

David and Nathan

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[0:00] 2 Samuel chapter 12 is on page 315. 2 Samuel and chapter 12. And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, There were two men in a certain city.

One rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds, 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. It was like a daughter to him. 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.

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. And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

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.

[1:34] And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more.

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 a sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.

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 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 son.

For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the son. 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. Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die.

[2:46] Then Nathan went to his house. And the Lord afflicted the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick. David therefore sought God on behalf of the child.

And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. And the elders of the house stood beside him to raise him from the ground, but he would not, nor did he eat food with them. On the seventh day the child died, and the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead.

For they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spoke to him, and he did not listen to us. How then can we say to him, The child is dead? He may do himself some harm. But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David understood that the child was dead.

And David said to his servants, Is the child dead? They said, He is dead. Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the house of the Lord and worshipped.

He then went to his own house. And when he asked, they set food before him and he ate. Then his servants said to him, What is this thing you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive.

[3 : 52] But when the child died, you arose and ate food. He said, While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, Who knows 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 will not return to me. Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba.

And he went into her and lay with her, and she bore a son. And he called his name Solomon. And the Lord loved him and sent a message by Nathan the prophet. So he called his name Jedidiah because of the Lord.

Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the Ammonites and took the royal city. And Joab sent messengers to David and said, I have fought against Rabbah. Moreover, I have taken the city of waters. Now then gather the rest of the people together and encamp against the city and take it, lest I take the city and be called by my name.

So David gathered all the people together and went to Rabbah and fought against it and took it. And he took the crown of their king from his head. The weight of it was a talent of gold. And in it was a precious stone, and it was placed on David's head.

[5 : 03] And he brought out the spoils of the city, a very great amount. And he brought out the people who were in it and set them to labor with saws and iron picks and iron axes and made them toil at the brick kilns.

And thus he did to all the cities of the Ammonites. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem. Amen. And we ask that God will bless his own word to us.

We're going to sing now in Psalm 51 from the traditional version of the Psalm. It's on page number 280, Psalm 51. We're going to sing from the beginning to the verse marked 7.

Page 280, traditional version of Psalm 51. After thy lovingkindness, Lord, have mercy upon me, for thy compassions great blot out all mine iniquity.

From 1 to 7, we'll stand to sing. After thy lovingkindness, Lord, have mercy upon me, and thy compassions great blot out all mine iniquity.

[6 : 30] May cleanse from sin and truly wash from my iniquity.

For my transgressions I confess, my sin I ever see.

Can't we be the only have I sin in thy sight done with sin?

That when thou speakst thou mayst be just and clear in judging still.

Behold, I in iniquity was born thou whom within.

[7 : 50] My mother also may conceive in guiltiness and sin.

Behold, thou in the inward parts with whose delighted heart and wisdom thou shalt make me know within the hidden part.

Do thou with his heart sprinkle me, I shall be cleansed so.

ye wash me in me, and then I shall be whiter than the snow.

Turn to the New Testament now to 1 John chapter 1. 1 John chapter 1, reading from verse 5. A short passage from verse 5 into chapter 2, verse 6.

[9 : 34] 1 John chapter 1, it's on page 1227. And verse 5. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

If we say we have fellowship with him, while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.

And the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. And the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

[10 : 40] He is a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And by this we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments.

Whoever says, I know him but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him.

Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. Amen. And once again, we read these words asking that God will bless them to us and open up our heart to receive them by faith.

We're going to once again join together in prayer. Our Father in heaven, we come to you this evening, Lord, asking for you to prepare us and to guide us for whatever lies ahead for each one of us.

We do not know what a day or an hour may bring, but we come here as the first day of the week, preparing for the coming week. We do not even know if we'll live to see much of it.

[11 : 50] And yet we do so, Lord, knowing that you have planned and purposed our lives, and we will live in this world for as long as you have determined in your goodness and in your kindness.

Lord, there are many things in this world that perplex us, and that perhaps are taking up our attention even now as we're worshipping, things that we feel so difficult to get our minds away from.

We pray that you will settle our minds and pray that we may listen to the words of the apostle, not to be anxious for anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication to let our requests be made known to God.

