

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Sometimes we manage to make a royal mess out of our lives, don't we? Temptations enter into our lives, and we are too short-sighted to resist them. Satan convinces us that the short-term pleasure will be worth it. We buy in to his reasoning and even though we know it is not what God wants us to do, we do it anyway. Then we end up paying some sort of consequence... sometimes a pretty major one.

The **child** is given a chore to do, but instead plays video games. Consequence: big trouble with Mom and Dad. Some of their trust has been eroded. The **student** has a test to study for, but instead puts off studying until it's too late. Rather than take the bad grade, they give in to the temptation to cheat. They're caught. Consequence: a zero on the test and a full grade drop for the semester. On the **job**, a person has a report do, and significant research must go into it. With the deadline approaching, numbers are fudged to meet the deadline. When caught, the employee is fired. A family has a **tight budget**. But a looming car repair pushes the husband to the new car lot. The money isn't there, but he buys the new car. The family suffers great stress and many arguments with the wife result because a tight budget just became nearly impossible to meet.

Or how about this one: a man can't fall asleep on an unseasonably hot late-spring evening. He goes out on his balcony for a little fresh air. He does a double take when he sees through the window of the house next door and spies a woman taking a bath. He contacts her and invites her to come over. Her husband was away – deployed and fighting on the front lines. One thing leads to another and they spend the night together. A few weeks later, she contacts the man... she's pregnant.

If you haven't figured it out yet, the man in this story is King David. The woman is Bathsheeba. As bad as the story has gotten, it gets worse. David sends word to the general on the front line that Bathsheeba's husband Uriah should be put on the front lines, and when the fighting gets fierce, everyone else pull back. Uriah, of course, was killed. David took Bathsheeba to be his wife, and no one was the wiser to David's sins.

Except God. We're going to look at what came next. David is led to repentance, and God forgave him. But we'll see that there was a negative consequence to his sin. His child would die. How did David deal with that? What was his attitude toward God when he endured the consequence of his sin?

I think when we hear this story of David, it's easy to disassociate ourselves from him. We wag our finger at him saying, "Shame on you." We think, "How could he?" But as the examples I related at the beginning show us, all too often we do exactly what David did. We are tempted. We sin. We cover up our sin. Negative consequences follow.

When we confess our sin and repent, what happens? Does God partially forgive us or fully forgive us? If I continue to suffer with the negative consequences of my sin, does that mean God has not truly forgiven me? Do I have a right to talk to God about the suffering I endure as a negative consequence of my sins? Would he listen or be sympathetic? What will get us through? So basically we're dealing with the question: When I sin and I suffer the consequences for it, how do I get through that? How should I respond and react to the negative consequences of my own

sins?

Let's look what God says in his word. Again, remember the setting. The prophet Nathan has just confronted David with his sins of adultery and murder. And then Nathan says this: **“This is what the LORD says: ‘Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.’”**

The sin *will* have earthly consequences! Nathan the prophet foretells the great family strife David would experience as a consequence of his sin. But the worst consequence was not yet announced. David's response?

Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” [This was David's confession. Short and sweet. But heartfelt and sincere. No more covering up or excusing the sin. David admits to God his sin. **Nathan replied, “The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.**

What amazing good news for David! Could David have objected if God's prophet hear David's confession and said, “Yes, you have sinned against the Lord, so you must die, for the Lord is angry and will never forgive you.” God would have had every reason to say that. But instead, God immediately forgives. David's guilt before God is completely forgiven. God hold nothing against David for this.

But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt, the son born to you will die.”

Make sure you understand what's happening here. Was David completely forgiven by God, or partially forgiven? Completely. But, God tells David that the earthly consequence of his sin was that the son conceived by he and Bathsheeba would die. Why would he die? For what reason? As a further punishment for David? No! His sin was forgiven. God gives the reason the son would die: **“you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt.”** If the leader of God's chosen nation sins in this way and seems to “get away with it,” what would Israel's enemies say? They would say, “The God of Israel doesn't really care about your sins. Do what you want... you'll always get away with it. Yahweh is not a just or holy God because he lets the guilty go.” So that God's name would not be mocked by the other nations, and so they would understand his justice and holiness, the child would die.

