

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

The Severity of Grace II Samuel 12:15-31

Intro: Last week we saw the **tenacity** of **YHWH's** grace; how God still sent Nathan to David even as he was ignoring & hiding his sin. Nathan confronts him with a legal scenario that David reacts to in righteous indignation, pronouncing a just & justified judgment against the crime. Nathan moves to checkmate & lays the guilt squarely at David's feet. He then proceeds to relate to David's **YHWH** perspective of the depth & damage of his sin. Nathan concludes by revealing to David the consequences that'll occur in the future b/c of his sin. David's response (13) is **short, sincere & specific**, "**I have sinned against the Lord.**" Amazingly, Nathan tells him that **YHWH's** forgiven his sin & David will live. But, Nathan adds 1 final caveat in vs14 that may set us back on our heels & cause us to scratch our heads & say, "**What gives?**" If God had forgiven David's sin, why does this child have to die? Is **YHWH's** forgiveness incomplete?

Not at all! We need to understand that there is a big difference between being judged **for** sin & being judged **by** sin. Judgment **for** sin only comes from God & everyone will have to face it at some point. But, sin itself is always accompanied by its own judgment (**consequences**); it's a package deal; you don't get 1 without getting the other. **YHWH's** forgiveness means David will live. He was under the death sentence not only b/c he committed 2 capital crimes (**adultery / murder**) but also b/c he, highest judge in the land, passed the sentence of death on himself (**5b**). That wasn't David's only sentencing. He also declares (**6**) that the perpetrator must restore 4-fold for the lamb. Of course, he didn't realize at the time that **he** was the perpetrator but the sentence was just (**Ex 22:1**) & the penalty stood. David **would** pay 4-fold for the life of Uriah & this child would be the 1st installment. Later, his sons Amnon, Absalom & Adonijah would also die tragic deaths directly related to the consequences David's sin with Bathsheba.

What we are seeing here in the last half of **ch12** is nothing less than the **severity** of **YHWH's** grace. Last week I mentioned that some confuse **grace** with **niceness**, implying that only good things happen thru God's grace. That is not the case. Sometimes God, in His grace, must bring **severe circumstances** into our lives to jar us from our foolish notions. Understand;

the consequences of David's sin started long before Nathan came to visit him (**Ps 32:3-4**). What David's experienced was the **malaise** of trying to **ignore his sin**. Sin separated him from fellowship with **YHWH** & it was palpable, he felt the loss spiritually, emotionally & physically; but not enough to bring him to repentance. David didn't repent until he was confronted with the true horror of his sin & the dire consequences it would bring.

Paul speaks of the reality & necessity of the severity of grace in **Rom 11:22**. He's making the point that the goodness of God towards the gentiles has come as a result of God's severity on Israel b/c of their unbelief. But the severity of God towards Israel was **not** for the purpose of **punishment** but was for the purpose of extending them **mercy** (**30-32**).

Why is the **severity of grace** necessary? To get our attention, to reveal the terrible reasons & horrible results of our sin & ultimately, to bring us to a place of **brokenness** (**Ps 51:1-17**). Brokenness is the result of the severity of grace & brokenness results in mercy being extended by God. 1 more thing, this severity of grace also leads to deliverance from the presence of this particular sin. We never again read of David committing adultery or pursuing his lust. It seems that the **severity** of **YHWH's** grace acted as a scalpel that dug in & removed that particular cancer out of him.

15- The author attributes this illness to the Lord's direct involvement in the situation. This reinforces to spiritual truths:

1) even when sin is forgiven, a price must be paid; 2) the innocent must pay the price for the guilty. This last principle was established all the way back in Eden. When Adam & Eve sinned & realized they were naked, God had to kill a couple of sheep to make clothes from their skins. You might think, "**That poor baby!**" but just realize; this is a newborn. If the illness entailed some sort of fever, he was out of it most, if not all of the time. The ones who suffered the most in this instance were the parents. They knew this illness was their fault & they experienced every excruciating second of this child's short life feeling both the guilt of their sin & the responsibility of his suffering. Tho the child would eventually die, the **severity of grace** was upon David & Bathsheba, not this child.

Still, why doesn't David get angry here (**as many of us would**) & accuse God of being cruel & insensitive to this child?

Last week we learned that **a man's heart is revealed by his response to the criticism of God's word**. When Saul was confronted with his sin by Samuel,

he blamed **the people** & tried to justify his rebellious actions with religious intent. But, when David was confronted with his sin by Nathan, he confessed. Why? B/c David took responsibility for his actions – he owned his sin. Thus, when this consequence appeared, he didn't blame **YHWH**, he owned it too! In fact, the reality of David's repentance is revealed by how he reacts to the consequences of his sin. As we will notice in the next section, David's behavior is that of a man who has a firm grasp on **depth** & **reach** of **YHWH**'s amazing grace.

16-17- Now, David's behavior both baffles & terrifies his servants but it ought to bring us **comfort** & **confidence**. David is throwing himself into **supplication**; he pleads with **YHWH** for this child! David doesn't get bitter towards God, nor does he take the fatalistic approach & say, "Oh well, I guess I deserve this." No, David takes the announcement & the arrival of **YHWH**'s judgment as an invitation to earnestly seek His mercy & he is right to do so. When the judgments of sin (**consequences**) are present in our own lives, we shouldn't just sit back & receive them passively or fatalistically (**I deserve it!**). Rather, we should cry out to God in repentance & ask for His **grace** & **mercy**, knowing we don't deserve any of it. Why should we do this? B/c our Father is a **gracious** & **merciful** God! His grace is beyond measure & His mercies are new every morning! David believed this & that's why he begins to fast & pray fervently.

