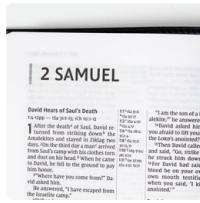


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2 Samuel 13 - 14



2 Samuel - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg delves into the repercussions of David's family's sin as seen in 2 Samuel 13-14. Gregg examines the story of Amnon and Tamar, noting societal issues and interesting behaviors displayed by the characters. He analyzes the bitter awareness of guilt that David carries and traces the unfolding of events leading to Absalom's plot to overthrow his father's kingdom. Gregg draws parallels between these familial struggles and the trials that God sometimes sets fields of fire.

Transcript

We're beginning now to see the repercussions that came upon David's family because of his sin. His sin in committing adultery with his neighbor's wife and then having his neighbor killed. Very serious sin.

And although those were both capital crimes under Jewish law, and therefore David deserved to die, he was not put to death. God gave grace when he repented and told him he would not die. But there would be consequences and they would not be liked.

The sword would not depart from his house all the days of his life. And even the crime that he had committed of sleeping with his neighbor's wife, though done secretly, the same thing would happen to him, only publicly. He said he would give David's wives to his neighbor, as it turned out to be one of his own sons.

And that he would sleep with David's wives in the light of the sun, or publicly. Actually it was not David's wives so much as his concubines. There were ten concubines that this happened to.

But still, these are very serious consequences and we begin to see them unfold in chapter 13. 2 Samuel chapter 13. Now after this it was so that Absalom, the son of David, had a lovely sister whose name was Tamar.

And Amnon, the son of David, loved her. 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.

Well, it was improper, they couldn't get married because they were half brother and sister. They had different mothers, but they had the same father. And therefore they were too closely related to contemplate being married.

If they had been first cousins, that would not have been forbidden under the law of Moses. But obviously being a half brother and sister was too close a relationship. So there was no way he could legitimately take her as his wife.

And so he became sick. I'm not sure exactly what symptoms we're looking at here. And it may not be that it was literal sickness.

He may have been, as it says in Song of Solomon, sick with love. I mean, lovesick. But the point is he was not happy.

He was distracted. He was impaired from functioning normally because he had this obsession with his half sister. Now, when a woman is out of bounds, a man just has to get a grip.

A man's got to not fall in love with somebody who's not available. Whether it's somebody else's wife or somebody who for some other reason is just not right for them and is not available. I mean, it's true, men can fall for a woman very easily and involuntarily.

I'm sure women can do the same thing. They don't necessarily decide they're going to be infatuated. But that's just what happens.

But a person can decide to become uninfatuated or at least to take their mind off it, to say this is not appropriate. Therefore, I won't be around this person or I won't entertain thoughts of this person. Amnon tormented himself with this obsession.

And it ended up being the death of him. And it's his own fault. I mean, you can't necessarily help who you feel infatuation for spontaneously.

But you can help your thoughts. You can make decisions about who you will and will not allow yourself to contemplate and think about. It's not like Hollywood makes it out that you just kind of fall in love and you're just doomed to be love struck.

And you just have to live with that. No, you can actually put your mind on other things. It's not the easiest thing in the world.

And many times kings and princes take the path of least resistance. They're pretty pampered. In this case, he was a prince.

He probably had not had many occasions that he'd had to say no to himself about anything. In fact, it's possible that his father had never said no to him about anything. We don't read anything about David's relationship with Amnon.

But we do know that David had a relationship with Adonijah, a son about whom it says he never ever confronted him about anything. Never even asked him so much as, why do you do what you're doing? Now, there's no reason to believe Adonijah was David's favorite. And yet he was a pampered son.

In fact, Absalom was David's favorite. And we find that he is fairly pampered, but not entirely. But it's possible that Amnon had simply never had to discipline himself or his mind or deprive himself of anything.

He's the son of a rich king. He can get what he wants, except in this case. So he didn't have any experience of denying himself.

And so he allowed himself to just become sick with obsession for something that he had no power to give. Now, Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimea, David's brother. Now, Jonadab was a very crafty man.

You know, in the Proverbs, it says you got to be careful about choosing your friends. Because sometimes a wicked friend will lead you into crime. And this is a friend of Amnon's who was just that kind of a wicked friend and led him into criminal behavior.

And Jonadab said to him, why are you, the king's son, becoming thinner day after day? Will you not tell me? Jonadab said to him, I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister. 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.

Then Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. Now, he was, we're told he became sick in verse 2, but apparently not in a sense that really would be a genuine sickness that would require him being bedridden. So he had to pretend to that degree of illness.

And when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, please take Tamar, or let Tamar, my sister, come and make a couple of cakes for me in my sight that I may eat from her hand. And David sent home to Tamar saying, now go to your brother Amnon's house and prepare food for him. Now, David therefore put Tamar in harm's way, probably not knowing that it was in harm's way, but there's no reason why Amnon's request should have been accepted without suspicion.

