

Why Do The Innocent Suffer And Die?

2 Samuel 12:14-15

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 5-13-2013

Introduction

Most of us probably know some children who have died at a very early age, and it is easy to wonder why God allows children to suffer and dies. Last week William asked me if I would preach on this verse, and I thought his suggestion was a great idea because it is a question that keeps coming up. And with good reason. Every year it is estimated that somewhere around 10 million children die from causes such as birth defects, malnutrition, accidents, disease, SIDS, starvation, parental misuse of drugs, homicide, war, and quite a number of other causes. And when this happens, people wonder, 1) Why do children have to suffer for crimes they have never committed? 2) Why does God cut off a life at a very young age if every life is created for a purpose? People think, “It sure doesn’t seem like there is purpose!” 3) Why do children have to suffer pain that they cannot comprehend? 4) Why do infants have to suffer when it does not appear that they can possibly learn anything positive from the experience? And there are probably other questions that have troubled some of you from time to time, which we will not cover today, but which are definitely worth discussing.

I. The puzzles in this passage: five reasons that people are understandably troubled by God’s actions with David’s child.

A. *Why is an innocent child allowed to suffer?*

1. **Problem: The “deed” that God is concerned about was not the deed of the child.**

But today I want to look at five puzzling questions that jump out of this text. The first question comes from verse 14. It is clear in verse 14 that the child becomes ill and dies because of a deed that David did. God says, “**However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die.**” David’s deed resulted in the child’s death. The child was not guilty of that deed. So the question comes, “Why is an innocent child allowed to suffer?”

2. Inadequate answers:

I've heard Christians give a lot of unbiblical answers. Let me give you a couple of samples. Some people try to escape the moral dilemma by saying, "God *allows* children to suffer, but does not *cause* the suffering." It's typically Arminians who give this answer. They will often add the idea that if God *could* have prevented such suffering He *would*, but that if man is to be left with a free will, God must allow the fallout of a free-will-universe to happen as well as the blessings of a free will universe. There are many reasons why this is a foolish answer, but I won't waste your time giving you all those answers. You just need one: look at verse 15 says, "**The LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it became ill.**" You cannot take God off the hook of the moral dilemma by saying that He didn't do it. The text says that He *did* do it. And so we still have to answer the question, "Why?"

A similar answer that I have frequently heard is that God rarely interferes with His creation, and bad things happen to good people accidentally. But last week we saw that God foreordains all things that come to pass. There is no such thing as chance. And by the way, there is no hope or comfort in knowing that my child died by meaningless chance or because God's hands were tied. There is no hope or comfort in thinking that my child's death is a meaningless death. Only a good God who is also sovereign over everything could give meaning to everything.

3. Answer:

a) God permits us to be unsettled by this question (Ps 73), but ultimately He calls us to trust Him to do right (Ps 73:23-28; Rom. 9:20) and to focus on the "not yet" of God's justice (Ps. 73:17-20)

I will not claim that I have the perfect answer to this distressing question. In fact, I find it interesting that God wrote a Psalm that allows us to express how unsettled we are about the problem of pain. Psalm 73 is an inspired Psalm that allows us to ask this "why" question. "Why Lord. Why do you allow these things?" He wants us to be somewhat troubled by it and to realize that this world is not what it should be or what it eventually will be. That Psalm shows to me that not all is right in the world between the now and the not yet of judgment day. However, in Psalm 73, Asaph partially resolved these and other perplexing questions in two ways:

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First, he said that He learned by faith to trust God and to affirm that God was good and always did good even if He couldn't understand it. When he realized that he was a foolish beast in comparison to God's wisdom, he decided not to question God simply because the situation didn't make sense. Of course we can't understand everything – we are limited creatures with limited understanding. And there are many Scriptures that call us to have this kind of a trust for God's ways. Romans 9:20 says, **“Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, why have You made me thus?”** If we recognize the limits of our reasoning abilities, it helps us to trust God when He promises that everything He does is just and good. It's a stance of faith.

