

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*When a Child Is Taken – Part II.*"

Please open your Bibles to **2 Samuel 12**.

After Brandan's passing, I didn't feel like I could preach the sermon that I had prepared on wisdom.

I wanted to bring scripture to bear on the situation, which meant looking at accounts of people losing children. It occurs in scripture more often than you might expect, and I believe it's because it occurs in our lives more often than we might expect. We live in a fallen world, and this is one of the worst realities of it.

Last week we looked at Elijah and Elisha raising two children from the dead.

We didn't get to talk much about grief because the parents received their children back. This morning we're going to look at an account with David, and he didn't receive his child back. This makes the account very instructive for us regarding grief.

Here's the context...

Last week I told you that when God takes a child, He isn't punishing the parents. Most of the time that's the case, such as in Brandan's passing. Jim and Kris weren't remotely at fault. They need to do their best to make sure they don't blame themselves.

But there are times when parents have contributed to their child's death:

- Think of mothers smoking during pregnancy and experiencing a miscarriage
- Think of fathers driving drunk and getting in an accident that killed a child

This morning's account with David is an instance of sin contributing to a child's death. God was punishing him for his adultery and murder.

David hoped that God might be merciful and change His mind, so he committed himself to fasting and praying.

Look at **verse 15**...

2 Sam 12:15 Then Nathan went to his house. And the Lord afflicted the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick. **16** David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. **17** And the elders of his house stood beside him, to raise him from the ground, but he would not, nor did he eat food with them. **18** On the seventh day the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, "Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spoke to him, and he did not listen to us. How then can we say to him the child is dead? He may do himself some harm."

Notice David's servants were afraid he'd hurt himself. Keep this in mind.

2 Sam 12:19 But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David understood that the child was dead. And David said to his servants, “Is the child dead?” They said, “He is dead.” **20** Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. He then went to his own house. And when he asked, they set food before him, and he ate. **21** Then his servants said to him, “What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive; but when the child died, you arose and ate food.”

David’s servants were confused because of the way he grieved, and this brings us to lesson one...

LESSON 1: PEOPLE GRIEVE DIFFERENTLY.

Grieving is normal and healthy; therefore, nobody should feel bad about it. God even gives us an entire book in the bible about grieving...

Proverbs is the book about wisdom, Job is the book about suffering, Song of Solomon is the book about romance, and Lamentations is the book about grieving. Many of the psalms are also laments.

Ecclesiastes 3:4 says **there is a time to weep, and a time to mourn.**

In **Rom 12:15** we’re told to **weep with those who weep.**

We wouldn’t be told to weep w/ people if there was something wrong w/ weeping.

David’s servants couldn’t understand his grieving...or I should say they couldn’t understand why he wasn’t grieving.

People can have the same confusion today when others grieve, or don’t grieve, the way they’d expect.

This happens because we don’t grieve the same, and when we see others grieving differently than the way they would grieve it can confuse us.

Consider this:

- When some people are grieving they want to be with others...but other people want to be alone.
- Some people want to stay busy...but others don’t want to do anything.
- Some people want to listen to Christian music, others want to read scripture, and others might want to go on a walk.

The point is there’s liberty to grieve differently.

Last week I mentioned my brother's death. I told you I received the news on a Wednesday night. The next day I stayed home, and I think it was the worst of my life. So on Friday I went back to school; I was teaching at that time.

There were two gentlemen I worked with and we used to play racquetball together. They asked me if I wanted to play that Friday night. They knew about my brother, but when I met them at the gym they didn't say anything...which was perfect...for me. I didn't want to talk about what happened.

For the next few hours I just played racquetball and it took my mind off everything.

I suspect if anyone looked at me, they wouldn't have known my brother died two days earlier, because I didn't look like I was grieving. Maybe some people even would've judged me for playing racquetball at that time.

Like with David's servants people might have said: "What is this thing that you have done? What's wrong with you?"

Looking back I think returning to work was a good approach. Being with my students was therapeutic and enjoyable. I don't think I would do anything differently.

My mom, on the other hand, returned to work. A few weeks later she had a breakdown. They had to take her in an ambulance to the hospital.

Then my parents took some time off and drove up to Oregon where they didn't know anyone and could be alone for a few weeks.

They clearly didn't grieve enough before returning to work.

I would like to offer three encouragements regarding grieving. I think this applies to all of us since all of us grieve.

First, if you're one of the people who take the approach I did and stay busy to keep your mind off what happened, or we could even say to avoid dealing with the grief, there is a point at which the grief must be dealt with. It must be processed, accepted, and taken to the Lord and worked through with Him. If this doesn't happen it can come up in the future and have detrimental consequences.

Second, if you're one of the people who grieves by withdrawing from different responsibilities—whether school, or work, or relationships—I'll be the first to say that this is reasonable and people shouldn't be made to feel bad about this approach.

