

# THE REBUKE OF DAVID AND HIS CONFESSION: A STRONG LESSON ON GOD'S CHASTISEMENT OF THE BELIEVER 2 SAMUEL 12:01–19

## *Introduction*

Chastisement is never a happy experience for the person being disciplined. Nevertheless, chastisement or discipline is necessary when a person does wrong. A parent who loves a child will discipline the child if he plays with matches. If a parent condones the child's behaviour, indulging and giving license to the child playing with matches, the result is catastrophic. The child soon starts a fire, perhaps endangering his or her life as well as the lives and property of the family or others.

Chastisement or discipline is essential for any of us when we do wrong. For if wrong behaviour is condoned or indulged, we are encouraged to continue to do wrong; and our wrong often becomes destructive, damaging both property and lives. If our immorality is condoned, we hurt people. If our stealing is indulged, people suffer loss. If license is given to abuse, lives are often wrecked with psychological problems throughout life. If a person indulges his laziness and slothfulness at his workplace, he often loses his job and always causes his employer to lose money.

If any wrong or wicked behaviour is done, the offender must be disciplined to prevent damaging or destroying lives. The present passage of Scripture is a strong lesson on God's chastisement of the believer when he sins. Remember that David had committed the terrible evils of adultery and murder. And David thought he had escaped punishment. But God knew, and the hand of God's chastisement was about to fall upon David. This is the great subject of the present passage: *The Rebuke of David and His Confession: A Strong Lesson on God's Chastisement of the Believer*, 2 Samuel 12:1-31.

- I. The chastisement of God pronounced upon David by Nathan: a lesson on the chastisement or discipline of God (vv. 1-12).
- II. The confession of David: a lesson on forgiveness, Psa 32, 51 (vv. 13-19).
- III. The strong testimony of David: a picture of the hope for heaven, of seeing loved ones again (vv. 20-25).
- IV. The capture of the Ammonite capital Rabbah: a picture of being steadfast and persevering against one's enemies (vv. 26-31).

## **I. 2 Samuel 12:01–12 The Chastisement of God Pronounced upon David**

There was the chastisement or judgment of God pronounced upon David by the prophet Nathan. Remember that Nathan was a personal advisor to David, especially concerning

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religious matters (7:1-2). Here Nathan is sent by God to confront David with the charge of his terrible evil of adultery and murder. Note that many months passed after these sins were committed before the LORD sent Nathan, for the child born to Bathsheba due to David's sin had already been born (vv. 14, 18). Obviously God had been waiting, hoping for David to repent, but the king had refused to humble himself and confess his sin. As a result, God Himself took action by sending his prophet Nathan to confront David:

1. Instead of directly charging David with the dual crimes of adultery and murder, Nathan shared a story or parable with the king. Obviously David thought that Nathan was bringing a real case before him that demanded his judgment. Nathan shared the parable of two men, one rich and the other poor (vv. 1-4). The rich man was very wealthy, possessing many herds and flocks. Whereas the poor man was poverty-stricken, owning nothing except one little lamb he had worked hard to purchase. He had raised the little lamb to be a pet, and it had grown up with his children, eating from the man's very own plate and drinking from his cup. The little lamb was loved so much that it had become just like a daughter to the man, with the man cuddling the sheep and letting it sleep in his arms.

One day the rich man had a guest to entertain in his home (v. 4). Instead of slaughtering one of his own animals for the evening meal, he stole the one and only lamb of the poor man and served it to the guest.

2. Enraged at the injustice of the rich man, David interrupted Nathan and swore under oath that the rich man deserved to die (v. 5). He then issued the verdict: the rich man was to make restitution, paying for the lamb four times over as dictated by the law (Exo 22:1).

Unknown to David, he had just condemned himself (the rich man) for having stolen the only wife (the little lamb) from one who had so tenderly loved her, her husband Uriah (the poor man).

3. Interrupting David before he could say another word, the prophet Nathan made the emphatic identification of the rich man (v. 7). In one of the most striking scenes in all of literature, Nathan pointed toward David and dramatically declared, "You are the man."

Stunned by the application of the parable to himself, David was unable to say a word. He knew he had condemned and pronounced judgment upon himself.

