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Introduction

The Lord sends Nathan the prophet to reprove David; which he does by means of a curious parable, 2 Samuel 12:1-4. David is led, unknowingly, to pronounce his own condemnation, 2 Samuel 12:5, 2 Samuel 12:6. Nathan charges the guilt home on his conscience; and predicts a long train of calamities which should fall on him and his family, 2 Samuel 12:7-12. David confesses his sin; and Nathan gives him hope of God's mercy, and foretells the death of the child born in adultery, 2 Samuel 12:13, 2 Samuel 12:14. The child is taken ill; David fasts and prays for its restoration, 2 Samuel 12:15-17. On the seventh day the child dies, and David is comforted, 2 Samuel 12:18-24. Solomon is born of Bath-sheba, 2 Samuel 12:25, 2 Samuel 12:26. Joab besieges Rabbah of the Ammonites, takes the city of waters, and sends for David to take Rabbah, 2 Samuel 12:27, 2 Samuel 12:28. He comes, takes it, gets much spoil, and puts the inhabitants to hard labor, 2 Samuel 12:29-31.

Verse 1

There were two men in one city - See a discourse on fables at the end of Judges 9:56 (note), and a discourse on parabolic writing at the end of the thirteenth chapter of Matthew.

There is nothing in this parable that requires illustration; its bent is evident; and it was construed to make David, unwittingly, pass sentence on himself. It was in David's hand, what his own letters were in the hands of the brave but unfortunate Uriah.

Verse 3

And lay in his bosom - This can only mean that this lamb was what we call a pet or favourite in the family, else the circumstance would be very unnatural, and most likely would have prevented David from making the application which he did, as otherwise it would have appeared absurd. It is the only part of this parable which is at variance with nature and fact.

Verse 5

The man - shall surely die - Literally $\text{x'xY xZx}^{\text{a}}$ (ben maveth), he is a son of death, he a very bad man, and one who deserves to die. But the law did not sentence a sheep-stealer to death; let us hear it: If a man steal an ox or a sheep, he shall restore Five Oxen for an ox, and Four Sheep for a sheep, Exodus 22:1; and hence David immediately says, He shall restore the lamb Fourfold.

Verse 7

Thou art the man - What a terrible word! And by it David appears to have been transfixed, and brought into the dust before the messenger of God.

Thou Art this son of death, and thou shalt restore this lamb Fourfold. It is indulging fancy too much to say David was called, in the course of a just Providence to pay this fourfold debt? to lose four sons by untimely deaths, viz., this son of Bath-sheba, on whom David had set his heart, was slain by the Lord; Amnon, murdered by his brother Absalom; Absalom, slain in the oak by Joab; and Adonijah, slain by the order of his brother Solomon, even at the altar of the Lord! The sword and calamity did not depart from his house, from the murder of wretched Amnon by his brother to the slaughter of the sons of Zedekiah, before their father's eyes, by the king of Babylon. His daughter was dishonored by her own brother, and his wives contaminated publicly by his own son! How dreadfully, then, was David punished for his sin! Who would repeat his transgression to share in its penalty? Can his conduct ever be an inducement to, or an encouragement in, sin? Surely, No. It must ever fill the reader and the hearer with horror. Behold the goodness and severity of God! Reader, lay all these solemn things to heart.

Verse 8

Thy master's wives into thy bosom - Perhaps this means no more than that he had given him absolute power over every thing possessed by Saul; and as it was the custom for the new king to succeed even to the wives and concubines, the whole harem of the deceased king, so it was in this case; and the possession of the wives was a sure proof that he had got all regal rights. But could David, as the son-in-law of Saul, take the wives of his father-in-law? However, we find delicacy was seldom consulted in these cases; and Absalom lay with his own father's wives in the most public manner, to show that he had seized on the kingdom, because the wives of the preceding belonged to the succeeding king, and to none other.

Verse 9

Thou hast killed Uriah - Thou art the Murderer, as having planned his death; the sword of the Ammonites was Thy instrument only.

Verse 11

I will take thy wives - That is, In the course of my providence I will permit all this to be done. Had David been faithful, God, by his providence, would have turned all this aside; but now, by his sin, he has made that providence his enemy which before was his friend.

