

The Sting of Consequence, The Hope of Grace: Part 1
2 Samuel 13

*In him we have **redemption** through his blood, the **forgiveness** of our trespasses, according to the riches of his **grace**,⁸ which he **lavished** upon us, in all wisdom and insight*

Introduction: If we ever wondered about the potential power of a small spark, we were reminded once again over the past few weeks. Fire is mesmerizing, since it is both beautiful and deadly all at the same time. It can bring warmth and sustain life with the ability to cook food, or bring destruction and death in its raging path. When a fire starts, it seems tame, controllable, small enough to stamp out with your foot or a mere breath. But that same fire can gain momentum with a growing wind, coupled with dry fuel on the ground, and within moments it takes on a life of its own, seeking to devour with an irrepressible appetite, leaving devastation in its wake and body count to all those in its path.

This is an apt description of sin in our life...

Sin is the ultimate distortion of what God created as beautiful. Going back to Creation in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1-3), we see that God created all things good, with mankind being *very good*. Everything in creation was designed to bring God glory and to be enjoyed by God's image bearers, from the beauty of a sunrise to the fruit of a tree to the companionship and intimacy of marriage. God is no prude. He does not withhold. He gives good gifts to His children so that they will enjoy Him and return praise through thanksgiving.

However, when sin entered the world through the willful disobedience of Adam, creation was tainted and sin grabbed a foothold. Now death was a part of life. The beauty of creation still retained its majesty but now its terrible power could become dangerous to man, from the poison of a serpent to the bite of a lion, to the draining nature of the hot sun or the freezing temperature without it. What once was worship in work now created sweat and pressure. And what once was received with exhilaration by a husband seeing his wife for the first time, now is tainted into power, manipulation, and selfishness. Instead of a husband serving his wife through humble gentleness, he has the propensity to use force and strength to get his way. Instead of a wife joyfully following and supporting a husband's leadership, she now has the built-in propensity to want her own way and dig in against him. And instead of enjoying physical intimacy as an extension of care and love, sex has become a selfish endeavor, used either for gratification or as a means to control, missing the point and wounding countless lives.

It is this reality that we see and seek to understand in **2 Samuel 13**, a narrative of gross, heinous, and stomach churning sin that none should be desensitized to, that was an extension of the consequence of the sin of **King David**. We believe the Bible is both **true and transformative**, and that means it does not pull any punches when describing life in a fallen and sinful world, but also contains these realities so that we will learn *from* them, pointing us to greater realities that are found in **Christ alone**. Our goal is not to teach things like this for shock value, but it is to remember that scripture speaks to the human condition, whether someone lived thousands of years ago or for someone a thousand years from now, it is **relevant and truthful, corrective and authoritative**. In understanding sin, we will also understand the fact that **grace is greater than our sin** (Rom. 5:20-21), and that God's grace is inexhaustible.

Over the next **two weeks** we will look at a low point in the life and leadership of David, and walk away with lessons of *avoiding sin, understanding the progression of sin, what happens after we sin, and walking through a redemptive path for those who have been grossly sinned against.*

A Context of Consequence

For those new with us or those with the memory of a goldfish, it's good for us to refresh our minds as to where we've been in the life of David and the progression of 2 Samuel. David had reached the height of his influence, wisdom, and success from 2 Samuel 7-10. Here, God made an **eternal covenant** with David, promising that the throne and house of David would last forever, pointing to the worthy seed and lineage that would find its culmination in the person and work of Jesus Christ, coming the first time as a humble king but will come again as a conquering and ruling One. After this, David's military might was on display as he ran out every enemy, bringing peace and expanding borders, which provided security for generations to come. After this he showed his greatness through **hesed** love which he showed to Jonathan's crippled son Mephibosheth, and to his enemies who had showed him kindness. The kingdom was strong, enemies were at bay, power was consolidated, and influence was at an all-time high. ***But the heights of success are often outdone by the pain of defeat, and in this case defeat came in the form of ugly, unbelieving, selfish sin.***

