

## 2 Samuel 13-14

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Preacher: Joe Sutton

[ 0 : 00 ] All right. Well, you can be turning to our text for today, if you're not already, 2 Samuel 13.

! So this is our 31st study in our series in Samuel, 1 and 2. Imagine that. But who's counting? And today, I want to cover the second half of chapter 13, which we did read last time, and then we'll make our way through the end of 14. Now, it's always hard to know how much review to do with these. I think we're going to run a little late today, so I'm going to keep the review short. If you want more thorough review, then there's always the sermons online.

So we've been tracking King David, and we've read of his sin with Bathsheba. Very famous. We all know about that. He took forcefully Bathsheba, who was already married to Uriah, and then he murdered Uriah when she got pregnant by him. And we covered that in chapters 11 and 12. And it took the rebuke of Nathan, Nathan the prophet, for David to understand and perceive what he had done and repent. And repent, he did. But there were consequences. There were consequences. Short term, there was the death of that baby that Bathsheba was pregnant with. And then secondly, there were the long-term consequences.

In 2 Samuel 12, verses 10 through 12, it says how the sword, this is the judgment on David, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah, the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the Lord, behold, I will raise up evil or harm or bad stuff. It's the Hebrew word rah. It's bad things. There will be harm, evil raised up against you from your own household. I will even take your wives before your eyes and give them to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did it secretly. I will do this thing before all Israel and under the sun. And this is what we're now starting to see. And that very thing that God through Nathan prophesied will happen, I think, next week or certainly in the coming weeks.

[ 2 : 45 ] So last time we read chapter 13, and we were focusing on the theme of discipline quite specifically. And I observed how God loved Solomon. It was a remarkable thing to note. Oh, God is love. God loves everyone.

Yes. But very rarely do you see it written down like that in the scriptures. God loved someone. Solomon is one of those someones. And well, so what? Well, the so what is, immediately we read, I will discipline him.

I will discipline with him. And we noted that connection between love and discipline, which God, of course, does perfectly. David, in contrast, does it very imperfectly. And really, that's one of the main reasons we see these things taking place. David is not disciplining his household, his sons.

And we noted that last time. Amnon, who was David's firstborn son, slept with, he took his half-sister, raped her, he slept with her. And then he basically, I'm done with you now. Go away. And Amnon, her full brother was a bit cheesed off. He was Absalom. Yeah, sorry. What did I say? Absalom. Yeah, Absalom was furious. And he gave David two years to deal with it. Chapter 13, verse 21. David heard these things. He was very angry. Of course he was. But he didn't do a thing about it. He did nothing.

And theories abound as to why. Was he showing favoritism? Did he have some kind of residual guilt over his own sin? Probably, to be honest. But in any case, he didn't take any action.

[ 4 : 43 ] And so Absalom takes action himself. And this is the beginning of the sword in David's house. Now, and again, we did read the end of 13 last time, but we didn't really cover it in any detail. So let's pick it up in verse 23. And we'll read together. So 2 Samuel, chapter 13, verse 23, reading, in my case at least, reading from the New American Standard Bible.

Now, it came about after two full years that Absalom had sheep shearers in Bal Hazor, which is near Ephraim. And Absalom invited all the king's sons. Absalom came near to the king and said, behold now, your servant has sheep shearers. Please let the king and his servants go with your

servant.

The precise location of Bal Hazor is unknown. People who make maps tend to stick it about 10 miles north of Jerusalem. Is that where it is? Somewhere around there. So not far. And Absalom calls himself to the king, your servant, which is a standard, polite address to the king. And the invitation is to come to sheep shearing. And I don't know how much that excites you to come to the sheep shearing party. But it's like the harvest festival in that it's a time of joy because the wealth, the wool, the wealth is being gathered in. So it's a time of celebration. It is a party. Different time. Verse 25.

But the king said to Absalom, no, my son, we should not all go, for we will be a burden to you. We'll be burdensome to you. Although he urged him, he would not go, but blessed him. And 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?