The second thing that helped Asaph to not be quite so troubled was the realization of the end result in eternity. He said, **“When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me – until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end.”** At the end of each of our lives, all wrongs will be righted. And this child was in a few days enjoying the glories of paradise. That doesn't make the situation on earth any less unsettling, but it helps us to face these puzzles a little bit better. So that is the first part of my answer under point A concerning the suffering of the innocent.

b) Though this child was indeed innocent of David's crime, ultimately there is no such thing as the “innocent” suffering (Ps. 14:1-7 [Rom 3:9-20]; 51:3; Jo 5;; Is. 48:8; etc)

The second part of my answer is not politically correct, but it is to observe that there really is no such thing as an innocent baby - at least not in an absolute sense. While this child was not guilty of David's crime - innocent in that sense, and we will look at that under puzzle #B, all humans are subject to death for two reasons: first, because of Adam's sin imputed to them and second, because of a child's sin nature that begins to be expressed even in the womb.

Psalm 14 is quoted by the apostle Paul as proving that every man, woman, and child is corrupt from conception and increasing in corruption as that child develops. According to Romans 3, every one of them is filled with the poison of asps. The Psalm that David wrote during his repentance in this chapter, Psalm 51, speaks of sin being present in our souls from the moment of conception. In other words, there is no innocent baby. Isaiah explains why

babies need God's salvation just as much as adults do – they are **“children given to corruption!”** (Is. 1:4). He tells adults, **“you were called a rebel from birth”** (Is. 48:8). They are not innocent; they are rebels. Psalm 58:3 says, **“The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.”** In an absolute sense, there is no such thing as an innocent who suffers - except for Jesus. Psalm 14 and Romans 3 says, **“They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one.”**

When I was at Covenant College there was a special series of lectures on Jonathan Edwards that was being given by John Gerstner. At one point in the lecture he gave a story about a lady who asked Jonathan Edwards if the little baby she was carrying was not a sweet, innocent, little angel. Edwards replied, “Madam. That is a little viper.” I don't think he won any Brownie points with his bluntness. Now at that point in the lecture Dr. Krabbendam raised his hand and said, “It may be true that infants are little vipers, but they are little vipers in covenantal diapers.” And that shows God's grace in calling our children to Himself and changing them from vipers into something else. A child is just as much in need of God's forgiveness, grace and salvation as an adult is. He may not have accumulated as many sins, but he still has a sin nature. And that's why I glory in the second half of this sermon – that God saves our children, often when they are still in the womb. But the Scriptures I have read show that apart from grace, even infants are vipers, vile, and filled with uncleanness. They are not innocent. And you don't have to be a parent very long to discover it.

The upshot is that Paul says in Romans 5 that death passed to even babies because of two things: Romans 5:14 says that death passed to babies (and you will have to look at John Murray's exegesis of that - death passed to babies) because of the legal imputation of Adam's sin, and secondly, because babies have their own sin nature that deserves death. And for those who object that it isn't fair for God to legally impute Adam's sin to babies, Paul's response is that you don't have salvation without imputation. If you think the imputation of sin is unfair, then the imputation of Christ's righteousness is unfair and therefore justification is unfair. Romans and 1 Corinthians both say that God imputes Christ's righteousness to us in exactly the same way that He imputes Adams sin to us. He does so immediately; not mediately, like Roman Catholics say, but immediate

imputation. So Adam's fall guarantees that death comes eventually to everyone and our own sin natures also guarantee the same death. The death of babies should not surprise us, even if it does trouble us.

B. Worse, why is a child suffering for his father's sins?

1. Problem: God explicitly commanded courts not to do the very thing that God seems to be doing. (cf. Deut. 24:16; Ezek. 18:4b,20)

But point B gives an even more troubling way of wording this question. It says, "Worse, why is a child suffering for his *father's* sins. After all, God explicitly commanded courts not to do the very thing that God seems to be doing." Atheists throw this objection in our faces all the time. And to understand why they object, let me read Deuteronomy 24:16, which atheists also quote. Many atheists know the Bible; just like Satan, they know how to quote it out of context.

Deuteronomy 24:16 "Fathers shall not be put to death for *their* children, nor shall children be put to death for *their* fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin.

Every court in the nation of Israel had to follow that principle of justice. And the objection is that God is being unjust if He puts anyone to death for the sins of Adam and He is unjust if He puts this child to death for the sin of David. And I think you can recognize that this is a fairly significant objection. Even though the child is not innocent of sin in an absolute sense, it is certainly innocent of David's sin and of David's crime. And yet, what does the text say? The word "**because**" in verse 14 shows that David's sin was the reason for the baby's premature death. Verse 15 shows that *God* struck the child. Verses 16 and following show David pleading with God for mercy that God would spare the child. And yet, despite David's repentance and prayers, the baby died on the seventh day.