David saw, sent for, and slept with another man's wife named Bathsheba, all while he **should have been** with his troops in battle. This led to an epic cover-up, culminating in the death of the righteous **Uriah**, Bathsheba's husband, and many more soldiers to keep the motives and intentions covered. Because of this plethora of sin, God levied out consequences through the prophet Nathan. Though David would NOT DIE (though he deserved to), and WOULD NOT LOSE THE THRONE (though he deserved to), God DID prescribe multiple weighty **consequences**: 1) *The sword would not depart from his house* as there would be conflict from among his family; 2) *Evil would rise up against David out of his own house*; 3) *The child born to him in adultery would die*. Now, it is **imperative that we understand God's work here**. David was **forgiven, completely, from his sin** – *as far as the East is to the West* (Ps. 103:12) – which meant that David regained a right standing before the Lord which lead to **joy, praise, and thankfulness**. But forgiveness does not mean there will not be consequences of sin, and in **2 Samuel 13** we begin to see these begin to play out, as they would for the rest of David's life.

*This carefully constructed narrative seems intended to demonstrate at least two truths: **first**, that God's prophetic word is true; **second**, that the sins of one generation imprint the next generation. Each sin not only fosters more sin, it also fashions it by providing precedents for others to follow¹*

Can this generational imprint be broken? Absolutely, but it means the gospel has to break through and God's grace has to be at the forefront. ***What do we learn from this story of abuse, incest, rape, and retaliatory murder?*** I hope much, but it is not for the faint of heart.

The Story and Characters of Graceless Actions (13:1-6)

*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*

¹ Robert D. Bergen, [1, 2 Samuel](#), vol. 7, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 379.

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."

After a decisive victory over the Ammonites (see 2 Sam. 12:26-31) and returning to Jerusalem, we are introduced to **four people, all related, who make up this disastrous story, and all of whom are related to David, himself becoming the fifth character in the sordid tale:**

- **Absalom** – Officially the third son born to David, he was the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmi, king of Geshur (2 Sam. 3:3). Here there is not much else stated about him, but he will become the focal point of this story and then until his death in chapter 18.
- **Amnon** – He was the **firstborn** of David at Hebron, born to Ahinoam of Jezreel (2 Sam. 3:2). Being the firstborn it would have been typical that he would have been in line for the throne, but also born as a son of privilege.
- **Jonadab** – He was the son of Shimeah, David's brother, meaning he was a cousin of both Amnon and Absalom, and the text says he was a **friend** of Amnon, and a *very crafty man*, in which the language uses the word "wise" or "shrewd". We will see that this type of wisdom was worldly, a kind of political maneuvering that allowed him to get things done outside of normal channels.
- **Tamar** – We will focus on Tamar next week, but here, she is presented as a truly righteous, innocent, and compassionate person. She was a **beautiful sister to Absalom**, she was a **virgin**, meaning she was not married but also sexually pure, who proved to be both obedient to her father and kind to her brother. There is NOTHING in the text that gives ANY implication that she did ANYTHING to deserve or contribute to the actions of her brother. In the text, she is presented as the true innocent party, one who will be wronged while bearing no blame, only the shame of another.

THE DEAL IS PLANNED AND STRUCK

The story is not overly complex and one that unfortunately has been unfortunately repeated far too often in this broken world. **Amnon** looked at his beautiful sister and began to feel the thrill of **desire**, which he interpreted as **love**. He allowed these thoughts to linger and grow, dwelling on what he knew he could not have, since EVERYONE knows that a desire of this kind for a sibling is wrong and sinful, even if you do not know the OT Law (but it DID say incest was sinful – Lev. 18:11; 20:17; Deut 27:22). This desire grew to a point that he got physically **sick, tormented, and haggard** in not being able to act on these desires. *This is a good place to discuss a few things:*

1. **Temptation to sin is real and powerful** – Temptation is like a lure in fishing (James 1:14), something shiny, appealing to the eyes or pride or material gain. It entices us according to our **desires**, but these desires are MISPLACED because of our sin nature. So food is good, a gift from God, but gluttony is sinful. Sleep is necessary, but too much is laziness, which is sinful. Sex is

good, a gift from God, but any sexual expression by desire or action outside of the confines of marriage is sinful. Our Enemy is a master of understanding our sinful hearts and will use **external means** to draw out the **misplaced desires of our heart**.

