THE PERVASIVENESS OF SIN

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 13

The pervasiveness of sin. That’s what this morning’s lesson is about, 2 Samuel Ch 13. David’s sin (last week’s lesson) didn’t just impact David and Bathsheba and the baby who died. It had a profound effect on David’s entire family. The word I chose, “pervasiveness” is defined as “being so thoroughly spread about that it is seen and felt everywhere.” And so it is with sin. Sin is not in some places, sin is all over; sin is not in some people, sin is in all of us; sin is not a problem some of the time, sin is a problem all of the time. Listen to what the Bible says…

READ scriptures on slides

The pervasiveness of sin! And it all started in the Garden of Eden. You all know the story. I don’t have to tell you what happened. We first heard this story probably as little kids in Sunday School. God tells Adam and Eve, “I have blessed you with an abundance of good food to eat. You can eat of any tree in this garden except one. You cannot eat of that tree over there, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For on the day that you eat of it you shall surely die!” Clearly the line of right and wrong has been marked. Simple and straightforward enough, right? Along comes the crafty serpent who we find out later is Satan, the old devil himself. He tells Adam and Eve, “Go ahead, eat of the tree. You won’t die. Hey, you deserve this. God’s holding out on you. In fact, if you eat it you will become just like God.” So Satan basically calls God a liar. And Adam and Eve believe him and eat of the forbidden fruit. Both Adam and Eve sin. Both eat of the fruit. Both disobey God. And God’s judgment on both of them is death. There is a relational separation from God which takes place. That’s spiritual death and it will need to be dealt with. But make no mistake there is also physical death. By God’s grace this will not occur for several hundred more years for Adam. We don’t know how old Eve is when she died. But eventually both Adam and Eve died. The result of that one sin was devastating. And not just for them, but for all of their future descendants right on down to us today.

There are several lessons we learn in the first few chapters of Genesis that are emphasized over and over again as you read thru the Bible: (1) God is a good God; (2) God is a wise God; (3) God tells the truth; (4) Satan is a liar; (5) Sin is pervasive.

In last week’s lesson you talked about David’s sin of adultery and murder, his attempt to cover up what he did and how God exposed it thru Nathan the prophet. And, yes, David repented. He was forgiven. He was restored by God. The story didn’t end there. You see, David’s sins, though dealt with, had far-reaching and devastating effects on his family. Part of God’s judgment against David is stated in 2 Sam 12…

READ 2 Samuel 12:10

And then from Chs 13 thru 20 we see how this divine judgment plays out in the life of David’s family. I strongly hold to the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. But clearly the Bible teaches that we’re not robots, that we are each responsible and will be held accountable for our own actions.

READ James 1:13-15

There’s just no way to sugar coat this. Sin is ugly and its effects are painful. But thankfully we can learn some lessons from the mistakes of others. And praise God that He has in his mercy and grace provided a remedy for our sin problem. We’ll talk about all this a bit later. Let’s get into our passage in 2 Samuel 13…

READ 2 Samuel 13:1-2

What kind of love does Amnon have for Tamar? We’ll see later that it’s not true love at all but that it is pure lust. Basically his so-called love for Tamar can be expressed this way: “I love me, I want you.” He passionately wants his beautiful half-sister but he cannot have her and he’s frustrated by this.

READ 2 Samuel 13:3-5

Jonadab is Amnon’s cousin. He’s described as “crafty.” That’s the same Hebrew word used to describe the serpent in Genesis 3. He has wisdom but it is distorted by evil. He’s wise but unprincipled. He has no integrity. Jonadab concocts a plan to make Amnon’s desires happen… Fein illness, ask David if Tamar can come and prepare food for him. This will be the excuse to get Tamar to come to his house. Well, the devious plan works…

READ 2 Samuel 13:6-8

The stage is all set. Tamar innocently prepares food in the kitchen for her half-brother. And now Amnon’s true intentions, his true colors are revealed.

READ 2 Samuel 13:9

Amnon doesn’t want food. He wants Tamar. Why does he send everyone out of the room? So that be alone with Tamar. Amnon has evil intentions.

READ 2 Samuel 13:10-11

Now we see Amnon’s intentions. He wants to have sex with Tamar. Notice Tamar’s reaction. She’s a virtuous woman.

