

God's Way Above Our Way

2 Samuel 13 & 14

Key Bible Texts

2 Samuel 13 & 14

Key Bible Verse(s)

“And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do any thing to her.” (2 Samuel 13:2)

Background to the Study

David was a man of devotion to God, and had been anointed by God to be the leader over His chosen people. Although David was the most just of all Israel's kings, he was not perfect. After restoring the nation of Israel to peace and great military power, his personal life became entangled in sin. He committed adultery with Bathsheba and then ordered the murder of her husband in an attempt to cover up his deeds. In the previous chapter, we learned how God chastised David through Nathan for his affair with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah. God declared that violence would plague David's house, and this chapter marks the beginning of that turmoil. David's troubles continued throughout his reign, with his sins mirrored in those of his sons, Amnon and Absalom, causing him great heartbreak.

It is interesting to note that adultery and murder were the sins of David, and immediately we see the same sins being committed by his sons, Amnon and Absalom. What heartbreak this must have brought David! Amnon, David's firstborn with Ahinoam, assaulted his half-sister Tamar, who was the daughter of Maacah. This violation not only cursed her but also violated the Law, which required a man to marry a virgin he had defiled. Amnon's subsequent rejection of Tamar revealed his true character—he lusted after her rather than loved her. Tamar's mourning, symbolized by her torn robe and ashes, highlighted her despair.

Two years later, Absalom avenged Tamar by killing Amnon during a sheep-shearing festival. Fleeing to his maternal grandfather, Talmai, Absalom could not seek refuge in designated cities because his act was premeditated. He remained in exile for three years, during which he honoured Tamar by naming his daughter after her (2 Samuel 14:27).

We see here how God's word came to pass, and evil rose up within David's own house. The “secret” sin of David caused continuing heartache, long after he had repented of it. After murdering Amnon, Absalom had to flee, as cities of refuge offered no protection for premeditated murder.

Meanwhile, Joab devised a plan using a widow from Tekoah to manipulate King David into granting Absalom forgiveness. The widow's story, coupled with her mournful appearance, moved David, who valued family lineage and was compelled to reconsider his banishment of Absalom. After acknowledging his hypocrisy in protecting a stranger while condemning his son, David agreed to restore Absalom, who had lived in Jerusalem for two years without his father's blessing, akin to house arrest. It was only when Joab intervened that David granted Absalom an audience, allowing him full access to the city.

TESTIMONIES FROM OUR DAY

The job had finally become available! The career position I had wanted so badly was open, and testing was going to begin. I worked hard at studying and getting myself into condition to take the written and physical exams that were required for the job. The thought of getting hired was on my mind day and night. Nothing else seemed to matter – even a call God had placed on my life.

Finally the day came when I was offered the job. However, after accepting the position, my obsession did not stop. I wanted to be the best person possible to do the job, so I took additional schooling during my off time, and worked overtime and extra shifts. Due to my heavy workload, I began to neglect my walk with God, and also my family. And, to my detriment, I continued to neglect the call of God. My endeavours proved successful, but that success came at a cost.

Eventually I suffered several injuries. My health deteriorated with the stress of the job, and I became physically sick. I had become so consumed with what I wanted, that it cost me the career I was so proud of and had worked so hard to achieve. Was my career choice wrong? No, but my obsession with attaining the career, and my neglect of God and His call on my life, was.

While work obsessions can be detrimental, they do not compare with the evil of the obsession described in today's chapter. Amnon became so obsessed with his lust toward Tamar, that he became sick. He was willing to do whatever he could to have her, even if it meant violating her and the Law of God. A plan was conceived with the aid of a friend, and Amnon got what he desired: fulfilment of his lust toward Tamar. However, what he did was wrong, and it eventually cost him his life at the hand of his half brother Absalom.

We must guard against anything that could start to become an obsession. In the Bible, "lust" often means nothing more than natural desire. If the enemy can, he will prey upon our natural desires through temptation, offering something beside God's plan for our lives. We want to be watchful and ask God to help us stay focused on Him.

A Closer Look

Question 1

What was David's reaction when he heard about Amnon's assault on Tamar?
Why was David reluctant to punish Amnon for his crime against Tamar? II Samuel 13:21

Question 2

In 2 Samuel 13:31, King David responds with deep grief over events that had occurred in his family. In two or three sentences, summarize the cause of his grief.

Question 3

In our day of moral relativism, many people believe that their own behaviour is a matter of personal choice. How do the consequences of sin, disobedience, and rebellion affect the lives of others? Cite specific examples to support your answer.

Question 4

What reasons did Absalom have for becoming more vain and self-important? How did the actions of his sons mimic David's own wrong behaviours?

Question 5

Following his murder of Amnon, Absalom was forced to flee from Jerusalem. In an attempt to have him restored to royal favour, Joab hired a "wise woman" of Tekoa to approach David with a contrived story paralleling David's own experience with Absalom. How did David respond? 2 Samuel 14:11-21

Question 6

How can you ensure that the beauty of Christ is evident in your life – regardless of your external appearance?

Take Home

The choices we make in life can either cause us to grow or to fall spiritually. If we seek to follow the plan God has for our lives, we will grow spiritually. But if we neglect the plan He has for us, we will fall. May we keep our hand in God's hand, and seek His will in each one of our life choices.

Absalom was set on having his own way. We should want our life's purpose to be pleasing God. When we allow the Holy Spirit to guide our desires and choices, we will realize the fulfilling life of being in the centre of His will, and others will see the beauty of Jesus in us.