After all, why not have a servant prepare the food? Why does it have to be Tamar? When a man's sick, he doesn't have to have a particular cook prepare his meals. And certainly there were servants who prepared the meals for the king's table who could have been dispatched. I'm sure they were quite good at cooking and it would not be necessary for Tamar to be the one.

The fact that he requested Tamar and not anyone else would almost raise the suspicions that he had a particular infatuation with her. Now, David, even if he could sense that,

might have thought, well, it would never erupt into something so criminal as rape. But even so, David should have been aware that in asking for Tamar specifically, Amnon must have had something in his mind, some kind of attraction to her or something, which would be inappropriate for a brother and a sister.

David seems to have not been on top of things as he should have been. And he sends Tamar into the situation where she actually is put in danger. And Tamar went into 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. Now, that he required the food to be made in his sight means that he just wanted to watch a woman work. And that's not something that would be a pure thing.

I mean, like I said, it doesn't matter who fixes your food. If you want her to come and do it in your sight, it's because you want to watch her particularly, not the food. And so, I mean, this Amnon's intentions toward Tamar could not have been thought to be 100% pure, even if it was not thought that he would be a complete jerk.

So 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.

Then Amnon said to Tamar, bring the food into the bedroom that I might eat at your hand. And Tamar took the cakes which she had made and brought them to Amnon, her brother, in the bedroom. Now, when she had brought them in to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, come lie with me, my sister.

And she answered, no, my brother, do not force me, for no such thing should be done in Israel. Do not do this disgraceful thing. 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. She is saying that if you would rape me, I would have shame, there's nowhere I could go. I'd be a defiled, no longer a virgin, a defiled woman.

A man would not want me because I'm not a virgin. And that would be simply more an issue in that society than it is in our own present society. A man wanted to be the first with his wife.

He didn't want to have a woman who was viewed as damaged goods. And therefore, she's saying, you know, I will be used by you, but you can't marry me, so you can't make it right. Under the law of Moses, if two people slept together, and they were neither of them married to anyone else or betrothed to anybody else, the only penalty was that they had to get married to each other, and they could not divorce.

In a land where the law did allow divorce for very many offenses, a man who slept with a

woman before they were married was forced to marry her and not have the option of divorce. This was, of course, a way of making sure that a man didn't lightly take advantage of a woman. Because a man might feel like, well, I don't mind if we have to get married.

In fact, I'd like to marry her, so I'll go ahead and sleep with her. Well, it wasn't the case that you just sleep with her and then you get to marry her, and it's like any other marriage. You don't have any way out of that marriage.

So the law did that to prevent people from doing this kind of thing too lightly. But, of course, it was a different kind of thing than adultery, because adultery was punishable by death. If a man slept with another man's wife, or a woman who was married slept with another man than her husband, both of them would be put to death.

But if it was an unmarried couple, unbetrothed, uncommitted to anyone else, then the result was marriage. They had to marry. But in this case, of course, they couldn't marry.

They were brother and sister. So she's saying, if you sleep with me, you'll ruin me for anyone else, and yet you can't marry me because we're a brother and sister. But then she tried to persuade him otherwise, perhaps as a desperate move.

She said, ask David, ask our father, and he'll let you marry me. That's what she's saying. Of course, this was not likely to be true, but I believe she was just desperately trying to find some way to get out of the room.

And if he would ask the king, and the king would say no, she could just keep her distance and never make herself vulnerable again. So it was her way of trying to talk him out of doing something impulsive here. She said, speak to the king.

He'll not withhold me from you. Well, obviously that's not true. He would have withheld her from him.

It was not going to be the case that David's son would marry David's daughter. But she hoped that that might be her escape. However, he would not heed her voice.

And being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her. And then there's this interesting psychological phenomenon noted here. 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. And 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.

Then he called his servant who attended him and said, here, put this woman out away

from me and bolt the door behind her. 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.

And 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. And Absalom, her brother, said to her, has Amnon, your brother, been with you? See, Amnon apparently had not made his interest in her completely unknown. I mean, even Absalom suspected.

He must have known Amnon was, you know, a no good guy who also had intentions on her. So the first suspicion that Absalom had when he saw her in this condition was that Amnon had wronged her. He says, 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.

She never married. And when King David heard all these things, he was very angry. And Absalom spoke to his brother Amnon, neither good nor bad.

For Absalom hated Amnon because he had forced his sister Tamar. Now here we see some interesting behaviors which are very true to life but very ironic in a way, very paradoxical. We read that he had so loved Tamar before that he was sick with love and he could hardly stand it.

But here the word love is obviously a shallow term. It's not love like the love of God toward people or like Christian love, like Christ's love which is selfless. This is simply infatuation.

This is loving a woman like a man loves his favorite flavor of ice cream. It's entirely selfish. It's the pleasure that he receives from thoughts of her or from thoughts of using her or whatever.

