

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF DAVID

Taught in Ambassador's Class of Peninsula Bible Church, Palo Alto, California

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by

Robert H. Roe, Pastor

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Today we're looking at Chapter 13 of II Samuel, the beginning of one of the sordid stages of David's life. One of the things we have talked about before is that God does not hide things. He lays out the truth cold whether he's referring to one of his greatest kings or to one of the least of his men. David was one of the greatest kings of Israel, if not the greatest, but he had a tragic side to him.

We are going to start our study this morning by going back to Exodus, Chapter 20 and the first 2 commandments because they are important in what happens to David.

Exodus 20:3

#1-You shall have no other gods before Me. #2-You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord Your God, am a jealous God, visiting iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

Those are not threats. They are commandments and statements of fact. God is telling us what we can expect if we disobey His commandments. He says, "There are two alternatives. You can "Love the Lord your God will all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself," the two great commandments upon which "depend the whole Law and Prophets (the Old Testament)," as the Lord himself said. Or you can do your own thing and serve yourself, your flesh, another god, whatever you want to serve, and you will inevitably reap the consequences. When you serve the Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ, you reap the consequences which are Christlikeness and walking in freedom from yourself and from bondage to sin. When you serve yourself or your other gods, whatever they may be [In David's case lust and the privilege of being king and doing his own thing], then you reap the consequences of that god. Unfortunately those consequences not only affect you, but affect generations to come.

Now this is not a God who hates kids and visits upon unborn babies the sins of the fathers. The Jews accused God of that one time and were carried into captivity by the Assyrians and the Babylonians. They had said, "The fathers eat the sour grapes, But the children's teeth are set on edge," and God indicated to the Jews, "No way. The sons shall not die for the sins of the fathers nor the fathers for the sins of the sons but each for his own. You

are just as culpable for your own actions toward Me as your forefathers were. Your being carried into captivity is simply a culmination of a long series of rebellions against Me for which I have warned you and warned you and warned you with prophet, after prophet, after prophet. Don't you ever use that idiom on Me.

There is a principle here though. It is that, when you sow to the flesh, you reap according to the flesh, and you reap it not only in your own life, but as you are a model for your children, they unfortunately begin reaping also. It is the result of being born with a fallen nature. I am born lost. I am born a sinner, and but for the blood of Jesus Christ, I would be dead. I am born with a curve on me. I am not a straight ball, but a twisted one. When that ball was thrown from the womb, it was twisted, and it twists every work of mine. Fortunately God hasn't left me in that state. He made ample provision for me through Jesus Christ. So each generation is accountable for its response to the Lord Jesus Christ. When they respond affirmatively, they begin the journey toward Christlikeness, the freedom from parental background and modeling, the freedom from the bondage to the flesh, etc. but God says, "When you don't have the Lord Jesus Christ, your kids also, through your modeling, tend to reap what you have sown."

We see it graphically pictured when, in a moment of lust, David, the great king of Israel, sowed to the flesh and ended up a murderer. This is not God punishing David. He even said that, "'Your sins are forgiven. You shall not die.' but the consequences of the 2nd commandment will work out in the lives of your family." David, as we have seen, was a very poor father. He never denied his kid anything, according to a note in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. He was denied all kinds of things when he was a small child. so, "All that I didn't get, they are going to have." And as a result these sweet little wild flowers grew up to be poison oaks. So this began way, way back in David's life.

Secondly, David is a polygamist. He had a very strong sensual desire which he catered to. As king he could cater to it with magnificent regal splendor. He had probably at least 10 wives, as near as we can figure, and unnumbered concubines. Under the law of that day, what the king saw he took, unless she was married. So David acted like the other kings of the earth instead of like God's king. As a result, his household consisted of a series of wives all competing for his affections, as Leah and Rachel did back in Jacob's time. There was no family unit, and the kids grew up competing with one another. They lived in separate houses. Each wanted to be king, so each looked with a jaundiced eye on the first born above him. Amnon was the first born, Chileab was the second born, but apparently by now he has been slain in battle, which moves Absalom up to number two. We are going to see that Absalom is not above a little self-interest when revenging his sister's violation. He wants to be king, but Amnon the first born is standing in his way. So, we have brothers Amnon and Absalom in competition with one another because of the household that David himself set up in defiance of Deuteronomy 17. This is where we are at the beginning of Chapter 13.

