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A Family Affair

II Samuel 13

Intro: We've come to a new section in the book – the story of Absalom. This tale of the rise & fall of the man who would be king will take up the next 6 chapters.

Ch13 lays down the foundation for Absalom's attempted coup & it is a very sordid tale to be sure; there's sex, murder & political intrigue thru-out but there is a danger for us here as well. Like any road-side accident or similar tragedy, the biggest problem first responders can have is with the large number of rubber-neckers it attracts. People slow down when they go past, not to stop & help or do any work, just to **take a look**. The danger for us today is the same: we can cruise slowly past this story, cringing at the devastation of sin but failing to allow it to **help** us, to allow it to **work** in our lives by teaching us to not just **abhor** sin but to **hate** it!

David is reigning over Israel but sin & death are reigning over his own family & he's about to discover that the consequences of forgiven sin are still very painful. There are 5 main characters in this chapter: 4 men & 1 woman. As we will see, the woman in this story seems to be the only 1 who understands the gravity & consequences of sexual sin in Israel but unfortunately, she's also the only 1 in the story who can't do anything to prevent it.

1-2- Absalom & Tamar were full brother & sister, children of David by his wife Maacah, daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur, a small Aramean kingdom near by the Sea of Galilee. Amnon was David's 1st-born son by his wife Ahinoam. Being 1st-born made Amnon the crown prince: 1st in line for the throne. Absalom was 3rd in line & was of royal blood.

Absalom was known for his good looks & apparently, it ran in the family. Amnon was infatuated with Tamar (his half-sister) to the point where he made himself sick thinking about her. But Amnon had a problem: when the writer states that Tamar was a virgin; that meant she was **available for marriage** – but not to Amnon b/c marriage between half-siblings is not only unnatural, it was also expressly forbidden in God's Law (**Lev 18:9-11, 20:17; Deut 27:22**). Amnon thought he loved Tamar but he'll soon prove by his actions that he wasn't in love lover her, he only lusted after her.

3-5- friend- that's a joke! Jonadab (a cousin) was no friend to anyone in this story. He should have told Amnon he was crazy; that's what a true friend would do. A true friend will tell you the truth no matter how uncomfortable it may be. Anyone that makes it easy for us to sin is certainly not much of a friend. In fact,

b/c he follows Jonadab's advice, Amnon ends up becoming a rapist, committing incest & eventually gets himself killed b/c of it. With friends like that...

Absalom's sister- If Absalom is your brother wouldn't that make Tamar your sister too? In his lust, Amnon can't allow himself to call Tamar "my sister." This shows that the **power of lust** is strong enough to **twist** our perception of reality.

6-11- Jonadab's wicked plan was just the medicine Amnon needed. He perked up enough to where he now had to pretend to be sick when David came to visit him. If Amnon's request in **vs6** seems strange its b/c it is! It's childish! What else do you call it when someone refuses to eat food unless it's served just the way they want it? Does David call him on this? No! He indulges him. 1 of David's greatest failures as a father is that he would rather indulge his children than confront or correct them. Maybe he felt guilty about not spending enough time with them or maybe he felt that he'd lost the moral high ground. Regardless of the reasons, the results of David's failure will be devastating. Note: David's indulgence went so far, he ultimately had to bear some responsibility b/c he **sent** Tamar to Amnon!

12-13- **No**- having expressed his true intentions, Tamar resists! She wasn't just being disagreeable, Tamar could see that Amnon's intentions were evil & **disgraceful** (**nebalah**: profane, **godless**). She argued that if Amnon did this, he would be 1 of the **nebal'm** in Israel; not just a **fool** but a **wicked pervert** or a **godless wretch**. The term is used of those who commit flagrant sexual offenses: rape; premarital sex or homosexual relations = godlessness. Tamar didn't just call Amnon's sin for what it was, she begged him to consider the consequences, both for her & for him. Finally, she tells him to just speak to the king & he would give her to him. Now whether she was just stalling for time & grasping at straws in an emergency, this last statement doesn't show David's character in a very good light. We've already seen that this Amnon/Tamar union was grossly unnatural & explicitly unlawful but Tamar knows that her father was indulgent to a fault w/ his kids. If he were pestered enough, he would even allow this unlawful union. Tamar knew she could count on her father; sadly, she knew she could only count on him to do the wrong thing.

14-17- **forced**- Tamar protested & resisted - to no avail. Amnon was stronger & that's all there was to it. Amnon had his way with Tamar, which is shocking & infuriating enough but nothing prepares us for the shock that follows. Amnon **hated** Tamar! Amnon was a passionate guy but his attraction to Tamar was devoid of any real love. True love would never violate another person's body just to satisfy selfish desires nor would it force someone to disobey God's word. Amnon was only attracted to Tamar for what he could get out of her, not out of

any concern for her well being.

Not only did he hate her, he wanted to get rid of her quick! Sexual sins usually produce that kind of emotional damage. When you treat people like objects to be used, you end up discarding them like broken toys or old clothes.

But Tamar resists again, but why? This was adding insult to injury. No longer a virgin, Tamar was no longer a good prospect for marriage & she could no longer stay in the royal housing w/ the other virgins. To redeem the situation, Amnon either had to marry her or at least pay her the bride price ([Ex 22:16-17](#); [Deut 22:28-29](#)) so she could support herself. But Amnon was again deaf to her pleas. He even told his servant, “**Put this out!**” Tamar had Amnon pegged: he was a **godless wretch**, he had far more glands than brains (which is why he needed Jonadab). Sadly, this attitude of Amnon’s is perfectly reproduced in our modern media culture: loveless, bitter sex is promoted & even glamorized in contemporary music, films, on TV & in print. This is what today’s youth feed their minds on the most.

