

2 Samuel 13

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[0 : 00] All right, so we're looking at 2 Samuel chapter 13 tonight. We're continuing our series in 2 Samuel.

That's page 264 in the Pew Bible. Let me encourage you to follow along there. It's a long passage. We're not going to have it on the screens tonight, but it'd be good for you to follow along.

There are some chapters in the Bible that are fairly hard to read.

Hard because they confront us in pretty shocking detail with the reality of our own human fallenness. And 2 Samuel chapter 13, in my mind, is one of those chapters.

I remember hearing a talk once about church architecture. And in particular, the talk was about arches.

[0 : 58] Romanesque arches, those are the sort of rounded ones. And Gothic arches, those are kind of the pointed ones. That's about all I remember from the lecture. There you go. Well, I guess I remember one more thing, and that's this.

What's true of arches is that they're held in place, they're held secure by kind of the single stone at the top where the two sides of the arch meet.

That's the keystone. Actually, if you look up, I keep looking up at our ceiling because we have them, actually. See where the fans are? And then there are these neat little decorative things. Where the arches come up, that's the keystone right there.

And the reality is that when this keystone in an arch grows weak, or when it cracks, or even when it's removed, what happens is that the arch isn't able any longer to bear weight.

And the whole structure begins to crumble. So it's the keystone that really holds the whole thing in place, that holds it all together safe and strong. And over the last couple of weeks, we've been learning in 2 Samuel about David's sin with Bathsheba and about his repentance after being confronted by Nathan, the prophet.

[2 : 08] And what we'll find in our chapter tonight is that as a result of all this, David's, we might say, his moral courage and his moral clarity have become greatly diminished.

Now, the Lord has forgiven David's sin. David won't bear the punishment that his sins deserve, but the consequences of his sin continue.

And what we'll see is that David's diminished moral clarity and courage in this passage is somewhat like the crumbling of the keystone in an arch. That when the head is weakened, when the head is compromised, the whole structure starts to come crumbling down.

And this is what Nathan, the prophet, had actually predicted. Do you remember last week? He said that the sword would never depart from David's house. And yet, God wouldn't abandon David's house.

Now, in our chapter tonight, there are three main characters here in addition to David. And they're all his children, in fact. Two sons, one daughter. And what we're going to do tonight is we're just going to walk through the text.

[3 : 20] We're going to sort of consider each character in turn. And what we're going to do is we're going to focus on what we see about the sorts of consequences that sin brings in our lives and in the lives of those around us.

And after we look at the consequences that sin brings, after that, we're going to ask what hope this passage presents to us. Where does it point us to? Where can we go in the midst of all this? And let me just say up front, as we think about this approach to this text, what I hope we get out of our study together tonight is actually a lively and a right fear of sin.

That we'll want to root it out of our hearts at all costs. Now, I know we don't often talk a lot about sin these days. Even in churches, we're a little maybe sheepish to talk about sin.

But think of it this way. You know, if out in the foyer, there were a hungry, sort of ravenous lion just sort of pacing back and forth, ready to pounce on the first person who went through the doors, ready to tear apart its next victim.

The last thing you would want me to do, that we would want to do as a church family, is to say nothing. We'd want to warn each other. And we'd want our warnings to be as clear as we could possibly make them.

[4 : 49] Because, you know, one of the earliest descriptions of sin in the Bible is just that. That it's like a predator crouching at the door, desiring to have us and to destroy us.

That's Genesis chapter 4, verse 6. So let's look at the consequences of sin together through this text so that we might be exhorted to flee and to fight against sin in our hearts.

And the first character we'll focus on is the character of Ammon. And what we see here, the sort of first, one of the first consequences of sin, is that it makes us a slave to lust and to lies.

Let's begin reading 2 Samuel chapter 13, verse 1. I'll read this for us.

Ammon said to him, But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her,

[7 : 07] Come lie with me, my sister. 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. 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. But he would not listen to her. And being stronger than she, he violated her and lay with her.

As I said, sometimes the Bible is so honest about our falling condition that it's hard to read. But what do we see here? Ammon, David's firstborn son, as we're told in 2 Samuel 3, 2, is so tormented with lust for his half-sister Tamar that he becomes physically ill.

In other words, he had become a complete slave to his desires, even when those desires had become clearly illegitimate. After all, the Mosaic law, Leviticus 18, 9, expressly forbids sexual relationships between half-siblings.

