

# SECOND SAMUEL

## Chapter 12

*Nathan Rebukes David*

And the LORD sent Nathan to David. 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. 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.’” 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.

**12:1-15** The Lord, being ever patient (2Pt 3:9), gave David nearly nine months to repent before sending Nathan to him. Cf v 14. Nathan chose his words to generate maximum pity and empathy in David, who had been a shepherd. (TLSB)

**12:1** *The LORD sent.* Prophets were messengers from the Lord. Here the Great King sends his emissary to rebuke and announce judgment on the king he had enthroned over his people. (CSB)

*Nathan.* God's prophet and David's royal court preacher/counselor. (TLSB)

*There were two men.* Nathan begins one of the most striking parables in the OT. (CSB)

*city* – Townspeople would have only a few animals. (TLSB)

**12:3** SHARED HIS FOOD – ESV has “morsel” Indicates the small amount of food the man had. (TLSB)

SLEPT IN HIS ARMS – Young lambs were often kept as pets. (TLSB)

**12:5** *As surely as the LORD lives.* Words of a formal oath, calling on the Lord to judge the actions of those involved. (TLSB)

*deserves to die* – Punishment that exceeded legal requirements. Cf Ex 22:1. (TLSB)

**12:6** *fourfold.* In agreement with the requirements of Ex 22:1. (CSB)

**12:7** YOU ARE THE MAN – David had rightly spoken his own judgment in vv 5–6. Greg: “[Nathan] had come as a physician to a sick man; he saw that the sore must be cut; but he doubted of the sick man’s patience. Therefore he hid the medicinal steel under his robe, which he suddenly drew out and plunged into the sore, that the patient might feel the cutting blade before he saw it, lest, seeing it first, he should refuse to feel it” (NPNF 2 12:26). (TLSB)

Note Psalm 51:11-12 TLBSB – *Your presence.* To be denied access to the earthly tabernacle of God’s mercy is the worst of all possibilities to David. *take not.* The tragic example of Saul’s rejection (1Sm 16:14) might have motivated this urgent request as David contemplated the ultimate end of a hardened heart: separation from God. “When holy people—still having and feeling original sin and daily repenting and striving against it—happen to fall into manifest sins (as David did into adultery, murder, and blasphemy [2 Samuel 11]), then faith and the Holy Spirit have left them. The Holy Spirit does not permit sin to have dominion, to gain the upper hand so it can be carried out, but represses and restrains it from doing what it wants [Romans 6:14]. If sin does what it wants, the Holy Spirit and faith are not present” (SA III III 43–44). *Holy Spirit ... willing spirit.* Bas: “It is called ‘Spirit of God,’ ‘Spirit of truth which proceeds from the Father,’ ‘right Spirit,’ ‘a leading Spirit.’ ... Names are borne by the Spirit in common with the Father and the Son, and He gets these titles from His natural and close relationship” (NPNF 2 8:15, 30).

**12:8** *your master’s wives.* Earlier narratives refer to only one wife of Saul (Ahinoam, 1Sa 14:50) and one concubine (Rizpah, 2Sa 3:7; 21:8). This statement suggests that there were others. But since it was customary for new kings to assume the harem of their predecessors (see note on 3:7), it may be that Nathan merely uses conventional language to emphasize that the Lord had placed David on Saul’s throne. (CSB)

Lit, “women.” Earlier accounts attribute only one wife to Saul (1Sm 14:50). The plural refers to the harem of women that David was at liberty to take to himself. Nothing else indicates that he took any of those women as his wives. (TLSB)

**12:9** *despised the word of the LORD.* Not a reference to David’s feelings but to his actual rejection of God’s Word. (TLSB)

*have killed him.* David is held directly responsible for Uriah’s death even though he fell in battle (see 11:15). (CSB)

The guilt of the murder is on David, even though he did not actually swing the sword or shoot the arrow. (TLSB)