18-21- There's a lesson here: extraordinary prayer & intense fasting does **not** change God's mind. Now, it did put David in the right frame of mind to receive what he must from God but it didn't **force** God to change His plan. Prayer & fasting are not tools to get whatever we want from God. They are simply demonstrations of radical submission & surrender to God's power & will.

Now, the **intensity** of David's actions scared his servants to death. When the child dies, they don't want to tell him, not knowing how he will react. David might be earnestly interceding but he's not an idiot. He knows what's happened by the way they whispered to each other. Upon hearing the news, he gets up, takes a shower, changes his clothes & goes off to the tabernacle to worship. When he returns he asks the chef, "**Hey! What's for lunch?**" Now his servants are beside themselves trying to understand what he's doing. Why not fast & weep **after** the child's death?

22-23- David's reply sheds light on his bizarre behavior. Apparently, David was hoping that **YHWH's** sentence in **14b** was not His *final* word. He might have thought the Lord was just moving him to pray, stirring him to plead His grace.

It all hangs on what David **thought** (or **assumed**) about God; "**Who can tell whether the Lord will be gracious to me...**" Do you see how well David's knows his God? He knows that showing grace is what **YHWH** does; it's His thing! Who can tell what a God like that may be happy to do in a case like this? Who can imagine how gracious a God of all grace wants to be to us in the midst of our sins & messed up lives? Do we think of God that way? Or do we always assume He's on His throne with His hand hovering over the "smite" button? We can see here that for David, grace is not just some doctrinal concept; it's a wonderful characteristic of **YHWH's** divine nature & he doesn't hesitate to appeal to God's grace despite his extreme lack of merit or claim upon it.

There's a story about a philosopher in the court of Alexander the Great. He was always "**down on his luck.**" Finding himself busted flat broke once again, where better to go (he thought) than Alexander, his master & the conqueror of the world? Alexander graciously gave him a commission to withdraw from his treasury whatever he wanted. He quickly went to the treasurer & demanded, in Alexander's name, 10K pounds! The treasurer was shocked – he refused to give it. He went straight to Alexander explaining that the request was unreasonable – the amount was absurd. Alexander heard him out but then said, "**Let the money be instantly paid. I am delighted with this philosopher's way of thinking; he has done me a singular honor. By the largeness of his request, he shows the high idea he has conceived, both of my superior wealth & my royal munificence.**" (John Whitecross)

In this particular case, **YHWH** didn't grant David's request but that doesn't negate the accuracy of David's concept of God. On the contrary, like that perennial penniless philosopher, David's big ideas about **YHWH** bring honor to Him. You can almost hear God say, "**I like the way this king thinks...**" David doesn't just have a grasp on grace; grace has a grip on him. It compels him to seek that Lord even tho he knows he has no right to. This should give hope to any believer who falls into sin. Many are conscious of their failures, have repented of their sins & realize they have no grounds to expect mercy – no reason to expect grace. Many falsely believe they are

doomed to live out the rest of their lives under the dark cloud of God's frown. But, if you understand grace, if you think of God as David did, then you can walk in the light of this blessed hope: that God delights to show grace to sinners & His children alike. This truth doesn't seek to excuse the guilt of our sin but it can help us get passed the despair of our sin.

24-25- This shows the great forgiveness & tenderness of God. He didn't hold a grudge against David & Bathsheba. The days of blessing & fruitfulness were not over for David. As a matter of fact, it is this son – born out of a marriage that began in adultery – that will ultimately be the heir to David's throne. God chose this son out of all David's sons to be both heir to the throne & ancestor of Messiah to demonstrate the truth that God truly forgives repentant sinners.

23-31- We almost forgot about the Ammonites! Joab's been busy whittling away at their defenses & now the city is almost ready to fall. Protocol expects the king to arrive & deal the final blow. David shows up & the war is over. Coming back to the Ammonites now, after all that's happened in **ch11-12** seems kind of anti-climatic, but that may be the writers point. After plowing thru all the sin, shame & severity of the last 2 chapters, he may want us to understand that in the grand scheme of things, the Ammonites really don't matter that much. On the other hand, what really matters the most here is the obedience & holiness of **YHWH's** anointed king. The conflict with the Ammonites was won but the real battle, the battle for the heart & mind of David was lost. Unfortunately, not only will David continue to feel this loss but so will his family & so will Israel.

Robert Murray McCheyne, the 19th century Scottish minister made this astounding statement while reflecting on his role as a pastor. He said, "**My people's greatest need is my personal holiness.**" The truth of that statement hits home to me but it should touch each one of us. Fathers, your personal holiness has a direct affect on your wives & family; mothers – kids; believers – friends, neighbors; co-workers... The greatest need the world has today is the personal holiness of God's people, not only that it exists but that it be displayed without any pretension or hypocrisy.

The majority of the battles we fight are in our hearts & minds & they mostly concern our obedience & holiness. Do we recognize the importance of these 2 aspects of our Christian responsibility? I hope we do b/c the stakes

are high! 😊