

THE DISCERNER



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“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.”

Ephesians 5:6-12 (NAS)

Does 2 Samuel 12:23 Mean All Infants and Children Are Automatically Saved at Death?

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Does 2 Samuel 12:23 Mean All Infants and Children Are Automatically Saved at Death?

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INTRODUCTION

This is a study which seeks to provide a Biblical approach to understanding 2 Samuel 12:23. I have addressed the subject of the verse from the Biblical position of the absolute sovereignty of God, and the total depravity of man. However, this study is not intended to examine the fundamental doctrines of God's sovereignty and man's depravity. I encourage those who do not see God's sovereignty as absolute and man's depravity as total to reevaluate their position in the light of the complete counsel of Scripture. I give the same exhortation to anyone who is under the false impression that God's sovereignty in anyway excuses man's responsibility either to witness to or raise children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, teaching them the Word of God (Ephesians 6:4; Deuteronomy 6:4-7; 29:29).

The death of infants and small children is by all means a very sensitive subject, but even more sensitive than their physical death is the subject of their salvation. For this reason, in addition to providing a biblical approach to 2 Samuel 12:23 I have also addressed in this issue the necessity of basing one's comfort on the **full counsel** of Scripture. Only when one begins to see God as He is presented in the pages of Scripture, High and lifted up, will he or she truly be comforted. Until one believes God is sovereign over everything, from the smallest thing, to the greatest, any belief or claim to the truth of Romans 8:28 is unjustifiable. For how can He cause all things to work together for good to those who love Him if He does not **work all things** after the counsel of His will?

CHAPTER 1

Is It Scriptural?

"But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me." 2 Samuel 12:23 (NAS)

The context of this verse is that of the death of David and Bathsheba's first son. Verse 15 says the Lord struck the child so that he was very sick. On the seventh day (verse 18) the child died. David, having seen the servants whispering together, perceived that the child was dead. After confirming his suspicion, he rose from the ground, washed, anointed himself, changed his clothes, and he went into the house of the Lord and worshipped. Following this, he returned to his own house, and at his request he was served food, and he ate.

David's servants, perplexed over his grief prior to the death of the child and now seeing him calm asked for an explanation of his behavior. He explained his fasting and weeping before the death of the child as an attempt to receive God's favor (Hebrew "chanan" meaning "gracious") for the life of the child. Verse 23 begins with *"But he has died..."* David found no grace in regard to the child being saved from physical death.

Oh, how directly the truth which God initially spoke to Moses in Exodus 33:19, is demonstrated in the life of David.

And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."

In Exodus 33:19 the word translated "gracious" is exactly the same word translated "gracious" in 2 Samuel 2:22.

Second Samuel 12:23 is often used to explain that at death an infant goes into the presence of the Lord and thus, is saved because he or she was not given an opportunity to choose God. While on the surface this thought may seem comforting, one must ask, “**Is it Scriptural?**”

The clear teaching of New Testament verses such as John 15:16 reveals it is God who chooses man, instead of man choosing God. The Bible reveals that it is God who is sovereign. He is the potter. Man is the clay.

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you...”

John 15:16 (KJV)

The New Testament sheds extensive light on the doctrine of election. Passages such as John 1:12-13; 6:37, 39, 44, 65; 10:1-18; Romans 9; Ephesians 1:4-6; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:1-2 and many others reveal that salvation is of the Lord.

God does not base His choice on any merit in man or any action having to do with man’s life. As Jonah 2:9 says, “**Salvation is of the Lord.**”

The teaching that says **all** infants who die go to heaven is faulty for at least four reasons:

1. It ignores the biblical doctrine of original sin.

Instead of referring directly to the first sin of Adam and Eve, the doctrine of *original sin* refers chiefly to the result of that first sin, the moral corruption of all humanity. Adam, as the federal head of all of mankind, represented all of mankind in the fall and as a result of his sin all of his descendants, which encompasses the entire human race (Acts 17:26), were corrupted. The Bible says in Adam all die (1 Corinthians 15:22). Death reveals sin’s (corruption’s) presence (Romans 5:14, 17). The very fact that the infant or child dies demonstrates the presence of sin, for it is

written in Romans 6:23, “*The wages of sin is death...*” Also examine Romans 5:12:

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned--
(NAS)

The automatic salvation of the infant or young child that dies ignores original sin, claiming that the child is in a kind of state of innocence.⁴ Innocence, in this case meaning an absence of sin. The Bible gives us clear teaching that sin is present even in infancy (Gen. 5:3; 8:21; Job 14:4; 15:14-16; Psalm 51:5; 58:3; John 3:6; 1 Corin 15:46).

