

The Life of David

Amnon and Tamar

2 Samuel 13:1-22

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Amnon and Tamar

Scripture

Today's sermon is about one of the most heart-breaking texts in Scripture. The title of the sermon is "Amnon and Tamar." But that doesn't tell you much, other than the names of two characters in the narrative. The story is about Amnon raping Tamar.

Lest one think that this is not a current-day problem, *USA Today* reported in 2001 that a person is raped every 5.8 minutes in this country.¹ It is still a significant problem.

Let's read about Amnon and Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:1-22:

¹Now Absalom, David's son, had a beautiful sister, whose name was Tamar. And after a time Amnon, David's son, loved her. ²And Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her. ³But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother. And Jonadab was a very crafty man. ⁴And he said to him, "O son of the king, why are you so haggard morning after morning? Will you not tell me?" Amnon said to him, "I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister." ⁵Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill. And when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Let my sister Tamar come and give me bread to eat, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see it and eat it from her hand.' " ⁶So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. And when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat from her hand."

⁷Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, "Go to your brother Amnon's house and prepare food for him." ⁸So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house, where he was

¹ "USA Today Snapshots," *USA Today* (12-11-01); source: 2000 FBI Uniform Crime Report.

lying down. And she took dough and kneaded it and made cakes in his sight and baked the cakes. ⁹ And she took the pan and emptied it out before him, but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, "Send out everyone from me." So everyone went out from him. ¹⁰ Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the chamber, that I may eat from your hand." And Tamar took the cakes she had made and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother. ¹¹ But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." ¹² She answered him, "No, my brother, do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this outrageous thing. ¹³ As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the outrageous fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you." ¹⁴ But he would not listen to her, and being stronger than she, he violated her and lay with her.

¹⁵ Then Amnon hated her with very great hatred, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, "Get up! Go!" ¹⁶ But she said to him, "No, my brother, for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you did to me." But he would not listen to her. ¹⁷ He called the young man who served him and said, "Put this woman out of my presence and bolt the door after her." ¹⁸ Now she was wearing a long robe with sleeves, for thus were the virgin daughters of the king dressed. So his servant put her out and bolted the door after her. ¹⁹ And Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the long robe that she wore. And she laid her hand on her head and went away, crying aloud as she went.

²⁰ And her brother Absalom said to her, "Has Amnon your brother been with you? Now hold your peace, my sister. He is your brother; do not take this to heart." So Tamar lived, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom's house. ²¹ When King David heard of all these things, he was very angry. ²² But Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor bad, for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had violated his sister Tamar. (2 Samuel 13:1-22)

Introduction

In our series on “The Life of David,” we have seen David’s meteoric rise from being a shepherd to serving as God’s king on earth. In the earlier part of his life, David seemed to go from one success to another success. There were occasional slips along the way but, by and large, his progress was stellar and exemplary. After all, David was a man after God’s own heart (*cf.* 1 Samuel 13:14).

All of that changed when David sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah (*cf.* 2 Samuel 11). David tried to hide his sin but after many months the Lord sent his prophet Nathan to confront David about his sin. Nathan told David that instead of experiencing peace and prosperity for the remainder of his reign as king, David would instead experience discord and bloodshed. Moreover, the Lord would raise up this evil from within David’s own household. From Second Samuel 13 onwards we read about the slow decline of David’s kingship.

When we study the Bible, and particularly the Old Testament narrative portions of the Bible, we must keep in mind that the narratives in the Bible are not merely moralistic. That is, we might think that the narrative’s main lesson may be: “Don’t be like this,” or “Do be like that.” As we examine today’s lesson, it might be easy to conclude that the violation of another person is bad. While that is true, and we shall look at that in our lesson today, the main point to keep in mind is that every narrative has something to do with the over-arching theme of redemption.

It is helpful to keep in mind that the story-line of the Bible is about how God saves sinners. The story of the Bible is about creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. That is, the Bible tells us about how God created man, how man fell into sin, what God has done to redeem man, and what God will do to restore all things. Genesis 3 to Revelation is the redemption part of the story-line of

the Bible. When we read the Bible, we need to ask how any chapter fits into the over-arching story-line of the Bible. So, as Gordon Keddie writes, “The over-arching theme is still the redemptive-historical one: God is unfolding his purpose of salvation for his people and it will come to decisive fruition in the Son of David, of whom David the king is a pale and faltering foreshadowing.”²

God had chosen David as his king on earth. Early on we had high hopes for David. But then he too sinned, and we begin to wonder if God has someone else who will be his perfect king on earth. And that king is of course the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall return to that theme again in the conclusion.

Meanwhile, the specific theme in our chapter has to do with the consequences of David’s sin with Bathsheba and Uriah.

Lesson

Second Samuel 13:1-22 shows us that the consequences of one’s sin is often seen in the lives of various persons.

