

## The Life of David, Sexual Abuse and the Power of Restoration, 2 Samuel 13, 10/5/25

**Pray for Matthew's Family.....**PG-13 Warning. There are some stories they don't include in children's Bibles, and this is definitely one of them. It's the story of Amnon and his rape of his half-sister Tamar in 2 Samuel 13. I considered skipping this chapter because it's so graphic and a difficult topic to address, but at BVC we are committed to preaching the whole counsel of God in his Word, and we don't shy away from the hard stuff, one of our core values is Authenticity and Restoration- and ultimately in the wisdom of God, he knew that we needed at least one story like this.

There are two resources to acknowledge in my preparation for this message. I'm grateful for Pastor Tim Clemens of Grace City, Australia whose teaching on this subject was instrumental for me.<sup>1</sup> Also, I read a book this week in preparation for this sermon, *Rid of my Disgrace* by Justin and Lindsey Holcomb. Both resources I recommend to you if you are walking through this yourself or with someone you love.

Now in case you are considering tuning out this message because you haven't experienced this, let me give you two reasons why this message is for all of us. **1- Sexual Assault and Abuse is pervasive.**<sup>2</sup> **1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men** have been sexually assaulted or abused in their lifetime spanning all ages. Which means you likely know someone, whether you know it or not, or are someone who has been sexually assaulted or abused- which ranges from rape like the story we will read, to unwanted touching to verbal sexual assault to other forms of sexual coercion and violence.

**#2- Preventing sexual assault and abuse is a community project.** As we are going to see from our passage there were many points at which this horrible sin could have been prevented. That's not always the case, we live in a broken, sinful world and it can't always be prevented. But, it's both the active and the passive failures of Tamar's family and the David's household that made it possible for her to suffer what she does. BVC, we have a responsibility for one another. And while we do everything we can to protect our church, especially the most vulnerable, our minors with background checks, references, and protocols, security team, cameras in our building, all of us must be committed to honoring and protecting one another. It's a community project.

So we're going to get into the story and then I want to offer some pastoral hope for those who can relate to this story in one way or another. Now some context is helpful, especially since it's been so long since we've been in 2 Samuel studying the life of David. Chapter 11-12 is the pivotal moment in the book and the rest of David's life, it's the story of David's adultery and the murder of Uriah. And we are told that one of the consequences of his sin is that the sword will never depart from his household. In other words, there will be continual violence and conflict

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KH9h8GVkhVs>

<sup>2</sup> All Stats from *Rid of My Disgrace*, Holcomb

among his own family members. And that consequence will play out over the next 7 chapters, starting with this story in chapter 13. Let's get into the story.

*In the course of time, Amnon son of David fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom son of David.*

*2 Amnon became so obsessed with his sister Tamar that he made himself ill.*

*She was a virgin, and it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her.*

Now, as you read on it's pretty obvious that this "love" is not the kind of 1 Corinthians 13 love as we're commanded to show- patient, kind, sacrificial, protecting... In Hebrew, the word used is the generic word for love much like the word love in English, but it's always defined by the context. This is better translated, he fell in lust. She has become the object of his twisted desire that he fed into. And I use the language of object intentionally- notice verse 2- It seemed impossible for him to do anything, not for her, not with her, but to her. He's already reduced her to an object for him to consume for his selfish pleasure.

*3 Now Amnon had an adviser named Jonadab son of Shimeah, David's brother. Jonadab was a very shrewd man.* (shrewd can mean wise, or in this case crafty like a snake). So he sees that something's off with Amnon and he asks and Amnon spills the beans- "I'm in love with my half-sister." Now a good friend would say, "Bro, you need help, this isn't love, this is creepy, she's your half-sister for one, but you need to repent of this, talk to your pastor, get a therapist, take a cold-shower...something." This isn't what he says. Instead, listen to his advice...

*5 "Go to bed and pretend to be ill," Jonadab said. "When your father comes to see you, say to him,*

*'I would like my sister Tamar to come and give me something to eat.*

*Let her prepare the food in my sight so I may watch her and then eat it from her hand.'"*

Jonadab is an instigator, he's the ancient equivalent of the guy who gives his friend date rape drugs. He proves to be a terrible advisor and a bad friend. Jonadab may not have done it himself, but he shares some of the guilt. Protecting the vulnerable is a community project.

However, Jonadab isn't alone in sharing the guilt. *6 So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. When the king (David) came to see him, Amnon said to him,*

*"I would like my sister Tamar to come and make some special bread in my sight, so I may eat from her hand."*

*7 David sent word to Tamar at the palace: "Go to the house of your brother Amnon and prepare some food for him."*

Now, we all have different things that comfort us when we are sick. For me, it's Campbell's soup, ginger ale, and a cold compress on my head...and we are all different with that, but does Amnon's request seem a little off to you? It's oddly specific, why Tamar- when you have all these servants in your house. And eating out of her hand? That's weird...I think any discerning father should have had their spidey senses up... David either was oblivious... or maybe somehow subconsciously chooses to ignore it. It exposes a major sin problem in David's life, just two chapters earlier, David uses manipulative tactics to enter into sexual sin with Bathsheba and cover up a murder...The sins of the father visiting upon his son.

