David Longed to Go to Absalom

2 Samuel 13:1-39

And King David longed to go to Absalom, for he was consoled concerning Amnon’s death.

—2 Samuel 13:39

The title of my message is “David longed to go to Absalom.” When we come to a passage like this it's difficult to process. Why? For me, at least, is because it is too human. What I mean by that is we see our own sinful desires running amuck through those involved in this story. Who hasn't suffered  unrequited love, or burned with lust or with anger or hatred? Who hasn't wanted justice when they saw they were so wronged. What can we do when we face such strong temptations? Sinful desires were running wild without any supervision. There was much brokenness as a result. We see our own brokenness and sympathies too.

Today’s passage tells us how Absalom fled from David. Absalom is going to become the key figure of conflict against David and the kingdom throughout the rest of the book of 2 Samuel.

We can summarize the events in this passage:

1. Absalom was wronged by the injustice from sister being raped without consequences. (1-22)

2. Absalom tried to right the wrong himself by murdering his brother (23-33)

3. Absalom fled (34-39)

Yet, after all this David’s heart was changed and he longed to go to his son Absalom. Through these events we see how the punishment to David was being fulfilled and how David’s heart was turned to his own household and children. It points us to God’s work of restoration and healing from the brokenness so this people can live a godly life, which is ultimately pointing us to Jesus Christ.

1. The way of God’s punishment to David was revealed.

When David was confronted with his sin by the prophet Nathan in the previous passage, he was given a punishment.

2 Samuel 12:10-11a say,

[10] Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.’

[11] “This is what the Lord says: ‘Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you.

Now we see in today’s passage how this was being fulfilled. It began with Amnon. As verse 1 says, "In the course of time, Amnon son of David fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom son of David.” The words “in the course of time” show that these feelings were naturally building up inside of Amnon. It tells us that God did not strike David or his house. He didn’t raise up enemies against David as he had done to others in the past. Rather, God let time takes its course and he did not intervene directly. In fact, the Lord or the word of the Lord is not mentioned at all in this passage. The protection and supervision of God and the word of God was missing. And when he was missing, so to speak, we see how their sins built up and ran the show becoming the supervisor of their actions. David chose to despise the word of the Lord and sin. So, the punishment came out by God giving them to their sin and letting time runs its course.

The passage gives us the details in this regard so we can think about it. It starts with Amnon. Look at verses 2-5.

[2] Amnon became so obsessed with his sister Tamar that he made himself ill. She was a virgin, and it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her.

[3] Now Amnon had an adviser named Jonadab son of Shimeah, David’s brother. Jonadab was a very shrewd man. [4] He asked Amnon, “Why do you, the king’s son, look so haggard morning after morning? Won’t you tell me?”

Amnon said to him, “I’m in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom’s sister.”

[5] “Go to bed and pretend to be ill,” Jonadab said. “When your father comes to see you, say to him, ‘I would like my sister Tamar to come and give me something to eat. Let her prepare the food in my sight so I may watch her and then eat it from her hand.’”

He had a lot of issues because he was not educated or guided rightly about love and sex. He’s a mess. He says he’s in love. He becomes obsessed. He literally becomes “lovesick.” He’s depressed. He’s confused. He says that he loves Tamar, but he really just wants to sleep with her. But he can’t because she’s a virgin. She’s not that kind of girl. The only advice he’s given is really bad. His advisor encouraged him and gave him ideas on how to be more obsessive, creepy and indulge in his desires. His advice was basically, “Oh, that’s what you want to do? Go do it! And I’ll help you.” It’s a good thing they didn’t have Instragram or Facebook back then. He’d be so creepy.

But this kind of supervision (or lack thereof) ruined him and his sister. His fleshly, sinful desires ended up running the show. He became violent and raped his sister.

Tamar tried to appeal to him.

