

Tamar is Raped by Amnon, and in Revenge Absalom Murders Amnon

2 Samuel 13

"After this Absalom the son of David had a lovely sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her. ² Amnon was so distressed over his sister Tamar that he became sick; for she was a virgin. And it was improper for Amnon to do anything to her. ³ But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother. Now Jonadab was a very crafty man. ⁴ And he said to him, "Why are you, the king's son, becoming thinner day after day? Will you not tell me?" Amnon said to him, "I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister."

⁵ So 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, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and give me food, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see it and eat it from her hand.'" ⁶ Then Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill; and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let Tamar my sister come and make a couple of cakes for me in my sight, that I may eat from her hand."

⁷ And David sent home to Tamar, saying, "Now go to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare food for him." ⁸ So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house; and he was lying down. Then she took flour and kneaded it, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes. ⁹ And she took the pan and placed them out before him, but he refused to eat. Then Amnon said, "Have everyone go out from me." And they all went out from him. ¹⁰ Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the bedroom, that I may eat from your hand." And Tamar took the cakes, which she had made, and brought them to Amnon her brother in the bedroom. ¹¹ Now when she had brought them to him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister."

¹² But she answered him, "No, my brother, do not force me, for no such thing should be done in Israel. Do not do this disgraceful thing! ¹³ And I, where could I take my shame? And as for you, you would be like one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you." ¹⁴ However, he would not heed her voice; and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her.

¹⁵ Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, 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, "Arise, be gone!" ¹⁶ So she said to him, "No, indeed! This evil of sending me away is worse than the other that you did to me."

But he would not listen to her. ¹⁷ Then he called his servant who attended him, and said, "Here! Put this woman out, away from me, and bolt the door behind her." ¹⁸ Now she had on a robe of many colors, for the king's virgin daughters wore such apparel. And his servant put her out and bolted the door behind her.

¹⁹ Then Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore her robe of many colors that was on her, and laid her hand on her head and went away crying bitterly. ²⁰ And Absalom her brother said to her, "Has Amnon your brother been with you? But now hold your peace, my sister. He is your brother; do not take this thing to heart." So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house.

²¹ But when King David heard of all these things, he was very angry. ²² And Absalom spoke to his brother Amnon neither good nor bad. For Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar. ²³ And it came to pass, after two full years, that Absalom had sheepshearers in Baal Hazor, which is near Ephraim; so Absalom invited all the king's sons. ²⁴ Then Absalom came to the king and said, "Kindly note, 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 now, lest we be a burden to you." Then he urged him, but he would not go; and he blessed him. 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 urged him; so he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him.

²⁸ Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, "Watch now, when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, 'Strike Amnon!' then kill him. Do not be afraid. Have I not commanded you? Be courageous and valiant." ²⁹ So the servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and each one got on his mule and fled.

³⁰ And it came to pass, while they were on the way, that news came to David, saying, "Absalom has killed all the king's sons, and not one of them is left!" ³¹ So the king arose and tore his garments and lay on the ground, and all his servants stood by with their clothes torn. ³² Then Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother, answered and said, "Let not my lord suppose they have killed all the young men, the king's sons, for only Amnon is dead. For by the command of Absalom this has been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar. ³³ Now therefore, let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead. For only Amnon is dead."

34 Then Absalom fled. And the young man who was keeping watch lifted his eyes and looked, and there, many people were coming from the road on the hillside behind him.^[a] 35 And Jonadab said to the king, "Look, the king's sons are coming; as your servant said, so it is." 36 So it was, as soon as he had finished speaking, that the king's sons indeed came, and they lifted up their voice and wept. Also the king 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 every day. 38 So Absalom fled and went to Geshur, and was there three years. 39 And King David^[b] longed to go to^[c] Absalom. For he had been comforted concerning Amnon, because he was dead."

Background Notes

Although God graciously forgave David for his sins of adultery and murder, David would suffer sad consequences as a result of those sins. 2 Samuel 12 records the fourfold judgment that was pronounced upon David for his sins. One of those consequences was that David would reap what he had sown, right in his own family and household. David's firstborn son, Amnon, raped his half-sister Tamar, and then David's son Absalom, who was Tamar's full brother, killed Amnon in revenge. This all part of a bad fallout from David's sin.