And this is what we want to do now. We want to bring the secrets of our heart into your presence. We want to bring to you and commit to you the cares and the difficulties, the frustrations, and the anxieties that are so often connected with this life.

We pray, Lord, that you will come and that you will lead us and guide us as the good shepherd, the shepherd who knows the end from the beginning and who knows our needs before we even ask.

[13 : 02] Give us to be reminded always of your care for us. And so we pray for the days that lie ahead. We ask you'll prepare us for them and that you will give us to trust in the Lord and to know that he who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also freely with him give us all things?

We lack nothing if we are yours this evening. We also pray for a world in which there is so much need. We ask, Lord, for where there is warfare and cruelty and where there is violence.

We've been thinking already on this day, along with the rest of the world, on the sacrifice that people have made, soldiers and others who have given their lives so that we may enjoy the freedoms that we enjoy.

And Lord, give us never to forget that others, that what we benefit in this life, the life that we live, the peace, was paid for by the lives of others who laid down their lives for us.

And our Father in heaven, we pray that you will make us thankful for what others have given to us. And never let us forget that we live in a world full of turmoil.

[14:17] We pray for where there is violence at the moment, for where there is bloodshed. We pray for the whole situation in the Middle East, for Iraq and for Syria. Once again, Lord, we pray that there will be peace in that region.

We pray for an end to all the cruelty and the obscene actions of men towards their fellow men and women. And we pray, Lord, for those who are involved in extremist actions.

We pray, Lord, that the gospel will somehow reach these people. And we pray that you will give them a dissatisfaction, to know, Lord, that the taking of life is not the will of God.

And we ask, Lord, that you will remind this world that there is a God. Have mercy on this world. We know that the world recognizes the existence of God in creation.

But, Lord, we are a world who want to turn our backs on you. So that's why we need the gospel, the gospel that declares Jesus Christ. We pray for everyone who's gone out with the gospel today.

[15:22] We pray for your servant who spoke to us here on Wednesday from OMF. We pray that you'll bless his work in South America and bless the work he's already done in Vietnam.

We pray for that region of the world and pray that your word will reach those who have been blinded by sin and false religion just as we were blinded ourselves.

Our Father in heaven, set them free, we pray, and restore this world to yourself so that the earth becomes full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing now in Psalm 51 once again, but this time in the New Psalms Version, Sing Psalms Version, you'll find it on page 68.

We're going to sing from verse 10 to the end of the psalm. Psalm 51. It's on page 68 of Sing Psalms and it's from verse 10 to the end of the psalm 4.

[16:23] The four last verses. Lord, create a pure heart in me and a steadfast mind renew. Do not take your spirit from me. Cast me not away from you. Give me back the joy I had.

Keep my willing spirit glad. The last four verses will stand to sing. Lord, create a pure heart in me and a steadfast mind renew.

Do not take your spirit from me and be not away from you.

Give me back the joy I had. Keep my willing spirit glad.

Then I'll teach your wisdom to sinners. Rebels will come back to you.

[17:33] Free me from that guilt, my Savior. God most merciful and true.

Then I'll praise your righteousness. Teach my lips your name to bless.

Sacrifice does not delight you else my tribute I would bring.

Nor do you take any pleasure in a whole burnt-off valley.

Come, treat heart of sacrifice. You, O God, will not despise.

[18:42] Let your blessing rest on Zion, build Jerusalem's walls.

The King. Sacrifices then will please you those upon your altar slain.

O praise may for your delight. Truly righteous in your sight.

2 Samuel chapter 12.

And then, of course, you'll have a break from the life of David for a few weeks. But it's probably appropriate that we end this episode of David's life at this time.

[19 : 51] 2 Samuel 11 and 12. They're one unit. They're one story. They go together. So we're really just completing what we started last week. 2 Samuel chapter 12, verse 7.

Nathan said to David, You are the man. Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel. I anointed you king over Israel and delivered you out of the hand of Saul. And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and Judah.

And I would have added to you as much more. Why have you despised the word of the Lord? And then at the end of that section, David said to Nathan, verse 13.

