



Studies in the Life of David

Text

Second Samuel 12:24-31

Topic

David is invited by Joab to come out
and finish the battle against the Ammonites

Title

"Back in the Battle Again"

Introduction

Maybe you've heard the expression, "The only army that shoots its wounded is the Christian army."

It means that we can have a dismissive, judgmental attitude towards a brother or a sister in Christ who has sinned. Even after they repent we can wonder if their repentance was genuine and often we are hesitant to see them returned to the full benefits and blessings of their Christian life. Many of these wounded soldiers live the rest of their lives being treated, or at least feeling, as if they are now second-class Christians.

The classic passage on how to approach and treat Christians who sin is found in the New Testament book of Galatians 6:1 where we read,

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

The word translated “restore” is one that would be used of setting a broken bone back in place or of mending a torn fishing net. It thus depicts the person as hobbled and unable to continue in the Great Commission as a fisher of men. You restore the bone and repair the net in order for them to return to serving the Lord.

Restoration is one of the main themes in the verses we are covering today, the last verses of Second Samuel twelve. David had sinned but through the intervention of Nathan the prophet he had repented. Though he would suffer severe consequences for his sins, we see that he was fully restored by God both at home and in the kingdom.

David’s restoration doesn’t tell us everything we need to know about every situation we might encounter with regards to restoring someone. It’s not a step-by-step primer. But it does establish a truth we sometimes forget or are hesitant to declare. **God loves to restore!**

I’ll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 God Restores You And Then Reveals Himself Through It In Your Private Life, and #2 God Restores You And Then Reveals Himself Through It In Your Public Life.

#1 God Restores You And Then Reveals Himself Through It In Your Private Life
(v24-25)

It is not our goal today to establish the precise biblical process for restoring a sinning brother or sister. That process can be found in Matthew 18:15-22 and is most of the time referred to as ‘Church Discipline.’ It involves confrontation of sin on an escalating scale if the person refuses to repent, going alone at first but later taking witnesses and much later, if necessary, exposing the person’s sin publicly to the gathered church.

In passing I might point out that the phrase, ‘Church Discipline,’ does not occur in the Bible. I refer to it as ‘Church Discipline,’ too, but I’m starting to think that it might be better, more biblical, to call it ‘Church Restoration.’ It includes discipline, it starts there; but if it’s goal is restoration, why not call it that, to remind us why we’re doing it and where we’re headed?

What we are focusing on today is the heart behind the process. It's a vital part of the process. It's described in the verses just before Matthew 18:15-22, in verses 12-14, where you read,

Matthew 18:12 "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying?"

Matthew 18:13 And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray.

Matthew 18:14 Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

Restoration is the attitude, the heart, the motivation we must have throughout the process. We see it illustrated in the restoration of David.

2 Samuel 12:24 Then David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in to her and lay with her. So she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. Now the Lord loved him,
2 Samuel 12:25 and He sent word by the hand of Nathan the prophet: So he called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord.

Really? After committing adultery and a murder to cover it up God allowed David to marry Bathsheba? To have a son by him? To produce the heir to the throne of Israel?

I wonder what steps I would have recommended for David to take in the aftermath of his sins if I had been on the committee charged with his discipline and restoration? It's a silly comparison since we do not live in a monarchy or even really understand a tribal culture like Israel's. Still I'm almost sure we would have been more punitive in the aftermath of David's sin. While we might have recommended he marry Bathsheba, I think we would have thought him disqualified from leadership and asked him to step down. We would at least have wanted to wait to see if there was fruit in his life after his repentance.

Again I want to emphasize that this passage isn't giving me a process of restoration. It isn't establishing the norm for how to treat adulterers and murderers.

What it **is** doing is showing us that God is serious about restoring repentant sinners. God is extreme when it comes to restoration and I should be, too.

Every restoration opportunity is going to be a little different. One thing they all must have in common is the goal to see the person restored to both fellowship and service. We want to mend the bone - see them back as a member of the body of Jesus Christ; and we want to mend the net - see them back serving the Lord.

David's private life, his home life, was restored. Verses twenty-four and twenty-five depict a joyous home life that was abundantly blessed by God. They named their son Solomon, which means *peace*. They were at peace in their home and they enjoyed peace with God.

Nathan put God's stamp of approval on David's private life by naming the child Jedidiah, which means *loved by the Lord*.

By now all the nation knew what David had done. All the nation was watching what David would do and, more importantly, what God would do. David repented; God restored.

Consequences there were. The first child born to David and Bathsheba was taken home prematurely. There would be turmoil in David's future which will begin in the very next chapter.

But the consequences God determines for sin are different than the punishments we might assign to repentant believers to be sure they are not getting off too easy.

God's restoration was first revealed in David's home, as a husband and father. He was also the king.

#2 God Restores You And Then
Reveals Himself Through It In Your Public Life
(v26-31)

At this point, with regards to the return to service, there is a wide variety of opinions among evangelical Christians. Take the cases of church leaders who have sinned. We can go to extremes.

