

David Loses His Infant Son
II Samuel 12:18-23, Trinity Sunday XVI
September 20, 2015

Sermon Text, II Samuel 12:18-23 (KJV):

“And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead? But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”

Beloved of the Lord.....There is in the Christian life, a great burden or a most difficult trial, God sometimes calls Christian woman to. And that trial is to lose a child by miscarriage or stillbirth. It seems so cruel of God, since God has allowed it, or we just can't figure out why God would allow such a terrible thing to happen to an innocent child who never had a chance, you might say. Inside the heart of a Christian mother there is naturally great sorrow and many questions. Did I do something to cause this to happen? Did I fail my child? Why has God struck me so? Is God now against me? Has God forsaken me? But high above all these questions, let every mother remember her Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord, who died for all. Jesus suffered and died for these little children no less than every mother. Jesus has salvation for them too, because Jesus is gracious and merciful. As David said, so may we believe, “I shall go to him but he shall not return to me.”

I. The consequence of sin and God's chastening. While almost every Christian is familiar with David's sin of adultery, we often forget that the first child conceived by David's adultery died only seven days after birth. This death was foretold by the prophet Nathan who said to David in verse 14, “Howbeit because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.” By David's sin the wicked were able to mock God's holy name, and this evil David had done would only help them to remain in unbelief without repentance. But if the child of their adultery died, God's enemies would know God punishes evil.

Our first lesson then is there are consequences to our sins. If God punishes you because of the evil you have done, who are you to argue and say you deserve differently? If imperfect parents have the God-given right to punish their children for disobedience, how much more does our perfect Father above have the right to punish us for our sins, and who are we to say there is no consequence to sin? In Leviticus 26 where God

commands His people to worship Him alone and keep His commandments, He also threatens to punish all who break His commandments. He says "If ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. And I will break the pride of your power." In the case of David it is worth noting that the prophecy regarding the loss of his child came after his repentance and restoration to faith. The loss of this child then would be something David would have to bear and endure, yet he would still need to believe and trust his sins were forgiven.

Therefore let every Christian today understand, whenever God chastens or afflicts His own believing children, He does so partly because of the honor of His name. This chastening or discipline then is not intended for your destruction, and it would not be wrong to call it a punishment for your flesh, but because of the sacrifice of Christ for your sins you ought to know God is still your gracious and forgiving and that is not going to change. But this discipline is indeed necessary to keep your sinful flesh in check, and if God were to let your flesh go wild without discipline, you would quickly fall away and become a heathen. So it is written, "despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: For he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole." To despise God's chastening is to argue against God and accuse God of evil inwardly in our heart by saying "Lord I don't deserve this, and you are evil for allowing this to befall me." These thoughts alone merit damnation. And if we go to our grave and descend into hell blaming God for all our problems in life rather than repenting and confessing we are the ones who have done evil!.....who is to blame for our damnation? Our sins cannot be pinned upon God, but they stick to us like tar. We own them because we have done them and Isaiah explains, "But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

But let every soul understand THIS also: even when God punishes men on earth for their evil, He does so only to work repentance in their heart. He wants all men to turn from their evil ways before it is too late, lest they die in the most dreadful sin of all, UNBELIEF concerning Jesus Christ their Savior! Hell is never God's will for any soul, because Christ offered up His own life upon the cross so all would be forgiven and receive heaven. Jesus therefore said of Himself, and those who need repentance, "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

But speaking now of those believers whom God chastens: like David, when God chastens His own believing children, generally we don't use the word punishment, for each believer knows Jesus was already punished for us on the cross. When God disciplines us then, our flesh interprets it as punishment for it can feel nothing else, but the new man within us remembers this only comes from His love, for "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." Therefore dear believer when you are afflicted and the devil and your flesh cause you to have bad thoughts against God in your head.....when you feel as though God has forsaken or forgotten you, remember God's most sweet promise to you in Isaiah 49:15. The Lord says, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of *my* hands." God cannot forget us in our hour of need, our time of trial and temptation, because our names are written upon His hands, the nail prints are still there. Think of David here and God's heavy hand upon him as his own little baby lay sick and was near death. In spite of what David saw with his

eyes, in spite of God's own prophecy that the child would die, David continued to pray and fast while the child was living, BECAUSE David understood, "Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live?" Because God is gracious David knew God could still change his mind and heal that child.