But when Absalom urged him, he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him. So David declines, the reason being that he and his servants and his whole household will be just too much of a burden, literally too heavy for him, too expensive. Some commentators suggest that Absalom knew that David would decline, but invited him to reduce the suspicion that he had an ulterior motive. I can't see that in the text, so I don't know if that's true or not. But David gives the blessing. He says, yes, sure. After that urging from Absalom, he says, yes, sure, they can go. How many is that? How many sons? Well, it's at least 17 sons. David had had six born in Hebron. You can look at 2 Samuel 3.

[ 7 : 30 ] And then there's a further 11 that we've had listed in chapter 5, born in Jerusalem. And the majority of these sons were born to different women. And we've talked about David's polygamy before. We don't need to revisit it today. But Amnon is the oldest. He's the firstborn. And Absalom is the third oldest by count. But the second born is a guy called Kiliab, or Chiliab, depending on how you pronounce that word. He's named Daniel in the book of Chronicles. But he doesn't show up again. He doesn't show up again in Scripture. And so the inference is that he must have died young. Otherwise, we would see him. We'd see him here, and he would be older than Absalom, and he would be more prominent. So we assume he died. So that means Amnon and Absalom are the oldest of this group of brothers. How old are they? I would say they're around early 20s. And so the rest of the sons are significantly younger. Some of them are probably just young boys.

So let's read on. Verse 28. Absalom commanded his servants, saying, See now, when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, Strike Amnon, then put him to death. Do not fear. Have not I myself commanded you, Be courageous and be valiant? The servants of Absalom did to Amnon just as Absalom had commanded.

Then all the king's sons arose, and each mounted his mule and fled. So Absalom's plan is carried out. I thought that his words of encouragement to his servants were ironic in the way that they recalled passages like Deuteronomy and Joshua, where God is, Be strong and courageous to do the will of the Lord. And here, it's almost like he's borrowing that language for sin's purposes, which I thought was not a good thing. But one thing that I wanted to pause on here for a minute is, is that this happened at the moment that Amnon was drunk.

Amnon was drunk. He let down his guard, and that is when the enemy struck. And we could do a little survey of all the times in the Bible that drunkenness leads to foolishness and bad decisions. We could look as early as Genesis 9, where Noah, probably having never experienced the concept of alcohol before, got drunk. We've got Nabal in 1 Samuel 25. There's other examples that we could look at. Galatians 5.21 lists drunkenness among 15 deeds of the flesh, declaring that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. And in contrast to that, we have this instruction in 1 Thessalonians 5.6-8. Paul wrote, So then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep, do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.

[ 11 : 03 ] We could look at 1 Peter, and there's a similar exhortation three times, and that's not a long book. So it's there. So what does it mean? So does it mean then that we should never drink alcohol?

Well, it doesn't mean that specifically. I did hear of one church who had a policy that their elders were teetotal. And their argument, in essence, was that alcohol dull senses. It makes one slower. It makes one more vulnerable. It makes one less thoughtful. And it diminishes one's capacity to be

spiritually effective and makes one more, again, vulnerable to temptation. I have heard of church leaders who've made a personal decision that they will never drink alcohol at all for the same reasons. And I would say that if one's conscious conscience compels you thus, then that is the right thing to do for you. But the Bible doesn't require this or command this. In 1 Timothy 3, the requirements for church leaders are listed, and it says simply that they ought not to be addicted to wine. I would say that for a church to require abstinence completely, it feels a bit like putting fences around laws to me, much like ancient Israel did. But I do get that personal conviction. And what we have with Amnon here is an example and a warning that drunkenness leads to vulnerability. So, let's read on. Amnon is murdered, the prince's flee, verse 30. Now it was while they were on their way that the report came to David saying, Absalom has struck down all the king's sons and not one of them is left. Then the king arose, tore his clothes and lay on the ground, and all his servants were standing by with their clothes torn.

John Adab, the son of Shimea, David's brother, responded, do not let my lord suppose that they have put to death all the young men, the king's sons, for Amnon alone is dead, because by the intent of Absalom this has been determined since the day that he violated his sister Tamar. Now therefore do not let my lord the king take the report to heart, namely all the king's sons are dead, for only Amnon is dead.