**12:10** *the sword shall never depart from your house.* Three of David’s sons came to violent deaths: Amnon (13:28–29), Absalom (18:14) and Adonijah (1Ki 2:25). (CSB)

Though forgiven, David’s sin produced a train of tragic consequences in the royal family: incest and fratricide, insurrection and violation of his wives by a son, and the death of David’s infant son. Forgiveness does not necessarily remove the natural consequences of sin. (TLSB)

**12:11** *I will raise up evil against you out of your own house.* David was driven from Jerusalem by Absalom's conspiracy to seize the kingship from his own father (15:1–15). (CSB)

God would not personally cause this evil, but His providence would prevent neither Absalom's rebellion (ch 15) nor his taking of David's wives (16:20–22). (TLSB)

*he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun.* Fulfilled in the time of Absalom. (CSB)

**12:12** The Lord will allow this to be done openly, to show that the king is not above the Law and that he dare not despise God's Word. (TLSB)

**12:13** *I have sinned against the LORD.* David recognizes his guilt and confesses his sin in response to Nathan's rebuke (see Ps 51). Notice the contrast between David's confession and Saul's. (CSB)

"David is rebuked by Nathan in this way. Terrified, he says, 'I have sinned against the LORD.' This is contrition. Afterward, he hears the Absolution.... This voice encourages David, and through faith it sustains, justifies, and enlivens him" (Ap XIIA 56). Cyr Jer: "Straightway the Prophet appeared as accuser, and the offender confesses the fault. And because he candidly confessed, he received a most speedy cure. For Nathan the Prophet who had uttered the threat, said immediately (TLSB)

No pretense or cover-up here. This is a model confession. (CSB)

*The LORD has put away your sin.* David experienced the joy of knowing his sin was forgiven (see Ps 32:1, 5; cf. Ps 51:8, 12). (CSB)

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

*You shall not die.* The Lord, in his grace, released David from the customary death penalty for adultery and murder (Lev 20:10; 24:17). (CSB)

You see the swift relenting of a merciful God" (NPNF 2 7:10). (TLSB)

**12:14** *you have utterly scorned the Lord.* David is required to suffer the disciplinary results of his sin in a manner open to public view. (CSB)

*the child who is born to you shall die* – Forgiveness frees us from eternal consequences and punishments of sin, but not necessarily from temporal consequences and discipline. Cf Ex 34:7; Is 55:8. "A punishment is also added, but this punishment does not merit the forgiveness of sins. Nor are special punishments always added. In repentance these two things ought always to exist, namely, contrition and faith" (Ap XIIA 56–57). (TLSB)

**12:1–15a** By preaching the Law, Nathan leads David to condemn his own sin. Once David repents, Nathan announces the Gospel: the Lord has put away his sin. Nevertheless, his child of adultery will die. Avoiding the responsibility of our sins does not lead to healing. Instead, repentance is the only right preparation for the Gospel. By receiving the Gospel of forgiveness, we are set free from our sins and made alive. • Gracious Lord, thank You for putting Jesus away on the cross, that I would not be put away in my sins. Amen. (TLSB)

*David's Child Dies*

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 worshiped. 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."

**12:15** *the LORD afflicted the child.* The Lord allowed illness to come to the child and to take his life. (TLSB)

**12:16** *sought God.* With devout prayer. (TLSB)

*went in.* Into his palace. Cf v 20. (TLSB)

**12:18** *seventh day.* Child was not circumcised. Cf Gn 17:12. (TLSB)

**12:20** *anointed himself.* With olive oil, much as we use lotion today. (TLSB)

*he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped.* In this way David clearly demonstrated his humble acceptance of the disciplinary results of his sin. Notice again the contrast between David's attitude and Saul's. (CSB)

To acknowledge the Lord's hand in the child's death and to offer his humble acceptance of the results of his sin. David sees the limits of God's patience toward him. (TLSB)

**12:23** *Can I bring him back again?* The dead are out of reach of our prayers. We cannot weep them back to life. Yet fasting and mourning are appropriate to honor the dead and to remember our own mortality. Cf 1:12. (TLSB)

