

A Thing Not Done in Israel

2 Samuel 13:1–39

The Fourteenth Sermon on Second Samuel

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Here we go again. Another chapter full of the depravity and brokenness of humanity. And not only is this is text we've come to today in God's providence in our journey through 1–2 Samuel, but this text is so important for us. Is it? Yes! Why? I can't help but think of the contrast between what it on the cultural calendar today—Father's Day—and the Lord's Day. I can't help but think of how so many Christians are hearing joke-filled sermons today but here we are hearing a sermon that is summarized by the word "serious." So again, we've come as the Lord's people on the Lord's Day to the Lord himself to be taught whatever it is his Word says to us, saying, "Speak Lord, for your servant hears" (1 Sam. 3:9). Is that your attitude and frame of mind now? There is something serious to hear from the Lord today as we deal with this passage:

1. *Take God's Word Seriously*
2. *Take Sin Seriously*
3. *Take God's Promises Seriously*

May the Holy Spirit lead us into the truth of his Word today.

This is not a fully written or transcribed manuscript, but the extended notes written in preparation.

Take God's Word Seriously

The first thing that stands out here is that we need to *take God's Word seriously*. I heard a person this week describe the Word of God with a bunch of expletives, saying that it was not true, that it was full of lies, that it was a self-righteous way to get people to conform to a code of behavior, but then this very same person turned around and said being human was what determined right from wrong. He was then asked how he knew that and if Hitler was just being human. The point is that everyone has a standard of right and wrong and the question is whether one's standard is God or themselves.

I say this because what Amnon did in verses 1–22 and what Absalom did in verses 22–33 is exactly what the Lord said would happen in David's family. Look back in chapter 12. When Nathan the prophet rebuked David for his adultery and murder the Lord spoke and said in verse 10, “the sword shall never depart from your house because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the Lord, ‘I will up raise up evil against you out of your own house’” (2 Sam. 12:10–11). This chapter teaches us to take God's Word seriously because it is self-authenticating. When God says something would happen, then it happened, is evidences that it is not just another book, but a book from God to us.

“But it's so full of disgusting events like the rape and murder we see here.” Yes, it is, and this is yet another reason to take the Word of God seriously. You see, the Bible isn't some self-help book filled with fluffy stories that are only meant to

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be uplifting. It's not a Utopian-filled book. The Bible describes the reality you and I experience as those who have rebelled against God and who live in a world that suffers the effects of that rebellion. The Bible is the most honest book the world has ever seen and it is showing us what life is like apart from him in this chapter. And it also offers us the remedy for our sins, but we'll come to that in a moment.

Take Sin Seriously

This leads to the second thing God wants us to take away from this chapter, which is to *take sin seriously*. One of the striking things about Reformed worship, whether it's our preaching, praying, or singing, is how often we talk about sin. I think you know this by now. We talk about sin a lot for a lot of reasons, but most importantly of all, because the Bible does! And it's been wisely said that the more seriously we take sin the more seriously we'll take salvation. The deeper we understand our sinful condition as well as our sinful acts the deeper we will see the love of God towards us in Christ. And this chapter is full of sin.

There's a lot of sin with Amnon. First, and obviously we see his sin of lust. Absalom and Amnon are David's sons not only literally but also rhetorically as they commit the same sins as David. They have the same dad but different wives as chapter 3 told us. So Amnon is watching and lusting after his **beautiful half-sister...Tamar** (v. 1) but **was so tormented that he made himself ill** (v. 2). As Jesus tells us in Matthew 5, just to look at a woman with lust is to have already committed the sin of adultery. You don't need to actually engage in immorality to

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be guilty of immorality because sin runs deeper than our surface level sins. I just read an article this week of scientists' discovery of an ocean under the ocean east of China.¹ It's a good illustration that while we see sin as something on the surface, underneath there is yet more sin. Why is Amnon so tormented? First, as the text says, she was mature; that's what the word translated **virgin** means. Second, while she was mature, **it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her** (v. 3).

Why impossible? Amnon knew the law of God. Let me give you just one example of how the Word of God forbids the sin of incest. Turn with me to Leviticus 18 and verses 9 and 11: "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your sister, your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether brought up in the family or in another home...You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife's daughter, brought up in your father's family, since she is your sister" (cf. Lev. 20:17; Deut. 27:22). This is a good point to apply this to our day and age, especially for you children who are beginning to go through puberty and learn about the bodies God gave you as well as for all of you young adults. The Word of God gives boundaries for sexual relationships that are pleasing to him. We are living in an age in which we are seeing before our very eyes not only the crumbling of civilization through sexual chaos but also the very judgment of God upon our society for abandoning God's Word. Read Romans 1:18-32 and that's what you'll see happening among us. Let me exhort you as strongly as possible to let God lead and guide your sexuality so that you please him and experience his blessing.