2. It ignores the doctrine of the total depravity of man.

The total depravity of man addresses the extent of the corruption of original sin. The extent of the corruption encompasses the total person rendering each person unwilling and unable to do that which is pleasing to God. Furthermore, from infancy to adulthood there is no merit in the natural man which commends a person to God in any way. Man is therefore, said to be totally depraved. Viewing all infants at death as saved ignores this truth and propagates the ideal that something in infancy commends people to God.

3. It indirectly makes God’s grace subject to the condition of man.

If infants are automatically saved at death, and salvation is only from the Lord, then God is obligated to save all infants at death. This denies the sovereignty of God for He says He will have mercy on whom He will and He will have compassion on whom He will (Rm. 9:15). It is clear from Scripture that God has not chosen to save all infants and He is just in this (Romans 9:10-14). Because grace is unmerited favor, those who believe that infants and young children who die are automatically covered by grace contradict the

definition of grace (unmerited favor) in that they believe infant death merits God's grace.

4. It twists the doctrine of the atonement of Christ into a bizarre form of universalism.

Since all forgiveness and salvation are predicated upon the atoning death of Jesus, the salvation of all infants who die would be a form of universalism inclusive of all infants. The Scripture nowhere teaches that the atonement of Christ is universal. The atonement is only effective in saving the elect (chosen).

The view of automatic infant salvation also leads one to believe that for a period of time (from conception to whenever the mysterious age of accountability is) everyone is under grace. At some point they fall from grace and become alienated from God. This also, is unbiblical for it says that man is initially saved (sin atoned for) and then as he approaches adulthood, loses that salvation (un-atoned for) through sin. The Scripture says that that which is first is natural, then the spiritual (1 Corinthians 15:46).

Chapter 2

David's Response Is Our Lesson

Following the examination of David's life we will in the next chapter examine an alternative and more Biblical approach to understanding verse 23. For now, in the light of the facts of Chapter One it should be evident that the death of an infant or the death of a young child in no way guarantees their entrance into heaven. I know first hand that this statement may sadden or even anger those who have built their hope on the teaching which says infancy guarantees salvation if death occurs. Such emotions lead many to discard the fact that an infant's death does not guarantee salvation. They perceive the fact as untrue, and therefore unbiblical. In the light of the verses mentioned above and many others, the decision to dismiss this teaching as untrue involves neglecting the clear teaching of Scripture.

The real reason many accept the automatic salvation of all infants at death is because of their own pursuit of comfort. In the pursuit of comfort, truth is often sacrificed. When this happens one's spiritual life begins to be built on false hopes. Inevitably the truth of Scripture is brought to bear on such hopes and they are toppled. This may cause the Believer to doubt Scripture and not realize that it is his or her own understanding they should doubt, not the validity of Scripture. Instead of pursuing comfort at the expense of truth, the Believer should pursue truth, and as a result be comforted.

As already mentioned, the truth which God initially spoke to Moses in Exodus 33:19 was demonstrated in the life of David through the death of his child. Examining David's response provides us with insight as to how we, as Believers can and should deal with such an event or for that matter any tragedy we may encounter, and thereby find hope.

In David's own words, he sought God's grace (v. 22). However, he did not receive grace in the form of his son living, but justice. Knowing that God is just in all that He does (Psalm 37:28), David responded to God accordingly. His response serves as a powerful example to us of our responsibility to see and accept God as He is. In so doing we pursue truth and as was David, we will be comforted, and enabled to comfort others.

For simplicity David's response to the child's death is divided into three groups followed by the fulfillment of God's promise to David. Pay close attention to the actions of David in each group.

1. Acceptance of God's Judgment

- He arose from the ground.
- He washed himself.
- He anointed himself.
- He changed his clothes.

