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## The Tenacity of Grace

### II Samuel 12:1-14

**Intro:** Ch12 is completely different from ch11. Not so much in a literary sense; it's still telling the same story but it *is* different. In ch11, David's in control, he's the primary shot caller; he's getting things done! In ch11, David's making all the decisions: from the palace roof until he runs smack into the unchanging standard of God's righteousness. Now in ch12, David's not calling the shots anymore. As you might expect, **YHWH** & His Word dominate the chapter. But let's not put too much stock in our expectations. We remember what David did in ch11: lusted after another man's wife, took her, committed adultery then tried to hide it by bringing her husband home from war. When that didn't work, he ultimately had her husband murdered on the battle field. In light of all that, we might expect a good deal of **retribution, punishment & judgment** to come on David & that is here in the text. But we should also sense the fact that in this chapter, we have moved beyond the realm of God's judgment into the realm of God's amazing grace.

Some might balk at the thought of grace being extended to David in light of the crimes he has committed, but that's just it. Sin does not cancel out the opportunity for grace, it provides the occasion for grace (**Rom 5:20** "**where sin abounded, grace abounded much more**"). After all, isn't that what God's grace is? **Unmerited favor, God's riches at Christ's expense** or as 1 guy put it: **God's something-for-nothing-when-we-don't-deserve-anything**. Looking at this passage from the perspective of God's grace will help us understand some of the difficult principles found here. We'll split the chapter up into 2 lessons & today we're going to look at the sheer **tenacity** of God's grace.

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**1a-** 1<sup>st</sup> indication that grace is being extended to David; without these words, we'd be in for a dark, hopeless story. This sentence should also dispel the false idea that **YHWH's** just a passive onlooker. "**Sent**" is the key word. In ch11, this word appears 12Xs: David sends, Bathsheba sends, Joab sends. Now **YHWH** sends; God has gone into action!

**YHWH sends** Nathan to David. Of course, we all know that that means trouble because we've read ahead. But let's not pass over this 1<sup>st</sup> sentence too quickly because they reflect the great tenacity of God's grace. These words reveal to us the amazing truth that **grace will pursue & expose the sinner in his sin**. **C.S. Spurgeon** said that **God will not allow His servants to sin successfully**. That is what is being shown here: **YHWH** refuses to allow His servant to remain comfortable in his sin. On the contrary, He blatantly exposes the sin just so he

won't settle down in it. You may succeed in being unfaithful to your Lord but He will come after you. These 1<sup>st</sup> 7 words should fill every servant of God with immense comfort – not that God's pursuing grace is always enjoyable! But think of where we'd be if grace didn't pursue? What if God simply abandoned us whenever we succeed in sinning? How miserable an existence?

In all of his mess, in the satiating of his lust & the murderous cover-up that followed; David may have forgotten about YHWH but YHWH didn't forget about David. **II Tim 2:13** echoes this same truth: "***If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.***" What comfort, what assurance but don't mistake this truth as a license to sin.

**1b-7a-** We've seen Nathan before: he had the privilege of delivering the message about God's covenant with David & his descendants. Now, he's been given a far less pleasant but equally important message to deliver to David; he has to confront the king with his sin! This wasn't an easy thing to do & Nathan had to be prepared for this confrontation. In this we see the wisdom of grace. Nathan could have taken the John the Baptist approach & accuse David straight up. He would have been accurate in his assertions but he may very well have been unsuccessful in fulfilling his task. No, Nathan takes a different approach: he seeks an audience with the king & just tells him a story.

This is not **just** a story. David is the supreme judge of the land & Nathan knows this story will stir his judicial juices! Maybe David took it as an actual case from the local court. Some call this story a parable but its obvious David didn't receive it as such. Regardless: Nathan is catching David off guard. As a former shepherd, David would pay close attention to a story about a stolen lamb; as the king, he was obligated to see that poor families were given justice.

**YHWH** directed Nathan to choose his words carefully so as to remind David of what he had done. In describing the lamb, Nathan said it **ate, drank & lay** on its master's bosom (**3b**). This should have pricked David's memory (if not his **conscience**) because they're very similar to words Uriah used to describe his relationship with his wife in **11:11**. But it wasn't until Nathan talked about the rich man stealing & killing the lamb that David showed any reaction & then, he was angry at the other man's sin! What exactly is the sin that's being described here? It might not be what you think.

Nathan simply states: the rich man **took** the lamb; the sin described is **theft!** There's a sense in which David **stole** something from Uriah. **I Cor 7:4** teaches that in marriage, a man has authority (control) over the body of his wife & vice-versa. David did **not** have this authority over Bathsheba so, in essence, he

**stole** it from Uriah. Adultery & sexual immorality are theft – taking something that does not belong to us. This principle isn't just limited to adultery; its application extends over the areas of lust & pornography as well. **Lev 18** delineates the sin of uncovering the nakedness of anyone other than your spouse. The idea is that the nakedness of others doesn't belong to us & it is **theft** if we take it. "But what if they're giving it away?" The sanctity of a person's body (**their nakedness**) is not theirs to give away – it belongs to their spouse or, to their future spouse. To take it, even if it's given away, constitutes theft. Pornography & sexual immorality cause damage (**emotional, psychological, physical, relational**) but the **spiritual** damage is no less real. To partake of sex outside of marriage is to be no better than a thief & a robber in God's eyes.

