

FASCINATING STORIES OF FORGOTTEN LIVES

STUDY NINE

Absalom: The Rebel Prince Charming

2 Samuel 12:7–25

David's multiple sins for a short season resulted in extremely painful consequences for the rest of his life and the lives of his family members.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll



To deepen your study, scan to listen.

THE law of the harvest is a simple truth: *You reap what you sow*. If you sow good seed, then you'll reap a good harvest. Hard work produces success and provides a sense of accomplishment. Attention to detail yields quality workmanship. Keeping your promises fosters loyalty. Good choices typically bring good results.

Sowing sinful seeds, however, can produce devastating consequences. When we violate the Lord's commands and act dishonestly, immorally, or arrogantly, we hurt those closest to us and everything we hold dear crumbles in a heap. We learn firsthand what the prophet Hosea declared:

*They sow the wind,
and so they will reap the whirlwind!* (Hosea 8:7 NET)

Kings are no exception to this principle, as David found out. He sowed the wind in his affair with Bathsheba, and, after the prophet Nathan confronted him, he reaped the whirlwind. One night's sinful pleasure yielded a lifetime of heartache.

How did David respond when Nathan exposed his sin? How did David's sin impact his children—particularly Absalom, the rebel prince who bore a lifetime grudge against his father? What can Christians learn from David's tragic family life? This *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study addresses these questions to help us avoid the kind of harvest David reaped.



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2 Samuel 12:7–25



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Some of your poorer choices may have led to thorny consequences, and you may feel sin's lingering effects in your life at this moment. Offer to the Lord this prayer from King David seeking the Lord's grace. The Lord understands your ache and offers His healing presence.

*Have compassion on me, LORD, for I am weak.
Heal me, LORD, for my bones are in agony. (Psalm 6:2)*



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

David thought he had covered his tracks, but God saw everything David did, and He dispatched the prophet Nathan to expose and confront David's wickedness. After David confessed his wrongdoing with deep and sincere repentance, Nathan extended God's pardon: "The LORD has forgiven you" (2 Samuel 12:13), *but . . .*

While God forgave David and cleansed his heart, David still endured sin's consequences as a purifying discipline. Consequences teach us the destructive nature of sin and guard us from repeating our sin. Speaking for God, Nathan said, "Because of what you have done, I will cause your own household to rebel against you" (12:11).

What are some of the lingering consequences of sin that you've seen others suffer, even though the person repented, received forgiveness, and was welcomed back into fellowship?

In the ensuing years, David traced the progressive fulfillment of Nathan's tragic prophecy among his family members. Let's see what troubles David suffered because of his sin.



Observation: The Family Consequences of David's Sins

Carefully observe the following passages from [2 Samuel 12–18](#) to identify the impact of David's sin on himself, his wives, and his children.¹ Scripture catalogs eight consequences.

Absalom: The Rebel Prince Charming

2 Samuel 12:7–25

The First Consequence—2 Samuel 12:14–23

Nathan told David that, although God would spare David's life, his "child will die" (2 Samuel 12:14). How was Nathan's prophecy fulfilled in *2 Samuel 12:15–23*? After the baby's death, what truth did David state at the end of 12:23 that gives comfort to all grieving parents today?

The Second Consequence—2 Samuel 13:1–15

Tragically, David's oldest son followed in his footsteps of lust. What awful crime did Amnon commit against his half-sister, Tamar, according to *2 Samuel 13:1–15*? Summarize what happened. What terrible harm did Amnon's sin cause Tamar (13:20)?

The Third Consequence—2 Samuel 13:16–22

How did Absalom, Tamar's full brother, respond in *2 Samuel 13:22*? According to *13:21*, what was David's reaction to this domestic disaster? What did he do—or not do—in response?

Absalom: The Rebel Prince Charming

2 Samuel 12:7–25

The Fourth Consequence—2 Samuel 13:23–29

Absalom waited two years for David to confront Amnon, but passive David never did. Justice demands consequences, which help restore the victims and make right the wrong. By neglecting to punish Amnon, David multiplied Tamar's shame and fueled Absalom's anger. According to *2 Samuel 13:23–29*, how did Absalom take matters into his own hands?

The Fifth Consequence—2 Samuel 13:30–39

According to *2 Samuel 13:30–39*, what did Absalom do when David discovered his murder of Amnon? Where did Absalom flee?