2. Answer: Psalms 32,38,51; Psalm 73; Deut. 24 context;

And again, I don't have answers that will completely take away the unsettling sense of injustice in this. God *wants* us to feel unsettled, or He wouldn't have us singing Psalm 73. He *wants* us unsettled, or He wouldn't have written Psalms 32, 38, and 51, all of which agonize over the difficult providences that David was facing in this chapter. There is a sense in which these types of things make us long for and look forward to heaven, when all

will be sorted out, and our pains will be replaced with joy. Oswald Chambers rightly said,

Suffering is the heritage of the bad, of the penitent, and of the Son of God. Each one ends in the cross. The bad thief is crucified, the penitent thief is crucified, and the Son of God is crucified. By these signs we know the widespread heritage of suffering.

It is the upside-down-ness of our lives that makes the cross so important in history. The cross begins the reversal of paradise lost to paradise regained. And even though we are moving forward, we are not there yet.

But it still does not answer the question, “How can God violate His own law and still be just?” So let me make a stab at answering this question. First, I would say that Deuteronomy 24 and Ezekiel 18 are both dealing with human courts that can only address the issue of crimes. The Bible does not allow human courts to punish envy, gluttony, pride, drunkenness, and a host of other sins. Those are not crimes. They are off limits to magistrates. Human courts can only deal with a very limited set of sins that God has also made crimes, and even when it comes to crimes, the state can only punish people after giving numerous protections of the accused and checks and balances that protect against the sinful hearts of the courts and accusers. In fact, there are so many protections of the accused in Scripture, that in a Biblical court, many people could not be successfully prosecuted. And there is a good reason. Because God has committed the ministry justice to unjust people, He has to very severely circumscribe what actions a civil officer may engage in. It certainly isn't all the things that our state and federal governments are engaged in. They have way overstepped their lawful jurisdictions.

But here is the point - since God is perfectly just, perfectly omniscient, never makes mistakes, and is perfectly good, He does not have those same limitations. For example, He doesn't need two witnesses because He knows exactly what the truth is. God's courtroom of heaven has the right to deal not only with crimes, but also with all sins – sins of the heart and sins expressed. Jesus said that we will be judged for every idle word and every idle thought. Sin alone can never condemn a person to death in a human court, but it can in God's court. No human may put a baby to death - ever. Scripture is quite clear on that. But Scripture is just as clear that God's

justice goes far beyond the justice of any human court, and captures even the secret sins of the heart. So God is not unjust in putting the child to death. It is appointed unto man once to die and after this the judgment, says Heb. 9:27. So Deuteronomy 24:16 and Ezekiel 18:20 apply only to human courts and not to God. So we shouldn't be surprised by the death of the baby.

Second, as we will see under the second part of the sermon, there is not the slightest hint in the passage that God was punishing the baby for David's crime. He was punishing David for David's crime. And since all humans are destined to die, it should not seem strange for God to use such death for the additional purpose of disciplining David. The baby could have died justly with or without David's sin. In John 9 Jesus said that the man who was born blind was suffering for no one's sin, but only for God's glory. You don't have to find a specific sin for suffering. Well, if that is true, there would be nothing wrong with God adding an additional purpose for the baby's death, with that additional purpose being to discipline David. There should be no moral dilemma.

Third, as we will see, the baby was experiencing such joy and glory in heaven that it wouldn't have even entered that baby's mind that this was unjust. That baby was enjoying blessedness that it did not deserve. The baby was entering into its reward that was purchased by the death of Jesus, and while it was a tragedy from one perspective (the perspective of those left behind – and we don't want to minimize that), it was not a tragedy from the perspective of the baby. So I think that second objection can be answered, even if it still leaves us very legitimately unsettled.

C. How does giving a child a fatal disease (v. 15) stop the enemies of the Lord from blaspheming?

1. Problem: Wouldn't this cause unbelievers to blaspheme God even more?

But the third troubling question takes this a bit further. Verse 14 says,

2Samuel 12:14 However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die."

The death was necessary so that God's enemies did not blaspheme. And critics object that there is a whole lot more blaspheming going on by atheists today over God allowing this child to suffer than there would be if

everything had gone hunky dory. And so they mock this idea that the baby's death will keep pagans from blaspheming.