That's what he loves. He doesn't love her. And she is the one that he sees as the source of a potential happiness if he can just obtain her for himself.

That is what many people call love. And many people actually believe they are in love when in fact that's all they really have. They don't love the other person.

They love themselves. Many people when they say I love you really should, if they're being more honest, say I lust for you. I love me and I want you because I want to please myself and I think you could do the job.

And that's not love. When you love another person, Jesus said you lay down your life for that person. You don't use them.

You allow them to benefit from you, not the other way around. And so Amnon is just a

selfish young prince who has an infatuation and lust toward an object of lust that cannot be righteously delivered to him in an honorable relationship. And so when he takes advantage of her, we have this strange phenomenon, verse 15, Amnon hated her exceedingly.

And it says the hatred he had was greater than the love he had for her. Now that seems paradoxical. That seems like something that wouldn't happen.

If you really loved someone, how would you turn on a dime and suddenly hate them? But you see, his love was only lust. And it's amazing what a man who's feeling lust can think. He can think all kinds of fond thoughts toward a woman.

He can think he's in love. But as soon as he's done, he's another man. As soon as he has no more lust pulling at his mind, he looks more objectively at the situation and says, wow, that I really value this person after all.

And now he sees her as somebody who he's ashamed of himself for having done what he did. And he sees her as the cause of that. Irrationally, of course.

It's entirely irrational to blame her. She resisted, and he took advantage of her. But that's how a person can be when he's totally self-obsessed.

I love you when you're somebody that my lusts will desire. But as soon as the lust issue's passed, and it does pass when a man has had sexual relations, the lust issue goes away, at least for the time being. Then he looks at the situation and says, now I see you just as somebody who's made me a bad person.

You've made me do something that I'm going to be ashamed of. I have a bad conscience for what I've done, and I see you as the person who was the provocateur. You're the person who tempted me.

Now, of course, this is not at all a reasonable or rational position for him to take, but it is the way that evil people will think. I mean, his conscience bothered him. He should have hated himself.

He's the one who did the dastardly deed, but he's not going to take responsibility for that. He's going to see himself as the victim of her seduction and view her as somebody that when he sees her, it's just going to remind him of his conscience bothering him. It's a strange, complex thing in the mind of a person, but it's entirely realistic.

This often will be the case. I mean, many times men who rape women, they aren't lovers of women. They're not men who love women.

They actually resent women. This man had never probably raped a woman before, but he was now a rapist. As such, he found he was not a man who loves a woman.

He's a man who loves himself and has degraded himself because of his uncontrolled lust, and the woman is seen as the problem. Because, after all, if she hadn't been so attractive to him, he wouldn't have done this degrading thing, he thinks. He just doesn't want to see her.

He hates her. It's a bizarre reaction, but it's not unrealistic. In fact, it's unusually realistic.

I mean, how the Bible portrays these people, they're not one-dimensional people. They have real, complex psychological reactions to their circumstances, and this is such. And so she's grieving because she's been defiled.

She's not marriageable anymore. He's ruined her prospects. She was a beautiful woman and a princess.

She probably had had many prospects, probably many desirable prospects for marriage, and now she's been deprived of that. Her life is ruined by his stupidity and evil conduct. And Absalom controls himself at this point.

Absalom is a cool character. He's a calculating character. He has decided at this point to kill Amnon, but he's going to bide his time and look for the opportunity.

Later on, he wants to overthrow his father, the king, and he takes his time at that too and gradually wins over the favor of the populace. He's not like Amnon. Amnon's passionate and unself-controlled and he just does what he impulsively wants to do.

If Absalom was that way, he'd just go into Amnon's room and stab him. He's going to do that anyway, but he's not going to do it right now. He's going to calculate the best opportunity to kill Amnon.

And so Absalom takes his sister into his house and takes care of her the rest of her life because she has no children or husband to do that. Now, it's interesting too, and this is an interesting psychological study of David too. In verse 21, it says, David heard of it.

He was very angry. Well, he was angry, but he didn't do anything. Here, his son has raped his daughter and the son should be punished.

David doesn't punish him. He's mad. What's he mad about? Probably he's angry on behalf of his daughter.

He's angry that a crime has been committed against her. He might be angry that his family has had this shame brought. Sometimes parents get mad at their children not so much because they care about the souls of their children as they care about the shame that their children bring on the family, the embarrassment.

In which case, of course, the parent is not loving their child. They just love their own reputation and resent the child's having brought shame on the family. If a parent's

children are doing the wrong thing, it should be a concern to the parent, but for the child's sake, not the reputation of the family's sake.

But David was angry, but he did nothing. Why did he do nothing? Well, we're going to see that he tends to do nothing almost every time his children misbehave. In this case in particular, I believe his conscience did not allow him to do anything because I'm sure he reasoned, my son has just taken a woman illegitimately and taken advantage of her, just like I did with Bathsheba.