2. **Sin offers pleasure and delivers pain** – Why is the temptation to sin so effective? Because when we sin we do GET a fleeting satisfaction and fulfillment of our desires! If we did not, it would not work so well. Here, Amnon was convinced that what was missing in his life was to bed Tamar, and if only he could do that, he would finally be fulfilled, happy, etc. But all sin actually delivers on is pain and death. I'm not sure what a fish feels the moment when they bite down on a shiny lure, but I know that after they do, they feel the sting of losing control and being brought into a net and eventually on my dinner table!
3. **Lust is a Cheap Counterfeit of Biblical Love** – It is almost strange that the text describes what Amnon felt as "love" for Tamar (13:1, 4). What he was truly feeling was lust, which is a perversion of a pure desire and sinful at its core, since it is by definition SELFISH. It is clear that Amnon was thinking about himself in thinking about Tamar, convincing himself that somehow this would be good for her. **Biblical love** is marked by humility and is **selfless and sacrificial by nature**. Biblical love seeks the best for the object of our love, and thus is gentle, patient, giving, faithful, and kind. Lustful love is unloving, and has deceived many.

NOTE: Let's pause here and clarify one thing, and let me address those who are in a dating relationship or hope to be so in the future. God makes purity one pre-requisite to being in his will when it comes to marriage and potential marriage (see 1 Thess. 4:3-8). This means that if you believe you love someone else and willingly engage in any sexual activity with them, it is **NOT LOVE, it IS LUST**. Does this mean there is no love in the relationship? No, but it does mean if you DO love this person, you will uphold their purity and if you have crossed sinful lines, you will stop, turn to the LORD and purity, and seek forgiveness. Do not misconstrue these two concepts in your relationship.

The Wiseguy without wisdom enters the stage...

Who we surround ourselves with tells us much about our level of wisdom and maturity. Surrounding ourselves with people who tell us the truth in love and who are willing to wound us for our best are the marks of good and faithful friends (Prov. 27:6; Eph. 4:15). A person in your life who tempts you, influences, or pushes you toward rebellion or unrighteousness is a fool, one who despises wisdom and instruction (Prov. 1:7). It is also true that in this world, there are two types of **wisdom** – That which comes from above and produces purity, peace, gentleness, reasonableness, mercy, and good fruits, and is marked by impartiality and sincerity (James 3:17). Worldly wisdom produces bitter jealousy, selfish ambition, and boasting, and is **earthly, unspiritual, and demonic** (James 3:14-15). **Jonadab** possessed the latter in spades. And he unleashed his crafty nature, devising a plan to "help" his friend.

It was simple: *Act like you are sick, when your dad comes to see you, request that your sister Tamar prepare you food and that you can eat from her hand.* Simple, devious, effective, and wicked...the marks of worldly wisdom.

NOTE: We need to find counselors and friends who will not just speak "wisdom" into our life, but particularly **Biblical Wisdom** into our lives. There is a trend for people to seek out counselors, therapists, or 'professionals' when they have problems. Instead of seeking the truth of Scripture or the

discernment of mature believers, we will look for people who affirm our desires and side with us, telling us what we want to hear. This is to our detriment and leads to rebellion, not joy.

The Terrible Plan Played Out (13:7-19)

Men are called to be husbands, fathers, protectors, leaders, and humble servants. Adam was created to watch over, preserve, protect, and guard what God created, especially his wife (Gen. 2:15). Sin flipped this, and men have the propensity and potentiality to use their God given strength to lord or rule over the women they are called to love (see Gen. 3:16)

The story played out just as Jonadab planned. David okayed the plan, and Tamar, being both obedient and compassionate, went into her brother's house to make him special cakes, most likely that contained medicinal herbs or essential oils. Sending everyone out, Amnon took advantage of the situation, his sister's graciousness, and his own physical prowess. **"He took hold of her"** and tried to convince her to sleep with him. Tamar, being righteous, **rightly appealed to him**, calling him not to violate her, that this was outrageous, that it would make him a **fool in Israel**, and it would bring **shame on her**. Then, in a show of trust in her father and Lord, appealed for him to talk to David and seek his counsel.