4. Without waiting for David to gather his senses and respond, Nathan continued to deliver God's stem message to David (vv. 7-12). The message was brief and forceful, a frightening message of divine judgment against the king, a stern message that included three parts:
  - a. First, Nathan listed the wonderful blessings God had poured out upon David through the years (vv. 7-8). The LORD had given David...

- position: made him king over the Israelites
  - protection: delivered him from the hand of Saul
  - wealth: given him the king's estate
  - royal privilege: given him the wives and harem of King Saul
  - one nation and rule: unified Israel and Judah into one nation
  - everything he needed: promised him he would always receive anything he lacked
- b. Nathan then listed the charges against David, which included four very specific charges (v. 9). David had actually broken three of God's Ten Commandments, the commandments forbidding covetousness, adultery and murder (Exo 20:1-17; Deut 5:6-21). God charged David...
- with despising His Word by breaking the Ten Commandments and committing the terrible evil he had done
  - with committing first degree, premeditated murder by killing Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba
  - with committing adultery with Bathsheba
  - with practicing deception by secretly ordering Uriah to be killed
- c. Nathan then pronounced God's judgment upon David (v. 10-12). Having allowed his lust to run wild, David had committed both adultery and murder. Consequently, he would reap exactly what he had sown. Violence and immorality would fill the lives of his family members. David would witness...
- his house being filled with death and violence, beginning with the death of the child conceived in adultery and born to Bathsheba (12:18); the violent deaths of his sons Amnon and Absalom (13:29; 18:14-15); and the death of his son Adonijah (1 Kng 4:22-25).
  - his own sons grieving him deeply and some actually rebelling against him, including the incestuous rape of David's daughter Tamar by his son Amnon, Tamar's half-brother (13:1-14); the vengeful murder of Amnon by Absalom (13:23-39); and the rebellion of Absalom (15:1-12).
  - his wives committing adultery in public with his own son Absalom (16:20-22; 1 Kng 2:13-17).

**Thought 1.** David had committed a terrible sin, the evil of adultery and murder. But God did not cast David away, rejecting and condemning him to hell. For within the depths of his heart, David genuinely believed and trusted in the LORD; and he loved the LORD. On this one occasion, he had yielded to the lust of the flesh and committed the terrible evil of adultery, which in turn led to murder. But the LORD still loved David and wanted to call him back into His service; therefore the LORD reached out for David, doing all He could to lead him to repentance.

So it is with us. If we genuinely believe in the LORD and follow after Him, the LORD does not cast us off. When we sin, He does not doom us to hell. He reaches out for us, attempting to lead us to repentance. But note this fact: just as David had to reap what he had sown, so we too will have to bear the judgment for our sin. If we sin, the hand of God's judgment will fall upon us. God will discipline us in order to bring us back into His service. As true believers in the LORD, we are chastised and disciplined by the LORD when we sin. This is the clear teaching of Holy Scripture:

**John 15:2** *"He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful."*

**1 Cor 11:30-32** *That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.*

**2 Cor 5:10** *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

**1 Pet 1:17** *Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.*

**Heb 12:5-6** *And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."*

**Rev 22:12** *"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done."*

**Deut 8:5** *Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.*

**Psa 94:12** *Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law.*

**Prov 3:11-12** *My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.*

## **II. 2 Samuel 12:13–19 The Confession of David: A Lesson on Forgiveness**

There was the confession of David, a striking lesson on being forgiven, yet having to bear the chastisement of God. What would be the response of the king to the charges of God against him? Would he humble himself in brokenness before the LORD, or would he react against the prophet of God? A graphic description of the scene is painted by Scripture:

1. In humility and brokenness David confessed his sin, declaring that he had sinned against the LORD Himself (v. 13). No attempt was made to rationalize or justify his

behaviour; no excuse whatsoever was given by David. In a very straightforward manner, David simply yet genuinely spoke from the depths of his heart, confessing and repenting of his sin: "I have sinned against the LORD."

