

Second Samuel Chapter 11-12 - John Karmelich

One of the things that fascinates me for some strange reason, is the topic of God and punishment. I'm not talking about eternal judgment for those who reject Jesus! As I assume we know, eternal judgment is only based on whether we accept His full payment for all our sins. My question is, when we commit a sin, how and when does God punish us? What is His intent? We know if we steal something we may be put in prison as punishment! Of course, the bible lists other sins that aren't against the law (adultery as the obvious example). My question is how and why does God punish us for such things? That is the underlying questions of these chapters!

Speaking of adultery, we get one of the most famous adultery stories in history, involving David and a woman named Bathsheba! He orders the death of her husband to cover it up! In both cases, the Jewish law calls for the death penalty. However, God told David in effect, "I am not going to kill you because I promised to start a dynasty with your family, but by the time I get through with you you'll wish that I had killed you instead!" David was punished in ways that cost him four of his children and a son of his had sex with women in David's harem! For the rest of David's life, we never again read of him having another affair! The point is God's discipline had a positive affect on the rest of his life!

Let me pause a minute to talk to the younger men and women about their natures. Men were born with a natural desire to be physically attracted to women they find well, attractive. Men have to control that natural instinct! To quote my late uncle who was happily married for 70 years it is ok to look at what's attractive, but it's the second glance that gets a man in trouble. My point is we men have to control that natural instinct. The same applies for women, in that it is their natural instinct to want to fix their man! That is God's business and women must fight that urge as well! The point as it relates to these chapters is David gave into that temptation despite the fact he already had a few wives who I suspect were good looking! With that said, all of us know adultery is a sin. My favorite quote on adultery came from one of the most famous pastors in my area. He would say, "God sometimes punishes adulterers by making them live with the ones they cheated with!" (Chuck Smith, who past away some years back.)

As we study this chapter, I love to ponder, what can I learn here? Yes, the issue is bigger than "keeping it in the zipper"! It's about dealing with temptation especially in situations when we are avoiding doing what we should be doing! Then it's grasping why He (God) punishes us for our sins "here and now". I would start by remembering why we're created in the first place: To glorify God with our lives. If we're doing things that aren't glorifying Him, He finds ways to bring those issues to the surface to be a better witness for Him. That's a key point in these two chapters. OK then, let's begin:

Chapter 11 in effect starts where the previous chapter ends. David and Israel were effectively fighting what we call Jordan today. In the history of warfare, it is common to march forward in the springtime so the soldiers can feed off the farmlands! This chapter opens by telling us David's general (Joab) was leading a battle David should have been doing! Instead, David was hanging around Jerusalem. That is when he spotted Bathsheba sunbathing on the roof! Of course, we can discuss what she did wrong, but I'll let that go for now. She suffered too and God "killed her baby" that came from that act! Anyway it says David got aroused despite all the wives he had at his disposal! Like I said earlier, men must learn to control their urges to want every beautiful woman they see! Bottom line David sent for her and they "did it" in his palace. She got pregnant because of it! The text stated Bathsheba cleansed herself from her period as to imply there's no way her husband impregnated her!

Now that the dirty deed is done, it's time for the cover up! Her husband is listed in the end of this book as one of David's mighty men! Here he calls him home from the battle and asked about the war. When he (Uriah) got outside, he probably thought about his war comrades sleeping in tents, and refused to go to his house. David hoped he'd have sex with his wife and that's that. He invites Uriah over again, this time to get him drunk. Still when Uriah steps outside he's thinking he can't go home. The next step for the elimination of Uriah is interesting: David wrote a note for general Joab to place Uriah in the heat of the battle. Uriah carried his own death note and never read it! Joab figured it out and that ends Uriah's life when the next battle occurred!

Next is getting word back to David. Joab tells a story from the book of Judges (which shows what was in the bible to date was studied)! Joab tells the messenger before he leaves that if David is upset by the news of Israelites dying, mention Uriah is dead. Remember there's a time lapse. When Bathsheba and David first did it, time must have gone by before she realized she was pregnant! It took time for Uriah to come home and go back to the war and the news for David. Just saying this wasn't a one-day event! Bottom line Uriah is dead. David then agrees to marry Bathsheba and thinks no one will be the wiser. But of course, God knows all things.

God planted the idea in a prophet's head how to tell David. The prophet made up a story about a poor man who owned only one sheep. A rich man came over and demanded that sheep for dinner. Nathan told that story to David as if it was true and he demanded the rich man pay "four times", as required by the Jewish law. An interesting coincidence is David ended up losing four sons in his lifetime due to his sin so God honored His four time rule! The most famous line in this story is when the prophet Nathan says (I'm guessing dramatically) "David you are the man". David realized he sinned and confessed it. The prophet Nathan then lays out David's punishment that we'll read about over the rest of this book. I can give details but let's just say it cost the lives of four of David's sons and many Israelites died due to what occurred. I always wondered why the baby died as it wasn't his fault! God wanted to show there's consequences for sin. When David found out the baby died, he made a statement that he'd see the baby in heaven one day after he died. By the way, for my readers who went through an abortion and now are committed Christians, I'm convinced you'll meet that child in heaven! This chapter also tells us David and Bathsheba had another baby Solomon, who of course became the next king of Israel, after a lot of warfare and the loss of many of David's other sons!

The final six verses of all things returns us to where Chapter 11 started with the war between Israel and again, what is Jordan today. When Joab was about to win, he called David there to put on a crown that assumedly belonged to a local king there. The Israelites won and life went on. David probably thought that's that, I had Bathsheba's husband killed, married his late wife and life goes on. It does, but as most of us know, God still interferes in man's affairs. David suffered for the rest of his life due to that, but he still had faith God is guiding his life, but as we'll see he suffered heavily for it.

Which brings me back to my opening question about punishment: Obviously some people seem to get away with it. As the Psalms teaches "this is the only joy they get for eternity". Of course all of us who trust in God and want to please Him realize there are consequences for sin, not to make us suffer but to make us a better witness for God as again, that's why we were created in the first place. I'm the first to admit I'm not perfect and I'm surprised He doesn't punish me more than in life! I realize grace is a part of that equation. The lesson to learn from these chapters is consequences exist for bad actions, so if we can confess our failures when they occur, we can still realize our eternal destiny is great as His witness to the world around us. When we mess up and we all do, confess it, accept the fact God has the right to punish us but to use that punishment hopefully to draw us closer to Him!

If you liked this little study, I wrote a more detailed account about twenty years ago! If you'd like you can read the rest or stop now. Either way, I'm grateful for you reading this. To see the other one, click on one of the two links on this web page. Thanks again, John