The Consequences of Sin

Courage to Lead Series

2 Samuel 13:1-39

Pastor Bryan Clark

I mentioned last week that our culture is cooking up a dangerous recipe. The ingredients basically would be these: we've all but dismissed the concept of sin; we have diminished our understanding of the holiness of God; we have so exalted our view of ourselves and this need to feel good, that you put those together and it is a recipe for disaster. Because of that recipe, we've failed to take sin seriously. Even among Christians it's interesting how many Christians still think that because God is gracious, and He's forgiving, and He's merciful that I can sin without consequence and somehow God just pushes the delete button and everything's going to be okay. The reality is that sin is devastating and it has devastating consequences, even to someone who is forgiven.

That's what we want to talk about today. If you have a Bible, turn with us to 2 Samuel, Chapter 13. Last week we didn't get to the last paragraph of chapter 12. Basically the idea is after the drama of chapter 12, David's the king; he has a job to do; he goes back to war, finishes off the Ammonites; God blesses him and life has to go on. So as much as David is still winning victories as the king, what's about to happen to his own family is where the devastation will be felt. Chapter 13, verse 1:

> **Now it was after this that Absalom the son of David had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar, and Amnon the son of David loved her.** (*NASB, 2 Sam. 1:1)

So we have an introduction to three new characters: we met a couple of them before in the genealogical record of chapter 3, but here they become players in the story. So Absalom is David's third son; Chileab is the second son—we don't know what happened to him—he's just out of the picture. So Absalom is the third son, and then we find out he has a sister by the name of Tamar. It's interesting that Tamar is not identified as David's daughter, but is identified as Absalom's sister. It may have something to do with David's connection with his own kids; it may also be kind of a hint that Absalom's going to be a player in this chapter. And then we're told that Tamar is **beautiful**. Now when was the last time we heard a statement like that? And the answer is: the opening of chapter 11 ...that **Bathsheba was beautiful**. There are a number of ways in which the writer connects this story back to chapter 11 to understand this is an outflow; these are the consequences of David's sin; so throughout the chapter you just have these little hints, these little clues and reminders.

And then we're told that Amnon is David's oldest son. At this point in the story, we as the readers know that Solomon will be the next king of Israel, but they didn't know that in Israel—and so at this point Amnon is the crown prince. He is the one that will succeed David on the throne, so if David was to die in battle—in the battle against the Ammonites in chapter 12—it would have been Amnon who would have succeeded him as king. That's an important detail in the story, and then we're told that *he loves Tamar*. The word *love* is kind of unfortunate here. It's not talking about love like a brother really loves his sister. It's a sexual term in the sense that he loves her—a lustful desire to pursue her sexually. So in the very first verse you already have kind of a plot that is starting to unfold.

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. But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother; and Jonadab was a very shrewd man. He said to him, "O son of the king, why are you so depressed morning after morning? Will you not tell me?" Then Amnon said to him, "I am in love with Tamar, the sister of my brother Absalom." Jonadab then said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill; when your father comes to see 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." (Vs. 2-6)

Amnon so lustfully desires his half sister that it's basically making him sick, physically ill day by day. The statement that she was a virgin and basically he had no way to get to her—both of those reflect her integrity, her character. She was a princess. She was the daughter of King David. She was a virgin and at this point in the story her future is as promising as one could possibly imagine. In the ancient world, likely the virgin daughters of the king were kept separate from the brothers, separate from the men. Literally access to her would have been very difficult and so, especially if she was a person of integrity, not interested in such things, it was unlikely to happen.

Other scholars see in Amnon's words a little bit of a kind of cynical statement related to David. In other words, the challenge is that she is a virgin and she's living her life with integrity and so it's hard to get access to her. If she was married, then he could just commit adultery, kill her husband, just like his father. So this is a more difficult assignment. That's kind of the idea if you take it as a more cynical statement.

