



... the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die...

### **Part Three – David's Repentance & Suffering**

<sup>13</sup> And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. <sup>14</sup> Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die. (2 Sam 12:12-14)

It has been acutely brought to David's conscience the enormity of his sin of both adultery and murder. While it is true that David had a mental awareness of them, it is possible to be mentally aware of our sins and not have our consciences keenly aware of their gravity. Both King David and King Saul were guilty of the same sins, yet David emerges forgiven and Saul dies at his own hand in a tragic loss in battle of Israel to their enemies. Why? I believe it is because a man is capable of forgiveness as long as the conscience is not dead to the feelings of guilt and the need to repent. In this way, David differed from Saul. When Nathan gave David the deprecating parable of the rich man's taking the poor man's only lamb to slaughter, the dormant conscience of David was awakened and his mind was able to assess the due penalty of a deserving death for the rich man - of course, the rich man was DAVID!

We have often described the Word of God as a mirror to the soul. We see our own unworthiness there contrasted with the perfect righteousness of God. David was no exception. In the Word of God given by Nathan, though David's name was not once mentioned, David came to see his own treacherous sin defined in the parable. If we fail to see our adulterous nature described in the Woman taken in Adultery (John 8:1-11); or the our spiritual (or carnal) promiscuity reflected by the Woman at Jacob's Well (John 4:4-42); or our hypocrisy, pride, and hate in the Pharisee who came to the Temple to pray with the publican (Luke 18:9-14), then we have become as Saul having *our consciences seared as with a hot iron*. (1 Tim 4:2).

Having our souls made aware of our sins will sometimes remove a horrible and dark dread from our souls. Deep in his heart, David knew he had sinned, but suppressed any conscious acknowledgement of the deed. When openly confronted by the prophet Nathan, at last he came to grips with his tragic unworthiness before God and man. He immediately repented, and he was just as promptly forgiven; however, the scars and hurt of his sin would plague Israel from that day forth. The sins of a shepherd

are magnified in contrast to those of the sheep. When a nation is ruled by an unrighteous leader, the nation will suffer far greater than having one citizen commit the same unrighteousness. Sin is never simply a matter between man and God - though it is most definitely that - it hurts all around us who love us, who are dependent upon us.

In precise accord with the words of the prophet Nathan, the child conceived between Bathsheba would die even without the benefit of a name - *And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick.* (2 Sam 12:15) The custom in Asia, even until recent decades, was not to name a child until its 100<sup>th</sup> day after its birth. In all probability, the child died days after birth without that name given by men, so it received a name in heaven instead. The subsequent words of David (discussed later in this devotion) reveals the child did go to await a reunion with David in Heaven. But David will suffer heartache aplenty in the ensuing days of the child's affliction and, in fact, for the remainder of his life, over the sins that led to this sorry and revolting development. In a sense, the child was blessed to be taken from an environment in which the sins of the father would forever be visited upon the child forever. And with certainty, the child died sinless like millions of others in America who perish in their mother wombs at the hands of butchers.

The response of David to the child's affliction was made greater, and more tender, by his knowledge that it was his own sin that had brought this illness upon the child. *David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them.* (2 Sam 12:16-17) God had not literally struck the child - it was a consequence of David's sin - no less than we inherit that sin nature from our own fathers and mothers in Adam and Eve. Adam brought physical death upon all Creation thereby.

Sin places her victims in hard bondage and suffering. David's 'free' will had led to a disregard for the Law of God. Now he is most wretched and miserable of all in Israel though the king thereof. Like leprosy,, sin pays no special regard to dignity of persons or station! David fasted all the while the child suffered in the tugging arms of the Angel of Death. He lay upon the earth and mourned for the child night and day until the mournful news came to his burning soul *And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died.* (vs 18) Creation of the world took six days, and on the seventh day, the Lord rested. This beginning phase of David's judgment took seven days, and on the seventh, the child rested in the bosom of Abraham until this day. Even in reading this account, our hearts are wrenched for both father and child. But, as David would later write under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost: *The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.* (Psalms 19:9)

The agony and misery of a soul under the pains of this life is most often that which must be mourned, but the flight of an innocent to the Everlasting Arms of Heaven is not a thing to be sorrowed over. *And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead?* (2 Sam 12:18) This is the usual view of those who know God so little as not to trust in those Everlasting Arms. King Solomon, the living son of David, wrote as well: *1 A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth. 2 It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. 3 Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. 4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.* (Eccl 7:1-4) Wiser or more spiritually noble words were never uttered. So how does David the King receive the finality of the child's affliction and death?

*But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. (vs 19-20)* David's response was a bewilderment to those of his household, and completely contrary to what they expected. David was a rough man, but one who KNEW God in spite of his warts and boils. He was, in some ways, like General George Patton - a rough hewn character whose faith was bigger than his reputation. There have been funerals which I have preached that were truly a blessing and joy for I knew that the deceased was not deceased, but living in radiant joy with God.

Now comes the commonly expected response of human nature: *Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. (vv 21)* Death is but a SHADOW to those who know and love the Lord. This life passes through that valley of the shadow of death. but, if you believe death is real, try and step on your shadow. It is nothing but a partial obscuration of light. It is only composed of darkness, but God is light - and light disperses the darkness. Now comes David's powerful and meaningful response: *And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. (vs 22-23)*

Once taken by the angels at the moment of death, a soul never returns, nor would desire to, to that old molding body of earthly clay from which it emerged at death. It is given an escort to the very bosom of Abraham where it is consoled with delightful joy and glorious rest. David knows the child shall not return from Heaven (and despite of all the cheap novels to the contrary, no soul goes to Heaven and returns). But David has the blessed hope and surety of going to the child when that curtain of life falls on his journey. He is sure that a God who would forgive such a sinner as he will keep him in His care forever. He shall go to the child at length. God loved David. He loved the child, too. He gave David and Bathsheba another son next named Solomon and called Jedidiah (Loved by Jehovah).

This will end our Notable Firsts of David, but a few concluding remarks may be edifying. David did not always break fast and eat at the death of a son. When the rebellious Absalom was killed by Joab, no greater mourning and grief was ever uttered from a man's lips than from David's. At news of the death of Absalom, David's heart was rent in two: *And, behold, Cushy came; and Cushy said, Tidings, my lord the king: for the LORD hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee. And the king said unto Cushy, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cushy answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is. And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! (2 Sam 18:31-33)* David knew he could go to the bay whom the Lord took after birth, but he could never again see his wicked son, Absalom, taken in death and Hell. *Be not dismayed whate'er betide, God will take care of you.*

In the fullness of time God would grant David a great Son to be accounted his Son - the Lord Jesus Christ!