

**“One Good Man”**  
**2 Samuel 13:1-39**

**February 16, 2020**

**SI:** We’re studying the life of King David because we want to know David’s Son.

**INTRO:** There’s a history of preachers skipping this chapter when they are preaching through the life of King David.

One example is Alexander Maclaren.

He was a famous preacher in Manchester, England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

His sermons are still printed. I have a set of them and occasionally read them.

Maclaren preached two sermons on 2 Samuel 12, just like I did.

Then he skipped this chapter and went right on 2 Samuel 14.

In one of those sermons he alludes to Amnon’s violation of Tamar, but he never explicitly names it.

He never says the words violation or sexual abuse or rape.

I don’t know Maclaren’s reasons for skipping this chapter.

My guess would be that in England in the 1800s it wasn’t a topic that was socially acceptable to mention in public, especially a church service.

There’s a website I sometimes look at that has sermon recordings from preachers in evangelical churches all over the United States.

There were over 1,000 sermons on 2 Samuel 12. There were 400 on 2 Samuel 13.

Preachers aren’t obligated to preach every text and there are any number of good reasons, practical or pastoral, for skipping a chapter.

But there’s something in this story itself that makes me think we shouldn’t skip it, and that’s the way everybody tries to shut Tamar up.

Nobody wants to hear her tell about the abuse she suffered.

Twice it says Amnon would not listen to her.

He wouldn’t listen to her pleadings when she told him no four times.

And then when he was done and told her to get up and get out and she tries to make him understand the harm he has done, it says again he again refused to listen.

He had her thrown out and the door bolted behind her.

Her father David heard about the incident, but he apparently never talked to her at all. He never went to her and said: Tell me what happened. Tell me what he did.

It’s clear he didn’t want to hear from her own lips what Amnon had done and the devastation and shame it had caused her.

Even Absalom, her full brother, who is the only sympathetic person,

did you notice the way he silenced her?

First, the way he described what had happened. He asks her:

Has Amnon your brother been with you? Been with you? What does that mean?

Clearly Absalom didn't want to engage in real conversation with her about it.

He tells her not to take it to heart. Don't let this bother you.

Then he tells her to be quiet. That could mean, quit crying.

But he probably means, you're going to be better if you just quit talking about it.

This is typical of sexual abuse, the silencing of those who have been wronged.

And I just can't help but wonder if the common practice of skipping this episode when preaching through 2 Samuel perpetuates that silence.

The inspired writer of 2 Samuel put this story in the Bible.

The Holy Spirit obviously did not want Tamar's story silenced, he wanted it to be read and told for all the ages of redemptive history.

In a historical sense this story is here because it shows the effects of David's sin on his family. This is the beginning of Nathan's prophecy that the sword would not depart from David's house. This is the origin of Absalom's rebellion.

But in a pastoral sense this story is here because it says to everyone who has been abused in this way, the eternal word of God bears witness to your pain.

And better than that, this passage points you to the one person who can give you sympathy and love and hope and healing.

Let's look at Tamar's story under two big headings:

1. Four bad men
2. One good man

## **MP#1 Four bad men**

The four bad men are the abuser, the instigator, the bystander, and the avenger

### **1. The abuser was Amnon**

He was Tamar's half-brother. Amnon's mother was David's first wife, Ahinoam.

Tamar and Absalom's mother was David's third wife, Maacah.

It says Amnon fell in love with Tamar.

This is the ordinary word for love in the Old Testament.

The same word used for true love between human beings and even love for God. So why does the writer use the word love when it's obvious this is not love at all?

Why doesn't he say, Amnon lusted after Tamar, or something like that?

Because he's showing the abuser's self-justification and deception.

Amnon tells Jonadab, I'm in love with Tamar, by brother Absalom's sister.

Look carefully at his words. He doesn't say, I'm in love with my sister.

Incest was forbidden in the law of God. His sexual desires were illicit.

He was trying to make this sound ok with verbal gymnastics.

She's not really my sister, she's my brother Absalom's sister.

But when he is finally able to isolate her, all his subtlety disappears.

He grabs her, and look again at his exact words: Come to bed with me, my sister. Why does Amnon call attention to this fact, the very thing that should most prevent him from following through with his desires, the thing he tried to skate over in his conversation with Jonadab?

Because this was his perverted attraction.

The Apostle Paul says when God's law prohibits something, our sinful nature often responds by enticing us to do the forbidden thing.

Sin draws us to what is forbidden.

That's why after he's done with her his so-called love turns to intense hatred.

He transfers to her the loathing he felt for himself for such a despicable act.

His hatred is a form of projection.

