

SECOND SAMUEL

Chapter 13

Amnon and Tamar

Now Absalom, David's son, had a beautiful sister, whose name was Tamar. And after a time Amnon, David's son, loved her. 2 And Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her. 3 But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother. And Jonadab was a very crafty man. 4 And he said to him, "O son of the king, why are you so haggard morning after morning? Will you not tell me?" Amnon said to him, "I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister." 5 Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill. And when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Let my sister Tamar come and give me bread to eat, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see it and eat it from her hand.'" 6 So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. And when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat from her hand." 7 Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, "Go to your brother Amnon's house and prepare food for him." 8 So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house, where he was lying down. And she took dough and kneaded it and made cakes in his sight and baked the cakes. 9 And she took the pan and emptied it out before him, but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, "Send out everyone from me." So everyone went out from him. 10 Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the chamber, that I may eat from your hand." And Tamar took the cakes she had made and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother. 11 But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." 12 She answered him, "No, my brother, do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this outrageous thing. 13 As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the outrageous fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you." 14 But he would not listen to her, and being stronger than she, he violated her and lay with her. 15 Then Amnon hated her with very great hatred, so that 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!" 16 But she said to him, "No, my brother, for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you did to me." But he would not listen to her. 17 He called the young man who served him and said, "Put this woman out of my presence and bolt the door after her." 18 Now she was wearing a long robe with sleeves, for thus were the virgin daughters of the king dressed. So his servant put her out and bolted the door after her. 19 And Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the long robe that she wore. And she laid her hand on her head and went away, crying aloud as she went. 20 And her brother Absalom said to her, "Has Amnon your brother been with you? Now hold your peace, my sister. He is your brother; do not take this to heart." So Tamar lived, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom's house. 21 When King David heard of all these things, he was very angry. 22 But Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor bad, for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had violated his sister Tamar.

13:1–39 The trouble within David's family begins. (CSB)

13:1 *Absalom*. In line after Amnon for succession to the throne of David. (TLSB)

Amnon. David's oldest son (3:2). (CSB)

Tamar. David's daughter by Maacah of Geshur (3:3), and Absalom's full sister. (CSB)

13:2 *made himself ill.* His lust for Tamar consumed him. (TLSB)

impossible ... to do anything to her. As a young virgin daughter of the king, Tamar was housed under protective care and supervision. (TLSB)

13:3 *a friend.* Also a counselor. (TLSB)

crafty. Or, "wise." Able to recognize opportunities and manipulate circumstances. Cf Gn 3:1; Jer 4:22; Jas 3:14–15. (TLSB)

13:5 *when your father comes.* To visit his supposedly ill son Involving the king would lend legitimacy to the scheme. (TLSB)

13:7 *sent home.* The older royal sons lived in their own houses. Cf v 20. (TLSB)

13:8 *made cakes in his sight.* Amnon could see the food preparation area (usually a courtyard) from his bedroom, perhaps through the doorway. Tamar was not yet in the chamber with him. Men and women did not typically work together closely, so such domestic activities may have had sensual appeal. (TLSB)

13:9 *emptied it out before him.* Tamar was in full view of Amnon, but in modesty she did not bring the food to him. (TLSB)

everyone went out. Everyone else had been sent away, both out of sight and out of earshot, with the exception of Amnon's personal servant (v 17); there was no one to hear or respond to Tamar's cries for help (cf Dt 22:23–27). (TLSB)

13:11 *my sister.* They were paternal siblings, having the same father (David), but different mothers. The Law forbids a man to have sexual relations with his sister, "whether the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother" (Dt 27:22; cf Lv 18:9, 11). (TLSB)

13:12 *not done in Israel.* The Law God gave to Israel forbids it. (TLSB)

13:13 *where could I carry my shame?* Rape would rob Tamar of her present life and future hope. She would no longer be a virgin daughter of the king; marriage arrangements for her would be badly complicated. There would always be the suspicion of fault or willingness on her part. (TLSB)

as for you? This act would jeopardize Amnon's position as crown prince and heir to the throne. (CSB)

he will not withhold me from you. Possibly a futile attempt by Tamar to escape Amnon's immediate designs rather than a serious proposal, since such a marriage was prohibited in Israel (see Lev 18:9; 20:17; Dt 27:22). (CSB)

It is questionable whether David would sanction such a marriage (Lv 18:9, 11; Dt 27:22), but Tamar preferred to be married to her father's son (cf Gn 20:12) than to be taken by force. Aside from that, she was buying time to find protection from his advances. (TLSB)

13:14 *he violated her.* He raped her. Cf 12:11. (TLSB)

13:15 *Amnon hated her.* The reversal in Amnon's feelings toward Tamar demonstrates that his former "love" (v. 1) was nothing but sensual desire. (CSB)