The Sixth Consequence—2 Samuel 14:1–15:15

For three years, Absalom remained in exile. David eventually brought back Absalom but refused to meet with him (*2 Samuel 14:1–24*)! What happened when father and son finally reunited in *2 Samuel 14:25–33*? How did Absalom take advantage of his return in *15:1–12*? What was David's response in *15:13–15*?

The Seventh Consequence—2 Samuel 12:9–12; 16:15–23

Absalom's conspiracy worked. What did Absalom do after taking control of the throne to show contempt for his father in *2 Samuel 16:15–23*? How did this fulfill Nathan's prophecy in *12:11–12*?

Absalom: The Rebel Prince Charming

2 Samuel 12:7–25

The Eighth Consequence—2 Samuel 18:1–33

David put Joab in charge of the campaign against his son, giving his trusted friend and advisor one command: *treat Absalom gently* (2 Samuel 18:1–5). Joab, however, happened upon an opportunity he couldn't resist. According to 2 Samuel 18:9–15, what befell Absalom, and what did Joab do? How was Joab's betrayal a final prophetic fulfillment of 12:10?

Hearing Absalom had died, David poured out his grief in sobs of deep sorrow:

The king was overcome with emotion. He went up to the room over the gateway and burst into tears. And as he went, he cried, "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you! O Absalom, my son, my son." (2 Samuel 18:33)

Though God forgave David, the king still bore the consequences of his choices. In the process, his precious daughter was violated, and he lost three sons to death. Was that moment of sinful pleasure with Bathsheba worth the lifetime of regret? Lamentably, David would say no.

The pain of the harvest eclipses the pleasure of the planting.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Balancing Forgiveness and Consequences

David's children observed and modeled their father's example. How do you see David's sinful tendencies mirrored in his children?

Absalom: The Rebel Prince Charming

2 Samuel 12:7–25

How does this seemingly contradictory concept that we can be forgiven yet suffer consequences help you better understand the complexities of God's grace and forgiveness? What attitude should believers have while enduring the consequences that their sin brings?

Grace means that God, in forgiving you, gives you the strength to endure the consequences. It does not mean the consequences are automatically removed.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: You Reap What You Sow

The apostle Paul taught the law of the harvest in [Galatians 6:7–10](#). Reflect on this passage and how you saw it play out in David's life. Record your takeaways below.

What could David have done differently to sow to God rather than to himself ([Galatians 6:8](#))? How would his circumstances have turned out differently as a result?

Rather than cast judgment on David, we should take heed. While we may know, quote, and find great assurance in [1 John 1:9](#), how should we balance that with the command from [Romans 6:13](#)? What is the possible tension here for believers?

Absalom: The Rebel Prince Charming

2 Samuel 12:7–25

Thankfully, Christians have both David's example and Paul's teaching to guide them as they consider the consequences of their choices.

We reap what we sow—forgiveness notwithstanding. If there is anything we have been duped into believing in our age of grace, it is the thinking that if we will simply confess our sins and claim God's forgiveness, then this business of consequence is all taken away. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Sowing Wise Choices . . . Reaping Welcome Consequences

David's example teaches a hard lesson. Have you ever reaped the painful consequences of sin you had previously sown? What thoughts or feelings do you have as you look back on the decision you made? What did you learn from that experience about God, yourself, sin, and grace? How can you weather the consequences with humility and hope?

David's passivity only made his troubles worse. How should he have confronted the sin in his family and sought reconciliation and healing with his children? What might you do to bring healing in your family?

The best way to guard against the storms created by sin is to flee as soon as you feel the first breeze of temptation. What temptations most entice you? What consequences await—now or later—if you yield to those temptations?

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2 Samuel 12:7–25

This difficult season of David’s life proved Paul right: we do indeed reap what we sow. Yet because of God’s grace, believers in Christ have the freedom to resist the urges of the flesh. By the power of the Holy Spirit, you can choose to sow seeds of righteousness and goodness that will reap an eternal harvest of God’s blessing. You have hope beyond your sin!

As I yield myself to God, when sin approaches, I can say no. In the power of Jesus Christ, I can turn away from it. I don’t have to sin.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



A FINAL PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I ask that You put together the pieces of my life that only You can. Turn my attention to Your Son—my only claim, my only hope. Give me the ability, Lord, as You forgive me, to forgive myself. Allow me to clearly realize that You will take me through, and Your grace will sustain me. I wait on You to do these things. I trust You for this, in the name of Christ. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, “[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)”

For the 2026 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Marshall F. Davis in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages. Copyright © 1978, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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Study 9 • Page 8