There is some thought that about this time David was inflicted with some very tough disease. Psalm 41 and Psalm 55 seem to elude to that. It may be true. We don't know for sure.

We do know that David sexually violated Bathsheba and murdered Uriah the Hittite, and watch now how the consequences work themselves out.

II Samuel 13:1

Now it was after this that Absalom [second in line now] **the son of David had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar,** [Palm Tree, glorious creature, lithesome like a palm tree] **and Amnon the son of David loved her.** [Better translation "lusted for her"] **And Amnon was so**

frustrated because of his sister Tamar that he made himself ill, for she was a virgin, and it seemed hard to Amnon to do anything to her.

Amnon falls in love with his step-sister, but in actuality his feeling is lust. He doesn't know what true love is. He has never seen it. There was no true love in his family. You recall Bathsheba was not loved by David. She was violated by David. She was not loved until a year or so after their child was born and died. Finally David comforted her after the loss of that child broke him, and only then did God begin to call Bathsheba his wife. It is probable that after he had lain with her he had all the disgust and self-loathing and guilt that goes with something like that. That is the model of love Amnon witnessed.

So Amnon lusts after his step-sister Tamar who is a beautiful girl. The law of God says if a half-sister and a half-brother marry, they were both to be slain. If a half-brother violated a half-sister, he should be slain. An incestuous relationship even as close as a half-brother and half-sister was totally illegal under the law of God. What does Amnon care. Big daddy not only committed adultery, which violated that law, but also murdered the woman's husband, which violated that law, also the 6th, 7th and 10th commandments and got away with it. Why should Amnon observe the law of God?

By constantly dwelling on his desire and feeding the flames of that desire and not being able to satisfy it, he becomes so frustrated he actually makes himself ill. He can't bring himself to violate her, not yet anyway, because she is a virgin and apparently acts like a virgin. She is a very chaste person. But Amnon has a friend. And as like seems to attract like, we get a little hint of Amnon's character here by the friends he has.

II Samuel 13:3:

But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother; [In other words, cousin] **and Jonadab was a very shrewd [cunning] man.** [Good translation, "wicked and ambitious"] **And he [Jonadab] said to him [Amnon], "O son of the king, why are you so depressed morning after morning? Will you not tell me?"** [Apparently Amnon dwells on and fantasizes over this lust and dreams of it all night long. In the morning he wakes up twice as frustrated as when he went to bed. The thing is consuming him. He started out playing around with it, but now he cannot let go.] **Then Amnon said to him, "I am in love with Tamar, the sister of my brother Absalom."** [He knows exactly the relationship and exactly the law of God involved] **Jonadab then said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill;** [With his depressed and haggard look and lack of sleep, he did look sick] **when your father comes to you, [which he will because he loves you] say to him, "Please let my sister Tamar come and give me some food to eat, and let her prepare the food in my sight, that I may see it and eat from her hand." So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill; when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let my sister Tamar come and make me a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat from her hand."** [When people are sick they get kind of peculiar desires for food,] **Then David sent to the house for Tamar, saying, "Go now to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare food for him."**

It is interesting, Jonadab does not suggest marriage. He knows that is illegal. He does suggest a way that will force David's hand. David indeed indulges and loves that first born, the strength of his loins. So if Amnon rapes Tamar, the only thing David can do to alleviate the problem is to use the law of the violated virgin. [Deut. 22:28] Tamar is not engaged, therefore, it will not be adultery. If a virgin is violated by a man under Jewish law, the man must pay fifty shekels of silver to her father, marry her and can never divorce her. In the Jewish culture a

non-virgin was a very hard person to marry off. There was stigma attached to her. In fact if she was found to be a non-virgin by the man who married her, she was to be stoned. But Jonadab could trap David. If Amnon raped Tamar, David was faced with either putting his son to death or marrying the two. It was circumventing the law, but, in a sense, accomplishing it and probably buying off the wrath of God and the wrath of the people. So here is the kind of reasoning that went on in the palace, understandable perhaps considering the way they were brought up. Intriguingly enough Jonadab doesn't seem to be at all worried that David will find out whose idea this was. Where did David lose his authority to uphold the law of God? why can't he put the fear of God into Jonadab's heart?