- When a leader sins, some claim, “touch not God’s anointed,” or they quote, “the gifts and callings of God are without repentance.” Leaders can get a pass, almost, as if they should not be subject to the regular process of restoration that must begin with discipline.
- Others go to the opposite extreme and claim the individual is permanently disqualified from any leadership or teaching position for the rest of their life - no matter their repentance. One prominent pastor writes, “I am not advocating that we “shoot our wounded.” I’m simply saying that we shouldn’t rush them back to the front lines, and we should not put them in charge of other soldiers. The church should do everything possible to minister to those who have sinned and repented. But that does not include restoring the mantle of leadership to a man who has disqualified himself and forfeited the right to lead” (John MacArthur).

Every situation, every case, is going to be a little different and will present its own difficulties. Rather than have our mind set on one extreme or another, we ought to remember that God loves to restore, that He can be extreme in doing so, and then walk through the process with the desire that God be revealed.

In David’s case it meant continuing as king of Israel and getting right back into the battle.

2 Samuel 12:26 Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the people of Ammon, and took the royal city.

2 Samuel 12:27 And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, "I have fought against Rabbah, and I have taken the city's water supply.

2 Samuel 12:28 Now therefore, gather the rest of the people together and encamp against the city and take it, lest I take the city and it be called after my name."

Joab was King David’s courageous and crafty general. He was about to take Rabbah after a successful military campaign. Instead of getting the glory, he determined to give it to David.

It's not part of our subject matter this morning, but I must commend Joab for not wanting to hog the glory. The glory belonged to God, not Joab, not David. By allowing David to get the final victory both men were functioning as God had raised them up to function. Do your part, defer to others, and God will get the glory for what He wants to accomplish through His people.

If anyone might have balked at David's restoration it was Joab who had been ordered by the king to put Uriah the Hittite, the husband of Bathsheba, in the thick of the battle so he would die. Instead he recognized David as a restored man and called him to the field to take his rightful place.

2 Samuel 12:29 So David gathered all the people together and went to Rabbah, fought against it, and took it.

Here was David on the very site of his sin being credited with a great victory. I'm telling you, it is mind-boggling from the standpoint of extreme restoration. If it were up to me, I'd want to embarrass David publicly at that location. God instead gives him a great victory at the very site of his earlier sin. A victory he did nothing to earn or deserve.

2 Samuel 12:30 Then he took their king's crown from his head. Its weight was a talent of gold, with precious stones. And it was set on David's head. Also he brought out the spoil of the city in great abundance.

Depending on the culture, a "talent" could be anywhere from around 60 pounds to well over 100 pounds. **Even at the lower weight, you had to have quite the neck and shoulder muscles to wear these ancient crowns!**

David conquered, he wore the enemy's crown, he took their spoil. It's a scene of *total* and *complete* victory that emphasized his *total* and *complete* restoration.

2 Samuel 12:31 And he brought out the people who were in it, and put them to work with saws and iron picks and iron axes, and made them cross over to the brick works. So he did to all the cities of the people of Ammon. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

There is a dispute among scholars regarding the translation of the verb “put them to work.” Some say it really means he “put them under the saws and iron picks and iron axes.” In other words, he slaughtered them.

Maybe. It sounds cruel, but that’s the way things were handled in those days. If David “put them under the saws,” it was probably the soldiers who suffered this fate and not the general population.

Either way what is interesting to our subject matter is that now that he was restored, David acted fully like the king. He wasn’t soft on the enemies of God. Restoration hadn’t weakened his resolve to bring glory to God.

We’ve been talking about the attitude “those who are spiritual” should have with regard to restoration. The person restored needs to have attitude as well. Once you are restored, you are back where God wants you to be and you ought to act accordingly.

David is a great example of that. From the moment he repented he started acting like the husband, the father, the king he was supposed to be. All of it revealed the grace and mercy of God, giving hope to sinners that God *can* and *will* restore.

We need to have God’s attitude, God’s heart, towards sinners and see this through all the way to restoration. Pastor John MacArthur writes,

What do you do when someone sins? You discipline them. What do you do when they repent and turn from that sin? You forgive them in the fullest sense. Then what do you do after they are forgiven? **You restore them.** You take them all the way back to the place where they were before they fell in the beginning. And the ministry of restoration seems to me to be a vital and final link in the process of our thinking.

This restoration stuff is hard! We can go to extremes:

1. On the one hand, we can restore a person, as it were, before they have repented. We do this anytime we ignore sin in their lives, or when we minimize their sin.

2. The other hand in this is the heavy hand of punishment and penance. We can require a person to jump through hoops in order to ‘prove’ they have truly repented. We seem unable to apply forgiveness even though it’s been asked for, and even though Jesus said we should forgive (and therefore restore) “seventy times seven times” in a day if necessary.

It’s popular among Christians to criticize the church because they don’t see much ‘Church Discipline’ going on. By that they mean they don’t see the pastor or the elders getting up on a Sunday morning and excommunicating people.

The truth is, **restoration is going on all the time**, and it generally never rises to the level of an all-church exposure. It’s handled before it gets that far.

We should apply the process of discipline as a restorative, as remedial and *not* a punishment, always having in mind the winning back of the sinning brother or sister to both fellowship and service.

We want to see that person back in the battle.

