in the light of it, that sin becomes even more aggravating, and David’s sin was aggravated sin, the kind of sin that you and I may be guilty of in the light of the great promises that are ours.

So it was a time to tremble. “Now, therefore,” the 10th verse, the Hebrew text says simply, “Now,” but the therefore is the thought of it. “Now, David, because you have done what you have done, your aggravated sin will result in a lifetime of chastisement. And, furthermore, your secret sin will become a public sin and men will know just precisely what has happened.”

There will be fourfold restitution, incidentally. If you’ll study the rest of David’s life, you can see, standing out are first of all, the death of the infant that we read about in this chapter. Then we read about Amnon, who commits incest and then is murdered by Absalom. And then we read of Absalom rebellion against the Lord God and the eventual loss of his life. And, finally, even near the end of his days, we read about Adonijah’s death as well. So there’s fourfold restitution all right. But it’s not the kind of restitution

that Moses was thinking about when he wrote his little text in Exodus chapter 22. But it's the kind of application of the word of God that God brings to pass.

So one might ask, why dwell on this story, after all, it's a story of sin? But the reason that we dwell on it is because it's not only found in the word of God, but it's designed to be instruction for us.

Dr. Louis Sperry Chafer used to say in his messages, “Secret sin on earth is open scandal in heaven.” This is sin that's open scandal on earth as well. And so, David, for the rest of his life, must experience the issues of his sin. There's no right to privacy in that world. He couldn't say, “Lord, right of privacy.” No, David's sin committed secretly will now be known by all. His wives will be taken by others. And the adultery with his wives will be made open, out on the roof top so that others in the place can see. These are the consequences of the sin of David. And these are the consequences, my Christian friend that God would have us bring to mind as sin stands before us, as a temptation to us.

Well, David doesn't have anything that he can say. And so we read in the 13th verse, so David said to Nathan “I have sinned against the Lord.” Internal wounds have been deep for months now. Here is the penitent confession and anyone who knows anything about the confession of sin knows that confession is often a great relief. Having fought against it for months, now it comes out, “I have sinned against the Lord.”

I think it's marvelous the way it comes out too. I want you to just carefully consider this. There's a recognition that is prompt and unqualified that what he has done is sin. It's not a fault. It's not a weakness. It's a sin. It's also recognition that it's a sin against the Lord. “I have sinned against the Lord” against Yahweh, the covenant God! And not only that, there is pain and shame. Not because of what men may say or do, not because of his personal influence will be weakened, but because it's sin, it's pain and shame. It's the sin which troubles and appalls the truly converted soul. And, moreover, notice that there are no claims for excuse. No excuse! “I have sinned against the Lord.” No palliation. There's an obviously an inward bowing of the spirit before the Holy God,

an absolute surrender as undone, condemned, helpless, and lost. Not lost of in the sense of losing his salvation, but lost of all reasons for appeal to the Lord.

What a great lesson is contained in this chapter. Oh, the comfort of the covering of this haunting sin that has disturbed this man of God with this great sense of justice, for almost twelve months. “I have sinned against the Lord.” And then, Nathan says to him, almost immediately, “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.” Think of the days of thoughts, the days that seemed more than twenty-four hours to David, the nights in which his sleep was broken. David’s heart is like a spring that is filled with dirty rubbish, but now with the confession and the rubbish removed, that which stands in his heart given by God, the new life that he has as a believing man, springs up again. But, unfortunately, the consequences are still to be borne.

I think of Peter, you know, when he denied the Lord and denied him three times. And, evidently, the apostles came to know about that, whether Peter said that, but they came to know about it. And they could look at Peter and say, “He’s one who let us down. He denied the Lord.” And then, remember, one of the words that our Lord gave was, after the resurrection, “Tell the apostles and Peter.” Isn’t that interesting? “Tell the apostles,” or his disciples, “and Peter.” It’s a personal word to Peter and also a personal word to the others that Peter still stands within the family of the apostles and possesses that fundamental relationship to him, in spite of his sin. So David, here’s the marvelous words. “The Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die.” However! However!