The consequences of one’s sin may show itself in:

1. Unbridled Lust (13:1-2, 14-17)
2. Unprincipled Counsel (13:3-5)
3. Unprotected Obedience (13:6-13, 18-19)
4. Unrestrained Hatred (13:20, 22)
5. Unmoved Anger (13:21)

I. Unbridled Lust (13:1-2, 14-17)

First, the consequence of one’s sin may show itself in unbridled lust.

You may recall that David had several wives and a number of children by them. Amnon was David’s oldest son by his wife Ahinoam of Jezreel (*cf.* 2 Samuel 3:2). A second son named Chileab

² Gordon J. Keddie, *Triumph of the King: The Message of 2 Samuel*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1990), 124.

was born of Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel (3:3a). He most likely died young because we do not hear of him in David's later life. The next oldest son was Absalom, whose mother was Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur (3:3b). Maacah was also the mother of Tamar. So, Absalom and Tamar were brother and sister, whereas Amnon was a half-brother to them.

We read in our text in verses 1-2, **“Now Absalom, David’s son, had a beautiful sister, whose name was Tamar. And after a time Amnon, David’s son, loved her. And Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her.”** Although the text says that Amnon loved Tamar, the fact is that his passion was pure unbridled lust. Gordon Keddie puts it well when he writes, “The ingredients of a genuine love are altogether lacking: there is no self-giving commitment, no seeking of the other’s highest good, no sensitive devotion, not even a hint of romance; there is only naked physical lust and an utterly self-centered disregard for Tamar’s personal integrity, welfare and blessedness. Amnon is consumed, not by what he could do *for* her, but by what he wanted desperately to do *to* her.”³

Amnon eventually got Tamar alone. When she realized what he wanted, she begged him to stop. Verse 14 says, **“But he would not listen to her, and being stronger than she, he violated her and lay with her.”** Keddie concludes:

This is always the case when sexual desire jumps the rails of God’s plan for personal sexual fulfilment. Self-giving love, commitment and faithfulness, marriage for life and of one woman to one man, family life and the raising of children as a godly seed, even social stability and peace, free from the immorality of sexual violations of all sorts—all are set aside in pursuit of what is actually an enslavement to self-gratification. All so-called ‘love’ without these profound moral and spiritual dimensions, which are so

³ Gordon J. Keddie, *Triumph of the King: The Message of 2 Samuel*, 124.

clearly set forth in God’s Word as essential to our blessing as individuals, families and societies, is no more than a self-centered lust. And all lust is a kind of rape, whether of mind or body or both, for such pseudo-love can only consume the objects of its grasping attentions.⁴

Interestingly, the text then goes on to say in verse 15, **“Then Amnon hated her with very great hatred, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, ‘Get up! Go!’ ”** He contemptuously discarded her after satisfying his unbridled lust. “And why did Amnon hate her so much as to treat her this way?” asks Gordon Keddie. “Because, as with all sexual violators, the one thing he wanted even more than sex itself was for her to want to give herself to him, freely and willingly. The rapist hates his victim because in the very act of his self-gratification he knows the most profound frustration of all: the humiliation of rejection. Without brute force, he would have nothing at all.”⁵

About a week or so ago, I heard an advertisement on the radio. As I recall, it was a lawyer urging parents to watch the example they were setting for their children. He talked about fathers drinking and driving and causing accidents with terrible consequences. He concluded by saying something like, “Dad, watch what you do because your son wants to grow up just like you.”

Amnon knew that his father had sinned against Bathsheba, and so he was imitating his father, although he did take it a step further. One consequence of David’s sin showed itself in Amnon in the form of unbridled lust.

II. Unprincipled Counsel (13:3-5)

A second consequence of one’s sin is that it may show itself

⁴ Gordon J. Keddie, *Triumph of the King: The Message of 2 Samuel*, 125.

⁵ Gordon J. Keddie, *Triumph of the King: The Message of 2 Samuel*, 126.

in unprincipled counsel.

Verse 3a says, **“But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David’s brother.”** So, **Jonadab** was a cousin to Amnon, and also to Tamar and Absalom. The text goes on to say, **“And Jonadab was a very crafty man”** (13:3b). The Hebrew text actually says that he was a very “wise” man. However, the *ESV* does a good job of capturing the idea of him being **“crafty.”**

Jonadab noticed that Amnon was not looking well. When he asked Amnon what was wrong, **Amnon said to him, “I love Tamar, my brother Absalom’s sister”** (13:4b). Jonadab proposed a solution: Amnon should pretend to be ill and ask his father David to send Tamar to feed him. Then he would be alone with her and he could have his way with her (13:5). This is exactly what Amnon did.