I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said to David, The Lord has also put away your sin. You shall not die.

Last week I took you through the events of chapter 11. I tried to do that as sensitively as I possibly could. Preachers are always under temptation to do a number of things.

[20 : 55] They're a number to preach on their own pet themes and to talk about all the ills and all the wrongs of the world and to use a chapter like this. Very easy to use a chapter like this to go on a rant about all the ills and the wrongs of the world.

I'm not saying that we shouldn't, but that's not what this chapter is about. I tried to stick to the events of the chapter. And that's always the safest thing to do, to stick to the events as they are given to us in the chapter and to try to apply them.

And it's not a question of me trying to apply them to you. I'm trying to apply them to myself first. We're all in this together. And equally, it's dangerous to try to read too much into the chapter.

We tend to do that very often. We read more than the chapter is there. I tried not to do that last week and I hope that I won't do it tonight either. Like I say, chapter 12 goes along with chapter 11 as the consequence.

It gives, the last chapter gave every indication that David was in control. He appears to be in command. I suppose as king, he could do that.

[22 : 10] He could take advantage of the authority that had been given to him by God. And that was part of the sinfulness of what he did. He was taking advantage of the authority that was vested in him by God himself.

And the chapter 11 is full of how he is ordering this, ordering that. The key word that appears all the way through chapter 11 is the word sent. David saw Bathsheba.

He sent for her. She came to him. Then he sent her away. And then he sent to her husband Uriah to come to him. He sent him home. And then he sends a message to Joab.

And then he's doing, it appears for, as far as the eye can see, that David is in control. But in actual fact, he's not in control.

He's actually become a slave to his own basic instinct, his sinful basic instinct. And he has become, he has given himself.

[23 : 09] Little did he know, with all the ordering, commanding that he's doing, little did he know that actually he was a slave to sin. That's what the Lord says. Whoever sins is a slave to sin. And that's the nature of sin.

Takes us under its command and under its authority. That's why we have to guard against it as God's people. If you belong to the Lord Jesus, you've been set free from its authority and from its command.

You don't have to do it. And yet we do, don't we? We fall and we enter into temptation. We allow ourselves to walk into temptation, to shock ourselves in the process.

And that's why it's wrong to ask. We asked the question last week, how did David do this? Now that's a very important question. The question that we could have asked is, why did David do this?

It's important not to ask that question because there is no logical answer for it. There is no explanation. The moment you start looking for explanations as to why you go down the wrong road, you're actually denying the wrongness of what you're doing because if there's an explanation to it, then it's not wrong.

[24:23] There are no mitigating circumstances. There is no explanation. And yet we do it time and time again. When we're confronted with our own wrongdoing, the first thing we do is we try and explain it.

Same as Adam and Eve. When God said to Adam, what's this you have done? He says, the woman that you gave me. That wasn't an excuse. It never is. There never is an excuse for sin. So it's wrong to ask, and I was very careful not to ask, why did David go down this road?

It is important to ask how he goes down this road. But what also is important is that we discover that the consequences of what his actions were, a downward spiral into a limbo in which he's in denial of everything that he does, comes at the end of a process of trying to get out, trying to cover up, and trying to, trying to, in his own, I suppose, in his own logical fashion, to try and sort out what he's done.

But he does that by getting himself deeper and deeper and deeper into guilt and into sin, so that he finds himself, so by the end of the episode, that he's actually been responsible for the death of one of his most trusted servants, a man who had never done anything, who'd spent his whole life serving David.

And yet here he finds, David finds himself as a killer, a person who orders, who orders his killing. Shocking, isn't it?

[26:02] It really is shocking. I don't want us ever, ever to lose sight of how shocking this chapter is. And I think that that is the main effect that it ought to have on every one of us, what we are capable of as sinful human beings.

And it gets worse. Because the frightening thing here is, that there's every, until God finally reaches through to David, as far as David is concerned, everything is as normal.

It looks like Bathsheba moves in, and David moves on with his life. Presumably there would have been a royal wedding, with all of the trappings, and the lavish reception that there would have been, and the speeches.