Well, the rumor mill is working, not quite clear how that happened, but word comes back to David that they're all dead, and the tearing of clothes is of course a practice associated with extreme grief. [13:36] The idea is that you rip and you bare your heart. And then we see this character, John Adab again. Now we saw him last time as the one who was enabling Amnon. And I just want to poke that guy in the eye for this.

You know, he was basically a traitor to David and his household by enabling this wicked, heinous sin. And now that it's happened, and now Amnon has risen up against, sorry, Absalom has risen up against Amnon.

He's like, oh, this is what happened. This is what Amnon, Absalom was going to do. I don't like him. He was introduced to us as a man who is remarkably shrewd in verse 3.

And it's interesting because that is just a word that means wise or skillful. It's not intrinsically negative or positive. But it is presumably why he was able to see through that rumor and perceive what had happened, because there's no hint that he was there.

Verse 34. Now Absalom had fled, and the young man who was the watchman raised his eyes and looked. And behold, many people were coming from the road behind him by the side of the mountain.

[14:55] John Adab said to the king, behold, the king's sons have come according to your servant's words. So it happened. As soon as he finished speaking, behold, the king's sons came and lifted their voices and wept.

And also the king and all his servants wept very bitterly. It's a traumatic day. And we're reminded that, again, a lot of these are very young men, very young boys. And it's a traumatic event that's happened.

Verse 37. Now Absalom fled and went to Talmi, the son of Ammihud. The king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son every day.

So Absalom had fled and gone to Geshur and was there three days. The heart of King David longed to go out to Absalom, for he was comforted concerning Amnon since he was dead.

So Absalom has fled north. As a reminder, he was the son of David and a woman named Maacah. Maacah was the daughter of this Talmi, son of Ammihud.

[16:04] So he's fled to grandpa. He's gone home to granddad. And where is that? Well, it's in a place called Geshur. Here's a little map. And you can see Geshur is right up there by the Sea of Galilee.

Technically, that is in the territory allotted to the half-tribe of Manasseh that was on the east, East Manasseh. But they never actually cleared out the land.

According to Joshua 13, that land remained untaken at the time of Joshua's death. And the Geshurites remained living among Israel until this day, we read there.

Now, in 1 Samuel 27, that was when David was living with the Philistines. And do you remember how he would go out on these raids?

And among the peoples that he would raid against was the Geshurites. So we can infer that there was hostility. And then, at some point, there is peace.

[ 17 : 03 ] And there is a marriage to one of the princesses, Ma'aka, which we can then infer is somewhat diplomatic. So anyway, that's where they are. Or where he is, rather.

And he's fled from Jerusalem, of course, which is here. And Absalom is there for three years. And I found myself thinking, I wonder what they talked about. What was the conversation when he got home to grandpa?

Did it feel like a home for him? Did he feel like, I'm so glad to be home? Or did he feel like a prince in exile? We just don't know.

What we do know is that when he does eventually come home, he has a plot in mind that we'll see unfold in the coming chapters. But the narrator notes, as we close the chapter, that it is long enough for David to be comforted concerning the loss of Amnon, his firstborn.

Now, before we move on, I wanted to take a moment to just reflect on the deed that Absalom has done. Now, we noted last time that Amnon should have been punished for what he did.

[ 18 : 14 ] His sin was a very, very serious crime. Not just the fact that he took and raped a woman, but that it was his half-sister. Now, according to Deuteronomy 22, Deuteronomy 22 is a key text for understanding what the law said.

At minimum, he would have been very heavily fined. It would have been the bride price, effectively, to compensate her. But actually, my reading of it is that the fullest punishment for the cases where this kind of thing happened, and the woman cried out for help, and there was no one to deliver, which is exactly what happened, death.

Death was the punishment. And when we further add that it was a forbidden relationship in and of itself, because they were half-siblings, there's no doubt in my mind that a true application of biblical law required that.

And if you read chapter 22 of Deuteronomy, there is this repeated quote, this. It says, You shall purge the evil from among you.

And there is a need. There is a need to not allow evil to be unpunished. It must be purged from the land. But David did nothing. He did nothing about it.

[ 19 : 34 ] He did not purge the evil, and so evil indeed remained. So then, can we say that Absalom was in any way justified in his deed?