2. Worship of God

- He went into the house of the Lord and worshipped.

3. Comfort of God's Mercy

- He returned to his own house and he ate.
- He answered the questioning servants.
- He comforted his wife.

Fulfillment of God's Promise

- They had Solomon, whom the Lord loved.

1. Acceptance of God's justice.

In verse 14 God informed David, through Nathan, that because of his sin and the occasion it gave the enemies of God to blaspheme, the child would die. This was God's just judgment. In verse 15 we are informed that God struck the child with sickness. David, already aware of God's judgment in verse 16 (the child would die) began to seek God's grace (cf. v. 22). He continued this for seven days.

Then on the seventh day the child died (v. 18). God's answer to David was clear, and direct. Having confirmed the child's death verse 20 opens with this amazing phrase, "*So David arose from the ground...*" God had spoken. His just sentence was death because of sin, and now in justice it was carried out. David's immediate response was **not** to question God's judgment. He was not bewildered by its execution. The text indicates that David knew exactly what to do in response to God's justice. He prepared himself to worship God! He did not remain in his misery. He did not desire to approach God in his uncleanness, this would have demonstrated a disagreement with God's justice. Instead, he cleaned himself up, thus signifying his acceptance of God's judgment.

David's acceptance of God's justice provides us with an inspired example of what our attitude should be regarding two of the

questions Paul obviously expected as he spoke on the doctrine of election.

"What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!" Romans 9:14

"You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" Romans 9:19

David's actions demonstrated that God is just in all that He does, and that he was no one to talk back to God (Romans 9:20-21).

2. Worship of God.

Notice that in addition to accepting God's justice, David continued in his relationship with God. Having prepared himself, he went into the house of the Lord and worshipped. This not only demonstrated that he had accepted God's justice, but that he continued in his relationship with God. David knew that in God's presence there is fullness of joy, and at His right hand there are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11).

All through our lives we encounter things which God moves into our paths that at times seem beyond our ability to fully comprehend. Along with those things we do not understand for the moment, there are those we, while in this life anyway, will never comprehend. The answer for dealing with both is not to withdraw from God Who is all knowing, nor should we change His nature for the sake of our comfort, but all the more we should seek Him as He is.

David himself said, as he considered the workings of God in his life "*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain to it.*" (Ps. 139:6). Did David, because of such wonder, write off God and His ways, adopting an attitude of, "Why bother?" No. He closed Psalm 139, in which he had written of God's wonderful knowledge with:

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any

hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way."

Psalm 139:23-24

In Psalm 73, Asaph said that as he pondered to understand the prosperity of the wicked, as compared to his own misery, it was troublesome to him. It was not until he went into the sanctuary of God that he perceived their end (vv. 16-17).

To have some understanding of God's justice then we must know God more fully. To know God more fully one must worship Him as He is. In order to do this, one must enter the sanctuary of His Word. Then he/she will discern righteousness and justice and equity and every good course (Proverbs 2:9).

*"My son, if you will receive my sayings, and treasure my commandments within you, Make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding; For if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will discern the fear of the LORD, and discover the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, Guarding the paths of justice, and He preserves the way of His godly ones. Then you will discern righteousness and **justice and equity and every good course.**" Proverbs 2:1-9*

The immediate response to trial should not be to withdraw from God, but a discipline to seek Him all the more.

3. Comfort of God's justice.

David's actions following worship indicate a profound sense of comfort. The Scripture informs us that he did three things:

- He returned to his own house and he ate

- He answered the questioning servants
- He comforted his wife

While praying for the child, David would not eat with his servants (v. 17). In their request to David, they indicated that during the time of his prayer David was fasting (v. 21). Following the child's death and having worshipped, David returned home, requested food and ate, all to the surprise of the servants. Their question indicates that a dramatic transition had taken place with the king, "*What is this thing that you have done?*" David had gone from weeping and fasting in prayer (so much that his servants thought that upon hearing of the death of the child he may do himself harm v. 18), to eating and being of right mind (ability to answer questioning servants).

Then in verse 24 we read that David comforted his wife Bathsheba. It was evident that David was comforted and thus was enabled to comfort his wife.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*" While God withheld His grace from David regarding the life of the child, He blessed him with mercy comforting him and thus enabling him to comfort his wife.