Comment from class: Because for a year he has been disobeying.

Bob's response. Yeah! Do you see that God is disciplining David by not punishing him according to the law of the land. God is very unique. He is very imaginative. He fits the circumstances to the crime. He could have slain David, since David violated the law of murder, the law of adultery, the law of covetousness, but that would have destroyed his purpose for David. It would have destroyed this beautiful model of how God operates. It would have destroyed the whole teaching of the 2nd commandment. So, by his grace, God let David off, but what did it do to David's authority over his family and as king over the land? He has none. He has all kinds of authority according to the law, but no real authority because of his character. So, the people under him just ignore him. God is teaching David you cannot be king unless you are above reproach. Your authority comes from a godly character, the life of God seen in the life of the king. It does not come from your position and your spear. Israel was a theocracy. The king was simply the visible representation of the invisible God Yahweh. David's authority was not from being king or the rules of the road or the spear in his hand or the number of bodyguards behind him. It came from his character as a godly man. God is teaching him a harsh lesson here. He has no authority. Now, verse 8, here comes the tragedy.

II Samuel 13:8

So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house, and he was lying down. And she took dough, kneaded it, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes. And she took the pan and dished them out before him, but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, "Have everyone go out from me." So everyone went out from him. Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the bedroom, that I may eat from your hand." So Tamar took the cakes which she had made and brought them into the bedroom to her brother Amnon. When she brought them to him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." [He knows exactly what he is doing and doesn't care.] But she answered him, "No, my brother, do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; [It would send me to death, as a matter of fact] do not do this disgraceful thing! As for me, where could I get rid of my reproach? [There is no way a non-virgin could get married in Israel. "There is no way that David can offer me, a princess of the nation of Israel a non-virgin to some other king or other prince when I am not pure"] And as for you, you will be like one of the fools in Israel. [You are the first born, the heir apparent to the throne, yet you want to disgrace us?] Now therefore, please speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you." [She has sensed also that in spite of the law that you cannot marry a half-brother and half-sister that David would cater to Amnon's desire and would marry them. At least a marriage is better than violation] However, he would not listen to her; since he was stronger than she, he violated her and lay with her. [Following in daddy's own footsteps]

Amnon being the first born and heir apparent to the throne, was a well trained warrior. He had been with daddy in battles and was a tough battle-hardened veteran. It was typical in those days, particularly in the Ancient Mideast, that when you won a battle, you raped the women. You took what you desired. Israel was not allowed to do that. When they walked with the Lord, they didn't do it. If they desired a foreign woman for physical intercourse, they had to make her their wife. She had to be taken into their household. She had to shave her hair, pare her nails, strip away marks or the old life, mourn her father and mother for a month and then she was to be married. Then, and only then, could they have her. If she didn't turn out to be what they wanted, they could never sell her or discard her. They had to give her her freedom. She was to be treated as a free woman in Israel. Israelites were not allowed the rights of invaders and captors that other nations were allowed. If you wanted a woman, the only way you got her was marriage. Apparently Amnon had not been observing that rule. Many of them probably didn't in those days, and he is quite hardened to it. He just took her, violated her and did what his daddy did, "That is what you do, that is what I do."

Don't ever kid yourself that what daddy does doesn't rub off on his kids. I always figured I was a pretty godly man, but one day I was shocked by my oldest son. He was talking to me about how he used to brag about his violent temper. He had a violent temper. Why, because daddy had a violent temper. He would go around smacking things. Why? Because daddy went around smacking things. I had more bruised knuckles than you can believe. It felt good to hit the wall when I was angry. It is rather foolish though when all you get is bruised knuckles. I had one friend who put his hand right through a wall panel. All those little splinters just ripped his hand to shreds. Worse yet, he had to pull the hand back out again. It had to be bandaged, of course, and for several months he was obliged to explain to people why his hand was all wrapped up. I won't name him, but he was a pastor.