READ 2 Samuel 13:12

Tamar doesn’t just say “no,” she expresses great wisdom and an understanding of what is right and wrong. She refers to Amnon as “my brother.” Incest is forbidden by the Mosaic Law, which they are both under (specifically Lev 18:9-11, Deut 27:22). Clearly Tamar understands that, as God’s people, they are to live differently. They are to reflect the very character of God to the nations. For Amnon to do what he is suggesting is a violation of God’s expressed will for His people. Tamar calls this an “outrageous thing.” It’s the same phrase expressed in Gen 34 when Shechem sexually violated Jacob’s daughter Dinah; same phrase used to describe the rape of the concubine by the men of Gibeah in Judges 19-20. Tamar knows that what Amnon proposes to do is wrong and she resists him. But she doesn’t stop there.

READ 2 Sam 13:13

Tamar tells Amnon, “What you are wanting to do, violating me in this way, will leave me in shame. It will disgrace me, bring a reproach upon me. I’ll be defiled. Think about what you are doing to ME. But not just me, think about what it will do to YOU. You will be one of the “outrageous fools in Israel.” Basically she’s telling Amnon, “You will bring dishonor upon yourself and be regarded as a wicked pervert by everyone. Think about what you’re doing to me and to you. Please, don’t do this thing!”

As Amnon moves in obviously ignoring Tamar’s plea she desperately says, “speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you.” The king, our father David, he understands all about these feelings you’re having, feelings of lust and longing. Now would David really give Tamar to Amnon? No. But Tamar is desperate to get out of this horrible situation! She doesn’t want this terrible thing to happen to her. She is a virtuous young woman.

READ 2 Sam 13:14

Amnon rapes his half-sister Tamar. Make no mistake, rape is not about love or sex. It is about someone stronger, more powerful, exercising control, dominance over someone weaker. By the way a comment here about what David did to Bathsheba. Though technically that was not rape, David misused his power as king and in effect forced Bathsheba because she was subject to him to have sex with him. He violated her. Don’t think that David’s actions weren’t known by his adult children. They were and they apparently had a negative impact on Amnon, his moral behavior.

READ 2 Sam 13:15-17

Tamar tells Amnon that disgarding her is worse than what he has just done to her. She knows the way people in their society think. They will give Amnon, the king’s eldest son and likely heir to the throne, the benefit of the doubt. They’ll believe him over her. She’ll just be considered a slut that seduced Amnon. He needs to take responsibility for his actions and own up to it. But again Amnon won’t listen to Tamar and has her thrown out of the house like a piece of trash. Cold, calloused, and indifferent!

I want you to notice what Tamar does. She doesn’t go out quietly as though nothing happened. No, quite the opposite…

READ 2 Sam 13:18-19

Tamar is a royal princess. She is the daughter of the king. And she has just been violated in the worst way. So she outwardly expresses that something terrible has just happened to her to anyone who will listen.

As you read this story it seems as though nobody is paying much attention to Tamar and to her feelings. V 20 tells us that this incident had an impact on Tamar which lasted the rest of her life. It says she “lived a desolate woman.” Apparently Tamar would never marry and have children. This would have been a great reproach for a Jewish woman of that day. Obviously Amnon didn’t listen to Tamar. David didn’t seem to care about what happened to Tamar. All we’re told in V 21 is that David was “very angry” when he heard about what had happened. But he, the king, the most powerful and influential man in Israel, and a leader who in the past had no problem administering justice to others apparently says and does nothing to Amnon. Absalom tells Tamar in essence not to worry about it or to say anything (v 20). It’s as though everyone in this story wants to sweep under the rug, ignore, what Amnon did as though it never happened. Nobody is listening to Tamar. Oh, but God hears Tamar. And in His providence He allows her story to be heard. Everyone for eternity is aware of the evil Amnon did that day. It is his legacy. And later there will be justice for Tamar. This will come at the hand of her brother Absalom.