David's loss was real and his misery grievous. **Suffering should not be minimized, but at the same time it must be held in check with the truth of God's Word.** Because of his sin David was disciplined by God. It brought sorrow into his life and heart.¹ Afterwards it brought the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Compare Hebrews 12:11).

The Fulfillment of God's Promise

"When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his

kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you.”

2 Samuel 7:12-15

What a praise it is to be reminded of God’s promises when we are in the midst of His discipline! This is exactly what God did. Not only was Solomon’s birth a reminder of God’s earlier promise (2 Samuel 7:12-15), it was also a fulfillment of that promise. In 2 Samuel 12:24-25 God blessed David and Bathsheba with Solomon. Notice what the Scripture says of Solomon, “*Now the Lord loved him...*” (v. 25). God loved him and sent word to David through Nathan the prophet, and he named the child Jedidiah for the Lord’s sake. The meaning of the name is “beloved of the Lord” (v. 25). The name given to Solomon by Nathan was significant indicating to David this son was the fulfillment of God’s promise.

In 2 Samuel 7 God told David that He would raise up this son (Solomon) and establish his kingdom (v12). In verses 14 and 15 of the same chapter God informed David of something rather amazing! Examine the following verses closely:

"I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took {it} away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. (NAS)

What an amazing promise, “*My lovingkindness shall not depart from him...*” And at the same time what an amazing testimony to the fact that God will have mercy on whom He has mercy and He will have compassion on whom He has compassion (Romans

9:15). Solomon was the son of God's promise to David as opposed to the son of David's sin.

Do not allow your mind to think for a moment that there was any merit in Solomon which moved God to love him. The sins of Solomon were great, too numerous to mention at this time. Nevertheless, God loved him. Why? The Bible tells us in the New Testament that God is love (1 John 4:7). It is His nature to love. It is His prerogative to set His love and mercy on whom He will. Why He sets His redeeming love and mercy on some and not on others is a question no man can answer, but one thing we can be sure of, it is not in any way because of any merit in man. God's love for Solomon did not excuse his sins. As the text says, God disciplined him.

CHAPTER 3

Biblical Meanings

The context of 2 Samuel 12:23 is not attempting to teach us that children or infants who die automatically go to heaven. The message this section of Scripture is conveying is that of God's justice in dealing with sin, David's repentance, and acceptance of God's justice regarding the death of his first child with Bethsheba. In addition to these, God's mercy is demonstrated through the birth of Solomon.

Concluding from 2 Samuel 12:23 that all young children or infants who die go into heaven is faulty. It is never wise to lift a verse out of its context and construct an entire doctrine on what could be considered (once lifted from its context) an obscure passage of Scripture. Verses in the Bible that appear to be ambiguous must always be interpreted in the light of those passages which are clear. Verses such as the one before us should never be used to support beliefs that are contrary to the over-all clear teaching of Scripture.

An important point when considering the biblical meaning 2 Samuel 12:23 is whether or not David's statement was the result of his being **informed** or **uninformed**. Did David make the statement in verse 23 based on information he had at his disposal or did he simply make the statement in ignorance because of the grief he was experiencing?

Uninformed Position

If one believes David made the statement in ignorance then it would be foolish to attempt to construct a doctrine with such information. The assumption would be something like this--- David ignorantly made an off-handed statement, the Holy Spirit inspired someone to record it, as He did the sins and foolish acts of others. If ignorance was the basis for this statement then we as well as David do not know the fate of the child.

Someone might argue that it is possible to state in ignorance that which is true, or that which becomes true. While this is certainly possible, (most of us have done this at one time or another) stock should not be taken in such statements until they are confirmed. Often, a sigh of relief is experienced when it is realized from an informed source that a comment made in ignorance is indeed correct. Real confidence does not rest on feelings or ignorance but exclusively upon truth.

If David's statement was uninformed then we must go to an informed source to determine if in ignorance he spoke the truth. As mentioned in Chapter One, **informative** passages such as John 1:12-13; 6:37, 39, 44, 65; 10:1-18; Romans 9; Ephesians 1:4-6; 1 Peter 1:1-2 and others reveal that salvation is solely of the Lord, according to His divine will and purpose. Hence, the informed source reveals that David's statement, if it was made in ignorance was indeed ignorant and untrue.