Mr. Spurgeon says, in one of his messages, he says that this, “How be it,” in the Authorized Version is something that has troubled him greatly, all throughout his life, evidently. Whenever he’s reading through here and he reads that word, “How be it,” it reminds him of the fact that when we sin there are consequences. And the consequences may, at the Lord’s gracious will may be foregone. But the consequences of our sin are often allowed to continue. And, consequently, the man who is the alcoholic, who has

ultimately come to the knowledge of our Lord and the forgiveness through Jesus Christ may have to suffer the results of the alcoholism, and so on.

So there are consequences, they are the disciplines of David, in this case; the forgiveness is full and free, but it's qualified. Pardon is not impunity. Remember that. Punishment becomes chastisement, but nevertheless, chastisement at the determination of the Lord God. These are the safeguards that we will not persist in the evil; warning us that while we may be forgiven as believing individuals, chastisement will follow. There are some people who think that when they sin all they have to do is just say, “Lord, I confess my sin,” and then everything is going to be exactly as it was before hand.

And the most astonishing thing happened to me when I went to Gillette, Wyoming a few years back. There in that local congregation was a young lady, in her early thirties, as I remember. And she had determined that she was going to get a divorce. And when the pastor of the church and the elders of the church counseled with her, for they knew what was happening, she said, and mind you she had not done that yet, but she was determined to do it. She said, “I have already confessed the sin, and I'm going ahead to get the divorce and remarry.” Astonishing! One brought up in an evangelical church taking the term confession as being just something that is spoken and that's all. I confess and, therefore, I'm free to continue to do what I know to be, and she knew, it was contrary to the word of God. But having confessed, she was free to continue in that particular act.

So Nathan now gives prophecy to David. He says, “How be it, by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.” Isn't that interesting? “You've given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.” How often have we heard believing individuals make much over the sins of believers? Very rarely, very rarely, relatively. Usually, when an individual is saying, “So and so has sinned and he claims to be a Christian.” Usually, that kind of person is an enemy of the Lord. And it comes out, just at that point. He says, “You have given great occasion to the enemies of

the Lord to blaspheme.” And, usually, an individual who takes that kind of response is an unbeliever.

There’s a story I read in studying for this about a scorner, who was in company with a devout man. And he took occasion to speak contemptuously of those whom he called, “Old Testament saints,” and especially of David, as the man after God’s own heart, asking his believing friend, “And what did he do?” And the believing man was pushed a bit, and so he said, “Well, he wrote the 51st Psalm and the 32nd Psalm in which he confessed his sin.” And if you cherish such feelings, he said, as David expresses there, you’ll be a man after God’s own heart. But this individual persisted. “Tell me what he did besides.” Then the Christian man said, “He did that which the Prophet Nathan said would cause the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.” And he got the point. He was taking the part of an enemy of the Lord and making an argument based over the sin based on the sin of Nathan. And, in so doing ridiculing the experiences of the prophet, he was revealing the nature of his own heart, as if it gave him opportunity to continue doing what he had been doing.

So Nathan continues. He says, well, at that point, “The child also that is born to you shall surely die.” And Nathan departed. And God, then, brings to pass the first of the ways by which the discipline is to take place. David, humbled by the experiences, flees to the rock that is higher he, down upon his face, without any food, and for seven days approximately prays, and asks that God may be gracious to him and deliver him from the judgment. The sad chastisement of the great king has begun. And, of course, the child dies. The servants question, because they are disturbed by his actions. He reverses the normal mourning habits. One thing you know from what David says here is that prayers for the dead are futile. So when David says, “But now he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.” He expresses the fact that prayers for the dead do not accomplish anything. But he also, marvelously I think, expresses the fact that there is life after death, as he understands it. This is one of

the great Old Testament passages on hope of life after death. And, furthermore, he says something that relates specifically to the question, are infants that die received by the Lord as saved individuals?