But with that said, there's a point at which people must reengage with their responsibilities, not just for those depending on them, but even for themselves. God has created us to work and serve, and withdrawing for too long can become detrimental to the person grieving.

Third, regardless of how we grieve, there's one thing that must be avoided, and it's the absence of **hope**. I say this because this is what scripture says...

1 Thes 4:13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope

So there is a lot of liberty regarding grieving, but we can't **grieve without hope**...and this brings us to Lesson 2...

LESSON 2: WE MUST GRIEVE WITH HOPE.

This makes sense if we understand who those are **without hope**.

Unbelievers!

Paul used the same language to describe unbelievers elsewhere...

Ephesians 2:12 You were separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, HAVING NO HOPE AND WITHOUT GOD in the world.

So when Paul says not to grieve without hope, he's saying not to grieve like unbelievers.

Just think about why this is the case...

What hope do unbelievers have when they grieve?

This is all there is to them. When they lose a loved one they believe they'll never see them again. There is no hope for them.

Besides the fact that grieving without hope is grieving like an unbeliever, is there any other reason we shouldn't grieve without hope?

Yes there is!

It can lead to despair. Listen to these verses...

2 Cor 4:8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but NOT DRIVEN TO DESPAIR;

Perplexed means confused. You might remember last week we talked about this. The Shunammite woman lost her son, and she was confused.

It's okay to be confused or **perplexed**, but Paul says we shouldn't be **driven to despair**.

What does it mean to **despair**?

A simple definition is lack hope. **Despairing** is **grieving without hope**.

The next verse...

2 Cor 4:9a persecuted, but not forsaken;

Paul was suffering and it would be tempting to feel like he was alone. But he said he wasn't **forsaken**. While he might have referred to other believers who were with him or praying for him, most importantly he meant the Lord was with him.

When we're grieving it's important to remember that we aren't forsaken. The Lord is with us.

Now listen to this...

2 Cor 4:9b struck down, BUT NOT DESTROYED;

And this is why it's so bad to **grieve without hope**, or to **despair**. It can **destroy**.

What does it mean to be **destroyed**?

It means to be overtaken with grief and completely consumed by it.

Paul says that no matter how bad things get, we can't let **grief** overwhelm us so that it controls us and causes us to harm ourselves or others.

If you look at the end of **verse 18**, this was David's servant's fear w/ him. They said, "**He may do himself some harm.**"

Jesus said...

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill AND DESTROY.

It's Satan's desire for **grief** to cause us to **despair** so we are **destroyed** and prevented from serving our family, friends, and most importantly the Lord.

Even though grief is healthy, the devil gets a victory when he's able to use grief in this way.

Let me give you an idea what it looks like to be consumed with grief. Turn a few chapters to the right to **2 Samuel 18**.

The context is David just received the news that another son of his, Absalom, is dead. Look at **verse 33**...

2 Sam 18:33 And the king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And he went, he said, “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!” 2 Sam 19:1 It was told Joab, “Behold, the king is weeping and mourning for Absalom.”

Joab was David’s nephew, and his fierce and ruthless general. He’s an ungodly man, but even he recognized David was **grieving without hope**.

It was appropriate for David to grieve, but his grief took him too far. He was despairing, consumed by it, and neglecting his responsibilities.

2 Sam 19:2 So the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people, for the people heard that day, “The king is grieving for his son.” 3 And the people stole into the city that day as people steal in who are ashamed when they flee in battle. 4 The king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, “O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!” 5 Then Joab came into the house to the king and said, “You have today covered with shame the faces of all your servants, who have this day saved your life and the lives of your sons and your daughters and the lives of your wives and your concubines, 6 because you love those who hate you and hate those who love you. For you have made it clear today that commanders and servants are nothing to you, for today I know that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, then you would be pleased. 7 Now therefore arise, go out and speak kindly to your servants, for I swear by the Lord, if you do not go, not a man will stay with you this night, and this will be worse for you than all the evil that has come upon you from your youth until now.” 8 Then the king arose and took his seat in the gate. And the people were all told, “Behold, the king is sitting in the gate.” And all the people came before the king.

Joab appropriately rebuked David, because he saw how much David had to lose if he didn’t do what we’ve talked about and reengage with his responsibilities.

Why was David was grieving like this?

He knew he wasn’t going to see Absalom again.

Absalom was an evil man. He was an unrepentant murderer and rapist. David knew he was going to hell, which is a horrible thought for any parent.

This could even be why David said, **“Would I had died instead of you!”** Perhaps David wished Absalom lived longer so he could turn his life around.

Now with this fairly discouraging image in mind, go ahead and turn back to **chapter 12** to see something very encouraging.

I want you to notice the strong change that occurred w/ David...

2 Sam 12:16 David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. 17 And the elders of his house stood beside him, to raise him from the ground, but he would not, nor did he eat food with them.

He goes from this to this...