And everyone knew it. Tamar's probably alluding to that law in verse 12. But this is the frightening consequence of sin in our lives.

[8 : 30] That it grows. It takes more and more. I guarantee you that Ammon didn't just wake up one day and suddenly find himself burning with uncontrollable lust for his half-sister.

How long had Ammon fooled around with lust in his heart? How long had he glanced at other women lustfully or fantasized in his mind? And then one day his beautiful half-sister comes into sight, and maybe he even tried to turn away.

But by that point he was already a slave. And he couldn't get her out of his mind. And it tormented him, the Bible says. Friends, you see, this is how sin works.

It doesn't stay small for long. It will control more and more and more. More of your thoughts. More of your time.

More than of your actions. More of your money. It will shape more of your personality. It will begin to determine more of your friends. Until finally, it owns you.

[9 : 37] And you find yourself doing the unthinkable. In other words, there's no such thing as a little sin.

Every sin. Within every sin. Is the seed of its greatest and most horrible expression. Just like an acorn holds within it all the sort of potent material to become a giant oak.

So every sin carries within it the potency and the same potential. For the greatest and most obvious and horrible expressions of it.

This is part of the reason why Jesus said that it was adultery even to look at another person with lust in your heart. Because the seed is there.

The principle. The intent. And if not dug out, it grows to utterly own you. So let me ask us tonight. What sin are you harboring?

[10 : 46] What sin are you harboring? Thinking that maybe it's just a little sin. That it's no big deal. That you've got it under control. Maybe a few minutes glancing at attractive women here and there.

Maybe a few little lies or sort of deceptions. Just hiding a thing or two. You know, no one really needs to know that. Maybe a little episode of anger or impatience.

You know, nothing big. Sometimes you just have to let it out. You know, just sort of give vent to your anger and, you know, let it release. And maybe you shouldn't. Maybe you know you shouldn't be doing it, whatever it is.

But maybe you even feel a little tinge of guilt. But after all, you say it's not so bad. I mean, it's not something to get up in arms about. I think what our passage is saying tonight, friends, is do not be fooled.

That lust, that lie, that seemingly inconsequential impatience, it will grow and grow until it makes you its slave.

[11 : 43] Amen, in fact, here is so enslaved to his sin that he's unable to recognize that the advice of Jonadab, his friend, he's unable to recognize this advice for what it really is.

Complete and utter wickedness. Jonadab here is described, did you catch that, as a very crafty man. It's a description, I think, I think that's meant to remind us of the serpent in the garden. And like the serpent, Jonadab comes to Ammon and he flatters him, right? Oh, son of the king. And then Jonadab proceeds to give Ammon a plan to fulfill his sinful desire, a plan that ultimately leads to his ruin and to his death.

And it's very interesting, verse 3 is actually sort of the turning point of Ammon's story here. But Ammon had a friend. But Ammon had a friend.

Brothers and sisters, are you careful who your friends are? Jonadab was not a friend to Ammon. A true friend would have said, run away.

[13 : 00] A true friend would have said to Ammon, look what happened to your father. And now you're going to do the exact same thing, flee sin. Move away, run away, do whatever it takes.

That's what a true friend would have said to Ammon. Friends, who are you and I listening to? Who are we surrounding ourselves with? Who is able to actually speak into our lives?

Be careful who your friends are. Just like Jonadab, they can be the instrument of your ruin.

And in all of this, where is David? Where is David? How could David not have seen that his son was harboring this inappropriate attraction to his half-sister?

How could David have been so naive as to ignorantly just sort of fall into their evil plan? How could David have allowed such a scoundrel as Jonadab to remain a part of the royal court around his family?

[14 : 14] Instead, what David does is he stamps, David's own sins, stamps its image into his son Ammon. David saw Bathsheba and he took her.

And like father, like son, Ammon does the exact same thing. So I hope we're beginning to see the consequences of sin.

It makes us a slave. And those around us, as we see through David, are going to be dragged into it as well. Often going even further. David slept with another man's wife. Ammon sleeps with his own sister.

And down and down and down it goes. Sin making all of us its slaves. Let's keep going. The second character in our story is Tamar.

And we see in her story that sin violates and shames the innocent. Let's pick up in verse 15. Then Ammon hated her with very great hatred.

[15 : 16] So that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Ammon said to her, get up, go. 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. He called the young man who served him and said, put this woman out of my presence and bolt the door after her. 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. Bolted the door after her. 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.