So Tamar, as a kind sister and obedient daughter, starts making bread for her brother who is pretending to be sick in bed. And so as a lion crouches in the grass watching his prey, so Amnon lies in his bed waiting for his moment to pounce. **V.9 "Send everyone out of here," Amnon said. So everyone left him.**

Again, another opportunity where this could have been stopped. Even if the servants felt like they couldn't question his authority, surely someone could run to David or someone with the power to stop and intervene. But no, they all just leave the room. Again, it's a community project.

**10 Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food here into my bedroom so I may eat from your hand."**

**And Tamar took the bread she had prepared and brought it to her brother Amnon in his bedroom.**

**11 But when she took it to him to eat, he grabbed her and said, "Come to bed with me, my sister."**

I've tried to imagine the horror of what went through Tamar's head as her brother whom I'm sure she loved as a sister should, before her eyes became a predator. Tamar is forced in an instant to make a series of defenses to attempt to stop what is about to happen, telling him the truth that this is wickedness and shameful. She was put in a situation she should never have been in. **14 But he refused to listen to her, and since he was stronger than she, he raped her.**

Church family, strength is a gift, but gifts are designed for service, human flourishing, and protection, never for bullying, abusing, intimidating, and taking by force what is not yours. Let me encourage you if you have kids, especially sons, to teach them this. Boys need to understand their strength is not evil. It's not toxic despite what the culture tells them. They don't have to apologize for being male or strong, they don't need to apologize for their testosterone that often makes them want to be daring, they don't need to feel bad for their aggression when it's harnessed in the right ways. God made them that way. But they also need to understand why God makes us strong so we can serve others, protect those who are vulnerable. Again, imagine how different this story might have been if Amnon's father, David — or Jonadab's father — had taught them this crucial truth. Instead, Amnon used his strength not to protect, but to destroy.

In a few moments of twisted pleasure, he shattered Tamar's life and set in motion the ruin of his own.

**15** *Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her. Amnon said to her, "Get up and get out!"*

In my study, I found that this reaction is actually common among rapists and violent sex offenders. Many lash out in hatred or violence immediately after the act—often because they can't bear the guilt, shame, or self-disgust of what they've done. Amnon does the same—he can't face himself, so Tamar becomes now the object of his hatred and says, "Get out of here." But her response might surprise us, especially when heard through our modern ears.

**16** *"No!" she said to him. "Sending me away would be a greater wrong than what you have already done to me."*

That sounds shocking to us—we'd expect her to run as far and fast as she could. But she doesn't. She's trapped between two terrible options. When she says, "Do not send me away," that's actually the same technical term for divorce. In that culture, after such an act, her chances of finding another man to protect and provide for her were almost nonexistent. So as awful as it sounds, Tamar is pleading for marriage—not out of affection, but out of sheer survival. It was the only way she might still have provision, social status, protection, and the hope of bearing children who could care for her one day.

Amnon refuses to listen to her. He removes her from his sight. In her devastation we see her response- *She was wearing an ornate robe, for this was the kind of garment the virgin daughters of the king wore.*

**19** *Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornate robe she was wearing.*

*She put her hands on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went.* It's heartbreaking, honestly it makes me so angry as I read it again. Can you see her in your mind's eye? Can you picture her sobbing uncontrollably? Do you see it? Particularly, I want you to picture this if you have a habit of using pornography. See, some people say pornography is acceptable, normal, harmless. Some will even go so far as to say pornography is about female empowerment. No, it's not. Study after study has shown the devastating impact of pornography—both on those who perform in it and those who consume it.<sup>3</sup> Much of what falls under the umbrella of porn is coerced or exploitative, and its use fuels a culture of objectification and sexual violence, particularly among men. Every click, every scroll contributes to an industry built on exploitation. Avoiding and being vigilant against pornography isn't just about personal morality—it's about protecting the vulnerable.

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<sup>3</sup> "The Public Health Crisis of Pornography" – American College of Pediatricians (2016)

So Tamar runs to her brother Absalom, maybe seeking shelter, comfort, to seek justice, but instead Absalom essentially tells her to stay quiet (a tragically response often told to victims by their own family members), and then seeks revenge by killing Amnon himself. But revenge doesn't heal the wound. Church revenge can never heal a heart wound, it only makes it worse. Tragically v.20 says she lived as a desolate woman the rest of her life. And so, the story for us today finishes in v. **21 When King David heard all this, he was furious.**

And so, he should have been. His son had done a wicked thing and raped his daughter. You know what he does about it? Absolutely nothing. He's angry, but we aren't told he does anything, he doesn't speak out for her honor, he doesn't charge Amnon for his crime, he doesn't enforce restitution and attempt to restore the dignity of his daughter...he's just angry, but too weak or ashamed, or self-preserving to do anything restorative. For all his strengths, and his heart that sought after the Lord, David was a man with major flaws. His life reminds us that what Tamar needed, what this world needs is the true and perfect King, a king who protects the vulnerable, brings true justice, and restores the broken...we all need King Jesus.