David doesn't see this, of course; all he knows is a great injustice has been perpetrated & he explodes with righteous indignation! He religiously calls on **YHWH** as he declares his judgment: the culprit deserved to **die**! Theft wasn't a capital crime but David saw more than a property offense: there's an attitude of **heartless cruelty** behind this deed. This is good because Nathan now had David right where he (& **YHWH**) wanted him to be! Now we see the **wisdom** of grace on display. Nathan so successfully suckered David into the story that David declared judgment on himself! Now, Nathan can stand up like John the Baptist & point his finger in David's face & say, "**You are the man!**" Nathan didn't have to badger or accuse David, he just upped his blood pressure over a ruthless rich man & David accused himself. Nathan had but to make the identification. Nathan's sword pierced David's conscience before David even knew Nathan had a sword! That the way God's grace works in our lives as well. It does an end-run around our best resistance & makes us shine the floodlights on our own sin. It may not be enjoyable, but it is effective. If God is so determined to bring you back to repentance, what chance do you have against grace like that? Not a pleasant one.

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**7b-12-** David has delivered his own verdict & now Nathan announces **YHWH's** word. This passage is important as **vs10-12** will drive the rest of **II Sam**. But notice, in usual fashion, **YHWH** begins with grace. He starts by listing all the grace that He has extended to David in the past: **I anointed, delivered, gave, gave & would have given you much more!**

This is the **assault** of grace. To accurately see sin in all its horror, it must stand in the glaring light of God's grace. The treachery of sin will only appear hideous when compared to the faithfulness it has despised. **YHWH** is stressing the senselessness of David's sin. David was far from deprived b/c God had loaded him with benefits! Thus, David's sin was an expression of **ingratitude**. He's dissatisfied with God's grace. No wonder **YHWH** erupts with **Why?** in **vs9!**

Vs9 reveals the depth of David's sin: he didn't just **commit iniquity**; he **destroyed** people! He sinned against **YHWH** & ruined lives. The consequences? B/c you used the sword against Uriah: sword will never depart from your house. B/c you took Uriah's wife: your wives will be taken & given to another, whose escapades will be as public as David's were private. This "**adversity**" (trouble) in David's house is the primary focus of the rest of **II Sam**.

Sounds like God's mad! His anger is understandable when we finally view David's sin from **YHWH**'s perspective. We see it expressed in the double use of "**despised**" (treat with contempt). It wasn't just that David was an ungracious thief. By his adultery & murder, David had despised God's commandments, His word. He treated them as tho they didn't matter. But, to despise God's word is to despise the One who has given that word. To despise the commandments is to despise the Commander. Thus, **YHWH** can rightly declare, "**you have despised Me**." God has the ability to see the true significance of sin, but the knowing doesn't ease the offense against Him.

Is **YHWH**'s anger justified? Yes! If David, a sinner, has the moral capacity to be upset over the rich man's actions how much more a holy God over David's sin? God is both gracious in sending Nathan to David & outraged because David has despised Him. Part of God's grace consist if Him informing us of His anger. **Grace isn't niceness!** "**Twas grace that taught my heart to fear...**" Grace informs us of God's anger against our sin so we might seek His favor!

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**13-14-** The law tells us what David deserved (**death!**) but grace shows us what David received (**life**): forgiveness & a commuted death sentence. Some may complain: **David got off too easy**, but don't do that lest you condemn yourself.

David's confession is brief (2 words) but it's to the point & Nathan assures he is pardoned. How can it be this easy? Would you prefer he wallow in his guilt & plead, beg & agonize over a pardon? Doesn't he need to do something strenuous? These ideas belong to those who foolishly assume that the intensity of repentance adds to its atonement.

It doesn't. Note: David offers no excuse, deflection; he doesn't look for loopholes, plead human weakness or attempt to implicate anyone else. He openly acknowledges his guilt. David owns his sin – that's the essence of confession!

**YHWH**'s response to David's confession is truly the **miracle** of grace. There was no reason fro **YHWH** to put away David's sin; the law didn't allow for that; this forgiveness was wholly an act of grace! Have we lost the wonder of such a marvelous miracle? Do we have a vending machine view of forgiveness? If we mumble the right words or offer the correct token of penance & out pops the

assurance of pardon. David refused to hold the view that forgiveness was the result of religious mechanics (**Ps 51:16-17**) Forgiveness doesn't come because we do or say the right formula; it only comes when we finally see our sin thru God's eyes, allow it to break our hearts then confess it & turn from it. If we do that & only that, God, thru His miraculous grace, will pardon your sin & offer you life.

In this midst of this miracle of grace, there's still tragedy. **YHWH** forgives the guilt of sin but inflicts the consequences of sin. For David, **YHWH's** forgiveness was both miraculous & costly – the child would die. We'll talk about the reasons & ramifications of this death next week but for now, it almost seems that the child will die in David's place. Clearly, David was the one under the death penalty – he had even judged himself that way! Yet, Nathan assures him that he will not die, but a death will still occur. The child soon to be delivered will die – its almost as if the child's death is a substitute for David's. We might protest the unfairness of this exchange but we dare not protest too loudly because most if not all of us here today should have first-hand knowledge of the paradox of forgiveness that is both free & costly b/c another son of David has stood in our place, a different son of David has died as our substitute.

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The same id true of God's grace today – it is miraculous & it is free but it is also costly: it cost God His Son. Our text teaches us that a man's heart is revealed in his response to the criticism of God's word. Are you combative (Saul) or submissive? When face with your own sin, do you try to deflect the blame or do you accept it? It's not until you fully own your sin that you can be fully forgiven of your sin. How much breaking will God need to do in your life? 😊