David has been cleared of his crime. That is to say the penalty for his crime has not been executed. He's not going to die, but he does know that this thing that's happened is a result of his crime.

In fact, it could well be that if David had not been known to have done this kind of thing, that his son would have not thought he could get away with it. When a father or mother is known to be compromised, how does the children pick up on that real quick? And they suddenly realize, well, if dad can get away with that, he can't very well blame me for doing it. Absalom may well have felt he could do something this immoral and get away with it because he knew his father couldn't dare say a word about it because David had done something similar.

David's own conscience prevented him from being able to do anything. He didn't keep him from getting angry about it, but being angry doesn't solve anything. And it left the matter unresolved.

No punishment was given to Amnon. And so it left it to Absalom to resent David. Absalom took the case of his sister, but David didn't take the case of his daughter.

And Absalom felt like he had to then punish Amnon because the king wasn't doing what he should do in the matter. And then, of course, things deteriorated between David and Absalom even more. But it was largely because, I think, of David's sense of guilt that David had always been a courageous warrior who always took a no-nonsense kind of a ruler who would punish a man, even kill a man, for doing something that could remotely be said to be a capital offense.

He was decisive and quick, but now he's indecisive. Now he's angry but unresponsive. And it's because, I believe, his own position had been compromised in such a way that he just didn't feel that he could judge as righteously as he could have if he had been innocent himself.

And I think that it is this sin that he committed with Bathsheba that haunted him for the rest of his life. True, when God said he wouldn't die, David wrote that Psalm 32, but how good it is to be forgiven. But when he began to see his family deteriorate, that's a heartache to any parent to see their children tend to fight each other and come to harm

and so forth.

But all the more so when you realize this is coming on them because of what I did. The prophet Nathan said that my family is going to have these problems because of what I did. So even though I've been forgiven by God and I'm not going to suffer the ultimate penalty directly, yet my children are suffering because of my sins.

That's got to make a person, that's got to be a bitter thing to be aware of. And David had to be aware of that. And so Absalom spoke to his brother Amnon neither good nor bad for Absalom hated Amnon because he had forced his sister Tamar.

Verse 23, and it came to pass after two full years, this is how long Absalom spent hatching his plot against Amnon. He's intending to kill his brother but he's cool and calculating and self-controlled and he takes his time. He takes two, not just two years, but two full years.

So the idea here seems to be he wasn't rushing anything. By saying full years, he could have just said two years to give us the time, but he talked about two full years as if it's a full period of time that he had planned out and he waited for it to run its course before hatching his plot. That Absalom had sheep shearers in Baal Hazor which is near Ephraim.

So Absalom invited all the king's sons. Then Absalom came to the king and said, kindly note your servant has sheep shearers, please let the king and his servants go with your servant. Now this was just a formality.

I think he knew that the king would be too busy to come to something like this, but it was to allay suspicion. He's inviting all of his brothers. I don't think his hatred for Amnon would have gone unnoticed in these two years.

He has avoided Amnon. He's got hatred toward Amnon. And so in inviting Amnon out of Amnon's house to a place where he might be vulnerable to be hurt, Absalom is doing everything to make it seem like this is a safe situation.

He waits two years so it seems like all the problems with Tamar, those are just water under the bridge, those have been perhaps largely forgotten by Amnon. And then he invites all the king's sons. So it's not just Amnon.

If he just invited Amnon, then it would raise suspicions. And then he invites the king and all the king's servants. Now obviously if David had accepted this invitation, then Absalom could never have carried out his plot.

So he's counting on the fact that David and the servants would not come. But he had to give the invitation in order to make it seem like he had nothing up his sleeve that would be hindered by David being there. And the king said to Absalom, no my son, let not all go now lest we be a burden to you.

Then he urged him, but he would not go and he blessed him. So Absalom even put up a second wave of urging David to come. But of course, knowing that David would not come.

And as Absalom wished, David declined and gave him his blessing. 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 Absalom urged him, so he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him.

Now he said, let Amnon go. We already read that he invited all the king's sons. That would include Amnon.

Perhaps Amnon had a plan. But he declined the invitation. When all the sons were invited, perhaps Amnon had said, no I'm not coming.

And so he specifically said, listen I want all the sons to be there. Would you tell Amnon to go? Because Amnon's not coming. And so, I mean if you can't come dad, why don't you at least allow all the brothers to come.

And Amnon apparently is declining, so please have Amnon go. And so David apparently required Amnon to go. 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. 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. Now none of the sons defended themselves or Amnon against Absalom. It was perhaps a surprise attack.

And probably all of them were drunk. Amnon particularly was drunk and that was perhaps merciful of Absalom to let his brother get drunk so that it would be less, you know, he'd feel less pain, you know. I mean if you're going to murder somebody, to anesthetize them first is perhaps as generous as you can be toward them.

