

**The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.
The Tree of Life for week ending 08/26/01.**

“The Peace of God Which Surpasses all comprehension shall guard your hearts.” Phi 4:7

The searing of the Conscience. Part 3.

We have been studying the seared conscience conspiracy of David in 2Sa 11. We have seen that David failed in the first two conspiracies but he succeeded in the third. In this conspiracy, David was successful in murdering Uriah because he got others to join him in his rebellion.

We continue with our subject on the seared conscience in 2Sa 11:26, ***“Now when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.”***

According to 1Sa 31:13, this type of mourning would last for seven days. In 2Sa 11:27 we read, ***“When the time of mourning was over [one week after the death of her husband], David sent and brought her to his house and she became his wife; then she bore him a son. But the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the Lord.”***

The evil that that David had done, the murder of Uriah, he did because his conscience has been defiled and seared, which brings us to the subject of the eventual divine discipline, as well as the grace of God that was given to David and is available to any believer whose conscience has been seared.

In 2Sa 12:1 ***“Then the Lord sent Nathan to David.”***

Nathan was a prophet who taught doctrine to Israel. In the Church-age, God no longer sends prophets; instead He provides to every believer a pastor-teacher, and believers are to go to him, he does not need to go to the believer, Heb 10:25.

It is a man of God who is about to help deliver David, a man of God that the Lord sends. The prophets were used by the Lord to warn the children of Israel, and pastor-teachers are to do the same to the Church-age believer.

The prophets had one of the most difficult jobs that any communicator of doctrine could have. In this case it was Nathan, and he is commanded to go to the castle and communicate to King David that he has done evil in the sight of the Lord.

2Sa 12:1 ***“Then the Lord sent Nathan to David. And he came to him...”***

David, remember, has a conscience that has been defiled and seared for over a year, and there has been no rebound and no recovery in his life. We know this because in Psa 32:3 he said, ***“When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me.”***

His physical health was failing because of his refusal to rebound. He went without sleep many nights throughout the year and this was devastating to his physical as well as his mental health. The rest of the verse goes on to say, ***“My vitality [my strength] was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah.”***

In Psa 38:11, David describes what he was going through: ***“My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague; and my kinsmen stand afar off.”***

David is in bondage to a defiled and seared conscience, and is hypersensitive; naturally those around him are going to avoid him. David has become psychotic through the function of his own volition and his preoccupation with himself and there is nothing lower point than this in life. To

be so preoccupied with yourself and stuck on yourself to the exclusion of everyone around you is the epitome of the greatest sin of all, arrogance.

God could have let David stay in the castle and die, but he sends a prophet, someone to warn David of his destiny. God does the same to believers in the Church-age through the pastor-teacher; therefore, in the Church-age, Satan loves to attack the messenger and discredit the message. Satan does not want you to receive the warning from the man of God. This is also why we need to protect the office of the pastor-teacher from those who would destroy it, 1Th 5:12-14, ***“But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly [those who do not fulfill verses 12-13], encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men.”***

There are times that the pastor must reprimand or discipline before the congregation, as the Apostle Paul did, Gal 2:11-14, Phi 4:2, Col 4:17, 2Ti 4:10.

The one individual who is about to help David get out of a jam is a man of God, a prophet, a man who is going to teach David Bible doctrine and help him to recover. Therefore, if there is anyone that Satan would love to discredit, it is the messenger, the man with the message. We must therefore esteem the office, respect the man, and love him impersonally and unconditionally, or else end up deceived.

In 2Sa 12, David is out of fellowship and life is so miserable now that he has become psychotic. To prolong David’s life and fulfill the plan of God the justice of God must challenge the volition of David, for it is David’s own volition that has produced this unbearable suffering.

Nathan has a challenging job; he has to go to the king and teach him some tough doctrinal principles, 2Sa 12:1, ***“Then the Lord sent Nathan to David.”***

Notice that Nathan was commanded by the Lord to do this; he did not do it on his own. God requires faithfulness from those who have the gift of communicating doctrine. The power is located in the Word of God, not in the personality or the persuasion of the communicator. Nathan was sent on a very dangerous and difficult mission, but he had the necessary courage and wisdom to accomplish his mission.