This is what our prayers must be like dear believer, when our cross is heavy. When the dark clouds roll in so we cannot see the face of God shining upon us which is gracious unto us, this is a time of testing and faith. God has a way of covering His face, making it seem in the midst of our trial as if He has forsaken us, though He has not. He appears strange to us, different, or distant, as if He doesn't care about us. Think of Jacob who wrestled with that Angel who was the Lord. God wrestled with Jacob as a Foe, but only so Jacob would seek God's blessing and overcome. Remember also the woman of Canaan who came to Jesus and said, "O Lord, *thou* Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." Jesus there appeared to her as a cruel and heartless Lord, for He called her a dog not fit to eat the crumbs. But Jesus did so only so she would persevere in faith, even press Him for mercy, because she knew that in spite of this external hardness, the heart of Jesus was still filled with love and mercy for both her and her daughter. In the end remember Jesus granted her request and said, "O woman great is Thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt." In a similar manner, David prayed but God still allowed the child to die, but later Bathsheba conceived again and another child was born.

II. How are we to view the unborn children who die in the womb, or those who die before they can be baptized? We now enter into the arena of one of the hardest questions Christians have to answer: what happens to the soul of those children who die in their mother's womb, or they are stillborn, or die shortly after birth before they can be baptized? Here we dare not deny any doctrine of Scripture. The FIRST doctrine not to be overthrown is that all children are born in sin, and by way of that sinful nature they deserve damnation. When you thus hear Reformed Christians today say that all children go to heaven, for God would never cast a child into hell, we cannot agree because all children are conceived and born in sin. Likewise all children need Jesus and His forgiveness if they are to be saved. The SECOND doctrine to be upheld is that all infants should be baptized because Jesus is their Savior too. Baptism is the only Means of Grace whereby we can be sure our infants will be saved, because in Baptism by the power of God's Word, the treasure of forgiveness is applied to infant and the gift of faith also given. Jesus said, "Except a man be born of water and the spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Likewise Jesus said "Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

If then we are dealing with a Reformed Christian who argues against infant baptism, what are we to do? In a loving way we should help them see the doctrine of original sin whereby all are condemned, and likewise the doctrine of universal grace, whereby Jesus has salvation for all. Yet concerning infants, the only Means of Grace we have whereby they can be saved is baptism, for Jesus Himself said, "Except a man be born of water and the spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Yet when a parent despises baptism and refuses to have their child baptized, they are keeping Jesus and His salvation away from their own child, and by doing so they are truthfully sending their own child to hell. They are stepping between a loving Jesus and a poor child born in sin, and saying

“No Jesus, my child does not need you, for I reason that you take all children to heaven.” But does that agree with the words of Jesus who said, “Except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

Now we say this because that is what the parent himself is doing by their unbelief. But we do not say this as if we really know what happens to every child which is not baptized. Therefore when we speak to *Christian* parents who do not despise Holy Baptism, yet their child has died in the womb or there was a miscarriage, we can and should speak quite differently. For this is not a soul that despises baptism, thus they do not despise Jesus, yet like David God has allowed the loss. What do we do here? Here we say in all true and Christian love “I am so sorry for what happened, and may God give you strength for this trial, for He is gracious and merciful. But understand dear friend, Jesus is still the Savior of your child, and when He suffered upon the cross for your sins, he suffered there all the same for your baby. And knowing that Jesus is not willing that any of these little ones perish, I believe Jesus has a way, a means for that child to be saved, even though he lacked baptism.”

So here let every Christian understand, just as it would be evil for us to say God simply takes all children to heaven without Baptism, so it would be evil to say all children are automatically lost without baptism. Ultimately we leave it to the judgment of God, yet because we know Christ died for all, and God so loved the world, and Jesus Himself was also baptized as a Substitute for all the world, every soul is precious. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is life everlasting for all and every soul, even the smallest life, at the earliest moment of conception or existence, even if that life was just a fertilized egg. This Gospel then is what causes us, like David, to wash ourselves clean and go to church and worship. When we hear the Gospel we are washed, when we believe the Gospel we wash ourselves remembering our Baptism. And as David said, so we also believe concerning such children, “I shall to go him, but he shall not return to me.” Amen.