¹ <http://www.livescience.com/1312-huge-ocean-discovered-earth.html>

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So Amnon can't do anything, but then verse 3 adds, **But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab**. Uh oh. And we're told he was a **very crafty man**. And in verses 4–6 he devises a plan for Amnon to get near Tamar, alone. And that's exactly what he does, and that's exactly what happens. Then we read of his sin of rape. We read that **he took hold of her** (v. 11), propositioned her, and that she said emphatically, **"No"** (v. 12). Why did she say no? She was a wise and godly woman who knew what God said in his Word. What Amnon wanted—what the culture wants you do engage in—is **such a thing is not done in Israel** (v. 12). Now typically, when the Bible speaks of sexual intimacy, it speaks intimately and personally with the idiom, "such and such 'lay with' such and such." In verse 14 our English translation says Amnon **lay with her**. But the Hebrew uses a crude idiom that does not include "with." This was not a consensual relationship; no, he forcibly "laid her" down, meaning, this was forced rape. And so impersonal was Amnon that in verse 17 he expresses his hatred of her saying to his servant, literally, "Get this out." It's horrible! Let me say as gently as possible that if you have been forcibly violated by incest or rape that what you went through was absolutely against the will of God. And may God have mercy on the perpetrator! I want to return to this in a moment because God wants you to be liberated from your guilt and shame.

So Tamar leaves **crying aloud** (v. 19) but neither her brother nor her father respond appropriately. Brothers and sisters, when a child, a young adult, or an adult in our congregation or in your family cries out for help in such a situation,

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you must respond appropriately. Tell the authorities in the world and in the church—in that order. May it never be said that we harbor or cover up sin. That’s what Absalom says, isn’t it? **“Now hold your peace, my sister. He is your brother; do not take this to heart”** (v. 20). Where’s the justice, big brother? Even more lamentable is that David does not act justly. All we read is this: **When King David heard of all these things, he was very angry** (v. 21). For two full years Absalom stewes, as we say; he plots against Amnon his hatred. And we read in verses 22–29 that eventually he has Amnon killed. And we finally get some action from David. When he hears the misinformation that **“Absalom has struck down all the king’s sons, and not one of them is left”** (v. 30), we read that **the king arose and tore his garments and lay on the earth** (v. 31). His own daughter was raped by his own son after he tricked David, but David just got mad; he did nothing. And here it is two years later and he finally at least tears his clothes and wails on the ground, and as verse 37 says, he **mourned for his son day after day**—but not for Tamar!

The Bible is honest, brothers and sisters. It is full of our sin. Take them seriously.

Take God’s Promises Seriously

I want to end this morning with a note of hope. After reading this story from our vantage point as New Covenant Christians, we learn here to *take God’s promises seriously*.

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Once again we should be struck from the life of David—a life that we usually associate with nothing but godliness—that David is a sinner but that God saves sinners. That’s the message of Scripture, brothers and sisters. God saves sinners. Despite David’s sin and in full view of it, God saves him and God uses him to bring us the Lord Jesus Christ, the son of David. And when Jesus came, he ate with tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners. What is your sin today? There is no sin too large, too deep, or too serious that Jesus cannot forgive it if you repent of it and put your trust in him.

And I want to say as well, that salvation is not just some heavenly Monopoly game where you get a “get out of jail free” card. Salvation is not only justification, but also sanctification and ultimately glorification. If you are suffering with the scars of sexual sin, especially those sins committed against you, I want you to know that Jesus genuinely and seriously offers you rest of soul and conscience for your guilt and shame. Jesus also promises to heal your scars. He’s had injustice done to him, so he understands. He’s praying for you now. And he’s sent his Holy Spirit into your life to transform you, to change you, and to bring you to him face to face in glory. I cannot fully understand all that has happened to you, but Jesus does. And he promises as your true husband, that he gave himself for you to sanctify you, to cleanse you by the washing of water by the Word, and that one day he will present you—yes you, with all your guilt and shame—to himself in glory without spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Eph. 5:25-27). This is the serious stuff God wants you to know today from this sin-filled story. Amen.