

**LIVES THAT REMIND US ABOUT GOD - Meeting Yourself In The Sacred Text Part nine - Sunday, March 31st, 2024
Pastor Don Horban - Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON**

DAVID - WHEN YOUR PRAYERS SEEM UNANSWERED

2 Samuel 12:15-23 - "Then Nathan went to his house. And the Lord afflicted the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick. [16] David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. [17] And the elders of his house stood beside him, to raise him from the ground, but he would not, nor did he eat food with them. [18] 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." [19] 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." [20] 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. [21] Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive; but when the child died, you arose and ate food." [22] 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?' [23] 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."

- 1) **THE REMOVAL OF THE BLESSING OF THE LORD AS A RESULT OF OTHER'S SINS - 15b - "....And the Lord afflicted the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick." O, how we all wish we didn't have to explain verses like this one, and dozens of others.**

This is the other side of David's wonderful confidence in God's forgiveness in Psalm 51. Yes, God could cleanse and forgive the deepest of sins. When David committed adultery with Bathsheba he cried out for forgiveness and was told God would forgive. But the baby would die. There is sin and there are the **consequences** of our sin. Sometimes those consequences don't go away. The judgment of God on sin overflows expected bounds. Like a water leak that you just can't find in your roof or under the sink. Verses like these are designed by the Holy Spirit to keep us from downplaying God's holy wrath.

This was a difficult and painful lesson fleshed out before the entire nation of Israel. ***The judgment of God must never be taken lightly.*** We need to ponder these stories because the whole concept of God doing anything we find distasteful has disappeared from today's user friendly church. He weighs and takes into account the actions of all people, even to this very day. God expected the observers of this incident to learn to take Him very seriously.

It all seems so unfair. The baby had done nothing itself to deserve this fate. ***David's sins were being punished in this little body.*** It all seems so cruel. Yet even this is the harsh side of God's purifying love. God would eternally look after that baby. He had not slipped beyond the Father's hands.

Also, we need to remember that David had sinned not only as an **individual**, but as the nation's **king**. His actions effected the moral tone of the whole nation. His actions had repercussions beyond his own personal morality. **How would God teach David that, as king, his actions had broad consequences?** David saw the fruit of his sin in his own blood line. There was no other way - no **gentle** way - to teach that lesson.

Also, if we're troubled by others suffering for our sins, we need to remind ourselves this **still happens** over and over in today's world. Consider the number of children who grow up having nothing but bad examples to follow. Think of those who grow up taking sin and its consequences lightly **simply because their parents did the same**. Consider the likelihood that in our own church there will be children who will reap deep pain from the events of their lives **simply because parents never took the time to teach them the principles of God's Word, or ground them in church or Christian Education**. Many children will ultimately pay for the laziness or the materialism of their parents.

- 2) **THE FERVENCY OF DAVID'S PRAYER - 2 Samuel 12:16-17 -**
“David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. [17] And the elders of his house stood beside him, to raise him from the ground, but he would not, nor did he eat food with them.”

Prayer doesn't unfold like magic. God has already **told** David the child would die (14), but **David prays anyway**. Right here we approach the reason David was called a "**man after God's own heart**." He didn't always get what he wanted. But he always kept his heart and soul dealing with God. There are some people who take David to task for his "impulsive praying", but I like it. After all, God granted King Hezekiah an extension on his life because he asked. **David asks in the face of insurmountable odds and is not chided for asking**. However, he also can take whatever answer God gives with humility and grace. That's the key.

Remember, **James 4:2** says "**You do not have because you do not ask**". David may not get what he desires but it won't be because he does not ask. For every person who asks too much there are ten thousand you quit too soon. **If I'm going to make a mistake in prayer, I'm going to make it on the side David did**. Why does David ask? Look at his wonderful explanation in **verse 22**. "**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?''**"

Yes, David knows God is just. But he says, "You can never underestimate God's incredible mercy! I'll ask." This is profoundly inspiring. David won't let God's severity against sin make him doubt His mercy and grace. Not many can hold so tenaciously to both truths at once.

- 3) **KNOWING WHEN TO LET GO - 18-20** - “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.” [19] 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.” [20] 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 worshiped. He then went to his own house. And when he asked, they set food before him, and he ate.”

There is such balance here. His faith is an ***honest, tough*** faith. Put yourself in David's place. ***First***, imagine the grief of watching your little baby die in a week. ***Second***, imagine knowing that it was totally ***your*** fault. ***Third***, imagine knowing ***God*** was the One taking that little life. David knows ***all*** of those facts. How does one get past this kind of thing? How can life every go on again?

Notice carefully some of the very ***deliberate steps*** that David takes in this situation, because he knows he can't trust the guidance of his own emotions at a time like this:

- a) ***He tells himself bluntly what cannot be changed*** - He doesn't pray for his dead son's body to come back to life. His words in **verse 23** are very important, ***"Can I bring him back again?"*** Of course the expected answer to that rhetorical question is no, he can't. David knows the vital difference between ***faith*** and ***make-believe***.

How important it is to know what you ***can do*** and what you ***can't do*** in life. There's enough work in doing the things that ***can*** be changed without spilling emotional energy with what ***can't*** be changed. David doesn't spend his whole life fighting God.

- b) ***He keeps himself in the presence of the Lord*** - Notice the emphasis on worship in **verse 20**- ***"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."***

Behold incredible wisdom and endurance unfolding here. David knew where to go when he had no answers to what was breaking his heart. Most people would have excused David for not feeling like going to church at this time. We tend to think people just need time to be alone and get things together personally. And there's certainly an element of truth in that.

But David **knows** God was involved in the death of his son. He's **fighting a natural grudge against the Divine**. And so David knows it's **God** with whom he has to come to terms and it's with **God** he has to bare his soul. David is smart enough to know he needs more than peace of **mind**. He needs peace with **God**. So into the house of the Lord he goes.

We can read in **Psalm 73:16-17** that David's life-long practice was to take his biggest problems and his greatest trials **into the house of the Lord** - "**But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, [17] until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end....**" When he had to work things out, David **included** God. Here's the life lesson. Face all the big crises of life in the presence of God.

- c) **He reminded himself of the certainty of eternity** - This is spelled out in **verse 23** - "**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.**" David reminds himself that he too will die one day. But death will not destroy the relationship between the father and his child.

This is more than just an academic exercise for David. You can't live **any** part of life well - let alone keep your soul when it's breaking with sorrow and confusion - without keeping an **eternal perspective**. No one gets all the answers in this life. No one gets to live his whole life on earth with his **first choice** always fulfilled. The full scope of God's plan and will and wisdom for our lives is never fully revealed in the 70 or 80 years given to us.

David arises and eats not because he's suddenly happy, but because he is putting the big issues of life into perspective. He can wait as he ponders eternity and his own short life. The death of his son is one of the realities that makes heaven all the more real and desirable for him. And his love for God is revealed later on in the Psalms when he says - **after** the death of his son - "**whom have I in heaven beside you?**" The last thing he wants to do is separate himself from the God who will work all things out for good.