Amnon denied his own sin and subconsciously projected it on Tamar.

We saw the same projection last week in the way David judged the rich man who stole the lamb in Nathan's made up story.

One more detail, the last thing Amnon says to servant: Get this woman out of here.

But the word "woman" is not in the Hebrew text.

What he actually says is: Get this out of here. He refers to her as an object.

That's the hideous heart of sexual abuse and why God hates it so much.

Because every human person is made in the image of God.  
And denigrating that image is an attack on God himself.  
The first bad man is the abuser, the second is . . .

## **2. The instigator. The instigator was Jonadab.**

I bet you almost forgot about him, the way he slips in and out of this story.

He's called a very shrewd man.

He had street smarts, he knew what was going on,  
and he was always trying to manipulate things for his own advantage.

Jonadab was David's nephew and a cousin of Amnon, Tamar, and Absalom.

But he's a friend of Amnon. Why do you think he was close to Amnon?  
Because Amnon was David's firstborn son and in line to inherit the throne.

Jonadab was close to him for his own benefit.

He cooks up this plot to get Tamar for Amnon to further ingratiate himself.

As a virgin daughter of the king, she lived in her father's house.

She was protected there.

And Amnon wasn't clever enough to figure out a way to get to her.

Jonadab not only gave him a plan, he also pushed him forward.

He did that first by appealing to his sense of entitlement.

He says: You're the king's son, why are you looking so haggard?

You don't deserve to be sexually frustrated in this way.

It's unreasonable for you not to have her.

It's not right for you to say no to this desire.

Also, instead of saying: Put this crazy thought out of your mind,

he apparently inflamed Amnon's lustful imaginations.

Hebrew scholars point out that in this detailed description of Tamar preparing  
the food with her own hands, doing this in front of Amnon, feeding him by hand,  
there are a number of unusual Hebrew words not used anywhere else.

And some argue that this is sexually suggestive in some way.

Jonadab is not merely suggesting a ploy to get Tamar alone,

he's also revving up Amnon with some sexually suggestive speech.

The book of Proverbs frequently warns about the power of evil influence.

Sometimes there are people who in various ways instigate and encourage abuse.

They may not do it themselves, but clearly they fall under God's judgment.

The abuser, the instigator, and then third . . .

## **3. The bystander. That was David.**

I said there are four bad men in this episode.

Don't misunderstand me. David was a believer. He was a regenerate person. I'm not lumping him in the same basket spiritually with the other men in this chapter. Absalom was not a believer. And that becomes clear in later chapters.

But in terms of how he acts in this chapter, David does a bad thing.

He did not respond as he should have to Tamar's abuse and that exacerbated the negative effects on her and brought even greater turmoil into his family.

How did David react? When he heard about it, he was furious.

But he didn't do anything.

First, he didn't take any action to punish this criminal act.

In the Dead Sea scrolls there's an extra sentence in verse 21.

It says when David heard about it, he was furious. Then it adds:

But he did not curb the excesses of his son Amon, he favored him because he was his firstborn.

What should David have done to Amnon?

He should have formally removed him from succession to the kingship.

In Genesis, Jacob did that to his eldest son Reuben for a sex crime Reuben committed within the family. Jacob took away his inheritance and status.

If David had done that, Absalom wouldn't have had to take matters into his hands.

But a bigger question is, what should David have done for Tamar?

The way he responds to her abuse is horrible. He never talks to her.

He never expresses to her his sorrow and tears for what she has suffered.

David couldn't change the past, but he didn't use his fatherly affection and kingly influence to soften things for her.

Like what? What could he have done? He could have brought her back home.

That would have meant more to her than just a comfortable, safe place.

It would have announced that David was covering her shame.

The reason she went to live with Absalom was because she was no longer a virgin daughter of the king. She tore the robe that symbolized her status.

She put ashes on her head. She wept loudly. Everybody knew what happened.

Where was her father?

It says she remained in Absalom's house, a desolate woman.

Which means not just desolate emotionally, but that no man would have her for a bride. But here's the thing, that wasn't part of the law of God.

That was just a social convention. Surely King David would have been able to use his influence to overcome that for the good of his daughter's future.

But he didn't. He just let her live out her days in isolation and shame.

David represents those who out of embarrassment or discomfort or fear of rocking the boat don't speak and act for those who have been abused.

The abuser, the instigator, the bystander, and fourth . . .

#### **4. The avenger. That's Absalom**

He's the only person who's sympathetic toward Tamar.

But when you look more closely at his response you realize that he wasn't really interested in helping her. He made it about himself.

I've already pointed out how he silenced her by telling her it would be best would just quiet down and keep it to herself. Instead of letting her grieve, he tried to end her grieving by minimizing what had happened.

