

A World Without God

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[0 : 00] Samuel chapter 13, and it can be found on page 316 of the Church Bibles. 2 Samuel chapter 13.

In the course of time, Amnon, son of David, fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom, son of David. 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 Amnon had an advisor named Jonadab, son of Shemiah, David's brother.

Jonadab was a very shrewd man. He asked Amnon, Why do you, the king's son, look so haggard morning after morning? Won't you tell me? Amnon said to him, I'm in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister.

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.

[1 : 03] Let her prepare the food in my sight so that I may watch her, and then eat it from her hand. So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. When the king 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 that I may eat from her hand.

David sent word to Tamar at the palace. Go to the house of your brother Amnon and prepare some food for him. So Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon, who was lying down.

She took some dough, kneaded it, made the bread in his sight and baked it. Then she took the pan and served him the bread, but he refused to eat. Send everyone out of here, Amnon said.

So everyone left him. Then Amnon said to Tamar, bring the food here into my bedroom so that I may eat from your hand. And Tamar took the bread she had prepared and brought it to her brother Amnon in his bedroom.

But when she took it to him to eat, he grabbed her and said, come to bed with me, my sister. No, my brother, she said to him. Don't force me. Such a thing should not be done in Israel.

[2 : 09] Don't do this wicked thing. What about me? Where could I get rid of my disgrace? And what about you? You would be like one of the wicked fools in Israel. Please speak to the king.

He will not keep me from being married to you. But he refused to listen to her. And since he was stronger than she, he raped her. 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. No, she said to him, sending me away would be a greater wrong than what you have already done to me.

But he refused to listen to her. He called his personal servant and said, get this woman out of my sight and bolt the door after her. So his servant put her out and bolted the door after her.

She was wearing an ornate robe, for this was the kind of garment the virgin daughters of the king wore. Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornate robe she was wearing.

[3 : 09] She put her hands on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went. Her brother Absalom said to her, has that Amnon, your brother, been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister.

He is your brother. Don't take this thing to heart. And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom's house, a desolate woman. When King David heard all this, he was furious.

And Absalom never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad. He hated Amnon because he had disgraced his sister Tamar. Two years later, when Absalom's sheep shearers were at Baal Hazor, near the border of Ephraim, he invited all the king's sons to come there.

Absalom went to the king and said, your servant has had shearers come. Will the king and his attendants please join me? No, my son, the king replied.

All of us should not go. We would only be a burden to you. Although Absalom urged him, he still refused to go, but gave him his blessing. Then Absalom said, if not, please let my brother Amnon

come with us.

[4 : 17] The king asked him, why should he go with you? But Absalom urged him, so he sent with him Amnon and the rest of the king's sons. Absalom ordered his men, listen, when Amnon is in high spirits from drinking wine, and I say to you, strike Amnon down, then kill him.

Don't be afraid, haven't I given you this order? Be strong and brave. And so Absalom's men did to Amnon what Absalom had ordered. Then all the king's sons got up, mounted their mules and fled. While they were on their way, the reports came to David. Absalom had struck down all the king's sons. Not one of them is left. The king stood up, tore his clothes and lay on the ground.

And all his attendants stood by with their clothes torn. But Jonadab, son of Shemiah, David's brother, said, My lord, should not think that they killed all the princes. Only Amnon is dead. This has been Absalom's express intention ever since the day that Amnon raped his sister Tamar. My lord, the king, should not be concerned about the report that all the king's sons are dead.

[5 : 26] Only Amnon is dead. Meanwhile, Absalom had fled. Now the man standing watch looked up and saw many people on the road west of him, coming down the side of the hill.

The watchman went and told the king, I see men in the direction of Horonim on the side of the hill. Jonadab said to the king, See, the king's sons have come.

It has happened just as your servant said. As he finished speaking, the king's sons came in wailing loudly. The king, too, and all his attendants, wept very bitterly.

Absalom fled and went to Talmai, son of Amahud, the king of Geshur. But King David mourned many days for his son. After Absalom fled and went to Geshur, he stayed there for three years. And King David longed to go to Absalom, for he was consoled concerning Amnon's death. This is the word of the Lord. Great. Thanks, Eileen, for reading, and Martin and Craig for leading us.

[6 : 42] Let me pray. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the hard passages. We thank you for the passages of rejoicing.

Please give us wisdom to understand and hear your message to us now. In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, it was a beautiful sunshine day.

Not a Glasgow sunny day. I'm talking a tropical sunny day. And life was good. Her dad had just started a company as a service provider in this thing called the internet.