Informed Position

I believe the statement in verse twenty-three along with the instant change in behavior indicate that David did indeed act from

an informed position. The following explanations demonstrate two informed positions which interpret David's comment in such a way that the over-all message of God's sovereignty as revealed in Scripture is not contradicted.

I. Common Hebrew Belief

When David said the child would not come to him but he would go to the child, he could have simply meant-- he too would eventually die and go to the child in the grave. This was a common view for the Hebrews at the time, thus indicating to us that David's statement was **informed**. Observing the last words of David before his death, as he charged Solomon, suggests this could have been all that David had in mind in 2 Samuel 12:23.

"As David's time to die drew near, he charged Solomon his son, saying, 'I am going the way of all the earth. Be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man.'" I Kings 2:1-2

This should not be strange to us as we have a similar practice today. Some purchase family plots at a designated cemetery and speak of being "laid to rest" **with** other members of their family.

II. Evidence of Faith Existing in an Older Child

If David believed that this child was indeed saved then his belief must have been based on something evident in the child's life. Two factors from Scripture indicate that the child was older than that of an infant, thus enabling David to distinguish the presence of faith in God on the part of the child.

1. Hebrew Meanings of the Words referring to the Child

Traditionally we have understood the words referring to the child in 2 Samuel 12 as pertaining to an infant, but a study of the same Hebrew words used elsewhere reveals that they do not always refer to an infant. For instance the Hebrew word "naar" in verse 16 used to describe the child, could indicate the child was considerably older than that of an infant, possibly a lad.

Three Hebrew words are used in this section of Scripture to describe the child.

1) “ben” 12:14. This word designates the child as a son as opposed to a daughter and can refer to any age.

2) “yeled” verses 15, 18, 19, 21,& 22. This word can refer to any age child from infancy to adulthood. In Exodus 2:3-9 it refers to the infant Moses, who at that time was not yet weaned. It describes the four Hebrew youths in Daniel 1:4, and 1:17. The word is translated “young men” in 2 Chronicles 10:8.

3) “na ar” in verse 16 is used to refer to Moses while he was an infant in Exodus 2:6 and David when he fought Goliath in 1 Samuel 17:33, 42, 55, 58. Most often this word is used to refer to a lad (young boy) as opposed to an infant.

2. Order of Solomon’s Birth

Further substantiating that the child was older than that of an infant are the verses which indicate Solomon was not the second son of David and Bathsheba. Although the present text seems to imply that Solomon was conceived and was born as the second son, 1 Chronicles 3:5; 2 Samuel 5:14; 1 Chronicles 14:4 shed additional light regarding the order of Solomon’s birth.

"And these were born to him in Jerusalem: Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon, four, by Bath-shua the daughter of Ammiel..." 1 Chronicles 3:5

"And these are the names of the children born {to him} in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon..." 1 Chronicles 14:4

"Meanwhile David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, after he came from Hebron; and more sons and daughters were born to David. Now these are the names of those who were born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon..." 2 Samuel 5:13-14

From these verses we see that David and Bathsheba had at least four children, Solomon being the youngest of the four. It stands to reason from verse twenty-four of 2 Samuel 12 that the conception of Solomon occurred following the death of the son conceived out of wedlock. This would have made the child which died considerably older than that of an infant, having at least 2 (possibly 3 if Shammua was not the son that died) younger brothers between Solomon.

Many assume that the child's death occurring on the seventh day (2 Samuel 12:18) indicates that the child was only seven days old. However, verse 18 could also refer to the seventh day of the week, or most likely the seventh day from the day in which the child became sick (verse 15).

Because the child was older David was able to distinguish the characteristic of faith in the child, and based his statement on the presence of that faith.

Conclusion

Whether David simply meant that he too would one day go to the grave or made the statement in the light of what he perceived as faith existing in the child, neither 2 Samuel 12:23 nor its context substantiates the teaching that all infants and small children who die go to heaven. As demonstrated in this chapter, interpretations exist for this passage of Scripture which are much more biblically consistent with the over-all teaching of Scripture. These are also consistent with the guideline of interpreting Scripture with Scripture.