2. Answer: Gal. 6:7 with Psalm 38

But my reply is that God's concern over blaspheming has nothing whatsoever to do with God wanting pagans to think well of Him from their point of view. It's quite the opposite. He wants them to understand who He truly is – that He is not a God who is light on sin and who sweeps sins under the carpet. God wants them to know that He has ordained cause-and-effect Laws of Harvest that will come to pass, and as Galatians 6:7 words it, **“God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”**

So here is a better question - what *was* David reaping from his sin that is now manifested in this baby's life? The answer is found in one of the Psalms that David wrote as he was mourning for seven days in this chapter. It appears that David was afflicted with a horrible case of venereal disease and/or possibly some other horrible diseases. We aren't told if he caught the disease from Bathsheba or from an earlier wife, but it is pretty clear that the disease flared up as a direct result of his sin with Bathsheba. And let me read the whole Psalm to you. Psalm 38. And I'll begin with the title.

Psalms 38:0 A Psalm of David. To bring to remembrance.

This title shows the genuineness of David's humility. Remember that prior to this he didn't want his sins discovered let alone to be remembered; he was covering them. But now God has so humbled him that he was telling the whole public things that they would never have known. And he was writing it specifically so that it would be brought to remembrance. He was humbling himself in the eyes of God and man. Continuing from verse 1

Psalms 38:1 O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your wrath, nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure!

Psalms 38:2 For Your arrows pierce me deeply, and Your hand presses me down.

Psalms 38:3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger, nor any health in my bones because of my sin.

And I want you to notice that phrase, **“because of my sin.”** Though not all sickness is because of sin, this sickness was a direct result of his sin with Bathsheba. And Scripture indicates that there are many sicknesses that are a direct result of sin. When you get sick, don't just take medicine. ask God to open your eyes to see if your sickness is due to your sin. God had to eventually kill king Asa because he only went to doctors and didn't seek the

Lord for his sicknesses. It's one of the reasons why James say that when you have the elders anoint you with oil, make sure you first confess you sins to the elders just as David confessed his sins. And though we won't get into it this morning, I believe these open confessions and prayers led to David's complete healing. Continuing on in verse 4:

Psalms 38:4 For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.

Psalms 38:5 My wounds are foul *and* festering because of my foolishness. [The ESV translates that, "My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness."]

Psalms 38:6 I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.

Psalms 38:7 For my loins [and you know what loins are] are full of inflammation, and *there is* no soundness in my flesh.

Psalms 38:8 I am feeble and severely broken; I groan because of the turmoil of my heart.

Psalms 38:9 Lord, all my desire *is* before You; and my sighing is not hidden from You.

Psalms 38:10 My heart pants, my strength fails me; as for the light of my eyes, it also has gone from me.

Psalms 38:11 My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague, and my relatives stand afar off.

You can understand why his relatives and especially his wives didn't want to get too near to him. He was a mess. He was infectious. The whole room reeked with the smell, and most people think that the picture in your outlines has David way closer to the baby than he really was. If you take this Psalm seriously, he was asked by his family to gonto the other room. And the rest of the Psalm shows that. In any case, his wives and family were disgusted with David when they found out about his sin with Bathsheba. But his enemies took advantage of it as well. Verse 12:

Psalms 38:12 Those also who seek my life lay snares *for me*; those who seek my hurt speak of destruction, and plan deception all the day long.

So there were people who wanted to take advantage of this to get rid of David. And David felt like he couldn't respond, because even though they were saying things about him that weren't true, he deserved it in a sense. He deserved a lot worse. How could he complain about their untruths when the truth itself was so bad? So he says,

Psalms 38:13 But I, like a deaf *man*, do not hear; and *I am* like a mute *who* does not open his mouth.

Psalms 38:14 Thus I am like a man who does not hear, and in whose mouth *is* no response.

Psalms 38:15 For in You, O LORD, I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God.
Psalms 38:16 For I said, “Hear me, lest they rejoice over me, lest, when my foot slips, they exalt *themselves* against me.”
Psalms 38:17 For I *am* ready to fall, and my sorrow *is* continually before me.
Psalms 38:18 For I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my sin.
Psalms 38:19 But my enemies *are* vigorous, *and* they are strong; and those who hate me wrongfully have multiplied.
Psalms 38:20 Those also who render evil for good, they are my adversaries, because I follow *what is* good.