Well, no. I think we have to conclude that it is vengeance, not justice. Justice is the measured and lawful response to sin.

Whereas vengeance is when a man takes the law into his own hands. A person takes law into his own hands. So it is vengeance. And it's clear from the way he flees.

So Absalom's deed is worthy of punishment too. He knows it. That's why he's run away. So what's David going to do? What's he going to do? Chapter 14.

Let's see what happens. Now Joab, the son of Zeruiah, perceived that the king's heart was inclined towards Absalom. So Joab sent to Tekoa and brought a wise woman from there and said to her, Please pretend to be a mourner and put on mourning garments now.

[ 20 : 40 ] And do not anoint yourself with oil, but be like a woman who has been mourning for the dead many days. Then go to the king and speak to him in this manner. So Joab put the words in her mouth.

Now we've met Joab already. He's the general in David's army. He is the son of David's sister, Zeruiah. Zeruiah is David's sister, and Joab is her son.

So, of course, he is David's nephew. And we've seen him to be a loyal, competent general, but also very ferocious. I don't know if you remember that there was a...

When Saul died, and there was this rivalry between Saul's son, and Ish-bosheth, and David, and there was a battle that took place, and Joab was very ferocious there.

Anyway, so we've seen that. It seems to me that he is a zealous kind of a guy, but he doesn't have a heart for God, it seems to me.

[ 21 : 49 ] We don't see him praying. We don't see him really acting in a way that you would expect from a man who knows the Lord. Who knows? But what he does is perceive David's heart.

And he sees that David is inclined towards Absalom, but does nothing about it. And it is really noteworthy to me how passive David is in this whole section of Scripture, which is something that we'll talk about at the end.

But Joab sees this, and he wants to intervene. So, he goes to Tekoa, which was on our map, so just rewinding, it's just there. So it's not far, about 10 miles away from Jerusalem.

Far enough away that it's unlikely that David would recognize the woman. But I'm guessing that Joab knew this woman, and he knew that she was wise.

Wise, same word as used for shrewd, for Jonathan, by the way. Again, it just means skillful, competent, capable. Verse 4.

[ 22 : 57 ] Now, when the woman of Tekoa spoke to the king, she fell on her face to the ground and prostrated herself and said, Help, O king! The king said to her, What is your trouble? And she answered, Truly, I am a widow, for my husband is dead.

Your maidservant had two sons, but the two of them struggled together in the field, and there was no one to separate them. So one struck the other and killed him. And now, behold, the whole family has risen against your maidservant.

And they say, Hand over the one who struck his brother, that we may put him to death for the life of his brother, whom he killed, and destroy the heir also. Thus they will extinguish my coal, which is left, so as to leave my husband, neither name nor remnant, on the face of the earth.

Then the king said to the woman, Go to your house, and I will give orders concerning you. The woman of Tekoa said to the king, O my lord, the king, The iniquity is on me and my father's house, but the king and his throne are guiltless.

Now let us pause there for a moment. So understand, she is presenting a situation. It is not a true situation, but she is presenting it as a parable, I guess.

[ 24 : 09 ] A hypothetical situation. Her husband is dead, she has two sons, and one has killed the other. And again, the penalty for murder is death.

And actually, this isn't even Levitical law. God said as far back as Genesis chapter 9, speaking to Noah, verse 6 of chapter 9, Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God he made man.

And what Moses did through the Levitical law, then, is expand and clarify the principle. We could look at Numbers 35, Deuteronomy 19, which are quite key background readings.

But what you will find is that there is this role of the avenger of blood, or the blood avenger. *Dam go'el* is the Hebrew.

And if you know the word *go'el*, anyone know what *go'el* means? It's actually redeemer. Again, the book of Ruth is key for that. So this is the blood redeemer. This is the one who redeems the blood that has been shed, the innocent blood that has been shed, by avenging it on the one who shed the blood.

[ 25 : 28 ] And that would normally be a close relative. Again, *go'el* is often translated as kinsman redeemer, a close relative, who has that obligation to find the murderer and put them to death.

And the law establishes these cities of refuge for if blood, if there was an accidental death, which we would call manslaughter, then they would go there.