CHAPTER 4

Compromise for Comfort, A Dangerous Conclusion

You may be thinking at this point that if you were to believe the things which I have pointed out to you from the Word of God you would lose your comfort. On the contrary, if what you thought you

experienced as comfort was not based on God's truth then it was not biblical comfort. How ever real your comfort may seem to you, if it does not have as its foundation the complete support of Scripture it is not genuine comfort. You are building on the sand. Your trust is either in the vain philosophies of men or in an experience. In either case, you are being deceived and until your thought is brought into submission to the whole of God's Word, you really have little confidence.

God's desire for you is that your trust be in Him and the truth of His Word. If it is, then you will not be shaken (Psalm 112:6-7). The salvation of infants and children who die is a very important subject to Believers, and it should be. For this very reason we should seek to understand the subject in the light of God's truth. He alone is the authority on such matters. Unfortunately many do not want to consider the matter in the light of truth, but rather, in the light of their feelings. **It could be said of them that they want comfort at the expense of truth.**

One of the greatest dangers of seeking comfort at the expense of truth is that it leads to an entire system of un-biblical theology, a system which actually changes the way a person perceives God. Consequently, the individual ends up believing in a god that exists only in his or her imagination. Inevitably one will reap the drastic consequences of such belief (Psalm 50:21-22),

"These things you have done, and I kept silence; you thought that I was just like you; I will reprove you, and state {the case} in order before your eyes. Now consider this, you who forget God, lest I tear {you} in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

We are warned in Ephesians 4:27 not to give the devil an opportunity. Once given room Satan will not be content until he has completely changed a person's perception of God. Often he accomplishes this act without the individual even being aware of

his work. Meticulously and methodically he works his scheme (Ephesians 6:10-11) eventually leading a person to weigh his perception of God not against the Word of God itself, but against his own feelings.

It is not uncommon for Satan to approach the Believer at his or her weakest and most grievous times of life. Consider Job's temptation. After losing all of his children, and virtually every possession, then when Job himself had been taken to the very gate of death, Satan employed what was possibly the only source of human encouragement and companionship left for Job-- Job's own wife.

She too had lost all of her children and possessions and now it looked as if she would lose her husband. Somewhere in the midst of all she had experienced, both good and bad Satan had influenced her perception of God, and now possibly seeking her own comfort (walking after the flesh) from the agony of seeing her husband suffer, and wanting to rid him of the torment, she considers God as one worthy of a curse. "*Curse God and die!*" were her words. Oh, but in the midst of all his suffering, in what could be considered Job's most vulnerable moment he would not change his view of the sovereign God! Listen to his words as they echoed from a heart bombarded by agony, yet fixed in God's sovereignty, "*You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?*" This is immediately followed by the narrative, "*In all this Job did not sin with his lips*" (Job 2:10). Job indeed saw himself as no more than clay in the hands of the Great Potter.

This tactic of Satan, to attack when one is in the midst of a trial is also demonstrated in the New Testament. James 1:2 exhorts the Believer to count it all joy when various trials are encountered.

The word *count* or *consider* comes from a Greek word meaning "to lead before the mind." So the Believer is to **realize** that the testing of faith produces endurance. Endurance results in the

perfection and completeness of the Believer (verses 3-4). As indicated in verse 5, **wisdom** is the key to knowing what the testing of one's faith produces.

In these verses we see: a Believer under trial, in the midst of that trial an exhortation to pursue wisdom, instructions regarding how to pursue wisdom in verses 5-11, and in verse 12, blessing for the one who perseveres under trial. Now look at verse 13.

"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone." James 1:13

In this verse there is a warning, and it is in this warning that we are alerted to the work of Satan in the trial. Just as in the case of Job, in the midst of the trial comes the temptation to sin. **It is notable that the admonishment of verse 13 is for the Believer to think properly about God.** He is to realize that when temptation comes in the midst of a trial the temptation to sin is not from God, but an appeal from the enemy to the flesh. Notice the character of the warning. It is a warning against thinking incorrectly about God in order to satisfy or comfort the lust of the flesh.