But the point is after everyone had drunk and everyone was off their guard, everyone was having a good time, all the guard was down. That's when the dastardly deed was done and Absalom gave the signal to his servants and they killed Amnon. Now the other sons, not knowing exactly what Amnon's intentions were and perhaps not being surrounded by their own bodyguards, decided they'd better flee in case, you know, maybe Absalom's trying to get his brother to leave so he can be king.

Sometimes that happened. Remember Abimelech, Gideon's son, had killed off all his brothers so that he could make himself king in his father Gideon's place. It was not unheard of.

The other brothers didn't know what Absalom's intentions were and thought well maybe he's going to take us all out so he'll be the only heir to the throne. So they all fled and got out of there. And it came to pass while they were on the way that news came to David saying that not one of them is left.

So obviously the report got twisted as it traveled. But it was a report that made some sense politically that a man might kill all the king's sons in order to be the only survivor. It was a believable story although it wasn't quite an accurate story.

So the king rose and tore his garments and lay on the ground and all his servants stood by with their clothes torn. Then Jonadab, he's that rotten scoundrel who persuaded Amnon to rape his sister. He's a great friend to Amnon.

Jonadab, the son of Shimei David's brother, answered and said, let not my lord suppose that 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 he forced his sister Tamar. 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. This man is Amnon's friend.

He says, oh don't feel bad about this, only Amnon's dead. And he's dead because I persuaded him to do something and this is the result. Now, you know, Jonadab's not taken any responsibility.

Of course Amnon was responsible for his own crime but Jonadab was a co-conspirator. He was involved in it. I mean if you told somebody, if you told your friend to do something and he got himself killed doing it, wouldn't you kind of feel like somewhat responsible? You'd feel badly if you were any friend of his.

This Jonadab was not much of a friend. He says, David don't feel bad, it's only Amnon that's dead. The other sons have survived.

Now, David no doubt at this point realized that he himself was somewhat responsible for this set of affairs because he had been indecisive. Amnon had committed a crime against one of the king's daughters in fact and David didn't do anything to vindicate her, didn't do anything to punish the perpetrator. And the fact that Absalom had done so was almost a just act.

I mean murder was not really called for but David could see that Absalom was really just doing something that David's inactivity had left a vacuum for. And there's a sense in which Absalom was defending David's daughter in a way that David had failed to or at least vindicating her. And David didn't take action against Absalom either any more than he had taken action against Amnon.

Now Absalom fled, but David didn't pursue him. It says 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. And Jonadab said to the king look the king's sons are coming as your servant said so it is.

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 the servants wept very bitterly. But Absalom fled and went to Telmai the son of Ammihud the king of Gesher.

This king was actually Absalom's grandfather. We find earlier when we were first introduced to Absalom or made known of his existence in chapter 3 verse 3 Absalom the son of Meaca the daughter of Telmai the king of Gesher. If your father is the king of one country and there's a warrant out for your arrest there you might as well go to the other country where your grandfather is the king.

Of course David controlled all the lands around and he could have pursued Absalom there. It would have been perhaps an unpleasant situation to confront the king of Gesher and maybe fight him in order to deliver Absalom over for justice to be done to him. David didn't press the matter.

Absalom went to the safest place he could think of and after all his grandfather was David's father-in-law and David just didn't pursue. David mourned for his son every day so Absalom fled and went to Gesher and was there three years. King David longed to go to Absalom not to pursue him and extradite him and prosecute him but he missed his son.

Absalom was his favorite son and he apparently did not entirely hold this against Absalom because he longed for Absalom and himself to be reconciled. I'm sure that he, like I said, he probably saw that Absalom was acting as an avenger of blood so to speak although there had been no bloodshed. I guess there was in a sense but Amnon had done a crime.

Whether it was a crime worthy of death would be a matter of interpretation because like I said for a man to force a virgin to sleep with him under the law was not quite the same crime as murder. It was something that would require that they get married but in a case where you couldn't marry her what do you do then? I'm not sure exactly under the law what the penalty would have been. Absalom probably exacted a more severe penalty than the law would in that case but nonetheless David had done nothing and therefore he saw Absalom as stepping into a vacuum that had been left in the situation by David's indecisiveness.

David longed to go to Absalom for he had been comforted concerning Amnon because he was dead. That is he got over the loss of Amnon and then was just missing Absalom. Chapter 14 So Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart was concerned about Absalom and Joab sent to Tekoa and brought from there a wise woman and said to her please pretend to be a mourner and put on mourning apparel and do not anoint

yourself with oil for you have been mourning a long time for the dead.

Go to the king and speak to him in this manner. So Joab put words in her mouth. Now this woman is said to have been a wise woman.

From our studies in Proverbs especially the introduction to Proverbs I mentioned that there were persons that were considered to be wise and who were resources for kings and other people who needed counsel or who needed especially the intervention of someone who had more than average well wisdom. And in this case this woman was to be an actress and she was going to have to ad-lib a little bit of her lines. So he didn't want someone who was incompetent in this.