2 Sam 12:20 Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. He then went to his own house. And when he asked, they set food before him, and he ate.

David was experiencing terrible grief, but right after that he picked himself up, washed himself off, anointed himself, changed his clothes, and was even able to go into the house of the Lord to worship.

The change was so strong David's servants asked him about it...

2 Sam 12:21 Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive; but when the child died, you arose and ate food."

David's answer...

2 Sam 12:22 He said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, 'Who knows whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' 23 But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."

What caused the dramatic change in David?

You might be quick to say he was fasting and praying because he wanted the child to live, and when the child died he had no more reason to fast and pray. That's partly true.

But the real reason is contained in the words **I shall go to him.**

He knew he would be reunited with his son...and this brings us to Lesson 3...

LESSON 3: BELIEVING PARENTS ARE REUNITED WITH BELIEVING CHILDREN THEY'VE LOST.

David lost a child and he did exactly what Paul said and **grieved as one who HAD hope**, b/c he knew he would see this son again.

It would be wrong to think David stopped grieving - just as it would be wrong to think any parents ever stop grieving when they've lost a child - but he was comforted knowing he would see the child again.

After my brother passed away I told you I went back to school as I told you. My principal, who was a good friend, called me into his office to see how I was doing. I still remember him telling me, “It is every parent’s greatest nightmare to have to bury their child.”

Jim and Kris had to live this nightmare.

But at the graveside service Kris said...

“We will miss him very much, but we will get to see him later.”

Jim and Kris are grieving, but they’re doing exactly what Paul said and **grieving with hope**, comforted by the reality that they’ll be reunited w/ Brandan.

As I looked at the accounts of children being raised from the dead, I noticed something in most of them: children were graciously returned to their parents.

- **1 Kings 17:23** Elijah took the child and...**DELIVERED HIM TO HIS MOTHER.**
- **2 Kin 4:36** When [the mother] came to [Elisha], he said, “Pick up your son.”
- **Luke 7:15** The dead [child] sat up and began to speak, and Jesus **GAVE HIM TO HIS MOTHER.**

So we repeatedly see deceased children returned to their parents.

In this account with David it looks like David’s son was NOT returned to him.

But he would be!

And this is the hope all believing parents have with their believing children.

Is this going to happen physically in this life?

No. But it is going to happen in the next life.

If there’s one lesson I hope can most encourage you, it’s this one. While I don’t think it eases the pain or loss, I do think it provides great hope.

As I studied these verses this week, here’s what came to mind...

David was comforted at the thought of seeing his son. We can be comforted at the thought of seeing our believing loved ones again.

But how much more comforted should we be at the thought of seeing our Savior?

David had the great hope that he would see his son again, but how much greater is our hope that we’ll see Christ?

Titus 2:13 [We are] waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

This brings us to our last lesson...

LESSON 4: THE HOPE WE HAVE IN CHRIST COMBATS GRIEF.

Let me show you someone who had this hope during his grief. Please turn to **Job 19**.

Job had more reason to grieve than anyone in history. We talk about losing a child. He lost all his children...and everything...in one moment.

I want you to see how he encouraged himself. Look at **verse 25**...

**Job 19:25 For I know that my Redeemer lives,
And He shall stand at last on the earth;**

Job didn't see his Redeemer as some force or concept. He saw Him as a Person who would stand victoriously on the earth at the end of time.

This thought is where Job found hope. This is how he comforted himself.

Look what else he said...

**Job 19:26 And after my skin is destroyed, this I know,
That in my flesh I shall see God,
27a Whom I shall see for myself,
And my eyes shall behold, and not another.**

Job felt like God hid Himself from him...just like we might be tempted to feel when we're grieving.

He couldn't understand why God would treat him the way he was being treated...and we might feel the same way when we're grieving.

But at the same time, Job had confidence that God wouldn't stay hidden from him forever.

Notice what else Job said...

My skin will be destroyed

What did Job's skin look like?

Job 2:7 says he had **painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.**

But he also said, "**in my flesh I shall see God.**"

So which is it...is his skin destroyed or in his flesh does he see God?

It's both!

He expected his present, earthly body to be destroyed, but he expected to receive a new glorified body.

We read about this last week and Pastor Nathan talked about it at the celebration of life yesterday...

1 Corinthians 15:53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

And notice he said **I shall see God.**

He knew he would see God in this glorified body.

Look what this thought produced in **Job...**

Job 19:27b How my heart yearns within me!

Despite everything he experienced, this understanding seemed to be almost more than he could handle.

Job was probably experiencing more suffering than anyone has ever experienced, but he was able to have great hope b/c he knew he would see his Redeemer...and this hope combatted his grief.

This is the hope we have.

Yes, we're excited to see Brandan and other loves ones again, but our hearts should be overflowing at the thought of seeing our Redeemer again, face-to-face, in our glorified bodies.

Let's pray.