So he runs into Jonadab who is described as his **friend**. It's actually his cousin, and we're told that Jonadab is **shrewd**. The word carries the idea of kind of politically shrewd. He knows how to work the system in order to advantage himself. All through this story there are moments when the players had opportunity to seek counsel and, at each point along the way, had they received different counsel, the story could have been different. In this moment, imagine if Amnon would have spoken to Jonadab but Jonadab would have been more like Samuel, and he would have said, "Amnon, what you're thinking is wrong and it's evil and it's wicked, and you need to repent of this, and you need to go a different way." The story would have been dramatically different. Jonadab knows this is the crown prince—this is the heir to the throne—this is an opportunity to gain advantage, so he comes up with a plan. It's important to understand that Amnon's decision to listen to this counsel at this moment in the story will cost him his life. It's kind of a significant moment. So he gives him the plan: Talk to your dad; pretend like you're sick; you want your sister to come give you some food. Whether Jonadab understood what Amnon was going to do beyond that is kind of hard to tell. Verse 7:

Then David sent to the house for Tamar, saying, "Go now to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare food for him." 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. 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." But she answered him, "No, my brother, do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this disgraceful thing! As for me, where could I get rid of my reproach? And as for you, you will be like one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you." However, he would not listen to her; since he was stronger than she, he violated her and lay with her. (Vs. 7-14)

So you can't miss the opening of this paragraph: *David sends Tamar to Amnon*. We talked about the word *send* as a key word in chapter 11, chapter 12, and here it shows up again, again connecting that what happens in this chapter is a consequence of David's sin. So David sends his daughter into this trap. What he understood at this moment is kind of hard to determine. So Tamar brings food to Amnon; he won't eat it, asks everyone to leave—it's just the two of them. He wants her to go into the bedroom. I'm guessing at this point she still did not suspect what he was about to do. It's important to remember, at this moment she is the king's princess. She is the king's virgin daughter; her future is unimaginably promising—and then literally in a moment that all changes. So alone in the bedroom, he grabs her and he says to her, "**My sister, come lie with me**." Her response: "**My brother**..." Whether they actually said that, or the writer is just simply trying to emphasize the wickedness of what's about to happen, the phrase, "Come and lie with me," is kind of a crude Hebrew phrase, and it's never used for sexual relations that are appropriate before God. It's always in reference to some deviant sexual behavior outside of God's plan and purpose. So it's kind of a crude language. She responds. She has to be absolutely terrified in this moment. She realizes in this moment everything could change. She speaks in strong language. She again demonstrates herself to be a person of character and integrity. She wants nothing to do with this and it must stop. She says, "**Do not do this disgraceful** (could be translated wicked) **thing. Such a thing is not done in Israel.**" The pagan nations around them had all kinds of strange sexual practices, but not in Israel. This kind of thing simply wasn't done. It was forbidden by the law and it was clearly wicked behavior. She identifies, *"If you do this to me, I will be a reproach for the rest of my life,"* and in the ancient Hebrew culture, she's right about that. She also says, "*You will be perceived as some kind of a fool for the rest of your life."* When she gives the statement, "*Maybe the king will give me to you*," at that point she is trying anything to get this to stop so she might escape. I don't think she ever imagined that the king would actually give his daughter to marry one of his sons. She's just trying anything to get out of this horrific moment. But Amnon will hear none of it. He's stronger. The text records the event in three verbs—three kind of crude verbs—he basically grabbed her, he overpowered her, and he raped her. It is just an absolutely horrific moment in the story.

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. Tamar put ashes on her head and tore her long-sleeved garment which was on her; and she put her hand on her head and went away, crying aloud as she went. (Vs. 15-19)

So almost immediately **Amnon hated her**—not a mild hate, but a significant hate. *He hates her with a hatred greater than the lust with which he desired her.* Now psychologists all have differing opinions on what exactly was going on here. Perhaps he, in that moment, came to his senses, realized the horrific act he had just done, and in that moment saw his own shame, and he saw his

own guilt, and his own wickedness, but rather than facing that himself, he turns it on Tamar, as if somehow it was her fault, and he is just sickened by her and wants her out. The language is actually very strong. She responds by saying, "*If you do that, that's even more wicked than what you've already done to me*." Now in our culture we don't really understand that, but in the ancient culture, for Amnon to have done what he did to her and then literally throw her out, meant she had no hope and no future at all. The only hope she had is if he would honor her by taking her as his wife, and that's what she's asking for. But he is sickened by her; he hates her; he wants nothing to do with her. The text says, "**Throw the woman out**." He doesn't even call her by name, but the actual Hebrew is literally, "**Throw this thing out and lock the door."** It's just reckless and it's crude and it's unfeeling. It's just again a horrible moment—lock the door as if this whole thing has been her fault! So she is thrown out; the door is locked.

We're told that she is wearing this very special garment that identified the virgin daughters of the king. The only other place in the Old Testament this description of a garment is given is in the story of Joseph and his coat of many colors. This is the exact same wording—some sort of a multi-colored, beautiful garment that identified her. But in that moment she puts ashes on her head, which indicates her mourning. She tears the sleeves of her garments off which indicates she's no longer a virgin. Her life has been devastated in a moment and she runs weeping.