Now we see the tragedy of intercourse without love.

II Samuel 13:15:

Then Amnon hated her with a very great hatred; for 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 away!" But she said to him, "No, because this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you have done to me!" Yet he would not listen to her. Then he called his young man who attended him and said, "Now throw this woman out of my presence, and lock the door behind her." Now she had on a long-sleeved garment; for in this manner the virgin daughters of the king dressed themselves in robes. Then his attendant took her out and locked the door behind her. And Tamar put ashes on her head, [the sign of grief] and tore her long-sleeved garment which was on her; [Because she was no longer a virgin, she ripped away her virginity as it had been taken from her] and she put her hand on her head [that is the way they indicated a deep burden because they carried things on their heads in those days] and went away, crying aloud as she went.

The first thing that happened to Amnon was one of the first things that happened to David with Bathsheba; self-loathing, disgust with himself and then, of course, hatred of the object that is making him feel guilty and causing him to loathe and be disgusted with himself. The desire to transfer our feelings and put blame on someone else is common to all of us. Tamar is no longer his beloved sister. Now she is "that woman." He just wants to get her out of his sight. He even has her thrown out of the room. and when she appeals to him with the one thing that could save his life, "Marry me, you have violated me, marry me." [the law for a violated virgin which we talked about], he totally rejects her. He seals his own death warrant with that. Since she has been

thrown out of the room, the word spreads all through the palace. Putting ashes on her head and ripping her garment, publicly proclaims what has happened to her, not to mention the hand to the head indicating a terrible burden.

Now Absalom, the next in line, sees his chance.

Comment from class: Couldn't Tamar have applied the rules about maidens being raped. Couldn't she have screamed in that situation?

Bob's response: That is why Amnon sent everyone out of the room.

Comment from class: Then how about trying to reason with him?

Bob's response: She was trying to reason with him as sister to brother, but you see that didn't work. Amnon was smart enough to get all the people out so that she couldn't do any yelling. He knew the rules.

Comment from class: Wouldn't that have made her free then?

Bob's response: Sure. The trouble was she was no longer a virgin, and she was a princess. Princesses married princes or kings. One of the things that had to be produced after the marriage night was a sign of the bride's virginity. So Tamar is a desolate woman. This is why God made the provision that the man was not to be slain when a virgin was violated. The man must marry her. The woman involved had a life ahead of her. In the culture of the Hebrews, the woman needed a husband to support her, protect her and provide for her. So God didn't let the man off with a quick death, as he would an adulterer where the woman was already betrothed or married. No, he was required to marry her, stay married forever and also pay a heavy fine to her father, a "dowry," the same process he would go through if he was courting her. God is a very strong protector of women in the Old Testament.

Amnon is no fool. He gets everybody out, gets the door shut, and has her where she can't cry out. When Tamar offers him the one way out for a violated virgin, he refuses, and it will cost him his life.

Comment from class: I would like to hitchhike here on what you are saying. Apparently Tamar knew the law or at least she knew the customs. She uses them in her argument. Then she uses the argument that, "Why don't we talk to the king. He'll not withhold me from you." She is choosing this in desperation, undoubtedly. And so Amnon knowing she is using that in desperation and knowing that the king wouldn't marry then since it is illegal, wouldn't listen to her.

Bob's response: I think David would have married them. I think Amnon didn't want to go through a marriage. He just wanted to violate her. I think he knows the king would marry them. I think Tamar knows it too. As a matter of fact, we are going to see here in a minute the king would have listened. David has absolutely no fatherly authority left in this family. It is gone. God's greatest Israeli king, next to Jesus Christ, is destroyed within his family. You do not win respect from your children by indulging their desires. David is a fine example of that. Any child psychologist will tell you that children want discipline. They want the security of knowing you care enough to discipline them.