*I shall go to him.* † Like the child, David will die and join him in the grave. Perhaps hope of eternal life is also expressed. (CSB)

In death. Some commentators think David showed confidence that his son was in heaven. However, the text does not specifically promise this. Rather than speculating on the final outcome of David's child, we should hold to Scripture's clear teaching: (1) All people are conceived in sin and deserve hell (Ps 51:5). (2) God delivers salvation through the Word and Sacraments (Jn 3:5; Rm 10:17; Col 2:11–12; 1Pt 3:21). (3) God's ways do not always make sense to us (Is 55:8). (4) Yet, God is gracious, hears our prayers, and works all things to our good (Ps 34:17; 103:8; Rm 8:28). The child was in God's hands. We trust Him to do what is right and best.

**12:15b–23** David prays for his child’s recovery until the child dies. David then goes to worship in the Lord’s house. When suffering the earthly consequences of our sin, we also should acknowledge that we deserve them, and we should continue to worship the Lord, who gave His Son for our sins, that we may live. • “The will of God is always best And shall be done forever; And they who trust in Him are blest; He will forsake them never. He helps indeed In time of need; He chastens with forbearing. They who depend On God, their friend, Shall not be left despairing.” Amen. (LSB 758:1) (TLSB)

*Solomon's Birth*

**24 Then David comforted his wife, Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her, and she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. And the LORD loved him 25 and sent a message by Nathan the prophet. So he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD.**

**12:25** *Jedidiah*. The giving of this name suggests that the Lord’s special favor rested on Solomon from his birth. And since the name also contained an echo of David’s name, it provided assurance to David that the Lord also loved him and would continue his dynasty. (CSB)

Solomon “Jedidiah.” (TLSB)

**12:24–25** David comforts Bathsheba, and she bears him a son. God gives the child a name indicating His love. When caught up in our grief, let us not forget our family responsibilities. In Baptism, the Lord gives us a new, eternal life and gives us the name “Beloved of the Lord.” • Loving Lord, thank You for loving us and giving us a new life and name in Jesus Christ. Amen. (TLSB)

*Rabbah Is Captured*

**26 Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the Ammonites and took the royal city. 27 And Joab sent messengers to David and said, “I have fought against Rabbah; moreover, I have taken the city of waters. 28 Now then gather the rest of the people together and encamp against the city and take it, lest I take the city and it be called by my name.” 29 So David gathered all the people together and went to Rabbah and fought against it and took it. 30 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. And he brought out the spoil of the city, a very great amount. 31 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.**

**12:26** *Joab fought against Rabbah*. The writer now returns to the outcome of the attack against the Ammonites (11:1, 25), which provided the background for the story of David and Bathsheba. Even while the Lord was displeased with David, he gave the Israelites victory over a people that had abused them. (CSB)

**12:27** *city of waters*. So called because Rabbah was on both sides of the river Jabbok. (TLSB)

**12:28** Joab wanted the victory to be credited to David. (TLSB)

**12:30** *the crown ... was placed on David's head*. A crown of such weight would have been worn only briefly and on very special occasions. Perhaps it was worn only once in a symbolic act of transferring to David sovereignty over Ammon. (CSB)

**12:31** *set them to labor.* Victorious kings often used prisoners of war as menial laborers in royal building projects (see 1Ki 9:20–21; cf. also Ex 1:11). (CSB)

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**12:26–31** Joab does not take credit for the victory over Rabbah but invites his master David to join him in conquering the city. We, too, should be loyal to our employers, parents, pastors, and other leaders, not seeking to exalt ourselves at their expense. Christ, the Son of David, is the great King of glory, yet He humbled Himself and gives us the benefits and glory of His victory over the devil. • Gracious Savior, You alone give the victory to me and to all who believe in You. Grant that in all things I take no glory for myself, but that I glorify You now and forever. Amen. (TLSB)