

Extravagant Grace for Egregious Sin 2 Samuel 12:1-15

“The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die”

Introduction: There are many questions we have about the universe, especially when we begin to understand Scripture and how God designed all things. *Where does evil come from? How can a good God allow bad things to happen? How does a loving God send anyone to hell? How does God’s sovereignty and my responsibility work together? How can Jesus be wholly God and man at the same time?*

These are good questions, ones that are answered in Scripture but will never satisfy our mind unless they are received by faith. Most questions that we ask, however, put ourselves at the center of the equation, rating the answer based on how well **we** understand it, or if it makes sense to **us**, or if we it would be the way **we** would have done it. We far too easily put ourselves in the position of arbiter of truth, placing ourselves at the level of authority that only God possesses.

Sometimes, *better* questions have to do with the graciousness of God, when we begin to comprehend how little we truly comprehend and even less what we deserve. *How does a holy, righteous, glorious God restore sinners back to Himself? Why would He do that? Why would a perfect God be motivated to bring people like me into His kingdom, and why does He want me with Him forever?*

It is this second line of reasoning by which we ask questions of **David following 2 Samuel 11**. The key questions: *what now? How could this happen? Is there any hope? Is everything that happened before get thrown away? Is there a pathway to move forward, and what does that look like?*

To understand and answer those questions, we need to consider the nature of **salvation, our heart, and God’s grace briefly before walking through this text**.

When we come to Christ in **salvation**, we begin as those whose *hearts are deceitfully wicked* (Jer. 17:9), are deserving of death *because of our sin* (Rom. 6:23), and are under God’s wrath (Eph. 2:3). We sin as people because we are sinful, rebellious from birth, and alienated from the life of God (Eph. 4:18). We were lost and did not know it, dead but still gasping for breath, and pursuing our passions that each took us further away from the truth. It was in this state that God **saved us**, not having anything good to offer or contribute, but by the **complete and satisfying work of Jesus on the cross**, who offered Himself as a substitute for us. When we believe in Him, turn from our sin, and ask for forgiveness, He gives it, thus giving us a **new heart** (Ezek. 36:26; 2 Cor. 5:17). This new heart is now able to respond, obey, love, glorify, and worship the Lord, since it has moved from a status of **stone to flesh**, changing our desires, motives, and passions, and giving us the opportunity and ability to hate our sin and move toward Christ’s righteousness.

But we also know that we still have the *old manor* the flesh that we contend with, that wages war against our hearts, seeking to turn it away from the Lord. This is why a believer still sins though we **hate our sin and love our Savior**. When we sin, it effects our heart. We feel conviction and shame and that motivates us to **confess, repent, and put off that sin**, knowing we are forgiven and restored (1 John 2:1-2). When we sin and do NOT confess and repent, it produces a barrier around our heart that repels conviction and holds fast to our sin, creating a growing fat layer around our heart. Over time, this fatty

heart begins to **act like a heart of stone, or looks a lot like a heart of pre-conversion stone**, since it does not respond to the leading of the Spirit.

This is where David found himself. A redeemed man who allowed sin to remain, whose heart was for the Lord but in a stretch of time gave himself over to his sin, including the misery that it produces – *“For when I kept silent, **my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.** ⁴For day and night your hand was **heavy upon me**; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer”* (Psalm 32:3-4) He was miserable, but not enough to turn. He was separated from the God He loved, but not enough to repent and be restored. He was joyless but not enough to deal with the reality of his heart.

The point of 2 Samuel 12 is the **graciousness of a forgiving God**. David, like every sinner, earned judgment but was given what he did not deserve. This continues to point us to the **work of our great Savior in Jesus Christ**, who was better than David in every way, and who is the ONE by which we move forward in hope and gives us a pathway of restoration when we are neck deep in sin.

God Graciously Pursues Sinners (12:1a)

*And the Lord **sent** Nathan to David...*

There was an immense amount of **sending** in chapter 11 as David not only sinned but tumbled down a rabbit hole of sin and cover-up. In fact, the word “sent/send” is used 12 times: *David sending for someone, Bathsheba sending messages, Joab sending correspondence*. But we concluded at the end of the chapter that God was a **silent but active observer in all that went on**, with His silence not signaling indifference but simply His own timing of interaction.

It is significant that the turning point in this story is that **God SENT Nathan**, the prophet who spoke on His behalf. We have seen Nathan before in 2 Sam. 7 as David was pondering building a Temple for the Lord. God provided prophets for His people so that He could communicate His will through them to the king or leaders of the nation. Here, God was the one **proactive**. God was not going to let David continue on in his sin. God was going to **pursue His own**.