Apparently, it was going to be the next big thing. There was... Life was good. The kitchen opened out onto the patio, an infinity pool. Not that any of that mattered to her.

Because she was crazy about tennis. She loved the forehands. She loved the backhands. She was mad about it. And it just so happened that she happened to be good about it.

[7 : 47] At least, her coach said so. She was so good that he started giving her special coaching sessions. At first, she liked the attention.

But then it started getting awkward. Slightly heated. He would say stuff like, You're so beautiful, baby girl. And I can't control myself around you.

And you don't know what you do to me. I love you. Is this love? She thought to herself. How would she know? She was only 13.

Well, her name was Joy. And years later, when she recounted the story to me, I wondered to myself, Where is God's grace and joy in this situation?

And how are we meant to respond to situations like this in life? How are we meant to bring about God's justice? To do the right thing?

[8 : 50] How do you care and love with God's love survivors of abuse? So it's hard, isn't it? When faced with shocking crimes and incidents in the lives of us, those around us, to figure out what is the best way to love and care for them and to give them the justice that they deserve.

And this kind of abuse isn't something that's out there. As Anne's prayers reminded us, it's something that's very much a part of our life here in Glasgow this week.

And if you're sitting here this evening as one who has experienced and survived this kind of abuse, please hear me and let me tell you that you're welcome and loved here.

You deserve better. And when the Bible writers write about these hard passages, it's not that they are condoning this abuse, anything but, but they're simply describing what our world looks like without having God as king.

So by way of context, as we've been looking through 2 Samuel in the evenings, we've noticed and remember that God has promised David that from his dynasty will come a king who will reign over God's people forever.

[10:20] But no sooner is that promise given that we realize that David is not that king. Instead, David, great king David, he rejects God, commits adultery, and murders Uriah the Hittite.

But from this passage tonight, we learn what God's king forever is going to be like. Namely, he is going to be a king who gives justice and sustains.

So a world without God. And it is a world that is completely upside down and disordered. And this is clear in the very first verse of our chapter this evening.

So love without God, verses 1 to 22. In the course of time, Amnon said to David, son of David, fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom, son of David.

David. 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.

[11:26] You see, Amnon is King David's eldest son. He should have been the king that we're waiting for in this passage, by rights. But in this passage, and the chapters that follow this chapter, are all about Absalom.

You see, in the Hebrew, Absalom comes first in this chapter. Amnon is Prince William to Absalom's Harry. But Amnon, instead of being regal and king-like, he comes across as completely disordered and out of control.

You see, he says he loves Tamar, but his love is without respect. She's his half-sister. If he loved her, he would want to honor her in the eyes of the law.

And she is a virgin. That's literally, she's a girl of marriageable age in the king's court. And as such, she was under King David's protection. You see, if Amnon loved Tamar, he would respect the king's control over her.

But it's the Garden of Eden, and it's David and Bathsheba all over again, like father, like son. He sees her. She's beautiful. She's forbidden. But he still wants to do something to her.

[12:48] And it's utterly disordered. But Amnon has made himself so sick of this that his shrewd and wise advisor, Jonadab, asks him, Why do you, king's son, look so haggard morning after morning?

Won't you tell me? I'm in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister. And what we notice is Jonadab's wisdom is a wisdom without discernment.

His wisdom is disordered and corrupted. You see, either he willfully sets up his cousin Tamar, or he fails to see the danger in Amnon.

And so Jonadab and Absalom devise a plot to get Tamar alone. And that's what sin does. It thwarts our best intentions, and it plants the most devious of plans.

And this plot that they devise revolves around manipulating King David to send Tamar to Amnon's house. You see, rather than David being the wise man of action that we're so used to in Samuel, here we see David the patsy.

[14:01] Patsy is really just a full guy who advances the desires and motives of other characters. And so we read in verse 7, David sent word to Tamar at the palace, go to the house of your brother Amnon and prepare him some food.

And Tamar, because she's the only character with integrity in this passage, of course does the right thing. And she obeys her father. So verse 8, so Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon who was lying down.

She took some dough. She kneaded it. She made the bread in the sight of it and baked it. She's that Proverbs 31 girl who does everything, who's industrious. And then she took the pan and served in the bread, but he refused it.

And then Amnon, he does a peculiar thing. He sends everyone out the room. And so finally, as planned, he and Tamar are alone.

And then Amnon said to Tamar in verse 10, bring the food here into my bedroom so that I might eat from your hand. And you can feel the tension building.