David, as the king, represents the highest authority in Israel and even when a person in authority is wrong, one should not attempt to destroy or attack their authority.

So Nathan will not go to David and rebuke him, rather, he will go to David and tell him a parable. The Lord does not send David’s enemies to destroy him but sends a prophet to help restore him, for the Lord is *always* for restoration as opposed to annihilation.

God will allow us to fall into sin and evil, but He does not permit us to remain there without some type of warning. If God did not send Nathan to David, and left David to himself, David would have remained in his sin and died the sin unto death.

Even when we are living in sin, the Lord seeks for us before we seek after Him.

It has always been this way; it began way back in the Garden of Eden when the Lord sought for Adam after he sinned, Gen 3:9.

2Sa 12:1. ***“Then the Lord sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said, there were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor.”***

Nathan taught in a way that caused David to judge himself, and when a pastor does his job right, he will teach the necessary doctrine, and the doctrine alone will cause the believer to judge himself. When you judge yourself, then you can handle the problem, 1Co 11:31, ***“But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged.”***

If the pastor judges you, or someone close to you does the judging, not only do you resent the individual who has done the judging but you also still have the problem.

Nathan is going to teach a story and at the end of the story he will have David judging himself and he will also remind David of a very gracious principle.

2Sa 12:2-13. *“The rich man had a great many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb which he bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and his children. It would eat of his bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom, and was like a daughter to him. Now a traveler came to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take from his own flock or his own herd, to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him; rather he took the poor man’s ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.” Then David’s anger burned greatly against the man, and he said to Nathan, “As the Lord lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die. And he must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion.” Nathan then said to “David, You are the man! Thus says the Lord God of Israel, ‘It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul. I also gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your care, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added to you many more things like these! Why have you despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon. 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 from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your companion, and he shall lie with your wives in broad daylight. Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.” Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” And Nathan said to David, “The Lord also has taken away your sin; you shall not die.”*

How simple the solution was to David’s problem—rebound and recover—how complicated were the excuses and the conspiracy to try to solve them in the flesh, without God.

In verses 1-13 of 2Sa 12, we have analogies to the events of David’s actions.

In verse 2, *“a great many flocks and herds”* refers to David’s wives and mistresses.

In verse 4, the “traveler” is the Hebrew noun *“helek,”* which means a traveler, a wanderer, or a stranger; it refers to the arrogance that is now residing in David’s seared conscience. Of course the rich man is David who has everything as the king of Israel, and the poor man is Uriah who is poor in comparison to David. The one little ewe lamb of course is Bathsheba.

When David reacts to the story he is judging himself. David must come to a place where he judges himself so that he can rebound and then recover. When the conscience has become seared rebound is not enough.

Rebound is accomplished through 1Jo 1:9, *“If we acknowledge our sins, He is faithful and righteous, with the result that He forgives us our sins [known sins] and purifies us from all wrongdoing [unknown sins].”*

When we **rebound**, we admit and acknowledge that we were wrong and that we failed, and that puts us back in fellowship with God. However, that is not the same as repentance or changing your thought pattern. **Repentance**, or **recovery**, is accomplished in Eph 4:22-24, *“That, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind [the breathing of your soul] and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”*

There must be motivation to recover from the “lukewarm” state, where the believer is halfhearted, indifferent, or uninterested toward the things of God. The motivation for the lukewarm believer does not come from doctrine resident in the soul but from hurting in some area of their life. All of us have to learn some things the hard way in the spiritual life.

If Nathan had gone to David and began to judge him, David would have become defensive and he would have reacted. But if David judges himself of his own volition, he will break out of his life of evil, and that is the purpose of the message.

In the use of a parable, objectivity is maintained and the message is communicated so that David will condemn himself from what is left of his own integrity.

In 2 Sa 12:5, we have the reaction of the king; the Hebrew indicates that this was explosive anger. David assumed that Nathan was speaking about a real case, but he did not associate the case with himself because he has entered into blind arrogance.

Here, David is saying that this is more than a sin, this is a crime. Just as he himself had done, David's actions were not just sin, but were evil and criminal.

