

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic.,
3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 8A
SECOND SAMUEL
CHAPTER 13**

INTRODUCTION

When a person commits a sin, it always affects the people around him whether directly or indirectly. In some cases, the results can be devastating — people are hurt, lives are lost, families and friendships are broken.

David had confessed and repented of his sin of adultery and the LORD God had forgiven him. But according to the judgment given to him through Nathan, the consequences of his sins would have to take its course. The fulfilment of the judgment is described in chapters 13 and 14.

The events chronicled in this chapter involved five key people, namely Absalom, Tamar, Amnon, Jonadab and David. They are recorded for our learning, as Paul noted in his exhortation to the Christians in Rome (Romans 15:4): *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

In our society today, there are the Amnons who care only for themselves; the Jonadabs who are cunningly wise; the Tamars who are victims of sexual abuse; and the Absaloms who patiently wait to take revenge.

Our diligent and prayerful study should reap valuable lessons for our spiritual growth and benefit.

COMMENTARY

Amnon Loves Tamar—13:1-20

Amnon was the eldest son of David, the crown prince and heir apparent to the throne (2 Samuel 3:2). He “loved” Tamar. The Hebrew word for “love” (*ahab*) is used to describe God’s love towards man, and to describe human love one for another, including family love and sexual love. The context determines the meaning of the word. In this case, Amnon’s love for Tamar was not the kind of love that sought the well-being of the object. Amnon’s love, as we shall see, was an obsession borne out of consummate lust for Tamar, his half-sister. Tamar was introduced as fair or beautiful and a “virgin” (Hebrew *betulah*), a woman of marriageable age. She was the king’s daughter and therefore very well guarded because the king might have plans for her to be married to a powerful ally. Hence it was not easy for Amnon to do anything to her. He and Tamar understandably had a standing fraternal relationship like any other brother and sister. But Amnon was so obsessed with lust for Tamar that he fell sick — love-sick (v.2).

Amnon had a friend in Jonadab who was his cousin, the son of David’s brother, Shimeah (1 Samuel 16:9). Jonadab was a very “subtil” man – a cunning and crafty person.¹ He was a man who knew what he

¹ The Hebrew for “subtil” is *hakam* which can be used to mean wise, skilful, shrewd, crafty or prudent. The context determines the appropriate shade of meaning.

wanted and how to get it by fair means and foul. He was the consummate politician. He observed that Amnon was not well and asked him for the reason. When Amnon confided in him, Jonadab suggested a ruse to bring Tamar to him which would involve his father, David. He told Amnon to pretend to be sick. As he was the firstborn, David would be concerned and would visit him, and then Amnon should ask his father for Tamar to nurse and cook for him. The ruse worked. David told Tamar to nurse Amnon, her brother.

Tamar obediently went to Amnon's house and cooked for him. Amnon pretended to be so ill that he could not get up and take the food himself. He told Tamar to bring the food to him in his chamber. When Tamar brought the food to him, Amnon "took hold" of her and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." (13:11) The Hebrew word translated "took hold" is a very strong word which means "grabbed firmly and overpoweringly, with intent." This was worse than rape. It was incest and clearly forbidden in the covenant law.² Tamar refused and tried to reason with her brother. She gave three reasons: such an act was against public opinion in Israel; she would be shamed; and Amnon would be disgraced. It was rather strange for her to suggest to Amnon to ask for her hand in marriage from their father David. Either she was trying to use this excuse to free herself from

Amnon or the practice was acceptable in spite of the law. The former reason would be more plausible.³ Amnon would not listen to her and used force to subdue and rape her.

After that, Amnon suddenly hated her. No explanation was given for the change in his feelings. This showed that what he felt was not true love but a lustful desire. Could it be that he was convicted by Tamar's reasons? If that was so, why wouldn't he release her without further action? After raping her, he told her to "Get up, and get out." Tamar pleaded with him that this evil of sending her away after raping her was worse than raping her. Again Amnon would not listen to her. He called his servant to cast "*this woman*" out and bolt the door after her so that she could not make a forced re-entry (v.17)! Observe that the word "*woman*" was written in italic which meant that it was not in the original language. But the King James Translators translated correctly since the demonstrative pronoun "this" was in the feminine. The fact that Amnon refused to address her by name demonstrated the contempt he now had for her. He treated Tamar like trash – this would be the modern term of describing his dastardly action.

There was nothing that Tamar could do about being treated so shamefully. She put ashes on her head, rent her multi-coloured dress, covered her head with her hand and

² Leviticus 18:9 -- The nakedness of thy sister, the daughter of thy father, or daughter of thy mother, *whether she be* born at home, or born abroad, *even* their nakedness thou shalt not uncover. Deuteronomy 27:22 Cursed *be* he that lieth with his sister, the daughter of his father, or the daughter of his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.