[15:17] And the action slows right down. And Tamar took the bread she had prepared and brought it to her brother Amnon in his bedroom.

And finally, Tamar is in Amnon's bedroom. What was that anything that Amnon wanted to do? But rather than take the bread, Amnon grabs her.

But when she took it to him to eat, he grabbed her and said, come to bed with me, my sister. And it's short and it's abrupt. Come, lie. Amnon calls her my sister.

And it's utterly disordered and perverse. It turns everything good on its head. No, my brother, comes to reply. Three times she says, no, don't force me. Don't do this wicked thing. And this is the type of thing that you can imagine happening out there. But surely not in Jerusalem, in the center of God's kingdom. [16:25] at the hands of Prince Amnon. And it's the kind of king that shouldn't, it's the kind of thing that shouldn't happen in Israel.

That such a thing should not be done in Israel. For this to happen should bring national shame and disgrace. You see, Amnon says he loves Tamar, but what he wants will destroy her. Look at verse 13. What about me? Where could I get rid of my disgrace? I would be better off dead than raped by you, is what she's saying. And what about you? You will be like one of the wicked fools in Israel. And that's what sin does. It destroys both the guilty and innocent alike. It turns Prince Amnon, who have everything and lack nothing, into godless fools, depraved, and warped. And you and I, as we read this, we read the paper all the time, and we know this to be true. [17:35] We read these stories all the time. And despite all her protestations and all her wisdom, we read, but he refused to listen to her.

And since he was stronger than her, he raped her. And it's literally, he overpowered, he abused, he bettered. Oh, I love you, but I don't respect you. You see, Amnon's god is power and pleasure, but not the god of the Bible. You see, it's a love without God. It's utterly disordered, and it breaks our hearts to read about it. It is disturbing. But this is only the start in this passage. You see, Amnon having finally done something to her, what does he do? He discards her. Look at verse 15. Then Amnon hated her with an intense hatred. He says he loves her, but he takes from her everything. [18:42] He leaves her nothing. He says he loves her, but he hates her. And that's what sin does. It clothes hatred in love.

Get up and get out. Literally, get, go. And again, Tamar says, with all her courage, as the only person with dignity and integrity in this passage, through gritted teeth. No. Sending me away would be a greater wrong than what you have already done. But he refused to listen. He doesn't even hear her. And calling his servant, he says, literally, verse 17, get this out, and bolts the door. And this is the heart of sin. You see, sin never has enough. It makes us worse and worse and worse. And it turns us into beasts and people into objects. [19:46] And as he leaves, the narrator reminds us of who Tamar is. She was wearing an ornate robe, for this was the kind of garment that the virgin daughters of the king wore.

Tamar put ashes on her head, and she tore her ornate robe she was wearing. She put ashes on her head and went away, wailing loudly as she went. You see, Tamar was King David's daughter, who was abused by David's son. Who then is safe? It is a great public grief. And you might expect a public outcry, or you might expect King David to act in the situation, but what do you get? Nothing. It's a kingdom on its head. No love, no justice. But instead what we see is Absalom is introduced in the next verse. [20:46] Has that Amnon, your brother, been with you? And perhaps Absalom has been noticing the attention that Amnon has been given Tamar at family gatherings, maybe sidling up to her on the couch.

And because he knows what has happened to his sister, Absalom hated Amnon because he had disgraced his sister Tamar. You see here, Absalom replaces King David as the rule of law here. And the last that we hear about Tamar in the Bible is the end of verse 20. And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom's house, a desolate woman. Her life is in utter tatters because that is what sin does. It destroys lives, yours and theirs. And this is what the love without God looks like. It's completely disordered and out of control. So justice without God, verses 23 to 39. And for two years nothing happens until Absalom holds a party and he invites his family over.

[21 : 54] And again we find someone manipulating King David. David being none the wiser. So verse 24. Absalom went to the king and said your servant has had sharers come.

Will the king and his attendants please join me? But David refuses and then it's then that the real plan comes to light. Absalom replies, if not, please let my brother Amnon come with us.

You see at first David smells a rat. Why should he go with you? But Absalom urged him on. So he sent him Amnon and the rest of King David's sons.

And as Amnon lured Tamar to his house, so Absalom lures Amnon to his and kills him in revenge for Tamar. And he speaks to his men like Joshua spoke to the Israelites entering into the promised land, about to excise the wickedness.

Be strong, be brave. And he sets himself up as a self-styled judge. And so verse 29, so Absalom's men did to Amnon what Absalom had ordered.