In other words, because I have done the right thing – I have confessed my sin rather than hiding it from my enemies. "Lord, I have done the right thing - I have confessed my sins, and my enemies are taking advantage of it." He goes on...

Psalms 38:21 Do not forsake me, O LORD; O my God, be not far from me!
Psalms 38:22 Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation!

Commentators point out that 2 Samuel 12 is the best place to place this Psalm. And how did this disease, which the baby apparently got too, keep God’s enemies from blaspheming? The answer is that when God’s enemies saw that God guarantees bad results from a one night stand, and He does so even for believers, it makes them realize that God is not mocked - that whatever a man sows that he will also reap. There are cause and effect laws that God has put in place that make it inevitable that parents on drugs will not only fry their own brains but produce babies with problems. God is not mocked; whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. It is in *that* way that God would forever prevent the blasphemy of those who claim that it doesn’t matter if you sin. One commentator said this,

He [David] had not thought of *that* when he so blithely sent his invitation to Bathsheba. He is thinking of that daily anguish now: “There is no soundness in my flesh because of Thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.”

Well might Paul write: “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without [outside] the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18). God has fearful weapons He can bring against the bodies of those who refuse to listen to Him in the matter of morality. There are some twenty different sexually transmitted diseases defined in modern medicine, every one of them marked by disgusting symptoms and several of them lead to horrifying complications such as blindness, brain damage, insanity, eye-infection, damage to skin, bones, liver, teeth, consequences to unborn children, and even death. With at least ten to fifteen million Americans being struck every year, with a new infection occurring every forty-five seconds, and with the annual

bill in America alone for these kinds of diseases running at over one billion dollars, it is no wonder that public health officials are at their wit's end.

Even if the immoral person somehow manages to evade disease, God has other weapons for those who break His laws. Some of them are psychological. The anguish they ultimately cause to the mind is no less real than the physical ravages in the body.

Now, there is forgiveness with God, as David discovered. However, before God showed him that, He allowed him to suffer: "There is no soundness in my flesh," David wailed, "because of Thine anger." ... That was the *consequence* of his sin.¹

D. Why does God's compassion for infants in Jonah 4:11 not seem to translate into compassion for the child here?

1. Problem: Jonah's actions brought about repentance, which in turn spared the city and the infants. Why did David's repentance and pleading for mercy for the child not accomplish the same thing? (cf. Jer. 18:7-8)

The fourth question is, "Why does God's compassion for infants in Jonah 4:11 not seem to translate into compassion for the child here?" And to further probe the problem, the objector can say, "Jonah's actions brought about repentance, which in turn spared the city and the infants. Why did David's repentance and pleading for mercy for the child not accomplish the same thing?" After all, does not Jeremiah 18:7-8 say

Jeremiah 18:7 The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it,

Jeremiah 18:8 if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.

2. Answer: Note context of Jer 18:6; see Roman numeral II

And I would answer, "Yes. That is God's normal way of dealing with nations. But you can't leave out verse 6. Verse 6 says,

Jeremiah 18:6 "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?" says the LORD. "Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel!

¹ John Phillips, *THE JOHN PHILLIPS COMMENTARY SERIES: Exploring Psalms*, (Accordance Software, 1988), pp. 291-291.

In other words, God is sovereign, and He has the right to do with us as He pleases. He has the right to give mercy, and He has the right to withhold it.

Secondly, I would say that Jonah implies that the children in that city would have died unless the nation had repented, and they would have died even though God cared about those children and thought that Jonah should care about the children too. It's an interesting verse to ponder when it comes to God's compassion for the children of unbelievers who want to abort their children. God does care, and like Jonah, He wants us to care about them. When we don't care about the prolife issue, we have the rebuke that God gave to Jonah.

Third, we will be seeing under Roman numeral II that God had incredible compassion for this child – the most compassion you could possibly have – giving the child a home in paradise for all eternity. Now, that is compassion. So I don't think the objection can stand.

E. How is any of this consistent with other declarations of God's love and tender care for our children?

1. Problem: Contrast God's treatment of this child and His treatment of children in Isaiah 40:11; Luke 17:2; Mark 10:16.

Just one more objection very quickly. How is any of this consistent with other declarations of God's love and tender care for our children? Let me read some of those declarations from the Scripture:

Isaiah 40:11 He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry *them* in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young.

Luke 17:1 Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe *to him* through whom they do come!

Luke 17:2 It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.