Verse 13

The Lord - hath put away thy sin - Many have supposed that David's sin was now actually pardoned, but this is perfectly erroneous; David, as an adulterer, was condemned to death by the law of God; and he had according to that law passed sentence of death upon himself. God alone, whose law that was could revoke that sentence, or dispense with its execution; therefore Nathan, who had charged the guilt home upon his conscience, is authorized to give him the assurance that he should not die a temporal death for it: The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. This is all that is contained in the assurance given by Nathan: Thou shalt not die that temporal death; thou shalt be preserved alive, that thou mayest have time to repent, turn to God, and find mercy. If the fifty-first Psalm, as is generally supposed, was written on this occasion, then it is evident (as the Psalm must have been written after this interview) that David had not received pardon for his sin from God at the time he composed it; for in it he confesses the crime in order to find mercy.

There is something very remarkable in the words of Nathan: The Lord also hath Put Away thy sin; thou shalt not die; *x'x° xTMx''x°x'' x''xçx'xTMx'' x—x~x°x^axš xœx° x^axžx°x^a* (gam Yehovah heebir chattathecha lo thamuth), Also Jehovah Hath Caused thy sin To Pass Over, or transferred thy sin; Thou shalt not die. God has transferred the legal punishment of this sin to the child; He shall die, Thou shalt not die; and this is the very point on which the prophet gives him the most direct information: The child that is born unto thee shall Surely die; *xžx°x^a xTMxžx°x^a* (moth yamuth), dying he shall die - he shall be in a dying state seven days, and then he shall die. So God immediately struck the child, and it was very sick.

Verse 16

David - besought God for the child - How could he do so, after the solemn assurance that he had from God that the child should die? The justice of God absolutely required that the penalty of the law should be exacted; either the father or the son shall die. This could not be reversed.

Verse 20

David arose from the earth, and washed - Bathing, anointing the body, and changing the apparel, are the first outward signs among the Hindoos of coming out of a state of mourning or sickness.

Verse 22

Who can tell - David, and indeed all others under the Mosaic dispensation, were so satisfied that all God's threatenings and promises were conditional, that even in the most positive assertions relative to judgments, etc., they sought for a change of purpose. And notwithstanding the positive declaration of Nathan, relative to the death of the child, David sought for its life, not knowing but that might depend on some unexpressed condition, such as earnest prayer, fasting, humiliation, etc., and in these he continued while there was hope. When the child died, he ceased to grieve, as he now saw that this must be fruitless. This appears to be the sole reason of David's importunity.

Verse 23

I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me - It is not clear whether David by this expressed his faith in the immortality of the soul; going to him may only mean, I also shall die, and be gathered to my fathers, as he is. But whether David expressed this or not, we know that the thing is true; and it is one of the most solid grounds of consolation to surviving friends that they shall by and by be joined to them in a state of conscious existence. This doctrine has a very powerful tendency to alleviate the miseries of human life and reconcile us to the death of most beloved friends. And were we to admit the contrary, grief, in many cases, would wear out its subject before it wore out itself. Even the heathens derived consolation from the reflection that they should meet their friends in a state of conscious existence. And a saying in Cicero De Senectute, which he puts in the mouth of Cato of Utica, has been often quoted, and is universally admired: -

O praelarum diem, cum ad illud divinum animorum concilium coetumque proficiscar, cumque ex hac turba et colluvione discedam! Proficiscar enim non ad eos solum viros de quibus ante dixi; sed etiam ad Catonem meum quo nemo vir melior natus est, nemo pietate praestantior: cujus a me corpus crematum est; quod contra decuit ab illo meum. Animus vero non me deserens, sed respectans, in ea profecto loca discessit, quo mihi ipsi cernebat esse veniendum: quem ego meum catum fortiter ferre visus sum: non quod aequo animo ferrem: sed me ipse consolabar, existimans, non longinquum inter nos digressum et discessum fore. Cato Major, De Senectute, in fin.

œO happy day, (says he), when I shall quit this impure and corrupt multitude, and join myself to that divine company and council of souls who have quitted the earth before me! There I shall find, not only those

to be by far the best in any language, ancient or modern, yet I am satisfied it stands much in need of revision. Most of the advantages which our unbelievers have appeared to have over certain passages of Scripture, have arisen from an inaccurate or false translation of the terms in the original; and an appeal to this has generally silenced the gainsayers. But in the time in which our translation was made, Biblical criticism was in its infancy, if indeed it did exist; and we may rather wonder that we find things so well, than be surprised that they are no better.