The one who had done it would be safe there. And again, it's all documented in Deuteronomy 19. One key verse that we might look at is this.

Again, regarding the requirement to purge the blood. Again, it says, you shall not pity him, the one who has murdered, but you shall purge the blood of the innocent from Israel that it may go well with you.

There is a need to purge the innocent blood from the land so that it may go well. Biblically, when innocent blood is shed, a land is polluted. And that is a terrifying thought when you think about topics like abortion and the amount of innocents that are slain.

[ 26 : 43 ] Interestingly, Deuteronomy 21 goes into this ritual that is carried out for cases when there's been a murder, but they don't know who did it.

It says in verses 8 and 9 of Deuteronomy 21, they do this ritual and then the elders of the city that's closest to the body would pray this prayer saying, forgive your people Israel whom you have redeemed, O Lord, and do not place the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of your people Israel. And the blood guiltiness shall be forgiven them. So you shall remove the guilt of innocent blood from your midst when you do what is right in the eyes of the Lord. So you see that even in the cases where there's been a murder and they don't know who did it, they don't just go, oh well, I'll put it with the other cold cases.

There is a need to redeem the innocent blood through this ritual and through this prayer. So this is the background for the woman of Tekoa and her tale.

Innocent blood has been shed, one brother killed another and there is a need for redemption. But that will ruin her and it will ruin the name of her husband.

[ 27 : 56 ] What do we do? What lawfully should be done? Well, but one thing, this I think explains her, did you notice her remark where she said, the iniquity is on me.

And what she's saying is, let me be the one who's bearing that blood guilt. Let it pass from my son and let it bear, let it come to me. Let him be spared. So, verse 10 of chapter 14, 2 Samuel.

So the king said, whoever speaks to you, bring him to me and he will not touch you anymore. Then she said, please let the king remember the Lord your God so that the avenger of blood, the damn Goel, will not continue to destroy.

Otherwise, they will destroy my son. And he said, as the Lord lives, not one hair of your son shall fall to the ground. I don't know if you catch what's happening there.

She is saying, in effect, you've given me your word, but I need you to vow it in the name of the Lord. Let the king remember the name of the Lord. And indeed, David says, as the Lord lives, so he makes the vow.

[ 29 : 07 ] Verse 12, then the woman said, please let your maidservant speak a word to my Lord, the king. Uh-oh. And he said, speak. The woman said, why then have you planned such a thing against the people of God?

For in speaking this word, the king is as one who is guilty, in that the king does not bring back his banished one. For we will surely die and are like water spilled on the ground which cannot be gathered up again.

Yet God does not take away life, but plans ways so that the banished one will not be cast out from him. Amen. I love that. So her argument is that in rendering this judgment, David has actually incriminated himself.

If you would pardon a murderous peasant son, how much more should you pardon Absalom, the heir to the throne? And in Absalom's case, again, it wasn't just a spat that escalated.

You know, to some extent, you could say, it was vengeance, don't get me wrong, but you could say, he only did what you should have done, David. And I think that's the point that she's making when she says, you are planning such a thing against the people of God.

[ 30 : 19 ] This, I think, is about the fact that Absalom is a popular guy. And this is something that will become very plain soon, actually, and certainly over the coming chapters. He's the future king.

And you're leaving him in exile outside of the land. And she says, this is a thing done against God's people. Now, again, verse 14 is incredible.

It's just an incredible turn of phrase. We will surely die. We will surely die. Or dying, we will die.

Which may sound familiar if you've ever studied Genesis chapter 2.

Because that was the curse. The day you eat of it, dying you shall die. And that same language is there. Death becomes us all.

And we are like water that is spilled on the ground. You cannot gather it back up. It is, you cannot recover from it. Life is short and death is permanent.

[ 31 : 18 ] Psalm 22 uses a similar figure in verse 14 where David says that I am poured out like water, he says. Yet God does not take away life but plans away so that the banished one will not be cast out from him.

Amazing. What a blessed word that is. Human life is short and it does end. Dying we surely die but God's heart is to draw humans, draw people back to himself.

And yes, we'll come back to that at the end. Verse 15, I think we've come as far as. Verse 15, chapter 14. Now this, now the reason I have come to speak this word to my lord the king is that the people have made me afraid.