> **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." 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. But Absalom did not speak to Amnon either good or bad; for Absalom hated Amnon because he had violated his sister Tamar.** (Vs. 20-22)

So she runs into Absalom, her brother. This is another one of those moments in the story where the story could have been different. If she would have run into someone with kindness and with compassion, who would have cared for her, but rather she runs into her brother Absalom, who for whatever reason, quickly figured out what had transpired and he sees this as an opportune moment. He is going to take his sister's tragedy and use it to his own advantage. Amnon was first to succeed the king. Chileab was second, who was now out of the picture, and Absalom is third. So the only person that stands between Absalom and the throne is Amnon, so now he figures out: this is my chance to eliminate the crown prince. So basically what he says to Tamar is that this is complicated; just trust me with this. "This is your brother; this is the crown prince; we need to do this delicately." So the idea is we just need to lay low, let some time pass, and I'll take care of it. So basically we're told that **Absalom hated Amnon** and was going to plot his revenge for what he had done to his sister.

The other interesting part of that paragraph is the statement related to David. We're wondering: where is David and what is David going to do? The text tells us that *David did hear about it and it made him angry.* But that's it! David has just heard that his own son has raped his daughter and his only response is he's angry and virtually does nothing about it! The way it's written in the text is to just catch us off guard—that David, while he's a courageous warrior on the battlefront, is a highly passive, ineffective father at home. Perhaps because of his own immorality and sin, he believes he has lost his moral authority. I mean, what is he going to say to Amnon? Is he going to say, "Do as I say, not as I do."? Is he going to say, "You shouldn't have done that!" And Amnon is going to say, "What are you talking about? You did that, and at least I didn't kill somebody." So David virtually does nothing. This is another moment in the story where, as a result of the consequences of David's sin, he is passive and inactive, and this is going to lead to more tragedy in his family!

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. Absalom came to the king and said, "Behold now, your servant has sheepshearers; please let the king and his servants go with your servant." But the king said to Absalom, "No, my son, we should not all go, for we will be burdensome to you." Although he urged him, he would not go, but blessed him. Then Absalom said, "If not, please let my brother Amnon go with us." And the king said to him, "Why should he go with you?" But when Absalom urged him, he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him. (Vs. 23-27)

So now two years have passed. Absalom has been biding his time and now it is his opportunity. Sheep shearing time was like harvest time for the farmers. It was also a party time. So Absalom invites the king about fifteen miles to the northeast of Jerusalem. But David isn't going to go. You'd have to think Absalom was pretty convinced David would not go. It appears at this point in David's life he's settled into a fairly sedentary lifestyle—not interested. So Absalom asks that the crown prince go to represent the king, "*Send Amnon*." Its obvious David is suspicious. There's stuff going on in his family. He's suspicious about the motives of Absalom and even asks, "*Why do you want Amnon to go?*" But rather than David being decisive as a leader and a father, Absalom talks David into it and he sends all of his sons.

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." 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. (Vs. 28-29)

There's a part of this that should again sound familiar. The plan is to get him intoxicated, then kill him. Again it hints back to David with Uriah and David's plan. Now this isn't just some guy; this isn't just their brother—this is the crown prince of Israel! This is the next king of Israel they're killing, so this is a significant moment! He has too much to drink and Absalom's men follow the orders. They kill Amnon and the rest of the sons flee for their lives.

Now it was while they were on the way that the report came to David, saying, "Absalom has struck down all the king's sons, and not one of them is left." Then the king arose, tore his clothes and lay on the ground; and all his servants were standing by with clothes torn. Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother, responded, "Do not let my lord suppose they have put to death all the young men, the king's sons, for Amnon alone is dead; because by the intent of Absalom this has been determined since the day that he violated his sister Tamar. Now therefore, do not let my lord the king take the report to heart, namely, 'all the king's sons are dead,' for only Amnon is dead." (Vs. 30-33**)**

So David receives word that all of his sons are dead. Now you remember back to last week when Nathan the prophet told David, "As a result of your sin of killing Uriah the Hittite, the sword will not depart from your own house." Now several years have passed and David must have lived with the fear every day, wondering, "What does that mean and who of my family will die?" So when the word comes that all of David's sons were dead, you'd have to imagine that there were many sleepless nights where David imagined: will this be what Nathan was referring to? So he is immediately devastated and is weeping. But then Jonadab shows up. He seems to have a knack for showing up at the right place at the right time to gain some sort of political advantage. So he says to the king, "*You know they are not all dead, only Amnon is dead. The rest of your sons are fine."*

But he finishes that by basically saying, *"But, David, you should have seen this coming. Absalom has been plotting this for two years in order to avenge that Amnon raped his sister and, David, you did nothing about it."* That's kind of the heartbeat of this statement. He is telling David that Amnon raped Absalom's sister and David did nothing, so Absalom took matters into his own hands. So it's a pretty tense moment in the story.