Unfortunately it appears that David himself had become desensitized to sin and reluctant to discipline sin. Although David was angry with Amnon for his heinous act, he didn't do anything about it! David didn't even rebuke Amnon, let alone discipline him. Why not? Part of the reason may have been that Amnon was David's firstborn son, and heir to the throne. But another part of the reason was that David himself had committed sexual sin, and was therefore reluctant to judge sexual sin in his son's life. However, David should certainly have disciplined Amnon, because prompt discipline might have prevented further terrible fallout from Amnon's sin. This is certainly a good lesson for parents today. Parents must discipline sin in their children's lives, even when they may have been guilty of those same sins in the past.

Doctrinal Points

1. Unchecked lust leads to fornication.

Amnon said that he was in love with Tamar (v4), but that was a lie. He may have thought it was love, but it was actually lust. In this context, lust is intense sexual desire. If Amnon had truly loved his half-sister Tamar, he would never have raped her.

Unchecked lust leads to fornication. In Matthew 5:28 the Lord Jesus said, *"...whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."* In other words, it's a process: starting with the lustful look and moving on to the actual act is a process. If something isn't done to check the lustful thoughts, the process will continue and proceed on to the act. Amnon should have checked his lustful thoughts long before consulting with his scoundrel of a cousin, Jonadab. This evil man conspired with Amnon on how to commit sexual sin. By the way, there are all types of "Jonadabs" around to help people carry out their lustful thoughts – books, magazines, internet sites, films, and on and on. Lust must be checked early, as soon as it arises.

Tamar tried to reason with Amnon, but it was too late. As a last resort, Tamar even said that she would marry Amnon: *"Now therefore, please speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you."* However, he would not heed her voice; and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her."

After the rape, Amnon's lust turned to hatred, and he threw Tamar out of his house. Under the Mosaic Law, Amnon was obligated to marry Tamar (Deuteronomy 22). Tamar may have been referring to that law when she said, *"This evil of sending me away is worse than the other that you did to me"* (v16). Tamar had to live with the stigma of having lost her virginity, and she may even have had to remain unmarried for the rest of her days.

How sad! Unchecked lust hurts people. Nothing good ever results from lust. Remember, ***lust can never wait to get, while love can always wait to give.*** Lust must be checked and stopped in the early stages, because unchecked lust leads to fornication.

2. Unchecked hate leads to murder.

Absalom's hatred for Amnon is understandable, because Amnon had committed a terrible crime against Absalom's sister, and Amnon had never been judged or disciplined for this sin. But Absalom's hatred should have been checked early on, because unchecked hate leads to murder. Absalom's hatred of his brother smoldered for two full years, until finally he got his chance to murder Amnon at a sheep-shearing celebration. Maybe David should have suspected that Absalom was up to no good when he specifically requested that Amnon go to the celebration (v26), but again David did nothing. Amnon's sin and Absalom's hatred were never dealt with, and the result was murder.

After Absalom took revenge for the rape of his sister by murdering Amnon (v23-39), once again David did nothing to judge or even rebuke Absalom. It's hard to judge your son's sin of murder when you've been guilty of committing that same sin. As parents, we can understand why David's heart went out to Absalom – he

loved his son! But David should have judged and disciplined Absalom for his awful sin of murder. Sadly, there will be further bad fallout from David's failure to discipline in the chapters ahead.

1 John 3:15 says, "*Whoever hates his brother is a murderer...*" Just as unchecked lust is part of a process that leads to fornication, from hate to murder is also a process - and unchecked hatred leads to murder. Let me ask you - is there someone that you hate? If so, you need to deal with that hatred before the process goes further. It's possible to "murder" people in ways other than physical murder, such as ruining a person's reputation out of jealousy, anger and hate. Unchecked hate leads to murder.

Practical Application

Did you ever feel like Tamar?

Poor Tamar! What had she done to deserve this horrible rape and disgrace? Nothing! Life-long bitter consequences sometimes seem to result from just "happening to be in the wrong place at the wrong time." Why would God allow a tragic thing like this to happen?

We don't know all the answers in Tamar's case, and often we don't know all the reasons in our own situations. But if you ever feel like Tamar, and you can't understand why God has allowed you to endure some terrible hurt or to suffer tragic loss, you need to turn to the Lord and **trust His sovereignty**. **God** knows what He has allowed and why He has allowed it, even though we may never know why in this lifetime.

When you feel like Tamar, remember 2 Corinthians 1:3 - "*...the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of all comfort, comforts us in all our troubles...*" Turn to the Lord and bring Him your pain. God is your strong source of comfort when you feel like Tamar.