Look at the text again! “But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I,” David, the servant of the Lord, the believing man, the man who has been restored to a forgiven state says, “I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”

If there is anything in the Old Testament that gives comfort to those who have been the fathers and mothers of infants and young children who have died before the age of accountability, it is this text. There is a passage in Deuteronomy chapter 1 in verse 39, where Moses speaks about an age of accountability. And Deuteronomy 1:39, let me read that verse, cause it's sometimes overlooked. We read here, “Moreover your little ones and your children, who you say will be victims, who today have no knowledge of good and evil, they shall go in there; to them I will give it, and they shall possess it.” And the same basic idea is found in Isaiah chapter 7.

So, evidently, from Holy Scripture, there is such a time as the time of accountability and, I would suggest, because there is no specific time that is made that it differs with individuals depending upon the understanding that God has given to them. But, in the light of this, we have reason to believe that infants that die, and young children who die before the age of accountability, are received by the Lord God. How marvelous that is, for if you look at human history, the literally millions that shall be in heaven included these millions who have, by God's grace, been used in this way to glorify his name.

Solomon's birth is described. He's given an official name of Solomon. That's the name that is used of him. But, at the same time, Nathan gives him the special name of Jedidiah, Yadid Adonai, the beloved of the Lord, a reference to his favored status as the elected successor of David.

Well, let me close. David’s remarkable history is often missed by fastening upon his sin. The thing we want to fasten upon, it seems to me, more important than fastening upon the act of sin, is his struggle with his sin. That’s what makes the incident so remarkable. The charm of David’s character, of course, is stained and stained forever, as a result of his sin. But our love for David is not destroyed. And, oh, what we learn from the struggles of David with his fall.

The Book of Revelation tells us something, I think, that pertains specifically to us that might help us to deliver us from following in David’s steps. When the Lord Jesus wrote to the Church at Ephesus, he said, “You have left your first love.” To leave one’s first love, to stop the reading of the Scripture, to stop the meditation in prayer, to stop the communion with the Lord that has come after we’ve been saved, is the first step along the way to a fall, and to the disgrace of a fall. Oh, my Christian friend, remember that. Don’t leave your first love. Keep the Scriptures before you constantly. Feed upon them. Feed upon the relationship with our Lord that comes through the word of God. Make your relationship to him a personal communion, nothing less than that truly satisfies the soul.

Wordsworth once said, I want to quote his exact words, but he said, “The best sermon is that which is best applied by those to whom it is preached.” And I’d like to say this to you as Christians, for most of you, probably, in the audience are Christians. If you are not, you need to flee to the Cross, to be saved through the shedding of Christ’s atoning blood. But let me remind you of this, no pleasure is bought at a greater price than the pleasure of Christian sin. No pleasure is bought at so expensive a price as that. And, furthermore, no pleasure, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews talks about the “pleasures of sin for a season,” but no pleasure of sin lasts so short for a Christian, for the moment that the sin is committed, God through the Holy Spirit moves in the heart and brings the heart to conviction.

Every one of us loses when we sin. Don’t pay that price, for you and I will surely suffer from it. Admire, adore, trust, and proclaim the pardoning love of God. Let sinners

believe, confessing and forsaking their sins, let no failing saint despair, dare to believe in the instantaneous forgiveness of sins, both for the unbeliever and the believer, sins cannot staunch the love of God. Please remember that, too.

May God in his marvelous grace deliver us from sins like David's. And if we do not know our Lord, may God bring us to the cross that we might know the forgiveness of our sins, of which John Owens speaks when he says, “There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared.” May the safeguards that Thou mayest be feared be things that guard and guide our steps as believers until we meet our Lord, hopefully, in his coming again.

If you are here today and you have never believed in Christ, we invite you, again, to come to him, and believe in him who offered a sacrifice for sinners, and receive through him eternal forgiveness.

Let's stand for the Benediction.

[Prayer] Father, how marvelous are the blessings that accompany the redeeming work of the Son of God. And, Lord, how significant are those warnings in the word of God. O God, deliver us as believers from sin. We do not wish the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. We desire to glorify him who loved us and gave himself for us. And, Lord, for any who may be here, give them no rest nor peace until they rest in Christ. And give us no rest too if we are not in the kind of relationship of communion that is pleasing to Thee.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.