Maybe I'm reading again far too much into it, but there must have been because she became his wife, which means there must have been a wedding. And because he was a king, it must have been a royal wedding. And royal weddings were not done in secret, they were done in public.

No wonder how much cynicism there was amongst the people of Israel, many of whom must have known what had taken place.

[27:19] Be sure your sin will find you out. And that's the effect that his wrongdoing had had on him.

As far as the outside was concerned, nothing. And that's, that's, that's a really frightening effect. When sin actually appears to have no effect on your outside life.

Inwardly though, we know that there was turmoil. David tells us how he felt inwardly in one of his Psalms. Psalm 32, which was written after the event, and which describes the process by which David came to a place of repentance to the Lord.

He tells us what he felt. When I kept silent, he says, Psalm 32, when I kept silent, my bones wasted away. That's how he felt inside.

He felt as if he was disintegrating on the inside. He felt as if there was a disease that nobody else could see. As far as his life was concerned, to all intents and purposes, he acted as normal.

[28 : 28] And yet inside there was chaos. Through my groaning all day long, for day and night, and it's only afterwards, he's able to tell us this, day and night, your hand was heavy upon me.

My strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. That's how he truly felt.

As the next chapter opens up, the chapter that we've just read, we discover that God is now in control. That where it appeared as if the rains had been given to David.

In actual fact, he wasn't in control. But now God really is in control. And it's time for God to take things back into his own hands.

The chapter opens. The chapter opens, where the last one ended with God, who's been a silent observer all along. Only telling us at the very end of chapter 11, that the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

[29 : 42] The anger of God. And it's real anger. That's what you would expect. Imagine God were to say, after all of this deceit and lies and killing and immorality, imagine God was to shrug his shoulders.

We were to discover that God was indifferent to all of this. That would really shock us, wouldn't it? This has to displease God. We all know that what went on, the events that went on in chapter 11, were sinful events.

There's something that lies within every single one of us that testifies. Even if you're not a Christian tonight, you know that the events of chapter 11 were wrong. Deeply wrong.

So it's not surprising, when we read at the very end of the chapter, that the thing that David did displeased the Lord. It wasn't just an indiscretion. I think I called it that last, that was an understatement.

It was wrongdoing. It was sin. It was deliberate sin. And it was against the Lord, and God is rightly displeased with David.

[30 : 47] But there's more than anger in God. Chapter 12 tells us that there's a determination in God that what David did must have consequences.

And it does have consequences. And there's a good reason why our actions have consequences. And I'll tell you why. I'll tell you the reason. How many times have you heard people saying, ah, well, they talk so glibly about David.

We talk so glibly about David, we say, ah, well, David sinned, didn't he? And what we really mean by that, when we say, ah, but David sinned, didn't he? Well, what actually, what some people mean by that is, well, it's what happens in life, isn't it?

And even if you're a Christian, then, you know, you sin, and then you ask forgiveness, and then you're forgiven, and that's it. But, I've heard people talking like that.

And people talk like that, people who talk like that, haven't really got to grips with what this chapter tells us. Their view of forgiveness is what Ralph Davis calls the vending machine view of forgiveness.

[32 : 03] You put your money in, you press the button, and you get what you pay for. You sin, you repent, and you get forgiveness from God. The vending machine approach.

That's not the way it works. And anybody who thinks like that simply hasn't read chapter 12 properly. For one thing, repentance for David did not just come like a vending machine.

Repentance in David had to be prized out of him. People talk about repentance as if somehow or other, it'll just come up, you wake up one morning, and you're repentant, and everything is okay.

That's not the way our hearts work. And anybody who can read a chapter like chapter 12, and come away thinking that forgiveness is cheap, really hasn't understood the chapter in the first place.

The problem is that there was no repentance on David's part. Remember I said, he was in denial. He had found a way psychologically of blocking out the past, of blanking the past.

[33 : 13] And that's what many people do. Instead of going straight to the Lord and confessing our sin and coming clean with the Lord, we try to make excuses to ourselves.

We give ourselves explanations. We try to make allowances for ourselves, and by so doing, we enter into a darkness that we call backsliddenness.