> **Now Absalom had fled. And the young man who was the watchman raised his eyes and looked, and behold, many people were coming from the road behind him by the side of the mountain. Jonadab said to the king, "Behold, the king's sons have come; according to your servant's word, so it happened." As soon as he had finished speaking, behold, the king's sons came and lifted their voices and wept; and also the king and all his servants wept very bitterly. 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. *The heart of* King David longed to go out to Absalom; for he was comforted concerning Amnon, since he was dead.** (Vs. 34-39**)**

So the sons—the rest of the sons—come home and they are bitterly weeping and mourning, "The crown prince is dead!" Absalom goes quite a distance away to find refuge, basically with his mom's relatives, and he is there for three years, which means at the end of three years something will happen. The end of that paragraph is not clear. Is it saying that David now has mourned the loss of Amnon and is ready to pursue Absalom to kill him? Or is it saying he has mourned the loss of Amnon and wants to pursue Absalom to bring him home and to reconcile him? The text isn't clear. We won't know the answer to that until next week.

So a couple of things to think about as we wrap this up this morning. I asked you this question two weeks ago; I'm going to ask you the same question this morning: Where do you find yourself in the story? This is another very intense chapter, so where do you find yourself in the story?

Some of you here this morning identify with David. There is no question that what's happening is a consequence of David's sin. The chapter is full of little reminder and clues all the way through that tell us that. In chapter 11 David modeled two primary behaviors for his sons—sexual immorality and murder. So now you have his two sons committing sexual immorality and murder, and David understands this is part of the consequence of his sin with Bathsheba and her husband. So some of you identify with David. If you could, you would go back and change some of the disastrous choices you have made. If you could do it all over again, you would do it in a heartbeat, because you know there were disastrous choices that you made, that even though you've been forgiven by the grace of God, the consequences have been real and they have been lasting, and they have been devastating. There are some of you that, if you could, you would come up here this morning and you would stand beside me and you would say to everyone else in the audience, "Listen to what he's saying before you go so far down the path and do something that will have devastating consequences for the rest of your life." It is not too late to stop and to rethink the path you're traveling. For those of you that identify with David, you can't go back and change the past. It is true that you were forgiven just like David was a forgiven man, but the consequences are real and they are painful. All you can do is, from this day forward, choose to do the right thing and God will bless you for that.

Some of you identify with Amnon. If the truth were known, you're engaged in some sort of sexual immorality, whether it's sex outside of marriage, whether it's some sort of an adulterous relationship, whether you have some sort of an addiction to pornography, you identify with Amnon

and his sexual sin. Or perhaps some of you say, "Well, I'm not exactly an Amnon. I mean, what he did here was horrific." Let me remind you: if you are engaged in pornography, you are feeding an industry that is devastating men and women's lives all over the world. Even the secular world gets the level of devastation this is causing. It is common in our culture for everyone to point fingers at all the different social injustices of our world. I am absolutely convinced the number one social injustice in the world today is sexual sin. If we could just clean up this one area of our world, the transformation in our communities, in our nation and in peoples' lives would be dramatic! We would have so many resources left over, we could easily address every other social injustice that bothers you. So before you look and point a finger at everyone else guilty of all these injustices in our world, you need to start by looking in the mirror and making sure that you, yourself, are walking with sexual purity before a holy God.

Some of you identify with Absalom. In your heart there is anger and bitterness and you're just unwilling to let it go. Someone has deeply wounded you. Somebody has devastated you and you are absolutely determined not to grant them forgiveness. Somehow, someway you're determined to make them pay. Even though Christ has lavished His grace and His mercy and His forgiveness on you, you for whatever reason aren't willing to extend that same forgiveness to someone else. How long will you continue to hold on to that? How many people—yourself and others—will need to be devastated before you're willing to face that issue in your life?

And sadly, very sadly, some of you this morning identify with Tamar. This text reaches deep into your soul and you feel the pain, you feel the horror, you feel the reality that somewhere in your story somebody took advantage of you sexually. Someone who decided that sin is no big deal and has no real consequence devastated you with some sort of sexual sin—sexual trauma. Statistics show that one out of every three women, one out of every five men has experienced some level of sexual abuse, and many of those a deep level of sexual trauma!