[12] “No, my brother!” she said to him. “Don’t force me! Such a thing should not be done in Israel! Don’t do this wicked thing. [13] What about me? Where could I get rid of my disgrace? And what about you? You would be like one of the wicked fools in Israel. Please speak to the king; he will not keep me from being married to you.” [14] But he refused to listen to her, and since he was stronger than she, he raped her.

She tried to appeal to his heart as his sister. She tried to appeal to his mind, warning him not to become one a wicked fool. She tried to appeal with pity regarding her disgrace. But he “refused to listen.” His love had turned to lust, then to violence, and finally to hatred. Then he sent her away.

There was no godly supervision or education guiding him. Sadly, many young men are like Amnon. When I first started attended church here, I went to weekly testimony sharing meetings. One time, a young man shared that he was thankful for Bible study because before being educated and guided by the word of God, his lustful desires were out of control. He said that he probably would have raped someone and had thought about it before. Research shows that most rapes are premeditated, just like what Amnon did. I was so shocked. But I also experienced how not cultivating love properly and lustful desires bringing a lot of troubles to me. I grew up without my dad. No one educated me about love and sex. As I grew up, my mom just said, one time, “Don’t get anyone pregnant.” I’ve learned the hard way through many mistakes. And I’ve learned that fathers and older men need to teach younger men about love and sex according to God’s way so that the word of God can supervise and protect their ways.

Amnon saw only Tamar’s beauty. She could also cook, which appealed to his stomach. It was all physical. It reminded me of Adam’s confession when God made Eve and brought her to him.

Genesis 2:23 says,

The man said,

“This is now bone of my bones

    and flesh of my flesh;

she shall be called ‘woman,’

    for she was taken out of man.”

His words are short and poetic, but so profound. He saw that she was like him, “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” He had seen and named the animals, but he couldn’t find anything like him. But by calling her “ ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man,” he acknowledged God. God was the center of their relationship. She came from God, and by speaking of how she was made and being like him, he found her as the “suitable helper” that he couldn’t find before. And the words “suitable helper” speak to his life with God. Here was a creature suitable because she was like him, in order to have a life with God as a helper.

My point is that the word of God teaches a young man how to look to God and how to look at women properly. Sadly, Amnon did not know this. Even though Tamar knew what was right and wrong, he didn’t listen. She was a noble woman. She was willing to be given in marriage to him to avoid wickedness and disgrace.

Proverbs 31:30 says,

Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

But how many young men say, “Wow, look at her! She fears the Lord. I love her.” But instead young men look at beauty and deceived by youthful charm. While visiting a relatives house yesterday, someone noticed a wedding picture on the bookshelf. It was an old picture from one of the grandma’s wedding. And someone said, “Wow, she was so beautiful. I can’t even recognize her.” If that’s what someone else says, what does her husband say?

Proverbs 31 is all about a wife of noble character.

[1] The sayings of King Lemuel—an inspired utterance his mother taught him.

[2] Listen, my son! Listen, son of my womb!

    Listen, my son, the answer to my prayers!

[3] Do not spend your strength on women,

    your vigor on those who ruin kings.

Keep in mind that this is a mother’s teaching to her son. (It may sound like she's bad mouthing women, but she's really bad mouthing young men who spend their strength foolishly on women because they do not know how to look at women properly.)

Let’s look at some of the ways she taught her son about a noble woman.

[13] She selects wool and flax

    and works with eager hands.

[14] She is like the merchant ships,

    bringing her food from afar.

[15] She gets up while it is still night;

    she provides food for her family

    and portions for her female servants.

[16] She considers a field and buys it;

    out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.

[17] She sets about her work vigorously;

    her arms are strong for her tasks.

Have you heard you men say, “Wow, look at her. She selects wool and flax, and works with eager hands”? Or, “What a girl! She considers a field and buys it. She also has strong arms”? What am I saying? There’s a proper way of education for young people, especially how a young man should look at a woman and consider a wife. A noble woman brings respect and honor to her husband and is deserving of praise and honor herself.

Look at verses 20-22.