Would David suffer? Absolutely. But understand that this consequence of his sin was not delivered *so that* David would suffer, but *so that* God's enemies would understand what kind of God he is.

Here is where things get interesting.

After Nathan had gone home, the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and he became ill.

David's son became ill. David knew what God had said... that the child would die. So how does David react? It could be in any number of ways.

1. David despairs of God's forgiveness because his dying son is seen as a punishment from God. So he stops praying to God and going to church.
2. David blames himself for his son's dying and lives the rest of his days despondent and depressed. He doesn't feel worthy of God's love so he stops praying and doesn't go to church.
3. David gets angry at God for because of this illness that is supposed to end in death and he finishes out his days hating God, of course never praying or going to church.

Any one or combination of these reactions is possible: God must not love me and hasn't forgiven me. I can't love me and can't forgive myself. I hate God for this circumstance. All are equally damaging. They separate a person from God.

APPLICATION: Does any of that sound familiar? What is the negative consequence of your sin that you struggle with? Broken relationships? Strained finances? Lost job? Have you ever responded to it by despairing of God's love and forgiveness? Unable to forgive yourself and move on? Angry at God? These are the destructive responses. Satan lies to us that these are the only possible responses. But listen carefully as I read on, because David But David does none of these:

David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and went into his house and spent the nights lying on the ground. The elders of his household stood beside him to get him up from the ground, but he refused, and he would not eat any food with them.

David completely humbles himself before the Lord and pleads with God that God might change his mind and save his son. Why did David bother asking God for this when God had already said the child would die? Because in spite of all that has happened, David still believes that God is a God of grace and mercy. David trusted without wavering that of all God's characteristics, grace was the dominant one. David new for a fact that even though God's decision was just and right, there still was a chance that God might change his mind and let his Son live.

Here's the ending:

On the seventh day the child died. David's servants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they thought, "While the child was still living, we spoke to David but he would not listen to us. How can we tell him the child is dead? He may do something desperate." David noticed that his servants were whispering among themselves and he realized the child was dead. "Is the child dead?" he asked. "Yes," they replied, "he is dead."

God is a God of grace, but in his infinite wisdom, knowing how people and other nations were reacting to these events, God still took the life of his child.

So again, how will David react? Despair? Helplessness? Anger? Shaking his fist at God? No.

Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate.

He gets up, takes a shower, splashes on the aftershave, puts on a clean set of clothing, goes to church and worships God. Then he goes home and asks for a meal because he's starving. If you think his behavior is odd, you're not alone.

His servants asked him, "Why are you acting this way? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!" He answered, "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.' 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." Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and lay with her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. The LORD loved him; and because the LORD loved him, he sent word through Nathan the prophet to name him Jedidiah [which means "Loved by the Lord".]

In spite of all that happened and how things turned out, David believed God to be a God of grace. The death of his son did not shake David's trust in his God of grace once bit. The first order of business was to go and worship him.

Friends, what will get you through when you're suffering under the consequences of your sins? What should you do when you messed up, repented, but the ripples and waves just keep going out and you continue to suffer?

Do what David did. Trust that your God is the God of grace. Because grace (undeserved love) is his dominant characteristic, believe him when he says to you that your sins are forgiven. He no longer holds them against you. You will not die eternally, but live. His grace moved him to do the unthinkable. To forgive you he had to condemn his Son, Jesus. Jesus, your holy and perfect substitute, to set you right with God. Jesus never suffered a negative consequence for his sins, because he never did anything wrong. But he chose to take the eternal consequence of your sin upon himself when he went to the cross and bled and died. When God says you are forgiven, understand it is complete and total. There is nothing left to pay.

But what about the ripples and after-effects of our sin? What about the negative consequences that continue? In this world, we may still suffer those consequences. When you do, continue to trust in your God as the God of grace. Don't despair of his love and forgiveness... they're still there for you just as they always have been. Don't beat yourself up and hate yourself. Because you are forgiven you are free to love and serve God. Don't get angry with God. Do what David did. Trust in the God of grace. Go to him with your problem and need in prayer. Do it over and over again. And who knows? Maybe God will be gracious to you and remove the worldly consequence of your sin. But what if he doesn't? Trust God anyway, worship him as David did. Entrust your life and your future to his gracious hands.

Know and believe this: God's grace *will* get you through.