In verse 6, David pronounces his judgment. He is actually quoting scripture from Exo 22:1, ***"If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep."***

It's interesting that David remembers and quotes this scripture, ***"four sheep for a sheep,"*** but throughout his actions he never remembers or quotes Exo 20:13, ***"You shall not murder,"*** or Exo 20:14, ***"You shall not commit adultery,"*** or Exo 20:17, ***"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife."***

As you can see, David is actually judging himself and he will actually pay fourfold.

First the son that was born from the adultery will die, 2Sa 12:14-19. In effect, the innocent son will die in the place of the guilty, which is a perfect illustration of the Lord Jesus Christ dying in our place as the perfect eternal Son of God.

The **second** payment will be carried out through Amnon, David's elder son by Ahinoam of Jezreel, who will rape his half-sister Tamar, the daughter of David by Maacah. This will be a repeat of the rape of Bathsheba by David.

The **third** payment takes place when Absalom murders his half-brother Amnon, analogous to David's murder of Uriah.

Finally, in the **fourth** payment we have a reproduction of David's rebellion against God in the Absalom revolution.

All of this resulted from David's statement in 2Sa 12:6, ***"And he must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion."***

Mat 7:2. ***"For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you."***

In 2Sa 12:7, Nathan then said to David, ***"'attah ha'ish,"*** the words that would ring in David's ears for a long time: ***"You are the man!"***

David has already judged himself as per Mat 7:2; he now hears the sentence from heaven. This message from the Lord includes the four-to-one payment which will be the imputation of divine discipline, but this will be bearable discipline.

When a believer has a seared conscience, it is really a demonstration of no respect for God and therefore the justice of God replies by emphasizing the logistical grace support and the supergrace blessing that has been imputed to David.

In verse 7, the Lord also reminds David what He has done for him in grace: ***"Thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul.'"***

God appointed David king of Israel as a part of his supergrace blessing. However, David's capacity for this promotion was destroyed, not by lack of doctrine, but by allowing his conscience to become defiled and seared. This can happen to any believer. In the final analysis, it takes either occupation with Christ or divine discipline from the justice of God to keep even a mature believer in line. David has rejected one so he must accept the other.

The same logistical grace that had delivered David from the tyranny of King Saul did not restrain David in exercising tyranny over Uriah. Having been blessed by logistical grace, he abused it!

2Sa 12:8. ***“I also gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your care, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added to you many more things like these!”***

All of his property, furniture, weapons, horses, cattle, all of the material things that Saul possessed as king of Israel, were actually given to David. God gave everything to David and promoted him far beyond anyone, who up till this time, had ever lived. During that year or year and a half of having a seared conscience, God did not take away the kingdom, the power or the authority of David. The verse goes on to say that God would have been caused to do more if David had remained in fellowship with Him. One of the worst things that could ever happen to some believers is to be given prosperity. Prosperity can not bring happiness apart from the believer’s residence, function, and momentum inside the predesigned plan of God. This is why capacity must always precede our prosperity.

2Sa 12:9. ***“Why have you despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in His sight?”***

This is the Hebrew verb “*bazah*,” which means to despise, to think lightly, to not take seriously, and to regard with contempt, and here it describes the state of mind David had reached. Here is where the sin of omission comes in as one of the signs of a seared conscience. This results in despising, thinking lightly, and not taking seriously the Word of the Lord, Bible doctrine. In other words, the more you think of yourself, the less you think of doctrine. This is not actually being negative toward doctrine; it is being so preoccupied with yourself or your problems that doctrine is ignored.

2Sa 12:9 tells us exactly what can happen to any believer: ***“Why have you despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in His sight?”***

David will now begin the recovery process and throughout the recovery process, he will remember that his relationship with God is based upon the imputed perfect righteousness that God gives every believer at salvation. He will remember the doctrine of righteousness and how the justice of God deals with the sins. He will remember the principle of approaching the throne of grace to find mercy in his time of need.

David will begin by asking God to be gracious, not to take the discipline away, but to make it bearable so that the curse can be turned into a blessing.