It is important to note that in verses 13 and following the Holy Spirit provides us with doctrine that is to be the basis of our theology. He instructs us on the nature of sin (13-16), the nature and sovereignty of God (17-18), and walking in the Spirit by putting off the old man (21), hearing the Word of God (19), receiving the Word in humility (21), and doing (obeying) the Word (22). As the Believer submits to God in these areas and resists the devil, Satan will flee (James 4:7).

Having become aware of one of the greatest strategies of Satan as evidenced in the Old Testament, with Job and his wife, and the New Testament in the first chapter of James, let's summarize his method so that we, like Paul (2 Corinthians 2:11) might not be ignorant of his schemes, consequently giving him the advantage.¹

- **He often tempts the Believer when he or she is in the midst of a great trial (such as the loss of a baby or child).**
- **His appeal is to the satisfaction (comfort) of the flesh.**
- **He designs the temptation intending to change the way the Believer perceives God.**

Once any person perceives God in any other way than that which the whole of Scripture reveals Him, that person begins to worship not the God of Scripture, but the god of his or her own imagination. Their god becomes subject to their feelings and desires. This is a subjective form of reasoning which inevitably leads one to spiritual bankruptcy.²

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

This brief study has shown that using 2 Samuel 12:23 to support that all children and infants are automatically saved at death because of their youth and inability to choose is at best unscriptural. As illustrated this interpretation, because it ultimately ascribes merit to man, compromises the Sovereignty, the Grace, and the Word of God.

Salvation, whether it be that of infants and children, or of adults should never be considered in the light of what might be thought of as merit on their part, for Biblically speaking, there is none. Rather, salvation should always be considered in the light of God's grace and mercy. When asked by a child, who also was undoubtedly concerned about the salvation of babies, I gave the following answer. My original answer along with the question was printed in the August 1997 *Discerner*. I reprint it here hoping to further demonstrate that God and His sovereignty are our only real sources of comfort and hope.

“The question of whether or not babies go to heaven if they do not have a chance to hear about God is a very good question. If salvation is up to man and his choice then it would be impossible for babies to be saved, but because salvation is of the Lord and not of man, it is possible for babies (if elect) to go to heaven even though they may never hear a person share the Gospel with them before their early death. The comfort of a Christian regarding this matter is that he or she knows that the God of all creation is just. He has always and will always do that which is right and good (Genesis 18:25b; Psalm 33:5; 37:28; 89:14; 97:2; 111:7).”

Christian, what is right is what God does, and what God does is best. Therefore we should praise Him that our lives, both now and eternally are in His hands. Left to ourselves there would be absolutely no hope.

It is the full counsel of the Word of God which restores the soul. Nothing else will suffice! No other word, however good it may sound, though it may seem soothing to the anxious mind, and its appeal to one's soul may be strong, if it is not the Word of God, will bring lasting comfort to the troubled soul. Accept no interpretation which compromises the sovereignty of God. It is merely a substitute that will confuse your theology and lead you to exchange the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of the corruptible creation.

The entrance of His Word gives light. It will bring you to know, as the patriarchs of the faith knew, that the judge of all the earth does right, and knowledge of that will be well with your soul.¹

"The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD

is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Thy servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward."

Psalm 19:7-11

APPENDIX I

The following verses are also used at times in an attempt to demonstrate that all children will automatically be saved at death:

Matthew 18:1-6, 10; 19:13-15

Mark 9:33-37; 10:13-16

Luke 9:46-48

These verses teach us that little children do believe and come to faith in Christ. Under no circumstances should anyone do anything to hinder a child coming to Jesus. The punishment for such an act is severe (Matthew 18:6).

The text of Matthew 18:1-6 indicates that Jesus was initially speaking of children in general as He compared the humility an adult must have before God at conversion to the natural humility expected of a child before adults. The word "like" in verse 3 implies the comparison. He is not saying adults must become children, nor is their humility the exact humility of children, only "like" children. Otherwise, the implication of verse 3 would be that all children believe. This implies that at sometime in their future they will be lost. I dealt with the problems this presents in the four points of Chapter 1.

In verse 4 Jesus begins to refer to the child which He previously had stood before them. He then says, "*Whoever then humbles himself as **this child**, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*" Notice, the scope of the comparison is now limited only to the child standing in their midst. Verses five and six indicate that this

child is a Believer. The Lord then gives a severe warning to anyone who might cause one of these little ones to stumble.