So your maidservant said, let me now speak to the king. Perhaps the king will perform the request of his maidservant. For the king will hear and deliver his maidservant from the hand of the man who would destroy both me and my son from the inheritance of God.

Then your maidservant said, please let the word of my lord the king be comforting for as the angel of God so is my lord the king to discern good and evil and may the lord your God be with you.

[ 32 : 33 ] So she's still pretending I guess, she's still acting as if the tale is real claiming to be afraid that there is going to be this vengeance, this justice if you like upon her son which will then by extension be on her destroying her livelihood.

Verse 18, then the king answered and said to the woman, please do not hide anything from me that I am about to ask you. And the woman said, let my lord the king please speak. The king said, is the hand of Joab with you in all this?

Hmm. And the woman replied, as your soul lives, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right or to the left from anything that my lord the king has spoken. Indeed, it was your servant Joab who commanded me and it was he who put all these words in the mouth of your maidservant in order to change the appearance of things your servant Joab has done this thing.

But my lord is wise like the wisdom of the angel of God to know all that is in the earth. So David perceives it. It's not clear exactly what tipped him off other than he is a wise man himself of course and she's really laying it on thick isn't she?

Oh, you're a wise man. You know, I don't know if she's starting to fear punishment now from David but anyway. I thought it was interesting to ponder this because I found myself thinking how should we take this wise woman?

[ 34 : 12 ] Is she speaking as a prophet on behalf of the lord or is she just fundamentally speaking a deceptive tale that's been put in her mouth by Joab and as I've said Joab himself is I would say unregenerate.

And it's tough and commentators seem to be quite split on this point because it doesn't seem to be like Nathan's parable which is clearly a parable and it reads like a parable.

This just feels very different. It feels like she is trying to manufacture emotion when she says hell poking and truly I'm a widow and it seems to me it's forcing this emotional response and it feels like a work of the flesh rather than a work of the spirit but on the other hand she has some very wise words especially verse 14 so I don't know and I came to the conclusion that I think the author of our narrator our narrator intends it to be ambiguous deliberately ambiguous again she's wise skillful competent capable neither positively connotating or negatively connotating verse 21 so Absalom will return to Jerusalem then the king said to Joab behold now I will surely do this thing go therefore bring back the young man Absalom Joab fell on his face to the ground prostrated himself and blessed the king then Joab said today your servant knows that I have found favor in your sight O my lord the king in that the king has performed the request of his servant so Joab arose and went to Geshur and brought Absalom to Jerusalem however the king said let him turn to his own house and let him not see my face so Absalom!

Absalom turned to his own house and did not see the king's face so the king is persuaded Absalom comes home but then the king is like I don't want to see that guy I don't want to see him I don't want to see him and it's I found myself struggling to put myself in David's shoes what was he thinking we know his heart was longing for Absalom we know he wanted to see him and yet he needed persuasion and then when he comes back to Jerusalem he's like I can't bear to see him I just can't see him I cannot see him he killed my son I think it's obviously very very tough very very tough for David it's interesting also to me that Joab seems to be so personally blessed by the decision today your servant knows that I have found favour in your sight he sees it as a blessing to him and I can't quite figure out why I mean Joab and Absalom are not exactly the closest of friends and if we read on far enough we will soon find that one kills the other and I'll let you guess which is which so they aren't the closest of friends and again my best guess on this is that Joab perceives that he is the one who will be king he is well let's read on and we'll see actually verse 25 now in all Israel was no one as handsome as Absalom so highly praised from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no defect in him when he cut the hair of his head and it was at the end of every year that he cut it for it was heavy on him so he cut it he weighed the hair of his head at 200 shekels by the king's weight to Absalom there were born three sons and one daughter whose name was Tamar she was a woman of beautiful appearance so this is