His “love” was never true, only self-serving. Perhaps this hate came from his own guilt and shame. (TLSB)

13:16 *Sending me away is greater.* No longer a virgin, she could not be offered by her father to any other potential husband. (CSB)

By law, Amnon was required to marry her (Dt 22:28–29). But in sending her away, he insinuated that she, not he, was at fault (cf Dt 22:13–21). Tamar’s reputation was ruined. (TLSB)

13:17 *Put this woman out.* He implies that Tamar had done the wrong, perhaps that she had seduced him. (TLSB)

13:19 *put ashes on her head.* A sign of great mourning. (CSB)

tore the long robe. Thus expressing her anguish and announcing that her virginity had been violated. (CSB)

Sign of mourning and graphic indication of what has been taken from her: she is no longer a virgin daughter of the king. (TLSB)

put her hand on her head. Also a sign of grief (see Jer 2:37). (CSB)

13:20 *hold your peace, my sister ... Do not take this to heart.* Absalom urges his sister not to make the matter a public scandal, and attempts to quiet her by minimizing its significance. Meanwhile, he formulates his own secret plans for revenge (see vv. 22, 28, 32). (CSB)

Absalom attempted to console his sister. Either he did not want her to make a public spectacle of herself and their family, or he was already formulating his plot for revenge, which would require patient silence (vv 22–29). (TLSB)

desolate woman. Raped and rejected, Tamar could no longer live in her father’s house as one of his virgin daughters. (TLSB)

13:21 *he was very angry.* Although David was incensed by Amnon’s rape of Tamar, there is no record that he took any punitive action against him. Perhaps the memory of his own sin with Bathsheba adversely affected his judicious handling of the matter. Whatever the reason, David abdicated his responsibility both as king and as father. This disciplinary leniency toward his sons eventually led to the death of Amnon and the revolts of Absalom and Adonijah. (CSB)

David did nothing. Amnon was the heir apparent at this time; punishment would have been embarrassing. David had learned through personal experience to know the Lord’s forgiveness. In his own fallible way, he demonstrated fatherly patience and mercy toward his wayward children. Unfortunately, he did not grasp that a father’s love and discipline belong together (Heb 12:5–11). David’s fatherly care and provision for Tamar were also missing. (TLSB)

13:22 *Absalom never said a word to Amnon ... he hated Amnon.* He quietly bided his time. (CSB)

Contrary to God’s Law in Lv 19:17–18. (TLSB)

13:1–22 Amnon’s lust for his sister Tamar leads him to commit a vile crime against her. David, from misguided love for his son or sinful weakness, fails to administer justice. The way is thus paved for further violence in the house of David. The covetous desires of our hearts, when nurtured instead of resisted, can burst forth into deadly wickedness. We need the Law’s restrictions and guidance. Our only

hope for mercy is in the Lord, who forgives even the most heinous of crimes for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Son of David. Yet, “the Lord disciplines the one He loves” (Heb 12:6) and calls us to daily repentance to strengthen faith in the forgiveness of sins. • O Lord, spare us from the curse and consequences of our sin for the sake of Christ’s sufferings. Amen. (TLSB)

Absalom Kills Amnon

23 After two full years Absalom had sheepshearers at Baal-hazor, which is near Ephraim, and Absalom invited all the king's sons. **24** And Absalom came to the king and said, “Behold, your servant has sheepshearers. Please let the king and his servants go with your servant.” **25** But the king said to Absalom, “No, my son, let us not all go, lest we be burdensome to you.” He pressed him, but he would not go but gave him his blessing. **26** 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?” **27** But Absalom pressed him until he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him. **28** Then Absalom commanded his servants, “Mark when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, ‘Strike Amnon,’ then kill him. Do not fear; have I not commanded you? Be courageous and be valiant.” **29** So the servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and each mounted his mule and fled.

30 While they were on the way, news came to David, “Absalom has struck down all the king's sons, and not one of them is left.” **31** Then the king arose and tore his garments and lay on the earth. And all his servants who were standing by tore their garments. **32** But Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother, said, “Let not my lord suppose that they have killed all the young men, the king's sons, for Amnon alone is dead. For by the command of Absalom this has been determined from the day he violated his sister Tamar. **33** Now therefore let not my lord the king so take it to heart as to suppose that all the king's sons are dead, for Amnon alone is dead.”