2. Responding in mercy, the LORD forgave David and set aside the death penalty. David would not be executed for having committed the sins of adultery and murder. Remember that the law demanded execution for both sins of adultery and murder (Gen 9:6; Exo 21:12; Lev 20:10; 24:17; Num 35:31-33; Deut 22:22). Mathew Henry gives an excellent discussion on David's forgiveness and the LORD's setting aside the death penalty against him, a statement that is well worth quoting in its entirety

*When David said I have sinned, and Nathan perceived that he was a true penitent, (1) he did, in God's name, assure him that his sin was forgiven: "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die," that is, "not die eternally, nor be for ever put away from God, as you would have been if he had not put away the sin." The obligation to punishment is hereby cancelled and vacated. He shall not come into condemnation: that is the nature of forgiveness. "Your iniquity shall not be your everlasting ruin. The sword shall not depart from your house, but, [1.] It shall not cut you off, you shall come to thy grave in peace." David deserved to die as an adulterer and murderer, but God would not cut him off as he might justly have done. [2.] "Though you shall all your days be chastened of the LORD, yet you shall not be condemned with the world." See how ready God is to forgive sin. To this instance, perhaps, David refers, Psa 32:5, I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD." And you forgave the guilt of my sin. Let not great sinners despair of finding mercy with God if they truly repent; for who is a God like unto him, pardoning iniquity? (Mathew Henry. Mathew Henry's Commentary, Vol. 2. (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., n.d.), p. 502).*

3. David then heard the fateful pronouncement of chastisement and judgment: the child born as a result of adultery would die (v. 14). Why? Because David had given opportunity for the enemies of the LORD to reproach and scorn the LORD's Holy Name. David was a genuine believer; therefore by his actions he had given an opportunity to show contempt for the LORD. If the child of the adulterous relationship had been allowed to live, the wicked of the earth would rejoice in David's fall and ridicule the Name of the LORD. They would think that the message of God's holiness and judgment meant nothing, that they could continue to sin without fearing the coming judgment. For if God tolerated the terrible sins of adultery and murder in the life of a believer such as David, he would tolerate sin in the life of any person. Consequently, God had to stop the world's reproach and contempt by showing His displeasure toward David because of his terrible sin. David had to bear the chastisement for his scandalous sins, bear the discipline of God's hand of judgment against him. God vindicates His name by chastising David and showing the world that He not only loves and forgives David, but also that He hates David's

sin. Note this fact: down through the centuries — even today — there are those who reproach or criticize both the LORD and David because of David's sin, and some who even use his sin to rationalize their own adulterous behaviour — all believing that they will escape the judgment of God. But they forget that the hand of God's judgment did fall upon David, beginning with the death of his small child and continuing on throughout the rest of his life.

4. Immediately after Nathan the prophet had left David's presence, the child became critically ill (v. 15). In just a few days he was to die (v. 18).
5. As soon as Nathan left the royal court, David also retired to humble himself before the LORD, praying and begging for the life of his child (vv. 16-17). He spent night after night on his face in prayer, fasting and begging God to spare the baby's life. Even when the servants of his household tried to lift him from the floor, he refused to rise and break his prayer and fast.
6. When on the seventh day the child died, David's servants feared telling him (v. 18). The king had already borne so much pain and suffering that they feared his reaction, that he might react in desperation and harm himself.
7. However, David noticed his servants standing off to the side whispering among themselves, and he realized that the child was dead (v. 19). Turning to his servants, he asked if his suspicions were true. And they confirmed the fact: the child was dead.

**Thought 1.** God will forgive sin. But if we sin, we will bear the chastisement of God's discipline because of our sin. For example, if a believer breaks the law while driving and causes an accident in which he loses his sight, God will forgive his sin for having broken the law. But God will most likely not restore his sight. The believer has to bear the results of his sin, which in this particular case is blindness. So it is with all believers: we reap what we sow, suffer the consequences of our sin. Yet if we confess and repent of our sin, God will forgive us. We must always remember, though, that confession and repentance are essential in seeking forgiveness. We must be willing to turn away from our sin and confess it before God. This is the clear teaching of God's Holy Word:

**Luke 15:18** *"I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you."*

**Acts 8:22** *Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.*

**1 John 1:9** *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

**2 Chr 7:14** *If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

**Ezra 10:11** *Now make confession to the LORD, the God of your fathers, and do his will. Separate yourselves from the peoples around you and from your foreign wives.*

**Prov 28:13** *He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.*

**Jer 3:13** *“Only acknowledge your guilt — you have rebelled against the LORD your God, you have scattered your favours to foreign gods under every spreading tree, and have not obeyed me,” declares the LORD. ■*