[ 37 : 56 ] Absalom's description very attractive highly praised Halel Me'od and I thought that's quite remarkable he's referred to as highly praised but the people speak very well they think he's awesome they think he's amazing and it reminded me of it's not it doesn't match closely but it reminded me of this verse 1 Samuel 9 2 where we described Saul a choice and handsome man there was not a more handsome person than he among all the sons of Israel and so there was a sense in which this handsomeness attractiveness is something that the people are looking for in their leaders which I'm not sure about that I'm not sure those are the right criteria but we look at the picture that we are given and I think we are meant to say that guy looks like a king and then we read about his family son he's got an heir and a spare as I say he's got sons he's got a daughter

named Tamar after his sister he looks like a king with his heir and the people love him and he's highly praised and I think

Joab is thinking this is the guy I need to make sure I'm in his good books and by the way we never learn who Absalom's wife is we never learn or wives who knows she's never named and we don't know whether she's from Israel or whether she's from Geshur just don't know verse 28 now Absalom lived two full years in Jerusalem and did not see the king's face then Absalom sent for Joab to send him to the king but he would not come to him so he sent again a second time but he would not come therefore he said to his servants see Joab's field is next to mine and he has barley there go and set it on fire sure so Absalom's servant set the field on fire then Joab arose then he arose came to Absalom at his house and said to him why have your servant set my field on fire and Absalom answered Joab behold I sent for you saying come here that I may send you to the king to say why have I come from Geshur it would be better for me still to be there now therefore let me see the king's face and if there is iniquity in me let him put me to death so when Joab came to the king and told him he called for Absalom thus he came to the king and prostrated himself on his face to the ground before the king and the king kissed Absalom!

so we have another two years that pass with Absalom still effectively in exile just a more local one it's been seven years since Amnon and Tamar it's been five years since Absalom killed Amnon and now it's been another two since he came back from it's been two since he came back from Geshur to Jerusalem so by this point I think Absalom is in his late 20s now and he's thinking why did my father bring me home from grandpa's house when I'm clearly not welcome and then not even Joab will come and see him I don't know what it is with the young men and setting things on fire by the way and I equally find it fascinating that the narrator saw fit to include that in the text it could just as easily have said Absalom sent for Joab and this happened but no this detail is included which I think is just to show us that these things are not being done prayerfully these things are not being done before the Lord these are people doing sinful things so this is how the chapter closes with what appears to be reconciliation he came to the king prostrated himself face to the ground and the king kissed Absalom and they all lived happily ever after it doesn't say that and it definitely doesn't say that in the next chapter either so well we'll see what happens

I'm sure you will know the story but I wanted to close with a few points and I prayed to the Lord like what this is just such a harrowing tale what do we make with all this well I have three things for us to ponder today this is the first one there's a warning here in the text against prayerlessness when did we see David pray when did we last read David pray when did we see anyone pray in this text there's no prayer there's no prayer and I think it's really really serious David used to be this very very proactive prayer warrior very proactive prayer warrior 1st Samuel 23 is a great example where he was fleeing from Saul you know the story he was holed up he heard of this village called Kayla that was under attack by the Philistines and he prayed to the Lord he said do I go and the God said yes you go and he went and he got there and there's more prayer the point is he prayed he asked the Lord for directions 1st Samuel 30 he's been raided

Lord do I pursue these Philistines yes go and pursue them 2nd Samuel chapter 2 Lord shall I go up to one of these cities yes go up to Hebron says the Lord 2nd Samuel 5 shall I go against the Philistines yes and this is how you do it this is the David we've seen and now it's just heartbreaking to me to see this jelly sat on the throne doing nothing he's he's passive he's taking no action and he's not praying and the years are rolling by and nothing is happening no prayers are noted and I thought about this and I thought you know David is a creative type right and if you doubt that point then just look at the Psalms and how many of them he wrote he's a musician he's a poet he is a creative guy and often and we've talked about this before often those guys are very emotional very given to feeling everything and I think he felt the weight of his sin and even though he knew he was forgiven even though he knew he'd repented and he had repented you can see