18-22- When Absalom saw his sister, he knew immediately what had happened. Why didn’t Tamar go to her father? Probably b/c she knew nothing would be done. It might be b/c Absalom (**full brother**) tells her to let it go for now. Was this b/c he was as indulgent of his siblings sin as his father? No; his crafty mind was already at work on a scheme that would enable him to kill 3 birds w/ 1 stone: avenge Tamar, eliminate Amnon & put him next in line for the throne.

Now, **King David heard of all these things** – he heard how Amnon had used him, getting his permission for Tamar to go to his house. He heard how Amnon had abused Tamar & then disposed of her; how she ran thru the streets weeping w/ her robe ripped. He heard how she was now a destroyed woman, living in shame at Absalom’s house. David heard of all these things & he was **very angry!** That’s good, but that’s all & that’s not good. David was livid – furious; he could scarcely contain his rage. But, unfortunately, that’s exactly what he did.

David was right to be angry. He had just cause for it but it should have led to a righteous result! His just anger should have led to justice. By law, Amnon should have been punished for his crime & Tamar should have been publicly exonerated. But neither of those things happened. Instead, Amnon is not held accountable, Tamar receives no justice or compensation & Absalom is given a plausible excuse for revenge. David heard; was angry & did nothing!

Now, some may say that David is compromised by his own past failures. Being an adulterer & murderer is not firm footing for exercising moral authority but that’s exactly what David’s responsibility was here. His position was the epitome

of justice both in Israel & in his own family. As both father & king, David is charged w/ maintaining justice whether he's compromised or not. His sordid past may explain David's failure to act but it doesn't excuse it. David could have confronted his sons, he could've stepped in & prevented most if not all of this mess; but he's broken by his own compromise & failure & it leaves him weakened, as a father & a king. Like Eli, David places his fatherly love higher than the will & justice of the Lord. So Amnon goes unpunished; Tamar lives on as damaged goods & Absalom is forced to become a seething, plotting vigilante – but for now, he plays it cool!

23-29- 2 full yrs- Absalom bides his time & makes his plans. Having learned a lesson from Amnon, Absalom gets David to sign off on the king's sons attending his big sheep-shearing shindig. This made David partially responsible for putting Amnon in harm's way. But, when everything was in place & the time was right; Absalom gave the order & the deed was done. Pandemonium ensued, of course. Valet tickets & chauffeur hats were flying everywhere as the rest of the king's boys vacated the scene. Clearly, Amnon wasn't the only 1 who could hate but Absalom's was a more sophisticated kind of hate. It was cool, patient but when the time was right, it was hatred without restraint.

30-36- Note: when David hears that Absalom has killed all his sons, he's not incredulous at all – he believes it! In his heart, David knew Absalom was capable of such a despicable act so he reacts with mourning instead of disbelief. Good thing Jonadab is there to clear things up! Obviously, he knows more than he's letting on to David. I wouldn't doubt that he helped Absalom plan this whole thing. Thus, Jonadab's likely the most dangerous man in the whole story. Everywhere he goes he leaks out evil. Sure he's smart but he lacks integrity; he's crafty but he lacks sincerity. He's a good politician – he gets things done! But, like most politicians, when he's done, you wished he never started.

Even after the rest of his sons arrive back home, David is still weeping bitterly. He lost his eldest son, the crown prince of Israel but David also knows that his lack of corrective action against Amnon contributed to this murder. If David had lived up to his God-given responsibilities & had administered justice according to God's word, Absalom would probably not have felt so free to administer his own brutal correction against his brother.

37-39- Tho he felt free to murder his brother, Absalom doesn't feel like hanging around to find out what his father thinks about it. He can't run to a city of refuge b/c they were only for people who had caused an accidental or unintended death. Absalom killed Amnon in cold blood (premeditated). So, he high-tails it up to Geshur to hang out with the grandparents for a while. Now, he wasn't up

there just to eat cereal & watch Saturday morning cartoons. He's actually hatching another devious plan but **this** 1 will focus on how to take the kingdom away from his father.

What are we to make of **ch13**, where 1 disaster follows after another? It seems as tho the life the David's kingdom is being driven by lust, conniving, weakness & hatred. Tamar (**shattered**), the only one who shows concern for Israel is ignored by justice & unrequited by murder. And **YHWH** is never mentioned thru-out the entire narrative! What's God doing in the midst of this? Has His kingdom gotten out of control; it's direction subject to the whims & sins of man?

It may seem like God has checked out of this scene but that is not the case. What is happening in **ch13** is simply **YHWH fulfilling His word of judgment** against the house of David. **YHWH**, thru Nathan the prophet, had told David that "**the sword shall never depart from your house...**" (**12:10a**). Absalom was the 1st to take up that sword. Tho it appears Israel is going to pot, in truth: God is fulfilling His word. Not that it is always pleasant, but it is dependable.

God doesn't check out of His responsibilities to the universe or to His people. He is there, in the midst of your struggles & failures, bringing His Word to pass. That should be a comfort to us no matter what situation we find ourselves in: blessed or oppressed, fulfilling or failing – God is with us & He is accomplishing His plan for our lives.

Don't allow past sins or to prevent you from using the standard of God's word at home. Just b/c you failed previously doesn't nullify the truth of the Word. We want our families to know the Lord & His expectations & live in the light of His love & grace, not under the judgment of their own sins. We're all called to break the cycle of sin in our families. 😊