READ 2 Sam 13:23-29

For 2 years Absalom has been plotting revenge on Amnon for what he did to Tamar. Jonadab, speaking to David later in the chapter, v 32, says, “For by the command of Absalom this (the putting to death of Amnon) has been determined from the day he violated his sister Tamar.” And so Absalom finally gets the opportunity he’s been looking for and carries out his revenge. Well, the rest of David’s sons (4 others mentioned in Ch 3 v 2-5), who had just witnessed the killing of one of their brothers by another. They are horrified and hightail it back to Jerusalem on their mules as fast as they can. Of course the rumor mill being what it is, exaggerating the facts, gives the news to David, v 30 that “Absalom has struck down all the kings sons, and not one of them is left.” This initial report devastates David and he tears his robe. This is an outward demonstration of his grief. That’s when Jonadab sets the record straight and says, “No, Amnon alone is dead. This is something Absalom’s been planning for a while.”

Absalom flees to Geshur which is just out of Israel’s borders to the N and E of the Sea of Galilee. Why Geshur? Because that’s where his grandfather lives. We’re told back in Ch 3 that Absalom’s grandfather is the king of Geshur. So he’s going to go where he knows he will be safe from David’s wrath.

For 3 years Absalom remains in Geshur and at the end of Ch 13 we’re told that David weeps for Absalom every day. In Ch 14 Joab intervenes and gets Absalom to come back to Jerusalem. But for whatever reason even though David is aware that Absalom has returned and is back in town refuses to see him -- for 2 more years. This is the one plight on David’s legacy. He was not a very good father. He won’t meet with Absalom to try and reconcile with him. He wouldn’t confront Amnon about what he did. Why is it that this great man of God, a man after God’s own heart, a man who had been so decisive in other areas will not take control of his own family? Perhaps David feels guilty about what he did with Bathsheba and to Uriah and feels like he has no credibility with his adult children to admonish them for their evil behavior. It is only after Absalom, having grown tired of waiting on David, forces the issue and gets an audience with his father. We learn from Ch 15 that Absalom has an ulterior motive which is to put himself in a position of influence in Israel which he can only do from the palace.

This is not one of those stories that you come away with a warm fuzzy feeling. It’s a terrible story, but it is here in the Bible for a reason. We can learn something from it. So what are some of the applications? What can we take away from the tragedy of 2 Samuel Ch 13?

1. God’s word is true. Just as Nathan prophesied, there was ongoing strife in David’s family. Why does God go into so much detail about all these terrible things that happened in David’s family? For our instruction and warning.
2. The dysfunction we see in David’s family some 3000 years ago mirrors what is going on right now in our own society and even in our churches. Dysfunctional families abound (in my own life I have a stepdaughter who refuses to speak to the rest of her family and many of you could offer similar testimony of things going on in your extended families); sexual perversions, assaults, rapes we hear about constantly in the news and by people we used to respect. Circumstances in this lesson are relevant for today. They show us the pervasiveness of sin, how it has spread to all areas of life. We as Christians need to be the voices for God and for good in this fallen, sinful lost world.
3. God sees and hears what happens. There is nothing hidden from God, even our secret little sins that only we know about. God knows about them as well. God sees injustice, He sees prejudice, He sees infidelity, He sees cheating and lying and hatred. He sees it all. He notices everything. In heaven there is no such thing as a cold case. One day justice will be done. There will be comfort for the oppressed.
4. A word of warning even for those of us who are believers in Christ – don’t mess around with sin! Your sin does not just effect you but it effects those closest to you.
5. We don’t know for sure. But our own sinful actions are not an excuse for later inaction. We still have a responsibility, as imperfect as we are, to be role models and to say what needs to be said as parents, as grandparents, as supervisors, as leaders. We cannot let our past failures be an excuse not to be the mouthpieces for God that we need to be in our families and workplaces. That said we need to understand how the wrong words and actions today can negatively impact our witness down the road. We must think before we act or speak!
6. Satan the accuser constantly reminds us of what we’ve done. We need someone who doesn’t have any guilt to speak up for us. That’s what David himself needed. He needed Jesus just like we need Jesus. The resolution of this story, awful as it is, comes 1000 years later when Jesus leaves the glory of heaven and comes to earth. What He accomplished on the cross was the remedy for our sin problem. He abolish sin, death and hell. David was a great king, perhaps the greatest king in Israel’s history, but he needed a Savior. He needed Jesus. And so do we.

We’re going to sing one verse of a hymn of surrender to Jesus. You see, Jesus doesn’t just want us to be saved and escape God’s wrath. He wants all of us. He wants our whole lives.