The problem with someone who's backslidden is that they can give, on the outside, every appearance that everything is going. You would never know the difference. You would never know there was anything wrong.

They go to all the right services. They look the part. They talk the part. They tick all the boxes. And you might look at that person and think that person's a strong Christian going on with the Lord.

And yet inwardly, that person knows that they're far away from where they should be. That's the way it was from David. And it can happen in a variety of different ways. It can happen this way.

[34 : 18] When you allow yourself to sin, to enter into temptation, to allow temptation to overcome you. It can also happen by prayerlessness.

It starts off when you're too busy to pray, and when prayer gets pushed out to the margins of your life, and when you lose sight of its centrality and its importance, it starts off so innocently.

It can start off by you not coming to church, by choosing not to come to church. You think, well, you don't have to come to church to be a Christian. I can maintain my...

But church is God's idea, God's way of strengthening us. As Christians, that doesn't mean we always feel strengthened every time we come to church. Nevertheless, it's God's means of nourishing His people.

It can start off by neglecting the Bible. That's why I said in this month's newsletter how important it is to maintain the discipline of keeping your Bible reading.

[35 : 25] That's not to say that every time we read the Bible we always get the same feeling from it. Sometimes we don't, but it's still God's Word and still the discipline of maintaining our contact with God's Word, hearing God's Word.

Whether you feel it or not, the Bible is talking to you. It is getting through to you. The problem is if you neglect these things, then you drift away from where you should be.

Even though you give every appearance that things are okay with you, inwardly, you know that you've gone cold and you've gone hard and you've drifted away from where you should be this evening.

I would want you, I plead with you tonight, if that is you, then I would ask you tonight to straight away go to the Lord and simply tell Him what you've done.

Tell Him the way you are. Tell Him how you feel. Tell Him how miserable you feel. That's all. Tell Him how miserable you feel and ask Him to deliver you and to rescue you from being trapped in a state of backsliddenness.

[36 : 29] I'm pleading with you tonight to do that because only the Lord, by His intervention, can restore you back into that right relationship with Himself.

I'm telling you from my own experience as a Christian, I'm not saying as someone who's standing here perfect, I know what it's like to be backslidden and go back over 40 years of Christian living and I can several times.

I know what it's like and I know how utterly desolate and lonely you feel. So don't delay and don't accept that and whatever you do, don't think God has written you off.

Don't write yourself off. Don't think, oh, I'm too far away to come back to the Lord because God has given up on me. God doesn't do giving up on people and if He's going to restore David back into fellowship with Himself after all that David has done, we're going to see this evening that God, His very nature, is one of grace and yet there are consequences at the same time to what we do.

There is grace and there is forgiveness in God. We're going to see that in a few moments but there are consequences in David's, to what David has done.

[37 : 51] Neither is it true, by the way, to say that what you do in private has no bearing on your public life.

You know, you find some people saying that and if ever there was a chapter that brings out to us the danger and the importance of maintaining a private life which is healthy, then surely it's this one.

David wasn't just acting on his own behalf, he was acting on the kingdom's behalf. He was the covenant king. He represented the people of God and here he was far away from what he should have been, a man after God's own heart and yet far away from what he should have been.

And so, when I hear people saying all you need to do, all you need to do is repent, all you need to do is repent, I think that person simply doesn't understand the complexity of a chapter like this and the sinful, what somebody else has called the sinfulness of sin.

Now, what God did was in his grace and in his mercy he sent this man Nathan. Nathan's one of the most unsung heroes in the Bible. He's there, he does what God wants him to do, he does something that's very, very difficult and he confronts David with what he had done and he does so in a very, very clever way.

[39 : 16] He tells him what he's done. And if Nathan had told David, if he had just simply given it to him straight, David, do you realize you've committed adultery and you've arranged the killing of a man in your own army?

David would probably by the authority we've already spoken about ordered Nathan to be taken away, to be removed from his presence. He had every right to do that. So Nathan had to act a little bit more subtly and that was so powerful because what he did was he told Nathan a story.