[23 : 06] And because David abdicates as judge, Absalom steps in. And as a result of this murder, Absalom flees to avoid the retribution.

And at this stage, David's kingdom is complete thugsful. It's godless and disordered. It is a kingdom without God, and it is completely on its head.

So how should we respond to this godless and heartbreaking of all chapters in the Bible? It's a chapter where we see Tamar abused by her brother.

Tamar, who is the next in line for the throne. She's trapped, ignored, abused, dehumanized, despised, banished, and ruined.

It's a world without God where everything is turned on its head and disordered. It's a world where Amnon says he loves Tamar, but he abuses her.

[24 : 11] It's a world where Amnon calls Tamar his sister in one breath, but then a thing in the next. You see, rather than loving her as a brother should, Amnon uses her.

Rather than being respected and loved and sustained and cared for in all its fullness, Tamar is abandoned and used. It's a world where the king is apathetic to the plight of the most vulnerable and denies them justice.

Look at verse 21. King David heard of all this. He was furious, but what does he do? He does nothing. He's Tamar's father and he allows her to be abused.

He's even an accomplice to the fact almost, but he does nothing to defend or vindicate her, her own father, and it is utterly outrageous.

Look at verse 31. The king stood up following Amnon's murder, tore his clothes, laid down on the ground, and all his attendants stood by with their clothes torn.

[25 : 21] And it's laughable. His son is murdered in his kingdom, which he's helped to facilitate King David, and he makes a great show, but he does nothing.

So as Saul had hidden the baggage, so David fails to rule and provide the justice for his people and children. You see, sin, rather than leading to empowerment, leads to failure.

It's a world where Jonadab's wisdom is either wicked or powerless to prevent the abuse of his cousin and the murder of his friend. And it's a world where Absalom, the younger brother, murders the future king and the older brother.

It's a world where Tamar, rather than being defended and loved and cared for by her father, is looked after by her brother. But it's also a world where we see evil being used to accomplish God's purposes.

You see, as God had promised to King David in 2 Samuel 12 that we looked at last week, that the sword will never depart from your house because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own, through Absalom's account this week and in the next seven chapters we're going to see God's word being fulfilled despite evil.

[26 : 50] And it's a world that points to our great need for a true and better king, who is a better king than King David or Amnon or Absalom, who is God's king, who gives justice and sustains us.

And that king is Jesus. You see, King Jesus will always give justice and never turn a blind eye in favoritism. King Jesus will always sustain you in love, in your brokenness, in your heartache, in your shame and disgrace, at the hands of those who should have loved and upheld you.

God's king will never abuse you and then discard you as trash. God's king will never let his love for favorites cloud his sense of justice for the weak and the vulnerable.

Jesus is not unable to empathize with our weakness and our humiliation. For your sake on the cross, he became weak and was humiliated.

You see, rather than use you and abuse you, Jesus died for you. Jesus did not let his love for you as his child cloud his justice, but rather in his death on the cross, he demonstrated his perfect love and taking the full measure for the judgment of sins.

[28 : 20] You see, Jesus is God's king who always gives justice and sustains. So what's it going to look like to have Jesus as your king?

Well, let me tell you about a friend of mine, Tom. Tom was a guy that I met surfing in the lineup in Durban. He was English. I thought he played for the English Lions as it were, because he was a massive bloke.

And what had happened was Tom had come down through Africa, through Mozambique, through the Civil War, and he had settled in Durban. and he had married a girl called Becky, who was a street child.

She was a girl who had grown up abused, addicted to glue, used in many, many ways. Tom married her and cared for her in unimaginably kind ways.

And then he started this outreach called Surfers, Not Street Children. And he worked to fix and redeem the lives of those who are broken around him.

[29 : 30] So what about you? Maybe there are areas of your life where you have been unjust and unloving. Maybe those are areas that you need to repent of.

Maybe you are in a relationship and you have not loved the person as well as you should. Maybe it's a friend or a father or mother or whatever it is.

maybe you are here tonight and you realize that you are under the Lord's just judgment for sin and you need to know his love and salvation.

Maybe you know of something really unjust and unloving going on, perhaps illegal, and where you know you should be acting but just weren't sure what to do.

Why not tell someone? Well, let me close for us. So, Father, we, Lord, we accept these hard passages, Father, and we trust your wisdom in giving them to us.

[30 : 34] We trust your guidance, Father, and we pray humbly that we would seek to grow and to know and love you and your Son as a King who loves us, who gives us justice and sustains us in our weakness.

In Jesus' name, Amen.