II Samuel 13:20:

Then Absalom her brother said to her, "Has Amnon your brother been with you? But now

keep silent, my sister, he is your brother; do not take this matter to heart." [How nice. Just take it easy. Absalom has plans not only for Amnon but for the throne.] **So Tamar remained and was desolate in her brother Absalom's house. Now when King David heard of all these matters, he was very angry.** [Now isn't that wonderful.]

Comment from class: Wasn't there any law that she could resort to?

Bob's response: Not when David is king. If the king won't enforce the law, where are you to go? Incidentally, that is exactly what Absalom is going to use against David down the road apiece, "Oh, that there was a just judge in Israel. Oh, that I were judge, and I would give you justice," and it makes points. Why? Because Israel has an unjust king who doesn't bother to fulfill the law.

This is the wrath of God. The terrifying part about God's wrath is it is not a lightning bolt from heaven. It is just a quiet giving you over to what you choose and the resulting consequences. That is the most frightening thing in all the world. Have you ever thought of the consequences of the things God lets you have? The alarming thing to me about the wrath of God is not Sodom and Gomorrah, or the Noahic flood, not those cataclysmic wraths of God. No, it is the quiet giving over by God leading to the wrath of God. That is the one that terrifies me. That goes on every moment of every day, whether you are a believer or an unbeliever. You are given over to your choices, and you are either being hardened toward God or softened toward Christ. It is a quiet thing. It doesn't shout at you. That is what is so scary. Lightning bolts are quick and obvious. This isn't.

II Samuel 13:22:

But Absalom did not speak to Amnon either good or bad; for Absalom hated Amnon because he had violated his sister Tamar. Now it came about after two full years

Absalom has been quietly brooding and biding his time. Where did he get that kind of vindictiveness? What did David do to the Edomites, his brothers? He spent six months hunting down every male in Edom. What did he do to the Ammonites, his relatives, when he conquered them? He tortured them with instruments of iron. What did he do to the Moabites, also related to him through Lot? He laid them in three lines, then killed off two of the lines and let the other line live. You don't cross David. It may take six months, but he will hunt you down and get you. Where did Absalom get this ability to sit and plot for two years? From daddy, dear old daddy.

II Samuel 13:23:

Now it came about after two full years that Absalom had sheepshearers in Baal-hazor, which is near Ephraim, and Absalom invited all the king's sons.

I'm running out of time here so I'll summarize. Harvest time was festival time in Israel. To celebrate God's grace in giving them a bountiful harvest, they would have a big feast and invite all their friends and relatives for a joyous celebration. So Absalom is smart and invites all the king's sons, not just one, understand, but all the king's sons. He wants to make sure that Amnon shows up. Then to throw off suspicion, he invites David and all of David's court. He knows full well David is not going to bring a mob of people down there which would be a tremendous expense for his son. And David doesn't. He explains it would be way too much of a burden on Absalom. David blesses him and thanks him for the thought and says, "No." Absalom says, "Well, I would like to have Amnon anyway." David says, "Why Amnon?" Even after two years it looks a little suspicious. But Absalom convinces David, and because he has invited all the king's sons at the same time, it kind of throws

David off the track, so he let's Amnon go.

II Samuel 13:28:

And Absalom commanded his servants, saying, "See now, when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, 'Strike Amnon,' then put him to death. Do not fear; have not I myself commanded you? Be courageous and be valiant." [I'm behind you all the way---waaaaay behind you. Amnon, of course, being the first born, is a seasoned warrior, and in hand-to-hand combat nobody can mess with him. Absalom wants to be king, but he doesn't want to be skewered. So he has his servants take care of Amnon.] And the servants of Absalom did to Amnon just as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose and each mounted his mule and fled.