He wanted someone who was a wise woman. The city of Tekoa had a woman who apparently was known to be wise and could hold her own in a conversation with the king even while playing a role. That was deceptive.

And so Joab is here trying to essentially get David to pardon Absalom and let him come back. And Joab is motivated by the fact that he saw that the king's heart was concerned about Absalom. That is Joab knew that David was wishing Absalom could come home.

But David did not feel that he had the justice on his side in simply letting Absalom walk when he had committed murder. And Joab is trying to find a way to make David happy and Absalom happy and make a restoration of this relationship that David is again not acting upon although he'd like to. And so he told this woman to go and play this role.

And the woman of Tekoa spoke to the king, verse 4. She fell on her face to the ground and prostrated herself and said, Help, O king! In those days kings were actually accessible to people with complaints. Even in the next generation Solomon could be approached by two prostitutes who were in a legal dispute over whose son it was. Even over a child custody case a couple of women could come right before the king himself.

So you can see that the rulers in those days were not quite as busy as rulers are in our day. You couldn't take your case to the president of the United States very easily who could, of course, grant a pardon. If you were, you know, condemned in court to a life sentence or even to death the president would be in a position, if he wished, in this country to pardon you and let you walk.

But good luck getting an audience with him. Good luck even letting him even become aware of your situation. He's got a lot of more important things to handle.

There are lesser courts and so forth that he has delegated all that to. The Constitution has delegated all those things so that people don't approach the president. He's too busy.

But here's a king and he's directly involved in administering justice. And so people with

complaints can come directly to the king in some cases. Now it may well be that they had to go to the lower courts first.

It's like when Moses set up that situation at the council of the king at the council of his father-in-law in Exodus chapter 18 where Moses initially was hearing all the cases personally but he couldn't do anything else. And his father-in-law said, well, set it up so that people there are rulers of 10 and rulers of 50 and rulers of hundreds and rulers of thousands and then eventually people's complaints they go to the lower courts first and if they can't handle it it goes to the next higher and eventually only the hardest cases come to Moses. And that might have been in place even in Israel at this time.

It may be that David didn't hear every case but the cases that had gone through the lower courts and not been resolved came to his throne. And with Joab holding such a high position as he could he could easily bypass any lower courts and put this woman on the docket to appear before the king just, you know, immediately I would think. So she comes with her pretended case.

It's not a real case. Then the king said to her what troubles you? And she answered indeed I am a widow my husband is dead. Now your maidservant had two sons and the two fought with each other in the field and there was no one to part them but the one struck the other and killed him.

And now the whole family has risen up against your maidservant and they said deliver him who struck his brother that we may execute him for the life of his brother whom he killed and we will destroy the heir also. So they would extinguish my ember that is left and leave to my husband neither name nor remnant on the earth. Now she's saying essentially the husband is dead and there's only two sons now one of the sons is dead and murdered by his brother obviously the law would require the murderer brother to be put to death and then the woman says I don't have no one there's no heir you know I'm totally bereft and she's asking David to make sort of an executive decision to let the penalty be commuted in this case so that the you know her son admittedly deserves to die and only the king would be in a position to say okay I'm going to I'm going to count that I'm going to absolve him from that.

Just like the president of the United States could you know pardon a murderer if he chose to and let him off the hook. So she goes she was coming to the king asking that her son deserves to die but would the king please make an exception for her son so that her her dead husband is not left without an heir. And the king said to the woman go to your house and I will give orders concerning you.

And the woman of Toccoa said to the king oh my lord oh king let the iniquity be on me and on my father's house and the king and his throne be guiltless. In other words if you're going to absolve my son arguably you're doing something that's not what the law would require. And if there's any guilt that would accrue to you because of this violation

of the law may it come upon me and my house rather than on you.

Let your throne be guiltless I'll take all the blame and all the guilt for what you've decided. So the king said whoever says anything to you bring him to me and he shall not touch you anymore. So she's set up a situation where the family members are telling her she has to turn over her son to them to kill him.

And David says if they keep bugging you send them directly to me and I'll tell them what's up. I'll defend your son. So David has essentially said I'm going to commute the sentence in this case because of the extenuating circumstances.

Then she said please let the king remember the lord your god and do not permit the avenger of blood to destroy anymore lest they destroy my son. And he said as the lord lives not one hair of your son shall fall to the ground. So she's kind of made sure he repeats himself a number of times just to make sure that he doesn't forget what he said.

And he said now he swears an oath as the lord lives not one hair of your son shall fall to the ground. I'm going to protect him don't worry he's not going to have to die. Well of course the point is if he would make an exception for her son why doesn't he make an exception for his own son? Absolutely.

This is sort of like Nathan saying you're the man. You know set up a fake situation where David makes a judgment on it and says well if you're going to be consistent you know then this applies to your household too. Then the woman said please let your maid servant speak another word to my lord the king.