This is how God always operates. If He were waiting for us to turn to Him to act, no one would be saved. It is in his own timing that God **sent forth His Son**:

Gal. 4:4-5 *“But when the fullness of time had come, **God sent forth his Son**, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”*

It is out of **love that God sent Him**:

1 John 4:9-10 *“In this the love of God was made manifest among us, **that God sent his only Son into the world**, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and **sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins**”*

If you are here today and walk in belief, it is because God loved you, sent His son to satisfy the requirements of His wrath and righteousness, and pursued you! You are loved and wanted, saved and secure. If you are hearing this word today, do not neglect the message that God is holding out for you, that you can have your sins forgiven and be reconciled to God today if you believe and repent.

God Graciously Confronts Sin (12:1b-9)

He came to him and said to him, “There were **two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor.** ² The rich man had very many flocks and herds, ³ but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, **and it grew up with him and with his children.** It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was **like a daughter to him.** ⁴ Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man’s lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.” ⁵ Then **David’s anger was greatly kindled** against the man, and he said to Nathan, “As the LORD lives, **the man who has done this deserves to die,** ⁶ and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.”

⁷ Nathan said to David, “**You are the man!** Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. ⁸ And I gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. ⁹ **Why have you despised the word of the LORD,** to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.

God sent a representative to lovingly confront David. This is how He operates today. When we are part of the **Body of Christ, the church,** we are given the *responsibility and opportunity to help each other in the battle against sin,* seeking to restore anyone who has been caught up in sin, and to do so in a spirit of gentleness (see **Gal. 6:1**). In doing this, we bear one another’s burdens and fulfill the law of Christ (**Gal. 6:2**). This does not mean a **direct assault on people** but we exercise wisdom and discernment to be as helpful in speaking the truth in love as we can.

David was NOT in a state of mind or heart to receive much confrontation from others. In fact, I’m sure when God told Nathan to confront David, knowing all that David had done over the last months, there was some trepidation of David’s reaction. The man was willing to kill faithful soldiers to cover his sin, knocking off a prophet would not be out of the question. So Nathan demonstrated **wise, loving, and helpful interaction with David, giving David the opportunity to see his own sin rather than Nathan having to convince him of it.**

So Nathan told a story, almost a parable like story, that proved effective. The story was simple yet profound, ground in reality with an obvious point. It was a tale of **2 men, one rich, one poor.** The poor man, possessing nothing materially but full of love, purchased a ewe lamb, which was loved so much it became part of the family (all of our cat and dog lovers know how this happens). The rich man, possessing everything materially but lacking in **contentment,** when visited by an out-of-town guest, was unwilling to take from his own vast herds, but instead took the poor man’s lamb and had a cook out for the traveler. **The point was clear:** there was an **egregious miscarriage of justice,** and the **wrong party was obvious.**

In a giveaway of his heart, David reacted to the story with an indignant stance of justice and an **anger toward the rich man.** What’s fascinating about our heart is that we often judge others harshly for the same sin which we ourselves struggle with or carry. Angry men are quick to call out the anger of others, those that struggle with lust, pride, and selfishness the like. But with David’s anger stirred, he quickly gave out **judgement on the rich man:** *Because he had NO PITY, he deserves to die AND pay back fourfold to the man of which he stole!* These were damning words, and gave Nathan the crack to open up and confront.

“Etah a-ish!” “You are the man!” is what Nathan cried. He pointed out what is obvious to all: **David WAS the rich man, and now he was in a position to listen and hear the truth, having the eyes of his heart open and soft.** What Nathan uttered was the depth and absurdity of the sin. Notice the text gives a rapid fire explanation of all that God had given to David: **I anointed** you king, **I delivered** you from Saul, **I gave** you your masters house and wives, **I gave** you the house of Israel and Judah...and if that were not enough, **I would have given** you MORE! In other words, **David did not sin because he lacked from the Lord, but because he was not content with what God had given, or to say it in a clearer way, He was not satisfied with the Lord at all.** This is the reality of all of our sin. Sin is a declaration that God’s promises are not enough, His gifts fall short of our wants and desires, and that we need to look outside of who He is for satisfaction, which is by definition **absurd**. When we sin, we shake our fist at God and His gifts and believe something else will finally make us happy.

Having explained why David had NO NEED to sin other than selfish desire, Nathan reviewed the case. The first and foremost sin was that David **despised the Word of the Lord**, which is always the source of our sinful drift, the conflict between keeping God’s commandments (1 John 5:1-2) and going our own way. The second was a direct consequence of despising God’s Word, and it was that he did evil by **taking what was not his: he took the life of Uriah and took his wife for yourself.** This sets up the narrative for what God was going to **take** from David in terms of consequences.

God Graciously Gives Consequences (12:10-12)

*10 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.’ 11 Thus says the Lord, **‘Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of 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. 12 For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.’*

We will look here at the first two consequences levied against David because of his sin: Because he had **taken** the wife of Uriah, God would **take** the peace from his house, meaning there would be conflict from that time forward. In many ways, chapters 13-20 of Samuel are an unfolding of this consequence, as there would be murder, abuse, and conspiracies against David for the rest of his life. The **second** consequence was more specific, which would find its fulfillment in **2 Samuel 16:20-23** as David’s son Absalom would run him out of Jerusalem, would take his throne, and sleep in the open air with his concubines to make himself a stench to his father and strengthen his standing with his supporters. The consequences fit the sin, and the scope fit the level of influence David had.