³ Abraham married his half sister from a different mother. Genesis 20:12 And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. This was before the covenant law was given to Moses.

ran away crying. The message of Tamar was loud and obvious. She was no longer a virgin! Absalom, her brother, found her and after discerning what had happened, counselled her not to say anything but to calm down and to consider that Amnon was her brother. He took Tamar into his house and protected her. Tamar remained “desolate” – deserted, devastated and ashamed in Absalom’s house. Amnon’s deed was evil and wicked. He cheated and trapped Tamar; ignored her when she tried to reason with him, forcefully raped her, and then hated, despised and banished her. He ruined her life. Her behaviour was like that of a widow whose husband had just died!

David’s Reaction—13:21-22

When David heard “all these things” concerning the outrage of Tamar’s modesty and ultimate humiliation, he burned with fury and anger. His anger should have led him to punish Amnon and vindicate Tamar but he did nothing. Amnon got away scot-free and Tamar did not receive any remedy for the humiliation and pain she suffered. David probably loved Amnon for he was the eldest and his heir to the throne. Perhaps it was difficult for him to punish Amnon because he felt morally disqualified to do so as his children knew what he had done in the past. If that was true, David put himself in an awkward situation as he could not even criticize his own children! Perhaps, in his eyes, Tamar was expendable. Perhaps, he did not wish to hurt Amnon. We can merely speculate on the reason for David’s non-response.

Absalom, on the other hand, maintained a cold disposition toward Amnon, saying neither good nor bad

to him. But in his heart, Absalom harboured a deep hatred for Amnon. He was patiently waiting for the opportunity to avenge the evil done to his sister.

Absalom Kills Amnon—13:23-39

Two full years had passed. It was sheep shearing time in Judah. It was regarded as a time of festivities. Absalom’s sheep was being sheared at Baal-hazor, a little place north-east of Bethel. As it was a time of celebration, he invited all the king’s sons and the king (his father). David declined the invitation but he gave Absalom his blessing. Then Absalom asked specifically for Amnon, the crown prince, to grace the celebration. Although David asked why Amnon in particular should go, he did not pursue the matter. Amnon and all the king’s sons went.

Absalom had arranged with his servants to kill Amnon. He told them to be courageous as they would be acting under his command. Amnon came and was murdered by Absalom’s men. When all the other king’s sons saw what had happened, they fled.

When David received news that Absalom had killed all his sons, he was struck with grief and laid on the ground. He had, in a way, contributed to this terrible event because he had permitted all his sons to attend the celebration, especially Amnon.

Jonadab, the one who had previously advised Amnon on how to seduce Tamar, told David that only Amnon was dead. In other words, he knew for certain that Absalom wanted to avenge the evil done to his sister, Tamar. And when the rest of the king’s sons returned to Jerusalem, Jonadab informed the king that his sons had come back.

Absalom fled to Talmi, the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. Talmi was Absalom's grandfather on his mother's side (2 Samuel 3:3). The land of Geshur was a buffer state between Israel and Syria to the north of Gilead. His flight there prevented him from being punished for his crime. But, at the same time, he forfeited the chance of becoming the next king. Absalom stayed in Geshur for three years. David longed for his son, Absalom, having come to terms with Amnon's death but he did not send messengers to recall Absalom. He was in a dilemma. He loved and longed to see Absalom but his sense of justice (as father and king, he was the chief justice) would not allow him to do so without punishing him. Torn, he did nothing.

as soon as possible or it would be too late.

David's failure to mete out justice resulted in the death of a son and the exile of another. His home life was a mess. This was, in part, due to his polygamous lifestyle. Just because God did not punish David for his polygamy did not mean that He condoned it. Here the family dispute demonstrated the evil of polygamy!

PRACTICAL VALUE

God forgave David's sin of adultery and murder when he confessed and repented. There was no record that David ever committed the same sin again. Sincere confession and repentance must be present for true reconciliation to take place. But that did not mean that there would be no consequences for the sin committed.

David failed twice when he did nothing about Amnon's sin and Absalom's sin. It could be because he loved them or it could be because he felt morally disqualified to punish them. If that was so, then how could he sit in judgment of other cases?

If he had punished Amnon, Absalom would probably not have taken steps to avenge Tamar. When Absalom murdered Amnon, surely some form of punishment was due? Sin and the sinner must be dealt with

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: 2 Samuel 13:1-14; Romans 6:1-14.

Tuesday: 2 Samuel 13:15-22; Galatians 5:19-21.

Wednesday: 2 Samuel 13:23-39; Hebrews 12:6-13.

Thursday: 2 Samuel 13:1-39.

Friday: 2 Samuel 13:1-39.

Analysis:

Text	Practical Value
2 Samuel 13:1-14	
2 Samuel 13:15-22	
2 Samuel 13:23-39	

2. How should we respond to someone like Jonadab who teaches craftiness and deceit?

3. Could "love" turn so swiftly to "hate"? What could have caused such a drastic turn around in the case of Amnon?

4. What would have been a just reaction from king David?

Discussion Questions

1. How should Amnon have dealt with his feelings for Tamar?

5. Was it right for Absalom to take matters into his own hands?

6. Was God's judgment upon David fulfilled in chapter 13?