And he said say on. And here's where her role as a wise woman comes in because she has to now you know take off the role that she's been playing and actually negotiate in her own wisdom in her own right with the king for what is being asked. The woman said why then have you schemed such a thing against the people of God? For the king speaks this thing as one who is guilty in that the king does not bring his banished one home again.

For we will surely die and become like water spilled on the ground which cannot be gathered up again. Yet God does not take away a life but he devises means so that the banished ones are not expelled from him. Now therefore I have come to speak of this thing to my lord the king because the people have made me afraid.

And your maidservant said I will now speak to the king it may be that the king will perform the request of this of his maidservant. For the king will hear and deliver his maidservant from the hand of the man who would destroy me and my son together with the inheritance of God. Your maidservant said the word of my lord the king will be now comforting for as the angel of God so is my lord the king in discerning good and evil.

And may the lord your God be with you. She has not mentioned Absalom but she has

mentioned that David has failed to restore the banished one from his household and David of course has been mindful of this for these three years of Absalom's absence and he puts it together right away. He's not he's not dull he realizes okay this is about Absalom isn't it.

And she's saying you know I I knew that I could get you to make a merciful decision about my son but really she's saying all of Israel's well being is at stake when it comes to what becomes of your son and therefore you should show the same clemency toward your own son as you just did toward my son. Now she talks as though her situation was a true situation even still whether she's keeping up the ruse or whether we should assume that Joab really found somebody who had this life situation and used her to do that I don't know my impression is that she was playing a role the whole time but she keeps up the story pretty much all the way through to the end here. Now she has spoken subtly she has not mentioned Absalom particularly but David reads between the lines and the king answered and said to the woman please do not hide from me anything that I ask you and the woman said please let my lord the king speak and the king said is the head of Joab with you in all this? So obviously in the three years of Absalom's absence Joab probably had made known his opinion to king David that Absalom should be restored for the morale of the people or for David's own morale or for whatever reason David knew that Joab was favorable toward having Absalom come back and he immediately assumed this woman was acting under influence from Absalom so there have been opinions expressed previous to this between David and Joab and so he suspects this woman is acting under instructions from Joab and he asks her directly about it is the hand of Joab with you in all this? and the woman answered and said as you live my lord the king no one can turn to the right hand or to the left from anything that my lord the king has spoken for your servant Joab commanded me and he put all these words in the mouth of your maid servant to bring about this change of affairs your servant Joab has done this thing but my lord is wise according to the wisdom of the angel of God to know all things that are in the earth in other words we can't hide anything from you you got Joab figured out in this and the king then called in Joab and said to him alright I have granted this thing go there and bring back the young man Absalom then Joab fell to the ground on his face and bowed to himself and thanked the king and Joab said today your servant knows that I have found favor in your sight my lord oh king and that the king has fulfilled the request of his servant now again it seems strange that Joab would express this particular gratitude as if Joab had some kind of benefit that he could derive from Absalom coming back like oh this is what I've always wanted you to do it's so kind of you king to agree to my request here and yet we don't find that Joab and Absalom had a close relationship in fact ultimately it was Joab that killed Absalom in battle so why is Joab so interested in Absalom coming back well we're told at the very beginning of this chapter is because he saw that the king's heart was concerned about Absalom and so Joab I mean this doesn't explain everything but Joab apparently knew that it's to his advantage to do things that endear him to the king and he knew that the king didn't have the initiative or wouldn't

take the initiative to bring Absalom back but that the king would like for Absalom to be back so Joab is in a sense doing David a favor he believes a favor that David would not allow himself to do for himself David probably wouldn't do it because he felt like he would be seen as simply showing nepotism and allowing crime committed in his family to go overlooked as long as Absalom was out of sight and away David could act as if you know he was concerned about keeping crime out of the family but that Absalom was presumably beyond the range of justice but if Absalom was brought back people would perhaps expect David to execute him and he didn't want to do that and so it was just more convenient for David to keep Absalom away but Joab knew that this was that David was pining for his son that David was not a happy camper and that it would make David a lot happier if Absalom could come back and so Joab apparently had a personal interest in ingratiating himself to the king by working this out in a sense he's trying to get David to do something that's in David's interest which David will be happy about but David cannot bring himself to do because he's conflicted by the various probably legal issues involved and so Joab in a sense is the advocate for Absalom there's a sense in which people then could blame Joab's influence on David rather than David for showing favoritism to his criminal son and you know when the general of the army is the one who's done it people can keep their mouths shut because Joab commands the army you don't want to really make him mad at you so it's like Joab has taken on himself as it were the responsibility for Absalom's misbehavior and for Absalom's being granted amnesty and the king said let him return to his own house but do not let him see my face so Absalom returned to his own house but did not see the king's face now this was unacceptable to Absalom as we shall see now in all Israel there was no one who was praised as much as Absalom for his good looks from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him and when he cut his hair the hair of his head at the end of every year he cut it because it was heavy on him when he cut it he weighed the hair of his head at 200 shekels according to the king's standard now that's the weight from what I understand that's about 3 pounds or something like that that's a lot of hair 3 pounds of hair hair isn't very heavy so it must have grown thick and fast and every year he called in the gardeners to come and trim it back 3 pounds of hair got cut off of him now this is perhaps relevant also because of the way he died the bible says later on that he died because he was riding his mule through the woods and his head got caught it doesn't say his hair it says his head got caught in the trees and he was dangling between heaven and earth by his head but probably by the hair of his head if his head had just gotten in a fork of a tree he wouldn't be hanging there for long he'd jump down and get out of there but his hair apparently became entangled in the branches and he was not able to get free so having this bush on his head made him attractive he was a very attractive man but it also was his undoing ultimately to Absalom were born three sons and one daughter whose name was Tamar interestingly he named his daughter after his sister probably in honor of her and she was a woman of beautiful appearance too like her aunt Tamar and Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem but did not see the king's face therefore Absalom sent for Joab to send him to the king but he would not