[ 44 : 34 ] Psalm 51 and you'll see how abundantly clear it is he knew that he was repentant and he knew that God had forgiven him Nathan had told him God forgave him but had he forgiven himself had he got over it I don't know you know I was struck as I read ahead by 2 Samuel 18 verse 4 where this is the king and he says this whatever seems best to you I will do I was like oh my gosh is that the words you expect from a leader whatever seems best to you that's what I'll do and I just thought David man what happened to you there's a real stark warning here about prayerlessness prayerlessness and passivity we need to be a praying people here's a word to the church today be on the alert this is 1 Corinthians 16 be on the alert stand firm in the faith act courageously be strong

which I think is recalling or echoing

Psalm 34:24 be strong let your heart take courage all you who hope in the Lord and who's that that's us we have a hope in the Lord because we are forgiven David was forgiven I think he had just taken his eyes off the fact that he was in good standing before God God loved him and restored him and forgiven his sins so we better reinforce this second point our sins are gone from the record and again I had a beautiful reminder of this do you remember you remember that I've told you before that 1 Chronicles is a parallel passage for a lot of what we're reading and so it goes through the genealogies and it goes through Saul and it goes through David and I told you when we went through Bathsheba tale how it's completely gone from Chronicles it's blotted out the handwriting of that sin is blotted out from the book what I forgot to mention at the time

I think I failed to realize this the book of Chronicles did you know this the Chronicles is the last book in the Old Testament canon in the end the sins are blotted out and guess what none of this stuff with Absalom is there either none of it it's all blotted out all of the sin is gone and I was like hallelujah praise God for that brilliant object lesson that God has put in the word of God Psalm 103 verse 12 says as far as the east is from the west so far has he removed our transgressions from us you know if God if God had written as far as the north is from the south then we could have gone on Google and we could have said oh gee that's about 12,000 miles that's quite a long way but where's the east pole or where's the west pole of course they don't exist and we know if you start heading north eventually you stop if you start heading east or west you can go forever it is an immeasurable distance the east from the west is infinite so as I said the final book of the Hebrew Bible the sin is removed and all that is left is the kingly behavior of David and his transfer to his son Solomon well here's our last point and this is based on verse 14 that we saw

God brings the banished back in Christ how is it that God can remove sin as far as the east is from the west well John the Baptist says of Jesus behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and one of the things that I think is a bit that we may lose sometimes is the concept of taking away is foreign to the sacrifices of the Old Testament because they covered they covered the sin and John didn't say behold the Lamb of God who covers the sin of the world he takes it away and I found myself asking do I live as though my sins are covered or do I live as though they are taken away because in Christ our sins are removed they are taken away and we must not live in the shame of them anymore we mustn't let our past sins cause us to self-flagellate or become passive the wise woman said

God does not take away life but plans ways so that the banished one will not be cast out from him you know banishment has been a part since Genesis 3:24 because God drove the man out and at the east of the Garden of Eden he stationed the cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life banished banished cast out and that theme is carried right the way through whether you look at that thick veil that was in front of the holy place whether you look at the fact that God said to Moses you cannot look at me and even in the New Testament Paul says to Timothy this in 1 Timothy 6:16 of God he alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light whom no man can see has seen or can see to him be honor and eternal dominion amen and our sins have created guilt and every time we do wrong this guilt this blood guilt is accrued and as in as in that story that we read there is a requirement for restitution the wages of sin is death and God can't just forgive sin that's one of the things that the world will ask why doesn't God just forgive sin well because then justice wouldn't be satisfied because then evil would not be purged in Christ that blood guilt is transferred he took it willingly the wise woman said let the iniquity be on me

[ 51 : 00 ] Christ says let their iniquity be on me I take it let that guilt be on me he is the propitiation for our sin didn't we read that just this morning my little children I'm writing these things to you so that you may not sin and if anyone sins we have an advocate with the father Christ Jesus the righteous and he himself is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for those of the whole world the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world Lord we praise you for these things Lord God we praise you that in you there is redemption that we who were cast out are brought back as we turn to you and we receive by faith the free gift of salvation we are brought back we are brought home Lord it is not of works it is not of works we do nothing to earn it it is by your grace Lord we thank you for what we've read in your word it's a hard hard thing to read and it can be really hard to read these difficult words but we thank you that in you there is hope and we thank you that when we read dark texts like the one we've just read the glory and the brightness of the

gospel shines all the brighter we praise you Lord as we turn our attention to the communion table  
and how you have done it all we praise you in Jesus name  
Amen Amen Amen