That's as far as we're going to go in this story. My hope is that by telling it the way I have, you've had your eyes opened to sexual assault and abuse and that you are sufficiently motivated as a father or mother, as a brother or sister, as a friend, and as a church family to do whatever we can to lovingly protect the vulnerable among us so that none of them ever have to experience anything like this.

Let me take a few minutes to offer some help and hope to those among us who might have something like this in your past. And to do this, I want to go back to Tamar's question in verse 13. She says, **"Where could I get rid of my disgrace?"** Maybe that's your question, too. Friends the good news is there is a place you can get rid of your disgrace, and the gospel of Jesus provides a divine grace that removes disgrace. Let me show you 3 ways.

The Gospel encourages us to **#1 Name the sin for what it is.** It's possible that some of you are tempted to minimize what has been done to you, maybe even deny it, and just move on. And maybe you've had some people tell you that, thinking they are helping you, but it's not true. The devil loves the darkness, he loves secrets hidden that keep you chained to shame. But the gospel empowers us to speak the truth, and the truth has the power to heal when exposed to the light. Part of what happens when we name it is we are agreeing with God that it was evil, that God rages against evil, and that he is the just avenger against evil. While it won't do all the healing, it will begin to lose its power over you when you name it. Bring it to God, bring it to a counselor, a pastor, a friend. Stephen Ministry might be a great resource for you.

The gospel encourages us to **#2 Run to Jesus for refuge and grace.** The temptation for victims is to run to drugs and alcohol to numb them, to run to the arms of another lover, run to promiscuity, to revenge, or even to self-harm. None of these things will give you the refuge and grace you long for and need, when you bury shame and anger you bury it alive. I don't know what it's like from the inside out to experience this but friends, Jesus does. The gospel tells us that Jesus knows what it's like to be stripped naked, pinned down, abused, and assaulted, and

then held up to public shame, to be ridiculed, abandoned by those who once said they love him. We have a God with wounds. Hebrews 4:15-16 says, *We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted*

*in every way, just as we are, yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence*

*so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.* In the middle of your suffering, you're not alone. Jesus knows what it is to suffer. And he calls out to the weary and burdened and disgraced- run to me, come to me and you will find rest for your souls. And it's not just that he's sympathetic, he actually has the power to heal. Because the same resurrection power that rose Jesus from the grave the Bible says, through faith, is in us. His grace is powerful to heal, and lifts up, and transforms us, and removes disgrace, grace recreates what violence destroyed, and even gives us the power to forgive our enemies.

Martin Luther said so eloquently, *"God receives none but those who are forsaken, restores health to none but those who are sick, give sight to none but the blind,*

*and life to none but the dead. He has mercy on none but the wretched, and gives grace to none but those who are in disgrace."*

The gospel encourages you to **#3 Remember your identity as a beloved child of God.** The Gospel tells us that If you know Jesus as your savior, for you the truest and deepest and most eternal thing about you is not being a victim of abuse, or being scarred, or being abandoned, it's that you are a beloved child of the most high God in Christ. While it may be part of your story, it isn't the defining story. And I'm not just talking about positive self-affirmation here. We are powerless to heal ourselves with empty self-affirmations. But I'm talking about what God has declared over you. You are my child. You are my son, my daughter whom I love. And so as we sing- you are chosen, not forsaken, I am who you say I am. He is for you, not against you. You're a child of God. Yes, you are.

And so I want you to picture Tamar with me one last time. She's walking down the dusty street in a torn robe, ashes on her head, tears streaming down her face. Can you see her? Do you hear her cry "Where can I get rid of my disgrace?" Without the resurrection, that's the last word on Tamar. As the author of 2 Samuel describes her, she really would be a desolate woman. But the gospel and resurrection of the true and just King Jesus invites us to imagine a different story. This time we're invited to see a woman, a new kind of princess walking down a street paved with gold. She's wearing a crown of glory and a beautiful robe of righteousness. She's wearing a sash that says beloved daughter of the true King. And she has a radiant smile on her face because the finger of God has wiped away all her tears. Can you see her? Can you picture her? I hope you can because if you trust in Christ, that's your hope, too.

**10 and 11:30 Only**- As we prepare for communion, Bethany is going to sing a song over us today called He Has Time. The song was written by Christian artists from their own personal experience with sexual abuse and the healing journey they have been on with Jesus. Let it wash over you today...