The context in no way indicates that all children are Believers, but it does tell us that some are. Those who are Believers need to be encouraged in their walk with the Lord, and those who are not need to be evangelized.

These verses along with the others mentioned do not describe in any way all children as being saved, but do indicate their need to be evangelized.

Chapter 1 Is It Scriptural?

¹ A doctrine promoted by the British monk Pelagius in A.D. 409. Much later a similar view was taught by the Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius (1506-1609). Both views base the imputation of sin (charging of sin to one's account) on the action of each individual. Adam's sin is viewed as having no direct affect on the spiritual state of an individual according to Pelagius, where Arminius seemed to see Adam's sin as only affecting the spiritual state indirectly. Views such as the Federal view and Augustinian view take a more biblical position claiming that the sin of Adam directly affected the spiritual state of each person. Thus rendering all humanity totally depraved from the moment of conception.

Chapter 2 David's Response Is Our Lesson

¹ The consequences of David's sins in this matter were great (2 Samuel 12:11). David would reap what he had sown. Just as the relationship between Uriah and Bathsheba was severed in Nathan's story, so would four vital relationships of a different sort be severed in David's life.

1. Death of the firstborn of Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12:18)
2. Amnon (David's son) violates Tamar (his half sister, David's daughter) (2 Samuel 13:14)
3. Absalom (David's son, Tamar's Brother) has Amnon killed (2 Samuel 13:28-29)
4. Absalom is killed (2 Samuel 18:14-15)

The fourfold restitution of Exodus 22:1 sentenced by David on the rich man of the story (2 Samuel 12: 6) seems to be carried out in the lives of four of David's own children.

In Galatians 6:7 the New Testament declares, "Whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." Nathan's story depicted a relationship that developed over a period of time between the poor man and the lamb. As indicated in verses 7 and 9 of 2 Samuel 12 the ewe lamb represented Bathsheba, the poor man-- Uriah, and the rich man of the story represented David. Notice in verse 3 the development of the relationship between the poor man and the little ewe lamb. Nathan describes the lamb as having grown up together with the poor man and his children.

"But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb Which he bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and his children. It would eat of his bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom, and was like a daughter to him."

2 Samuel 12:3 (NAS)

The presence of a relationship which developed between David and his firstborn son of Bathsheba is exemplified by David's intense concern over the illness and pending death of the child. While David could have experienced grief over the death of an infant, it would seem to be implied that significant time had elapsed (see chapter 3 of this booklet) allowing for a fuller development of the relationship between David and the boy. See the following verses relating to how David was impacted regarding the incidences involving the other children 2 Samuel 13:21, 34-39; 18:31-33.

Chapter 4 Compromise For Comfort, A Dangerous Conclusion

¹ I should point out that this is only one of the devil's numerous schemes. Many well meaning Believers are frequently overtaken in a pursuit of Satan. Our awareness of him and his dealings needs to be limited to the testimony of Scripture alone. Outside of this the unsuspecting Christian walks directly into Satan's camp. Various Christian ministries infatuated with the devil often become entangled in his schemes and end up twisting the Scripture to justify their pursuit. As a result many are misled. **Remember, the Scripture emphasizes knowing God and pursuing holiness. As**

the Believer makes this a priority, he or she is enabled to resist the influences of the evil one. For a condensed but scriptural study on the subject of confronting the devil I suggest John MacArthur's study book *How To Meet The Enemy, Arming Yourself for Spiritual Warfare*, Victor Books, 1992.

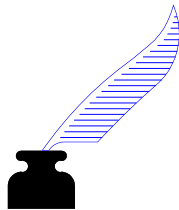
2. While the Bible tells us that the Father is the God of all comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3) and that He is the God of peace (Philippians 4:9) He gives neither at the expense of truth.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

¹. See Genesis 18:25 and Psalm 119:130.

Thank You Lord that Your Grace and Mercy are
greater than all our sin!!!!!!

Romans 5:20



The Discerner reflects the heart desire of this pastor for God's people to know and understand God as He has revealed Himself through the Scripture. Jeremiah 9:23-24

David Martin