If that was all Absalom had done. If he sincerely tried to help his sister by giving bad advice to quit crying and look on the sunny side, that could be excused.

Over time he would have become more and more of a help to his sister.

But that's not all he did. He took revenge on Amnon.

And when you consider why he did it and the repercussions it had for Tamar, then you realize how little he really cared about her, and the abuse she suffered. Absalom killed Amnon for two reasons and they were both about him.

First, to repair his own honor.

Her abuse was an affront to him as her full brother. Amnon disrespected him.

And that is certainly true and it was no doubt a bitter pill.

But think about what this meant for Tamar. She's left all alone for three years when her brother has to run away after the revenge killing. She's further isolated.

The second reason he killed Amnon was to clear the way to the throne.

Absalom was second in line after Amnon.

The text doesn't say this, but his motivations become obvious later when he conspires against his own father.

Absalom wanted Amnon out of the way, and Tamar provided a pretext for that.

If David had done what was right and removed Amnon, Absalom's rebellion might not have ever happened.

But it did happen and when Absalom was killed, Tamar left alone for good.

Absalom represents those people who respond to another person's abuse with guilt or revenge or misplaced honor, making it about them and not the sufferer.

There are so many gracious warnings in this story.

Warnings about the destructive power of unholy sexual desires.

Warnings about the self-deception we are all prone to practice.

Warnings about exposing yourself to evil influences.

Warnings to parents who get angry but refuse to address a child's self-destructive behavior. Warnings about self-centered motives.  
There are a lot of practical applications you can work out for yourself.  
But I don't want to go there in this sermon.

## **MP#2 One good man**

I want to spend the rest of this sermon pondering a feature of the story itself.  
Did you notice someone missing from 2 Samuel 13?

Someone whose name is never mentioned?

The Lord. God's name never appears in this chapter.

We don't even get a comment like, and what Amnon did displeased the Lord.

And there's someone else who is missing from 2 Samuel 13.

A good man. There's not one good man in this story.

How different it would have been for Tamar if there had been just one good man.

If Amnon or Jonadab had been a good man, this would never have happened.

If David or Absalom had been a good man, they might not have prevented this,  
but they would have mitigated the desolating effects.

And so when you read this chapter it makes you long for God.

You want God to show up and bring justice.

You want one good man who will be a loving father, a steady brother,  
a kind friend, an advocate, a defender.

This story makes you realize other people are not the answer. They all fail.

And that pushes you to look for God and ultimately to look for help in the  
one good man, the one true man Jesus Christ.

Is God really absent from this story? No, he's not absent.

But he's unseen except by eyes of faith.

God saw the evil done to Tamar and his judgment was swift.

Absalom should not have taken the law into his own hands.

He was motivated by vengeance and possibly by self advancement.

But God used him to judge Amnon for what he did to Tamar.

And this wasn't just for Tamar.

Think what would have happened if Amnon and lived and succeeded David.

It would have been a disaster for all of Israel if this cruel, immoral man had reached  
the throne, so God removed him.

God worked through this evil event, evil all around, to accomplish his long-term  
good for his people and his salvation plan.

God sees abuse and he will bring justice. Your abuser might never have been

brought to justice in this life. You might never have been able to confront him.  
He might have died peacefully at home.  
This story assures us that God will bring justice.

But justice is only part of it what of Tamar's desolation? What of her shame?  
Did God hear Tamar when she wept aloud?

Did he see her when she tore her robe and put ashes on her head?  
Yes, he did. And he has seen everyone like her.

And that's why he sent his son. Jesus Christ came into this fallen world.  
He suffered. He wept. He bled. He experienced mankind's cruelty.  
He did that so he could be a sympathetic high priest for his people.

If you have been abused or if someone you love has been abused, and that probably  
covers everyone here this morning, you may not experience the full sense of  
healing and change you desire this side of heaven—  
But in Jesus Christ you have a loving father, a steady brother, a kind friend,  
an advocate, a defender.

Psalm 72, speaks of the Messianic King, David's coming Son.

For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help.  
He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death.  
He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight.

Jesus is with you as one who suffered and died.

He hears you. He sees you.

And in his perfect time he will judge the wicked  
and he will wipe away every tear from your eyes.  
He will clean away the ashes of shame you have heaped on your head,  
and he will cover you with a perfect new garment, a robe of righteousness,  
that says to everyone who sees it: I'm a daughter of the King.

He will take you from a place of desolation and sorrow,  
and he will make you fruitful and glorious.

Only he can do that, for he is the true King of Israel, the true Savior of the world,  
and the only good and true man.