

Grace That Just Won't Quit

† Judgment in mercy (11:26 – 12:7)

† Merciful discipline (12:7-10)

† Discipline accepted (12:13-15)

In the name of Jesus, God's kindness and love, dearly redeemed children of the heavenly Father:

Some of the worst fathers are in the Bible. Up until the incident in our text David was not one of them. Afterwards he brought more grief and shame on his family than any other father in God's Holy Scriptures. And yet we see how God's grace rescued David and his loved ones in the forgiveness of the coming Christ, great David's greater Son. Let's look back through the eyes of one of those servants mentioned so often in 2 Samuel 10-12. Look at **Grace That Just Won't Quit**.

† Judgment in mercy (11:26 – 12:7)

Sometimes it's hard to be a servant of the king. I've known David's family since he was a shepherd boy in Bethlehem. All through my early years I kept hearing how he killed the lion and the bear, then Goliath the Philistine giant, then tens of thousands of every army that dared to attack God's people. It was truly awesome the day a messenger came to say I would be a servant of the king.

*Everything leading up to that dreadful day was one victory after another. Maybe that's partly the reason why David finally fell. Maybe he just got cocky and careless when his whole life was a giant celebration of God's grace. The age old enemy Ammonites had fallen the year before – first to Joab and his brother Abishai at their capital city, then to David across the Jordan River at Helam. It didn't matter how many Aramean mercenaries the Ammonites hired. **"The LORD gave David victory wherever he went."** (2 Samuel 8:6) If David had just stuck with it, God would never have stopped blessing him.*

***"In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war..."** (11:1), David stayed in Jerusalem. He had battles to fight against the LORD's enemies. But it was easier to send Joab and stay home to enjoy the fruits of his labors as a middle aged man. How many fathers don't get into trouble in your day just by not keeping busy with their responsibilities? Instead of taking care of family finances or talking to their wife or playing with their kids, they're on the Internet surfing where their eyes and heart do not belong. We didn't have Internet in those days, but there were plenty of other ways for good men to fall.*

*David's house was up on the hill overlooking the city named after him, also called Jerusalem. I wondered what had him so mesmerized, until he called me over with a smile. "Son," he said, "can you find out for me who that woman is?" She was beautiful – bathing. I guess I blushed a little. He said, "It won't hurt to find out who she is." So I did. When I came back, I tried to stress: **"Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Elliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"** There's only so much you can tell the king. She was someone's daughter and some else's wife. I never would have believed what happened next.*

I got busy doing other things and before I knew it, there she was, Bathsheba, coming quietly to the king. This was so out of character for him that I thought there must be some explanation. For a few months nothing more was said until a messenger arrived. He took me aside and said, "Go tell King David, Bathsheba says, 'I am pregnant.'" I thought my heart would stop right then and there.

*But King David was a smart man and he was the Commander in Chief. Since Uriah was off to war, it was an easy thing to call him home. You know what soldiers do when they come home to their wife. But Uriah surprised us all. The first night he slept with us servants on his military mat. King David asked him why, and the noble soldier answered: **"The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my master Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open fields. How could I go to my house to***

*eat and drink and lie with my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!” (11:11) David kept trying to get him drunk to go home to his wife. Finally he sent him back to Joab with a letter. No one could believe David did such a thing, but he had Uriah and his company killed in battle. Bathsheba mourned; David took her home as his wife. By then she was very pregnant. Everyone just whispered. I wondered what God would do. Would there be **Judgment**? Could David hope for **mercy**?*

✠ **Merciful discipline (12:7-10)**

My king got really sick, physically and emotionally. He’d wake up at night crying out, but he would not tell anyone what was wrong. He had committed adultery and murder, yet tried to go on with his life as if nothing had happened. You might compare it to a cancerous tumor that just kept growing. It would have killed him without the LORD’s surgery on his soul.

*Isn’t this what your family psychologists call “emotional word pictures”?¹ David had been a shepherd. And he always stuck up for the “little guy.” So when the prophet Nathan told him about a rich man slaughtering his poor neighbor’s only ewe lamb to feed a traveler, David was as angry as I’d seen him in a long time. I felt that way too. I did not realize what Nathan was doing until David had handed down his verdict: **“This man deserves to die!”***

*Nathan got very quiet. He looked directly at King David and said, **“You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul.⁸ I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more.⁹ Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.¹⁰ Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.”** He went on and on as David started to cry, not angry tears, but almost relief that it was finally out in the open. **Merciful disciple from the LORD!***

✠ **Discipline accepted (12:13-15)**

*There was no anger in David’s voice, just deep, deep sorrow. **“I have sinned against the LORD,”** he said in childlike simplicity. And without hesitation Nathan replied, **“The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.¹⁴ But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the Lord show utter contempt, the son born to you will die.”** David just nodded and said nothing more.*

*The next week was the worst of my life. David would not eat. He kept praying and fasting and sleeping on the ground. The elders of his family tried to get him up to take care of himself, but he refused. David kept on pleading with the LORD for his baby with Bathsheba, but **“on the seventh day, the child died.”** Honestly, we were afraid to tell him. If he was so distraught before, what would he do after the child died? But you could never keep anything from the king. He noticed us whispering and finally asked, **“Is the child dead?”** We had to tell him the truth. But David surprised us again.*

*He got up, cleaned up and ate up. We asked, **“Why are you acting like this now that the child is dead?”** He answered with **Discipline accepted**: **“While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, ‘Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me and let the child live.’²³ But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.”***

The LORD disciplined David’s family. Yet in all the hard times and tough discipline that resulted from David’s sin, we see clearly God’s **Grace That Just Won’t Quit**. God enabled David to trust God’s forgiveness and enjoy **“cleanness in his sight.”** (22:25) God kept His promise of a Savior by giving David and Bathsheba two sons. Solomon, fathered Christ’s legal (Matthew 1:6), and Nathan Jesus’ blood line (Luke 3:31f) through Mary. Hate sin. Repent when you sin. Trust God’s **Grace That Just Won’t Quit**. God is our gracious Father, our Savior and King. Amen.

¹ Smalley, Gary, *KEYS TO LOVING RELATIONSHIPS* series <http://smalleyonlinestore.com/videosanddvds/smallgroup.aspx> .

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