Now he didn't bring it to him as a parable. He made David believe that this man who had the one ewe lamb was actually a poor man in his own kingdom and then a visitor came to the rich man.

The rich man, instead of killing one of his own flock, he took the one ewe lamb from the poor man for the visitor who had come. David was utterly outraged.

He invoked God's name. When he heard the story, he invoked God's name. He says, as the Lord lives, he declares what the man deserves.

[40 : 24] He says, this man deserves to die. And he orders that he repays four times. What Nathan says next, hit David right between the eyes.

you, David, are the man. The sense of natural justice in that story was enough to condemn David.

But David's sin went way further than natural justice. David had to not only see how sinful he had been in the eyes of the world, but he had to see what he had done in the eyes of God.

This was God's word to him. And David suddenly, all of a sudden, for the first time he saw that if he had a right to be angry about the rich man in the story, how much more did God have a right to be angry with him who had despised his law on at least two counts.

Thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, I anointed you. This is, you notice the word I? This is a personal thing between David and the Lord and that's what sin is.

[41 : 44] It's personal between us and the Lord. That's why he says when he finally comes to that place of repentance in Psalm 51, he says, against you, you only have I sinned.

He saw it for the first time as a personal affront to God and that was the very worst aspect of it and here's what God says to him. I anointed you king over Israel and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul.

Here's what I have done to you and I gave you your master's house, your master's wife, every step of the way I have seen you through it. I've taken you from being a nobody in the field of your father, looking after your father's sheep, to putting you on the throne of Israel.

I've done everything for you. I was there for you at the very right moment through all the dangers and all the snares. I was there for you and you've despised me.

You've done what is evil in my sight. You struck down Uriah the Hittite with a sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and you've killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore says God, the sword will never depart from your house.

[43 : 03] You know, there's a terrific logic in all of this, all the way through the chapter. That's, if I can put it in men language, that's the language we men understand, isn't it?

We say, we always say as men, I like people to get to the point. Don't mess around. Don't, don't flannel.

Don't waffle. Let's get to the point. Tell it as it is. Give it to me straight. Okay, how is this? For logic and blunt talk. This is God's language too.

It's a language in which God says to us, I see everything. Whatever your excuses are, whatever your deception are, however much you've tried to deceive yourself that things aren't as bad, they are.

They couldn't be worse. I see everything. I'm going to ask you tonight, is there a secret?

[44 : 16] A secret you've kept from everyone around you? You try to keep it from yourself, try to explain it away, you try to run from it, God.

You can't run from God. You may even think you've been successful so far because you think you've got away with it.

You'll not get away with it ultimately. God sees everything. You must give an account to God. He has a particular personal interest in you.

He has an interest in you. If you're not a Christian, you might say to me tonight, I'm not part of this. I'm not a Christian. I don't want to listen to this. Yes, you do. You have to listen to it because God created you for himself.

You must give an account to God. And if you are a Christian, he has a special interest in you. An interest in you that says, I have purchased you with the blood of my son.

[45 : 22] You're mine. And you're trying to hold out. And you're trying to deceive. And you're trying to run. And you're trying to hide. You can't do it.

David tried. He couldn't do it. Neither can you. So that's the language we understand, isn't it? The language of logic.

So be it. God's God's word. And let's tell it as it is. That when we sin, we sin against the God who we are accountable to and who sees and knows everything.

Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up. It was David that wrote these words. You know my thoughts. Everything about me, you know me.

And that's God's word. that's the truth of God's word to us this evening. And the fact is that when we finally come to terms with that truth that we must come to terms with, the only way to deal with it is to come to the Lord and to ask him what David asked him.

[46 : 38] Search me, O God, and know my heart and try and know my thoughts and see if there is any grievous way within me and lead me in the way everlasting.

That was the moment that David woke up. That was the moment that he came to the place where God was leading him to in his grace all along. And that was the moment he finally confessed what had been in his heart all along.

I have sinned against the Lord. these words don't sound much, do they? You might get the impression, well, is that all he's got to say?