And her brother Absalom said to her, has Ammon your brother been with you? Now hold your peace, my sister. He's your brother. Do not take this to heart. So Tamar lived a desolate woman in her brother Absalom's house.

When King David heard of these things, he was very angry. But Absalom spoke to Ammon neither good nor bad. For Absalom hated Ammon. Because he had violated his sister Tamar.

[16:22] The narrator uses a number of images to bring his point home here. First, back in verses 8 through 9, there's this picture of Tamar baking bread. Did it strike you how much the narrator focuses on that scene?

Baking bread is such a caring, such a domestic act, isn't it? It's sort of the quintessential act of family and domesticity and caring.

But here Ammon twists it for his own selfish depravity. The very thing that symbolizes warmth and nurture becomes the occasion for something unspeakably wrong.

Then there's the image of the bolted door in verse 17 and 18. As soon as Ammon violates Tamar, his lust turns into hatred.

And isn't that the way? Desire becomes consumption and consumption becomes disgust. It's completely pitiful, but it's very real, is it not?

[17:26] The victimizer blames the victim. He transfers and projects his guilt onto her. And the bolt of the door is slammed shut. Tamar, violated, wronged, is now excluded.

Shut out. And shut out not merely from Ammon's presence here. Because you see, in that culture, her violation now marks her as somewhat of a pariah. No one will want to marry her.

She'll never have a family. She'll always be an outcast in the community. In verse 16, she even begs Ammon not to put her away.

She senses the very real danger she's in, a life of total social exclusion. And as terrible as it must have been, she at least would have some moral cover had Ammon agreed to marry her.

How tragic to be in such a situation. But the door is bolted. Finally, the last image is this torn robe.

[18:32] As a daughter of the king, Tamar was given a special, beautiful robe to wear. It must have signified her dignity and her nobility. But in grief, she tears it.

And weeps. This beautiful garment torn. What a poignant image of her shame. You know, there's only one other place in the Bible where this kind of robe is mentioned.

And it's the robe that Jacob gave to Joseph. Described as exactly the same thing. That robe of many colors, as it's sometimes translated. And in that story too, Joseph's own family, his own brothers, attack him, leave him for dead.

And that robe too ends up bloodied and torn. Friends, we think that sin is just a game, don't we? How we tend to minimize it. We only think of ourselves and our own pleasure. We only think of our own little desires or our own little needs, as we call them.

[19:40] But how many innocent people are violated and shamed as a result? How many Tamars are left in the wake of our selfish lust and greed? How many doors will be bolted?

And how many robes will be torn? Friends, you and I, human beings, men and women, we are created in the very image of God himself with unparalleled dignity and honor.

We are the crown of God's creation. How heartbreaking to see God's image violated and defiled here. It rightly raises in us anger and pain.

And we want to cry out for justice to be done. And in that crying out, we are crying the same cry of God himself. And yet, friends, and yet, do we keep on harboring our own sins?

With our mouths, do we denounce evils like human sex trafficking or corporate greed? But in our hearts, do we show our allegiance to the exact same things when we cultivate the root of those same sinful desires in ourselves?

[20:52] When we keep lusting after the men or the women that we see on the street or on the screen? When we keep on lying or deceiving, even in small ways, are we not perpetuating in some way the very culture that our mouths are so quick to denounce?

Are we not actively and silently giving our approval to those very things we say we despise? And again, in all of this, where is David?

In verse 21, he gets angry. But he does nothing. David actually has the authority as the king to judge lawbreakers and to vindicate the innocent.

In fact, that's not just David's right. It's his duty as the king. And yet, he does nothing. His moral courage, it seems, is too weakened to act. Perhaps his moral clarity, too out of focus here, too fuzzy here, to see how awful the thing is that's been done.

And friends, that fact in itself ought to frighten us, to flee from sin. So here are two consequences of sin in our lives.

[22:02] It enslaves us. And it violates the innocent. Finally, the third character in our text is Absalom. And in Absalom, we see that sin causes us to take matters into our own hands.

Let's read the rest of the chapter, verse 23. After two full years, Absalom had sheep shears at Belhazor, which is near Ephraim. And Absalom invited all the king's sons. And Absalom came to the king and said, Behold, your servant has sheep shears.

Please let the king and his servants go with your servant. 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.

Then Absalom said, If not, please let my brother Ammon go with us. And the king said to him, Why should he go with you? But Absalom pressed him until he let Ammon and all the king's sons go with him. Then Absalom commanded his servants, Mark when Ammon's heart is merry with wine.