Now the report comes to King David that Absalom has struck down all of the king's sons. That seemed very logical because, typical of the Ancient Mideast culture, you wiped out all your opposition. All the other kings around did that very thing. Any aspirant to the throne was a fool to leave any relative alive that might be a threat. So David assumes that is what has happened. But what he doesn't do is pursue Absalom. He is told by Jonadab, this wonderful friend of Amnon's, that this has been in Absalom's heart ever since the day Amnon violated Tamar. So Jonadab has known all along Amnon is facing the death penalty and hasn't bothered to warn him. Jonadab figured, "Absalom is on his way up. I can ingratiate myself with David by biding my time and when it happens, I'll tell David all about it." So he tells David, "Don't sweat it. It's not all your sons. It's just Amnon." So he comforts the king and makes a few points. What a delightful friend

II Samuel 13:37:

Now Absalom fled and went to Talmai the son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son every day. So Absalom had fled and gone to Geshur, and was there three years. And the heart of King David longed to go out to Absalom; for he was comforted concerning Amnon, since he was dead.

Absalom flees to his grandfather. Remember he was the son of a Syrian princess. Geshur was a little Syrian country east of Galilee up in the middle of David's sphere of influence. David didn't conquer it because he married into the family. It was within the boundaries of Israel, although it was a separate kingdom. He could easily have taken it if he had wanted to , but he didn't.

Comment from class: Had any of David's family had any religious training? They act like morons.

Bob's response: That is right. The tragedy is that in the culture of that day what Absalom did to Amnon would be looked upon by the people as an heroic deed. His avenging of an insult warranting death was considered normal and to be done. In failing to make Amnon marry Tamar, David caused the death of Amnon. Absalom would never have killed him had he been married to Tamar. Now the people see Absalom as a hero. The law of vengeance was very strong in those days. Even God recognized the right of vengeance. The cities of refuge were God's system to take the right of vengeance and channel it into legal channels. When you killed somebody, you fled to a city of refuge before the avengers, the family of the murdered person, could get to you. The cities were all Levite cities. There the Levites, the teachers of the law, would put you on trial, and if you had not committed a premeditated murder, you would be allowed to live in that city of refuge until the High Priest died, a picture of Jesus Christ setting you free. Then you could go free, and the avenger of blood could not touch you. In fact if he

touched you within the boundaries of that city, he was a murderer and was killed. However if he caught you outside the boundaries of that city before the High Priest died, he could slay you. If you had committed premeditated murder, you were delivered into his hands to be slaughtered. That was the right of vengeance. God recognized that as being totally within their culture. He just channeled it into a legal channel. So, in the eyes of the people, Absalom was a hero. He had done only what any red-blooded Israelite would do if his sister had been violated. So by not bringing Absalom back as a common criminal, David promoted him into a hero. By not punishing Absalom, David begins sowing the seeds of the rebellion of his own son, the loss of his kingdom and a horrible war that slaughters thousands of Jews.

So, what happens when you don't discipline your kiddies when they are little? Not really very much. You just lose them when they are big; innocent people get slaughtered; you lose all authority as a father; you lost all authority as a king; your nation goes down the tube. I would submit to you that God needs the 2nd commandment. He is not a jealous God who is jealous for himself. He is a jealous God, jealous for us. He is totally Holy. He doesn't need obedience to make himself feel good. He is God. He is jealous for us, "If you don't listen to me, if I am not the only God in your life, if you are not totally sold out to me, you will build into your kids perversions or hang-ups that will produce repulsive fruit later on. I don't want that to happen you. I love you. I am jealous for you. Listen to me!"

We will see the further proof next week.

Father, we do thank you for your desperate, in a sense, and jealous love for us, using strong human language to describe how much you deeply desire us not to get hurt. And, Father, we just thank you that you care that much. You care enough to discipline us like a father should, that you do not want us to go down the tube. You do not want our children to go down the tube or our children's children or their children's children, but you want us to walk with you in obedience in the freedom and the wholeness that goes with being totally sold out to Jesus Christ, totally in bondage to His will, and therefore not in bondage to anything else. Thank you, Father, for your inexorable love that pursues us and will not let us go, that is relentless in its mercy and grace that will take us the whole trip and hurt as much as you have to hurt us in order to redeem us and make us yours. Thanks you, Father, in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Back to Bob Roe's Index Page](#)