Wherever you find yourself in the story, we want to help. Some of you over the last two weeks have been absolutely miserable. We talked about sexual sin in chapter 11. We talked about pornography. Some of you have over the last two weeks felt the shame; you feel the guilt. You hate yourself. You promise every time, "I will never do it again," but the reality that you're coming to is that you cannot stop. How far does that have to go? How much more do you need to devastate your own life and the lives of the people around you before you'll have the courage to step up and say, "I have a problem; I need some help." Waiting for you are caring, compassionate people that want you to feel the joy and the freedom of being set free from that bondage. Wherever you find yourself in this story, we want to make resources available to you. In the bulletin this morning, there are all kinds of resources for you, wherever you find yourself in the story. We have groups that can help you be set free from some sort of a sexual addiction. We have groups that can help you if you have a spouse that's sexually addictive. We have groups that can help you if you've been through some sort of sexual abuse. Whatever it is, we just want to help.

Our Father, we are sobered again by this part of the story. It all started one spring evening when David thought his sin was no big deal, which led to a cover-up, which led to a murder, which now has led to utter devastation in David's family. God, I have no doubt that the pain he feels in this part of the story is deeper than anything he felt in the Wilderness School of Leadership. God, wherever we find ourselves this morning, may we have the courage to do what is necessary to find healing, to find hope, to find forgiveness. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE
Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1987, 1988,
The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.
Lincoln Berean Church, 6400 S. 70th, Lincoln, NE 68516 (402) 483-6512
Copyright 2017 – Bryan Clark. All rights reserved.

February 11/12, 2017

The Consequences of Sin

Courage to Lead

2 Samuel 13:1-39

Pastor Bryan Clark

Opening Discussion

1. Does God's forgiveness remove all consequences of sin? Why or why not?

2. What happens when we dismiss the significance of what some might consider "little sins?"

3. Bryan stated that the ingredients to a recipe for disaster in our culture are a dismissing of a concept of sin, a diminishing of the holiness of God and an exaltation of ourselves and our need to feel good all the time. Do you see this in our culture? What are some examples? How can we as Christians get caught up in this thinking?

Bible Study

1. Read II Samuel 13:1-22. Even in an ancient culture, what Amnon did was considered a wicked and disgraceful thing. What do you think were some of the cultural factors in the home of David that led to this tragedy? Do you see similar factors in our culture today?

2. There are several moments in this story when the outcome could've been altered. Identify some of those. What do we learn from this? What happens when we get so consumed with our sin that we fail to stop until it is too late? How is David's sin and Amnon's sin similar in this way? What was the consequence to everyone involved?

3. Many people in our culture consider most sexual immorality to be a sin with no real victim. People say that what happens in private is no one else's business. If they are two consenting adults then what's the real issue? The truth is that sexual sin is responsible for more social breakdowns and human devastation than probably any other behavior in the culture. Sexual abuse and sexual trauma is overwhelming our communities. The consequences of the so-called sexual revolution of the 60's and 70's have been devastating. The cost to the breakdown of our social fabric and the devastation to people's lives would be in the billions of dollars every year. In what ways have you been touched by this devastation?

4. Read II Samuel 13:23-39. How does a passive David play into both the sexual sin and murder in this text? Why would a courageous leader be so passive and ineffective at home?

5. One learning from this story relates to who we choose to talk to in our hour of need. How might the story have changed if Amnon would have sought counsel from someone

else? What if David had responded differently? What if Tamar had confided in someone who would've handled the situation differently? What if Absalom would've handled it differently? What if David had trusted his instincts when he was suspicious of Absalom's motives for wanting Amnon at the sheepshearing party?

6. What were David's two big sins in chapter 11 and what are the two big sins in chapter 13? Is that merely a coincidence? What did David model for his sons? Does God's forgiveness automatically change David's impact on his sons?

Application

1. The sinful choices in chapters 11 and 13 lead to devastating consequences. In both stories there were many places along the way where sin could have been confessed and the devastation limited. What do we learn from this? Each of us needs to ask what is necessary for us to get serious about our sin.

2. In moments of great temptation and great pain, it's obvious that it's critically important who we talk to. How can we make sure we are talking to the right people?

3. LBC has many resources for those willing to face their sin and for those deeply wounded by someone else's sin. Review what you know about those resources and where one might go to find help.

Copyright 2016 – Bryan Clark. All rights reserved.