Mark 10:16 And He took them up in His arms, laid *His* hands on them, and blessed them.

2. Answer: see Luke 17:1-2; Roman numeral II

But even though Jesus expressed his care for infants in those passages, and even though God in those passages pronounces woes on Davids who do stupid things that will hurt those little children, those very passages still

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express the fact that children will suffer. In fact, Luke 17:1 says, “**It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come!**” There is no contradiction.

But since the biggest part of the answer is really Roman numeral II, let’s move on to the five reasons why this passage can be a tremendous encouragement to parents who have lost little ones due to their own fault or due to the fault of another person or through other causes.

II. The comforts of this passage: five reasons why this passage can be an encouragement to parents.

A. God disciplined the right person (cf. Ps 38. Though David felt sorry for the child, it would be the child who would feel sorry for David (cf. point E).

The first comfort is the reminder that God did indeed discipline the right person. It does indeed seem like the wicked get away with things when they abuse children, but eventually they do not. And Psalm 38 (which we have already read) shows over and over that David saw all of the things he was groaning over as a discipline in his own life. Even though David felt sorry for the child (and well he should), it would be the child who would feel sorry for David’s continued sufferings, because that child was forever free of all suffering after the seventh day. One commentator said, “Whatever the malady was that afflicted him [David] it was something foul, that filled his chambers with a nauseating stench.” And so when our children die, we can rest assured that the God of the universe does right. He always disciplines the right person eventually (it was some months before this discipline caught up with him) and eventually rewards the right person. Though we may not understand it, and though things may seem upside down, we can trust that God is doing right. And I think I have already spoken to that enough. David is disciplined and this child (after some suffering) is rewarded.

B. God is compassionate and caring. Note that God Himself moved David to have deep sorrow over his sins and over his son’s sickness (Ps. 32; 51). The inspired Psalms show that God had sympathy for both David and the child. (cf. Ex. 34:6-7)

I’ve also already spoken to point B. But the Psalms written during this time show that God knows how to bring compassion and healing to parents whose children suffer because of the parent’s sins. Those who have had

abortions have often found tremendous release by confessing Psalms 32 and 51. Both Psalms help a parent to resolve the enormous guilt, regret, pain, and suffering that they feel, and to move on to ministering to others who are experiencing post-abortion trauma. Some of the best post-abortion trauma counselors are women who have suffered from post-abortion trauma themselves. Psalm 51 says,

Psalms 51:12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. [And notice this next significant phrase:]

Psalms 51:13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.

We will never know all the reasons why God allowed David to lose his child. But one of them is listed here. His experience has enabled countless post-abortion trauma mothers to find restored joy and comfort in the Lord. He did indeed teach transgressors God's ways and lead them to conversion and healing, and his writing continues to do it. He goes on in that Psalm to say,

Psalms 51:14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.

Psalms 51:15 O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise.

God didn't give David release by making his sin look less evil, and we do an injustice to women who have aborted their babies by making them out to be purely victims and the doctors the evil ones. You don't bring healing by minimizing the guilt. Men and women who have asked Joabs to kill their babies have found release by confessing: **"Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness."** By the way, it is not just women who suffer post-abortion trauma. They may suffer the worst, but men do too. And I have a book that a pastor friend wrote that is designed to help men process through that.

But, back to the Psalm - really, the whole Psalm is so grace oriented that it enables people like Saul of Tarsus to be able to move on and make something of their lives even though Saul killed many Christians. That Psalm has brought not only comfort, but kept Christians from being chained down by their awful past. David's experience has enabled countless Christians to cut those chains and to move forward. It's a Psalm that shows that God is indeed compassionate and caring. God was not only moved by

David's deep sorrow, but was also moved by the sickness and the death of the child. And the Psalms that God inspired prove it.

C. God gave permission to grieve and to ask for mercy. It was OK for David to pray in verses 15-23 (see Ps. 6,32,38, 51; cf. Jer. 18:5-8). These Scriptures show that God does not want us to be passive when facing troubles.

The third comfort brought by this passage is that David's pleas for mercy in verses 15-23 are authorized by God Himself through the Psalms that exemplified this grieving. Psalms 6,32,38, and 51 all show that we should not be fatalistic when it looks like our child may be suffering because of our sins. God can reverse such a child's sickness - even miraculously. And I'm not sure about it yet, but I may preach on this point more next week, Lord willing (while giving a lesson on aggressive prayer), but for now, I will just read verse 22:

2Samuel 12:22 And he said, "While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell *whether* the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?'