But Amnon was given over to his lust – and lust fully formed was willing to use up.

He did not **listen**, he was **stronger than she was**, he **violated her**, and he **lay with her** (v. 14). Abusive, sinful, wicked, violating, traumatic, undeserved, and unconscionable. But if there was any question whether this was an act of love or good desire, the next phrase revealed his warped heart:

*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!"***

Once lust was satisfied but his heart was found wanting, this love/lust turned quickly to **hatred**, but not just any hate, a fully formed, top of the line kind of hate. What he thought was love turned to his own guilt and shame, the sting of rejection, the enlightenment that this was not the answer. He could not stand to look at her anymore, since the sight of Tamar reminded him of his own shame, so he did not even have the decency to show an ounce of kindness, but spouted **"Get up! Go!"**, unwilling to even say her name. In her own righteousness, she called for him to do the right thing and marry her, which was even what a pagan like Shechem was willing to do in a similar situation with Dinah (Genesis 34). But he was only willing to put her out of his house and have his servants bolt the door on her way out. This left Tamar in a **terrible situation**, not only with the mark and violation on her body, but left her culturally unable to get married and stay in the king's court, leaving her a **desolate woman**. We will talk through this aspect next week, in terms of what could she do moving forward, but for now, let's conclude by looking at Amnon. What lessons do we learn from this tragic and wicked story?

- **Lust is a fire NOT to be trifled with** – Just like a destructive fire, lust, especially sexual lust, will result in destruction and death. That is why we are to aggressively kill it, to **abstain** from it (1 Thess. 4:3) and to be willing to pluck out an eye and cut off a hand (Matt. 5:28-30). Regardless of where you are at today with the battle against lust, now is the time to aggressively deal with it, to cut it off, in your mind, from your eyes, and in your body. This is the act of **repentance**, which willingly confesses sin, asks for forgiveness, and turns from sin.

- **Lust is an equal opportunity threat** – If anyone thinks they are above the temptation of lust or beyond its clutches, it signals that we are prime to fall. Lust is an equal opportunity threat, and our Enemy is great at scheming ways to catch us unaware or unprepared. We need to deal with this together, encouraging each other, praying for each other, and exhorting each other in the battle.
- **Lust is a result of unbelief** – Lust, like all sin, is the result of unbelief in God and His promises and taking matters of life, pleasure, and joy into our own hands. Amnon believed he knew best, listening to poor counsel and giving himself over to his desires, listening to himself instead of speaking truth to himself. God does not withhold from us, and offers us pleasures and joy in Him, and then giving us good gifts to enjoy (see Psalm 16:11 and Jer. 2:11-13).
- **Lust must be replaced to be killed** – Lust is common, but those who know Christ should approach it differently than those in the world (1 Thess. 4:5). When someone who does not know Christ is ruled by their desires, it's tragic but makes sense. However, a believer should be marked by **self-control, holiness, and honor, NOT IN THE PASSION OF LUST**. We seek to **please God** (1 Thess. 4:1), knowing that He is the avenger and gives us information for our good and as a warning. But lust must be fought not in a knockdown, drag out, mano y mano type of fight. It is a fight of **desires, so we have to replace the desire for misplaced lust with better desires**. That is why this fight begins in our minds, and progresses from there. Training and feeding our minds with satisfying truth is the antidote for the battle against lust:

*If then you have been raised with Christ, **seek the things that are above**, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² **Set your minds on things that are above**, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

*⁵ **Put to death** therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry*

We put sinful lust to death by seeking and setting our minds on something better. In doing this, we can extinguish the deadly fire that is lust.