come to him and when he sent again the second time he would not come to him now here's the thing Joab had intervened for Absalom to get him to be able to come back to the country without any criminal penalties but David his forgiveness was not very complete either forgive somebody or you don't forgive somebody and David kind of half forgave him he absolved him but he didn't want to see him perhaps he still wanted to show the nation that he was not just giving Absalom a pass here Absalom was still suffering something in terms of alienation from the king even though he wasn't suffering the death penalty and for whatever reason David didn't want to see Absalom and that was not acceptable to Absalom he's thinking you know what listen my father does he forgive me does he not forgive me an incomplete forgiveness is a frustrating and wrong thing you either forgive somebody or you don't if you say I forgive you but then you don't really act like everything is okay again then you don't forgive and you're only going to cause more bitterness and resentment in the relationship and that's what happened here now Joab saw that David was not favorable towards seeing Absalom and so Joab distanced himself from Absalom too and since he had advocated for Absalom before Absalom now wants Joab to do it again and he wants him to go and tell David that he should see Absalom but Joab is not wanting to respond messages are being sent to Joab from Absalom saying hey I want to talk to you and Joab is ignoring the messenger twice so Absalom said to his servant see Joab's field is near mine and he has barley there go and set it on fire and Absalom's servant set the field on fire then Joab arose and came to Absalom's house and said to him why have your servant set my field on fire and Absalom answered Joab look I sent to you saying come here so that I may send you to the king to say why have I come from Geshur it would be better for me to be there still now therefore let me see the king's face but if there is any iniquity in me let him execute me let's be decisive David let's stop being such a wimp and waffling and kind of half resolute if I deserve to die let him kill me if I don't deserve to die let him restore me but this limbo of being half forgiven is not acceptable so Joab went to the king and told him and when he had called for Absalom he came to the king and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king then the king kissed Absalom but the damage in their relationship was apparently irreparable and from that point on Absalom began to plot to overthrow his father in the kingdom all of this because of David's mishandling of his family and his mishandling of his family is due to guilt I believe and he felt like he could not that's one thing when you compromise yourself you suddenly are not able to make clear and decisive moral judgments of other cases when you should because you figure who am I to make a judgment here who am I to criticize I've got a beam in my own eye how can I pick the speck out of these people's eyes and yet it was the king's duty to judge it was the king's duty to maintain righteousness and justice in the kingdom but he was compromised in his own conscience and so he became a very poor ruler even over his own family and he ended up just making his family mad at him he didn't punish Amnon and so Absalom had to do that and when he eventually supposedly forgave Absalom it wasn't complete forgiveness and it's interesting how Joab is being politically astute here when he saw that David really wished Absalom would come back then Joab

favors Absalom's cause when he sees that David doesn't want to see Absalom Joab doesn't want to have anything to do with him and it's interesting how that Absalom found that when Joab ignored his messengers he went and sent his servants to set Joab's field on fire and then Joab comes storming over and says why'd you do that? and he says well you wouldn't talk to me otherwise I think there may be some parallel here whether intentional or not I don't know but certainly there is a parallel in that sometimes God has to set our fields on fire before we'll talk to him we don't always pray until things go really badly you know when things are going well for us God wishes we'd talk with him but we don't need him we're not motivated but as soon as he sets our fields on fire and our life turns into a crisis then we're really quick to come running to God and talking to him just like Joab did on this occasion anyway there is something like a restoration of the Father and the Son here so to outward appearances the whole thing has come full circle families back together Amnon's dead Tamar's been defiled but Absalom's back and the troubles are over for David and his family so it would seem he's paid a price in the loss of his son the criminal act against his daughter but certainly that's enough and the problems are now over he probably thinks but they're just beginning because Absalom is going to bring him even more grief than any that he's suffered so far