And the inspired Psalms show that this was not an empty hope. God gives permission to grieve and permission to ask that the discipline may be removed. And Jeremiah 18:5-8 indicates that most frequently God does do exactly that. Though he is the potter who can do whatever He wants with the clay, He is also a compassionate God who says this in Exodus 34:

Exodus 34:6 And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,

Exodus 34:7 keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

So even though children can suffer to the third and fourth generation for the sins of parents, God's mercy is such that He causes His compassion and mercy to go to a thousand generations. The very giving of God's Psalms during the period of this chapter shows me God's great compassion.

D. God is a covenant keeper. God declared His covenant mercies concerning the child (Ps. 103:13,17-18), and therefore the death is no indication that the child was not in the covenant (cf. 1 Cor. 7:14).

The fourth comfort that I have is that God declared His covenant mercies concerning the child in Psalm 103, also written during this time. God said,

Psalms 103:13 As a father pities *his* children, *So* the LORD pities those who fear Him.

Psalms 103:17 But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting On those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children,

Psalms 103:18 To such as keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them.

To me this means that the death of the child does not at all mean that the child was not in covenant. 1 Corinthians 7:14 indicates that even if there is one believing parent, God sets the child apart from the world and claims that child for Himself. This means that He is even more compassionate toward the children of believers. Now, if you have questions about the dead children of unbelievers, I have a couple passages that give some hope, but I can only say for sure what the Bible says about covenant children. God claims such children for Himself. As to other children, I just leave their destiny in the hands of a God whom I can trust. I don't need to know. I don't see enough information in the Bible to make a definitive case one way or the other.

E. God receives our dying infants into paradise. God saved this covenant child, even before the sign of the covenant could be applied to him (v. 23; compare Luke 1:15,41,44; Jer. 1:5; Ps. 22:9,10; 1 Kings 14:13; also see Luke 18:15,16; Matt 18:10; 25:40,45; etc.) and therefore it is certain that angels took the child to paradise glory sooner than most elect get to go there, free of all sufferings (cf. Luke 16:22,25). Of this, David was confident (v. 23).

And that God did take this child to Himself in this chapter can be seen by David's confidence in verse 23. And this is point E.

2Samuel 12:23 But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”

"I shall go to him." David had a total confidence that he would meet his son in the afterlife. And I believe it was a well-grounded confidence. I have listed several Scriptures in your outline that show to me that God's general pattern was to regenerate our covenant children in the womb, so that they never know a time when they do not know and love God.

Luke 1:15 is God's declaration that John the Baptist would be filled with the Holy Spirit from His mother's womb, and verses 41 and 45 show John leaping for joy when in the presence of Jesus – in his mother's womb. Jeremiah 1:5 speaks of Jeremiah being set apart to God from within the womb. In Psalm 22 David says to God,

Psalms 22:9 But You *are* He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust *while* on My mother's breasts.

Psalms 22:10 I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother's womb You *have been* My God.

These are the kinds of Scriptures that have been so encouraging to parents. They have shown parents that God claims our children very early. 1 Kings 13:13 speaks of another child who died in infancy (interestingly both parents were in the covenant but were unbelievers), and yet God declares that child's heart to be regenerate - to have good in it. Luke 18 declares the children and infants that came to him to be in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 18:10 declares that each of the covenant children had an angel assigned to them. In Matthew 25:4-45 Jesus claims such a close relationship with our little children that He calls them His brothers, and says that everything done "**to one of the least of these My brethren, you did to Me.**" And this makes me absolutely certain that just as angels carried the soul of Lazarus to paradise to enjoy his reward and everlasting joy in God's presence, God sent angels to carry David's child to that same paradise. And if that is true, we should focus more on the richness of God's graces and mercies to our suffering children than we should on things we do not know or understand.

Conclusion – Ex. 34:6-7

What we do know beyond any shadow of a doubt is that God loves us, and I want to end with reading Exodus 34:6-7 one more time.

Exodus 34:6 And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,

Exodus 34:7 keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...”

Let's rest our faith on that solid foundation. Amen. Let's pray.