Well, let me ask you this, what else is there to say? Everything else has already been said by God. God has confronted him with all the ugliness of what he's done.

what is there left apart from David to simply hold up his hands and to say in truth, I have sinned against the Lord.

[47 : 48] In actual fact, between him and the Lord he said a lot more. He tells us what he said. He tells us how he went secretly to God and how he asked for his forgiveness forgiveness.

Psalm 51 is the account of how in David's sense of horror, his sense of darkness, there was only one place for him to turn and that was to the Lord.

And he said this, have mercy, O God, according to what? God. He's asking for God's mercy.

He's asking for God's forgiveness. What right does he possibly have? We've already seen that he doesn't deserve anything. He deserves all the punishment that anyone can give him for what he's done.

And yet here he is and he's asking God for mercy, for forgiveness. What right does he have? He says, have mercy on me, O God, according to you.

[49 : 02] He could have said a whole host of things. Look at my past, Lord. Look at how I've served you in the past. I haven't been too, but on the whole, on the whole, I've obeyed you.

And this on the scales of things, then surely what I've done for you is greater than I've done against you. What about all those times in the past that I've spent with you, praying and writing the poetry, the psalms in which I extol you and praise you and express my love for you?

Do these not count? And after all, surely if this is a turning point, I've been made to see my sin, I've been made to see how utterly wrong I am.

I'm confessing it now. I put my hands up, I know I was wrong. Surely on that basis, surely that's enough. The very fact that I'm so sorry for what I've done, surely that should be enough to bring about your forgiveness.

No? Or his promises, his resolutions in the future, I'll never do it again. That's the way we think, isn't it? His resolution never to do it again.

[50 : 18] I've learned my lesson. I can never do what I've done, especially after what you've said to me, that everything's going to be different now in the kingdom, and things are going to happen that are going to be most unpleasant.

Well, I'll never, ever, ever do this again. So please forgive me on that basis. that's not what he says. Do you see what he says?

He says, have mercy on me, O God, according to your chesed.

Remember that word? Seen it so many times. loving kindness. ESV says your steadfast love.

That's all that he had to lay hold upon. And that was the basis on which he asked for God's forgiveness knowing the nature of the grace of God and knowing that grace is grace because it is undeserved.

[51 : 32] There was nothing he could say to God that would possibly mitigate his actions. There was nothing at all that he could bring to God that would offset what he had done.

Nothing that he could say or do that could deserve God's forgiveness. Do you know what? There's nothing that you and I can say or do that deserves God's forgiveness either.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love, your unmerited favor, your kindness, your extraordinary unique love.

grace. That's the great miracle, what Dale Ralph Davis calls the miracle of grace. That's what we don't expect in this chapter. As you work your way through the events of chapter 11 and as you come to discover that the thing that David had done displeased the Lord and as you remember that God is holy, he is of purer eyes and to look at iniquity, then you expect his wrath and his judgment, you expect the consequences for David's sin, but what you don't expect is the forgiveness by which David is restored completely into a right relationship with the Lord.

Now there is a difficulty here because the child, because God is saying the child that's been born to you will die. And it leaves you wondering, well, is it that the child is somehow being punished for David's sin?

[53 : 20] Is that the way it works? I would say to that, no, that's not the way it works. And the reason I say that is because in the Old Testament it was very important that children would not be put to death for the sins of their fathers.

The way I think to understand this, the connection between the illness that the child contracted which led to his death, is a providential one, what we call God's providence, in that God works everything according to his own will and purpose.

We are not to see that this child is somehow being punished as a result, but rather that this is what we might call a providential consequence.

It's a consequence, and there's a difference between a consequence and a punishment, a providential consequence, in which God is making a statement to David and all those who are around him at that time.

And the statement was here is how serious your sin was and your sin is in my eyes.

[54 : 40] and that's all I'm going to say on that one. The day and I think this is really important, by the way, because you might read this chapter and you might yourself experience some calamity in your life.

And you might come to the conclusion that the calamity is because of some sin that I have done, just as David suffered the death of his son as a consequence of his sin, then I'm suffering this calamity, I must have sinned.

It doesn't work that way. You remember the man that was born blind in Jesus' time? And his disciples said to Jesus, Lord, who was it that sinned?