And when I say to you, strike Ammon, then kill him. Do not fear, for have I not commanded you? Be courageous and be valiant. So the servants of Absalom did to Ammon as Absalom had commanded.

[23 : 09] Then all the king's sons arose, and each mounted his mule and fled. And while they were on the way, news came to David. Absalom has struck down all the king's sons, and not one of them has left.

Then the king arose and tore his garments and lay on the earth, and all his servants who were standing by tore their garments. But Jonadab, the son of Shimea, David's brother, said, Let not, my lord, suppose that they have killed all the young men, the king's sons?

For Ammon alone is dead. For by the command of Absalom, this has been determined from the day he violated his sister Tamar. 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 Ammon alone is dead. 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 by the side of the mountain.

And Jonadab said to the king, Behold, the king's sons have come. And as your servant said, so it has come about. And as soon as he had finished speaking, behold, the king's sons came and lifted up their voice and wept.

[24 : 05] And the king also and his servants wept very bitterly. But Absalom fled and went to Talmi, the son of Amahud, king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son day after day.

So Absalom fled and went to Geshur and was there three years. And the spirit of the king longed to go out to Absalom because he was comforted about Ammon since he was dead. And sheep shearing was traditionally a time of festivity.

He threw a party. Sort of like a harvest festival. Absalom plans a party, convinces David to let Ammon and the rest of the brothers come, and he kills Ammon in cold blood. Or at least he makes his servants do it for him, telling them to be courageous and valiant while he sort of stands off on the sidelines.

Now some might say that Ammon got what he deserved, perhaps. But you see, it wasn't Absalom's place to administer that justice. And was he really doing it for Tamar's sake?

People seem to think so. But did you notice how cold Absalom's response was to Tamar in verse 20? Absalom does little to comfort his sister and everything to make Ammon pay.

[25 : 19] And you know, as the rest of the story of Absalom plays out in the following chapters, we're going to be following Absalom and his rebellion and the civil war that ensues over the next few weeks.

It becomes clear that Absalom had much more in mind than merely avenging his sister. He was most likely making a move for the throne. After all, Ammon was the firstborn, right?

The heir to the kingship. And Absalom sees his chance to move one step closer to being king. Absalom takes things into his own hands so that he can be the king.

And friends, isn't that really what's going on with sin? It's not merely breaking a few laws here or there. It's not merely a few mistakes that we make. At the heart of it, it's putting ourselves in the place of the king.

Putting ourselves in the place of God. And the consequence of sin is that that attitude takes on more and more and more and more of our life.

[26 : 24] That we think we can do things our own way. And that we can make things right. And that we get to decide the outcome. Sin says, I'll live my life my own way. And I'll be the king.

But you see, in trying to order our lives our own way, it's only chaos that results. We see it here in our text. Do you remember? A few chapters ago, Hebron was the place, years before, where the tribes had united around David.

But now the sons of David flee from Hebron in fear. They disperse. They run. The kingdom, once united, is now simply coming undone. And again, where is David?

Again, we find him, just like in verse 21, at the end of this whole chapter, doing nothing. Absalom flees to his maternal grandfather and Geshur.

And David, though his spirit goes out to him, doesn't do a thing. In short, he fails in his duty as a king. And he fails in his duty as a father. It's sort of like Eli, the priest, back in 1 Samuel chapter 2, who refused to control his wicked sons, and they end up defiling God's house.

[27 : 45] And it's sort of like Jacob, the patriarch in Genesis, who for some reason the narrator wants us to think about in this chapter. Jacob, who shows unbridled favoritism towards Joseph.

And as a result, his family gets torn apart. And it's all sort of like Adam, the father of us all, who sinned against God in the garden, taking matters into his own hands.

Then as a result, to see his firstborn son, Cain, do exactly the same thing. Taking matters into his own hands. Killing Abel, his own brother. The Bible seems to read like one long story of failed fathers.

Does it not? Fathers who sin get stamped onto the image of their children. Fathers who crumble and the whole arch comes down. Except one.

In the whole story of the Bible, there's one father who always does what is just and what is right. In the whole arc of scripture, there's one father who has kept all of his promises.

[28 : 58] A father who can actually break our slavery to sin. And cover our shame. And release us from the curse and the chaos of trying to be our own kings.

You know, we've seen the consequences of sin in our passage. And we've seen how we should root it out of our hearts at all costs. But what hope do we have, right?