TOC \n \p " " \t "Heading 1,4,Heading 2,5,Heading 3,6,Heading 4,7,Heading 5,8,Heading 6,9,Title,1,Author/Date,2,Introduction/Conclusion,3" **Why Do The Innocent Suffer And Die?**

2 Samuel 12:14-15

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 5-12-2013

Introduction

I. **The puzzles in this passage:** five reasons that people are understandably troubled by God's actions with David's child.

A. **Why is an innocent child allowed to suffer?**

1. Problem: The "deed" that God is concerned about was not the deed of the child.
2. Inadequate answers:
3. Answer:
 - a) God permits us to be unsettled by this question (Ps 73), but ultimately He calls us to trust Him to do right (Ps 73:23-28; Rom. 9:20) and to focus on the "not yet" of God's justice (Ps. 73:17-20)
 - b) Though this child was indeed innocent of David's crime, ultimately there is no such thing as the "innocent" suffering (Ps. 14:1-7 [Rom 3:9-20]; 51:3; Jo 5;; Is. 48:8; etc)

B. **Worse, why is a child suffering for his father's sins?**

1. Problem: God explicitly commanded courts not to do the very thing that God seems to be doing. (cf. Deut. 24:16; Ezek. 18:4b,20)
2. Answer: Psalms 32,38,51; Psalm 73; Deut. 24 context

C. **How does giving a child a fatal disease (v. 15) stop the enemies of the Lord from blaspheming?**

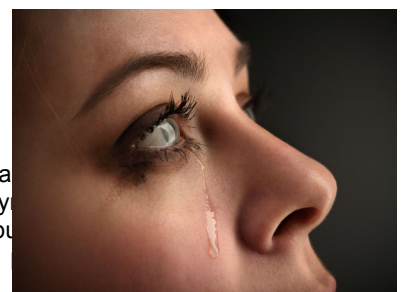
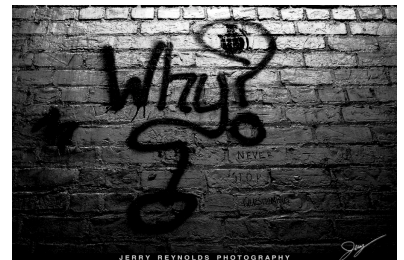
1. Problem: Wouldn't this cause unbelievers to blaspheme God even more?
2. Answer: Gal. 6:7 with Psalm 38

D. **Why does God's compassion for infants in Jonah 4:11 not seem to translate into compassion for the child here?**

1. Problem: Jonah's actions brought about repentance, which in turn spared the city and the infants. Why did David's repentance and pleading for mercy for the child not accomplish the same thing? (cf. Jer. 18:7-8)
2. Answer: Note context of Jer 18:6; see Roman numeral II

E. **How is any of this consistent with other declarations of God's love and tender care for our children?**

1. Problem: Contrast God's treatment of this child and His treatment of children in Isaiah 40:11; Luke 17:2; Mark 10:16.
2. Answer: see Luke 17:1-2; Roman numeral II



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- II. **The comforts of this passage:** five reasons why this passage can be an encouragement to parents.
- A. **A perfectly just and good God disciplined the right person** (cf. Ps 38. Though David felt sorry for the child, it would be the child who would feel sorry for David (cf. point E).
- B. **God is compassionate and caring.** Note that God Himself moved David to have deep sorrow over his sins and over his son's sickness (Ps. 32; 51). The inspired Psalms show that God had sympathy for both David and the child. (cf. Ex. 34:6-7)
- C. **God gave permission to grieve and to ask for mercy.** It was OK for David to pray in verses 15-23 (see Ps. 6,32,38, 51; cf. Jer. 18:5-8). These Scriptures show that God does not want us to be passive when facing troubles.
- D. **God is a covenant keeper.** God declared His covenant mercies concerning the child (Ps. 103:13,17-18), and therefore the death is no indication that the child was not in the covenant (cf. 1 Cor. 7:14).
- E. **God receives our dying infants into paradise.** God saved this covenant child, even before the sign of the covenant could be applied to him (v. 23; compare Luke 1:15,41,44; Jer. 1:5; Ps. 22:9,10; 1 Kings 14:13; also see Luke 18:15,16; Matt 18:10; 25:40,45; etc.) and therefore it is certain that angels took the child to paradise glory sooner than most elect get to go there, free of all sufferings (cf. Luke 16:22,25). Of this, David was confident (v. 23).

Conclusion – Ex. 34:6-7

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