Let us be clear and say that Jonadab was no friend to Amnon. Jonadab was utterly unprincipled in dispensing counsel to Amnon. A true friend would have realized what was going on, or, at least, asked more questions to get to the bottom of the matter. But, Jonadab gave advice that helped Amnon carry out his heinous crime.

Jonadab was undoubtedly aware that his uncle David had given unprincipled counsel when he sent a message to Joab to put Uriah in thick of the fight and then withdraw so that Uriah would be killed. So, what was good for uncle David was good for Jonadab as well.

III. Unprotected Obedience (13:6-13, 18-19)

Third, the consequence of one’s sin may show itself in unprotected obedience.

Amnon pretended to be ill. King David came to see his son, and **Amnon said to the king, “Please let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat**

from her hand” (13:6b). So, David sent a message to Tamar telling her to go to her brother’s house and prepare food for him, which she did. While she was there, Amnon had everyone leave the room and then made his intentions known to her. She begged him not to do **“this outrageous thing”** (13:12). But he wouldn’t listen to her, and he violated her. Then he sent her out of his house, and she left, an utterly disconsolate woman. John Woodhouse writes, “Terror takes a second or two. In ten minutes Tamar’s whole life lies in tatters.”⁶

In this terrible story, Tamar obediently followed her father’s instruction. David should have protected his daughter, but instead he unwittingly sent her to a terrible encounter with her half-brother. David should have done more to protect his daughter but he did not do so.

IV. Unrestrained Hatred (13:20, 22)

Fourth, the consequence of one’s sin may show itself in unrestrained hatred.

Presumably, while Tamar was walking back to her house, she met her brother Absalom. Her beautiful robe was torn, she had ashes on her head, and she was crying aloud as she went. **And her brother Absalom said to her, “Has Amnon your brother been with you? Now hold your peace, my sister. He is your brother; do not take this to heart”** (13:20a). But, of course, she did take it to heart. She had been terribly violated and would live the rest of her life as an unmarried woman because in that culture no-one married a violated woman, as the text goes on to say, **“So Tamar lived, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom’s house”** (13:20b).

The kindness that Absalom showed Tamar did not extend to

⁶ Dale Ralph Davis, *2 Samuel: Out of Every Adversity*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 163.

his half-brother Amnon. Verse 22 says, **“But Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor bad, for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had violated his sister Tamar.”** It would take time, but in the next pericope we shall learn that Absalom eventually murdered Amnon. Absalom demonstrated unrestrained hatred.

In the fall of 2002, Rick Garmon’s daughter, Katie was violated. She was 18-years old at the time and a freshman in college. Initially, she did not tell her parents what happened. But, after more than a year, she opened up and told her mother what had happened. The article said, “Fortunately, after a year of fervent prayer and support, Katie was able to overcome the pain and return to a normal life.”

But that was not the case for her father. When he heard the news, Rick Garmon developed a plan to kill the man who had so deeply wounded his daughter. He mulled over his plan for months. He withdrew from his family and became preoccupied with killing the perpetrator. Eventually, thankfully, through the intervention of his son, Rick realized that his hatred was hurting his own family. He repented and made a choice to let go of his hatred.⁷

I think every father of a daughter understands this emotion. But, dear friends, unrestrained anger is still a sin.

V. Unmoved Anger (13:21)

And finally, the consequence of one’s sin may show itself in unmoved anger.

Toward the end of this horrific narrative, we read these words in verse 21, **“When King David heard of all these things, he was very angry.”** As I just mentioned, one can understand David’s anger at what had just happened to his daughter. However, David’s anger was unmoved. Unmoved in the sense that he did nothing whatsoever to address the situation.

⁷ <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2006/july/7073106.html>.

It is entirely likely that David may have felt that he had lost any moral authority because of his own sexual sin. Yes, it is true that David had sinned. But that did not diminish his responsibility to enforce justice. He was both a father and a king, and he was charged with maintaining justice in his family and his kingdom. And he should have done this, whether he was personally compromised or not.

David's unmoved anger was an additional sin on top of his previous sin. He should have imposed justice, because it was the right thing to do.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the account of Amnon and Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:1-22, let us look to the perfect Son of David, Jesus.

As I mentioned earlier, the specific theme of this chapter has to do with the consequences of David's sin with Bathsheba and Uriah. The consequences of David's sin are going to dog him for the rest of his life. Here in the immediate aftermath of David's sin, we see unbridled lust, unprincipled counsel, unprotected obedience, unrestrained hatred, and unmoved anger.

As we study today's lesson, we realize that David is also a sinful human. He was indeed a great man, but he was also a great sinner. We realize too that someone other than David must sit on his throne forever and ever and rule with perfect righteousness. And that one is none other than David's greater son, Jesus.

David is not God's eternal king. Jesus is. So, let us look to the perfect Son of David, Jesus, for our salvation. Amen.

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The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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