I mean, if our parents have failed, how do we know that we will not fail too? Where do we turn in this world where every authority seems compromised, And every king seems crooked and every father fails.

And then Jesus comes and lives among us. And he teaches his disciples to pray.

And he says, when you pray, say this, our father. Jesus comes and he points us to the one true, faithful, good father.

[29 : 58] The one God who has made us all. The father that we all need. Who in his eternal wisdom and loving kindness never grows slack.

And never falters and never fails. You see, friends, this is why Jesus came. He came and went to the cross and paid for the sin of all who believe.

So that we could now have God as our father. And so that by his holy spirit, we might have his holy, beautiful image stamped on us anew.

So that no longer need we follow in our earthly father's footsteps. Like Ammon. And like Absalom. Who decides that it's his job to kill. And perhaps greatest of all. No longer must our royal robes remain torn like Tamar.

[31 : 03] Friends, God has come. And for all of us who have been violated and wrong and shamed, God has come to throw a new robe over us. A robe of splendor without spot or wrinkle.

A robe of utter white. You know, one way of looking at the story of the Bible too is that it's all about clothes. My daughter would be happy to hear that. How does the Bible begin?

The Bible begins with Adam and Eve in the garden, naked and unashamed. And yet they sin. And they try to clothe themselves with these fig leaves. That doesn't work.

So God clothes them. And then when God sort of calls Israel to himself and he sets up this tabernacle in the wilderness. And he says, this is how you're going to worship me. What does he do? He says, there's going to be one person in your midst who you're going to call the high priest. And that high priest is going to be decked out in some of the most radiant clothing that this nomadic, desert living, 400 years in slavery people had ever seen.

[32 : 09] Purple and scarlet and gold and jewels and a headrest. Everything. Right in their midst. One of them dressed in total splendor. A high priest.

And then Jesus Christ comes. And he's ripped naked on a cross. And he's utterly shamed. But he rises again in power.

So that everyone who believes in this high priest will have the garments that we've all been longing for. A white robe of utter and complete righteousness.

The apostle John in the book of Revelation gets a glimpse of heaven. And he sees the saints there from every tribe and every tongue and every family. Not just one family in the midst of all the earth. Not just one person in the midst of that family. Every single one of them. In the most gleaming white apparel he had ever imagined. Tamar says, where can I go with my shame?

[33 : 19] And that question rings out across the Bible. Until it finds its answer in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, our true brother.

Who acts not to exalt himself in revenge. But who comes and humbles himself. And is torn. So that we can be mended. And so that our shame can be covered.

And we can know that we're loved. And friends, if you come to know God as your father. Through the righteousness of Christ.

By the Holy Spirit working faith in your hearts. He will enable you. To do exactly what we've been talking about tonight. To flee from sin. To run away.

From all of these things. The terrible consequences of which we've been seeing. Displayed for us in this passage. He won't just robe you with righteousness. But he'll give you inner strength by his spirit.

[34 : 21] To become new. New. So friends, let me ask you a very straightforward question tonight. Have you turned from sin.

And placed your trust in Jesus Christ? He is the only one. Who will cover your sin. And give you a new nature within. If not, do so without delay.

Call upon him in prayer. And he will receive you. Come to me. The prophet Isaiah says. Come to me and get water. And get bread.

You don't need to bring a thing. You don't need to bring a dime. Just come and I'll give it to you. And friends, if this is true of you. If you know the beauty of having God as your father.

Then you know that you have a father you can trust. You can trust his commands. You can trust his promptings. You can flee from every known remaining sin in your heart.

[35 : 27] Knowing that those things have no joy for you. And you can live for him. And you can listen to his word. And you can trust him. And he will never fail you.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Oh Lord Jesus. As the song says that we're about to sing.

Our shame was deeper than the sea. But your grace goes deeper still. Lord many of my brothers and sisters here tonight. Know the shame.

Of being a victim. Oh Lord would they know. And would they embrace the fact that you have seen them. And you have loved them. And you have covered them in Christ.

Would they know. Would they know. Would they know. Would they know. The shame defeating power. Of your all embracing love in Jesus. And Lord for those who bear the shame.

[36 : 29] Not of being the victim. Of being the victimizer. Lord of being the perpetrator. Those who carry that shame. Oh God. Would they too.

Know the beautiful covering. Of your righteousness tonight. Would they know real forgiveness. In Jesus. That you have washed.

Even that stain away. And would they rise. To sin no more. Oh God work these things in us.

By your spirit we pray. Amen.