That's the way they thought. They made a logical connection between the man's blindness and something which the parents must have done as a consequence of which this man was born blind.

No, said Jesus. You're going down the wrong road. This man is blind so that the works of God may be made manifest in him. Don't ever try to understand how God works providentially.

[55:59] Here is the way it works in this chapter and in this chapter alone. This is a one-off. This is unique. But there's an awful tragedy to it nonetheless, isn't there?

There's something deeply, deeply sad. And you see this in the way that David in his desperation, he cried, he fasted, he went without sleep, he went without food, and he pled with the Lord.

And when he was asked about it, he said, while the child was alive, I pled with the Lord. Who knows? Well, you know, you've got to hand it to him. He knew that God works in grace and in mercy.

Who knows what he could have done? But God chose in his ultimate wisdom to take the child from this world.

Only he knows. Only he holds that mystery in his hand. We have to leave it to him. What we know is two things.

[57:11] We know that things were never the same for David again nationally as a kingdom. We're going to read about that in a few weeks' time. We'll return to this, chapter 13 onwards, and we'll see how Absalom, David's son, rebels against David, and how the kingdom, or at least a lot of the kingdom, turned against him.

And David became an exile, became a refugee from his own palace. He suffered tears, and disappointment, and pain, and darkness, and confusion his whole life from that moment onwards.

And it was largely on the surface because of the suspicion that there was, that there must have been throughout the whole kingdom. Many of them had lost confidence in him. How could he expect it to be otherwise?

There are always consequences to our actions, but what we know also is this, that God loved David. What's more, another son was born to him in Bathsheba, and God loved that son.

He had a great purpose for him. God would see to it that his purpose was fulfilled in the life of Solomon. Solomon was the king who was going to one day build the temple of the Lord, the wisest man that ever lived.

[58:29] David was right with God once again. He was brought back into fellowship with God. God removed all his sin. How is it that a holy God can simply wipe away sin?

Well, we know the answer to that, don't we? The answer lies in Jesus, and in what he did by coming into the world and giving himself on the cross.

Because he died, God removes all our sin. He washes it, purges it, never anymore to revisit our guilt and our darkness.

When God forgives, he does something that no one else can do. He can remove the guilt of our sin. God and that's why the most important thing that each one of us that stands in front of every one of us this evening is to be right with God.

That can only happen through that forgiveness which he offers us. Every one of us, you and me, in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's bow our heads in prayer.

[59:51] Our Father in heaven, we ask, Lord, that you will give us that forgiveness. Forgive us where we have gone wrong as your people. Forgive us where we have allowed ourselves to backslide and we haven't been honest with you.

We haven't been honest with ourselves and we haven't been honest with other people. We've allowed ourselves to drift. Lord, restore us. Restore our soul and make us to walk in the paths of righteousness.

forgiveness. Lord God, we pray for anyone this evening who has never yet tasted your forgiveness. We pray that they will run to you this evening, the only safe place, the only one who can give us that promise of everlasting life, that newness of life through Jesus Christ.

In his name we ask. Amen. Psalm 32 from Sing Psalms and we're going to sing from 1 to 6, the first four stanzas, page 38.

I apologize for the lateness. Psalm 32 from 1 to 6 on page 38. How blessed the one who has received forgiveness for his sin, whose sins are covered from God's face, whose debt is cancelled in God's grace.

[61:12] There's no deceit in him. Psalm 32, the first four stanzas from 1 to 6. We're going to stand to sing. O bless the one who has received forgiveness for his sins, whose sins are covered apart from God's face, whose debt is cancelled in God's grace, there's no disheight in him.

when I cast silence all my bones with growth in weather or not beneath your heart.

I felt and drop both day and night my strength was up as in summer's drought.

Then I laid day at my sin to you. The guilt that we resist I said, O Lord, I have transgressed and you forgive forgive when they confess you pardoned all my sin.

So let the godly pray to you while you are are to be found surely when we are sweeping past and mighty water waiting fast you keep them safe and sound and now may the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest on and abide with each one of you both now and always. Amen.