13:23 *two full years.* Long enough to avoid suspicions of his hatred of Amnon. (TLSB)

sheepshearers. Sheepshearing was a time of celebration. (TLSB)

he invited all the king's sons. The time of sheep shearing was a festive occasion (see 1Sa 25:4, 8). (CSB)

To mask his vengeful plot against Amnon. (TLSB)

13:25 *burdensome.* An excuse. Not likely that the king would take time away from governing to attend a party out of town. By inviting his father, Absalom took a calculated risk to conceal his real agenda. (TLSB)

his blessing. David unknowingly blessed Absalom's plot to execute Amnon. (TLSB)

13:26 *let my brother Amnon come.* Upon David's refusal of the invitation, Absalom diplomatically requested that Amnon, the crown prince and oldest son, be his representative. (CSB)

If the king could not come to Absalom's party, then the heir apparent should represent his father. (TLSB)

Why should he go with you? David's question suggests some misgivings because of the strained relationship between the two half brothers (see v. 22). (CSB)

13:28 *kill him.* Absalom arranged for the murder of his half brother in violation of Eastern hospitality. In the wicked acts of Amnon and Absalom, David's oldest sons became guilty of sexual immorality and murder, as their father had before them. With the murder of Amnon, Absalom not only avenged the rape of his sister but also secured for himself the position of successor to the throne (see 3:3; 15:1–6). Kileab, David's second son (3:3), may have died in his youth since there is no reference to him beyond the announcement of his birth. (CSB)

have I not commanded. Like father, like son; cf 11:12–25. (TLSB)

Be courageous and be valiant. Absalom believed he was meting out divine justice. Cf Jsh 1:5–9. (TLSB)

13:29 *mules.* Apparently the normal mount for royalty in David's kingdom (see 18:9; 1Ki 1:33, 38, 44; see also note on 1Ki 1:33). (CSB)

13:30 Message suggests there may have been fear of rivalry for David's throne among his sons. (TLSB)

13:31 *tore his clothes and lay down on the ground.* Common ways of expressing grief (see Jos 7:6; 1Ki 21:27; Est 4:1, 3; Job 1:20; 2:8). (CSB)

Expression of grief and mourning. Cf v 19; 12:20. (TLSB)

lay on the earth. Recognition of his own mortality (cf Gn 3:19). (TLSB)

13:32 *Jonadab.* Amnon's counselor (v 3). (TLSB)

13:23–33 Absalom takes the law into his own hands and avenges Amnon's rape of his sister Tamar. By failing to discipline his sons, David is partially responsible for all these events. Vengeance is not to be taken into our own hands; punishment and discipline are rightly administered through the offices God has established (parents, government) God confronts our sin head-on with His judgment so He may then cleanse us by the precious blood of the Son of David, Jesus Christ. He prepares for us a feast of peace, the supper of a King who gives us life. • Lord Jesus, deal with us not as we deserve but according to Your great mercy by granting us sincere repentance and faith. Amen. (TLSB)

Absalom Flees to Geshur

34 But Absalom fled. And the young man who kept the watch lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, many people were coming from the road behind him[e] by the side of the mountain. **35** And Jonadab said to the king, “Behold, the king's sons have come; as your servant said, so it has come about.” **36** And as soon as he had finished speaking, behold, the king's sons came and lifted up their voice and wept. And the king also and all his servants wept very bitterly.

37 But Absalom fled and went to Talmai the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son day after day. **38** So Absalom fled and went to Geshur, and was there three years. **39** And the spirit of the king[f] longed to go out[g] to Absalom, because he was comforted about Amnon, since he was dead.

13:34 *Absalom fled.* To avoid punishment. (TLSB)

kept the watch. At Jerusalem (cf 18:24). (TLSB)

the road behind him. People fleeing from Baal-hazor took a roundabout journey, which may have been the safest course under the circumstances. (TLSB)

13:37 *Talmai son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur.* Absalom's grandfather (see 3:3). (CSB)

Absalom's (and Tamar's) maternal grandfather (3:3). Although under David's military control (8:3–8; 10:6–19), Geshur affords a measure of political asylum. (TLSB)

mourned for his son. May mean that David mourned for both Amnon and Absalom (v 39; 14:1). (TLSB)

13:39 *longed to go to Absalom.* With Absalom a refugee, David had lost both of his oldest living sons. (CSB)

Either David yearned to be reunited with his son, though caught by the demands of justice, or he desired to punish Absalom. Either way, he did nothing. (TLSB)

13:34–39 Absalom flees from his father and goes into exile. Thus, the king has lost two sons: the murdered Amnon and the runaway Absalom. One sin leads to another, leaving a trail of consequences along the way. While our sin does not always lead to outright murder, unrepentant sin does lead to our spiritual death and to much grief. True reconciliation with God is granted us through the forgiveness of our sins, through the atoning death of God's own Son. • O Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us! Pardon our iniquity, and with Your forgiveness bring an end to the warfare of our sin. Amen. (TLSB)