Did these consequences mean David could not or was not forgiven? Not at all, as any good parent knows, consequences are opportunities to learn and correct. The misnomer is that when someone is forgiven or restored there should not be ANY consequences, but that is inconsistent with God’s nature. The whole goal of God for a believer is to prepare us for eternity by purifying our faith, which is infinitely precious to Him. This is why He gives hard, ongoing, and multi-variegated trials in our life (1 Pet. 1:6-7), so that **“the tested genuineness of our faith --- more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire --- may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”** In other words, consequences of sin (which we ‘earned’) have the same effect as trials (which we did not), which is to refine our faith by making us more dependent on God in Christ. In this, there is grace to be had in both, even though there is a temporal weight and pain to bear. But this is NOT the end of the story, and the consequences, though severe, were not the ultimate expression of grace...*what happened next certainly is!*

God Graciously Forgives Sin (12:13-15)

13 David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. 14 Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die." 15 Then Nathan went to his house.

After the confrontation by Nathan, the explanation of sin and the levying of consequences, it was as if **David's eyes were opened from his glazed look, and his heart softened to the reality of sin.** His simple but profound phrase was this: *"I have sinned against the LORD"*. Now, at first blush, this seems like too little of response to too deep of a sin. **Did David mean it? Was he sincere?** We live in world where written or prepared statements by known figures can wear thin, and our cynical nature wonders where the words are genuine. But to understand what David meant, we can look at **Psalm 51** to catalog the breadth of his understanding. Listen to how he described it:

Have mercy on me, O God,
 according to your steadfast love;
 according to your abundant mercy
 blot out my transgressions.
² **Wash me** thoroughly from my iniquity,
 and **cleanse me** from my sin!
³ For I know my transgressions,
 and **my sin is ever before me.**
⁴ **Against you, you only, have I sinned**
and done what is evil in your sight,
 so that you may be justified in your words
 and blameless in your judgment.
⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
 and in sin did my mother conceive me.

⁶ Behold, you delight in truth in the inward
 being,
 and you teach me wisdom in the secret
 heart.
⁷ **Purge me with hyssop,** and I shall be clean;
 wash me, and I shall be whiter than
 snow.
⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
 let the bones that you have broken
 rejoice.
⁹ Hide your face from my sins,
 and blot out all my iniquities.
¹⁰ **Create in me a clean heart, O God,**
 and renew a right spirit within me.

David sinned against many: Bathsheba, Uriah, Joab, his soldiers and their families, and the entirety of the nation, but he also realized the **primary offense of his sin was against the LORD.** Much like the younger brother in Luke 16 and the Prodigal Son, David laid himself prostrate and humbly before the Lord. He recognized the **depth and breadth of his sin,** going back to his sin nature at birth. He knew he needed not just forgiveness from these sins but from ALL sin, needing his heart scrubbed clean. He needed a **clean heart, since his heart had become dull and unresponsive.** Though David did not go through a laundry list of specific sins, he acknowledged and confessed his abject sinfulness. And to his great joy, God listened to and accepted his confession.

God's response in grace to David's confession: *"The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die"*. Did David *deserve death*? Absolutely, as do all who sin and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). When we think that ANY sin we commit is NOT, we tend to categorize the severity of sin ONLY by consequence rather than their declaration of rebellion against the Lord. No, David deserved death but instead received **forgiveness,** with his sin being "put away", or "removed", or "taken away". **God's grace was greater than David's sin,** and in forgiveness it meant David could be **restored to a right relationship to the LORD, which is the point of salvation.** In Psalm 51:12, David said, *"Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit."* David was not concerned with the consequences of sin as much as he was hopeful to move from anguish to joy, from distance to intimacy, from rebellion to peace with His Father.

Forgiveness of sin, which can happen because God in Christ forgave us by pouring out His wrath for sin on Christ, is possible for all who would by faith ask for it! There was **one more consequence for David**, and that was the death of the child produced out of adultery. This clearly produced sorrow, as any death of an infant should, but it was a shadow of hope to come. In a way, David's child was a substitute for David's sin, dying instead of David. We know that it would be a **son of David** who would grow up to die, to take the place of those He loved and chose on the cross, to offer forgiveness of sin. In the **New Covenant** to come, God would "remember our sins no more" (Jer. 31:34; Heb. 8:12) because the punishment of sin would find its satisfaction on the persona and death of Jesus Christ, the once for all sacrifice (Heb. 10:10-12).

As we head into the Christmas season, we remember the love of Christ, that willingly entered into humanity in order to hang on a cross to offer the forgiveness of our sin that we desperately need. This is why we celebrate His **extravagant grace in the midst of our egregious sin**. Whether you have a heart of stone or a heart of flesh covered in fat, today is the day to confess and ask for forgiveness from a gracious God who lovingly and graciously gives it.