[20] Her brother Absalom said to her, “Has that Amnon, your brother, been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother. Don’t take this thing to heart.” And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom’s house, a desolate woman.

[21] When King David heard all this, he was furious. [22] And Absalom never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad; he hated Amnon because he had disgraced his sister Tamar.

He knew what had happened. He tried to comfort her. He told her to not take this thing to heart, but that’s exactly what he did. But when David hears about it, he’s just furious. And that’s it. He doesn’t do anything about it.

I’ve heard a lot of talk of what David could have done or should have done. It stands out that he doesn’t do anything about this situation, either for Tamar or Amnon. He had been a quick tempered and righteous man. However, after being exposed of his own sins, he became much slower to respond to others.

There was a law about rape.

Deuteronomy 22:28-29 say,

[28] If a man happens to meet a virgin who is not pledged to be married and rapes her and they are discovered, [29] he shall pay her father fifty shekels of silver. He must marry the young woman, for he has violated her. He can never divorce her as long as he lives.

He had to marry the girl he raped. It may sound strange that a victim of rape should marry her rapist. It’s challenging. But we do see the law putting responsibility on the man so that a man should not act on his fleshly desires however he wants. He has to be responsible for what he has done. It is also a deterrent, but such commitment and responsibility can be a huge deterrent to a young man. And in this way it also protects the woman from being desolate (which is just what happened to Tamar). Although the law permitted divorce, it did not in this case for these obvious reasons.

But it leads Absalom to harbor this hatred for his brother. We can understand how he felt so wronged and the injustice of the situation. Should he just let things go without any recourse?

What is a brother to do? In the book of Genesis, Jacob’s daughter was raped. Her brothers did the same thing. They pretended to get along with the rapist and then at the opportune time they killed not only him, but all the males in the town. Their father also hadn’t done anything about it. When their Jacob complained about their actions, they replied, “Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute?” (Genesis 34:31).

I have a younger sister. I was not a good brother to her, and not really involved in her life. But I didn’t like it when she introduced a boyfriend to us. I always made sure to do my best intimidate and scare the boy off. It was the only times I tried to use my height as an advantage, because her boyfriends were usually short. Once she brought a boy to my mom’s house and said, “I just picked him up from rehab.” So I told her, “Go take him back.”

So, there was no justice. It lead to hatred and then to murder. Sin grew more in the house. Like the rape, it wasn’t on the spur of the moment. It was premeditated murder. We don’t know if Absalom had the intention of hurting David as well, because he kept urging David to come to his party too along with Amnon.

Like Amnon, Absalom didn’t have proper supervision and education about how to deal with anger, hatred, and injustice. Young men also need godly supervision and education. It’s so sad to hear about school shootings. And they’re becoming more frequent. But the attention is usually turned to gun control, rather than self-control.

I also was not educated properly about anger and hatred. The men in my family are short-tempered and proud. My guidance was a story an uncle told me. He was at a carnival with his older brother. They caught one of the vendors cheating them. So the older brother called him out on it. Then the vendor pulled a knife on them. But the older brother only got even more angry. He said, “How dare you threaten me and my family.” Then he chased the guy with the knife and beat him up. That’s what I learned to do if someone threatens your family.

But the Bible teaches us to leave room for God’s justice.

Romans 12:19 says,

Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.

The Lord is the judge of all people. And he will hold everyone accountable for what they have done. He says, “It is mine.” It does not belong to us, but to him. Sometimes we think God is not repaying quick enough. So we help him. But we should not do that. God gives life to us. And he is our judge. He says so. He tells us to leave room for his wrath.

Jesus taught, in Matthew 5:21-22,

[21] “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ [22] But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell."

Jesus went to the root of murder and taught not even to be angry with a brother or sister. We have to cut out even anger, and bring it under control of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. He taught us to do good and to love each other, including our enemies.

Look at verses 36-37.

[36] As he finished speaking, the king’s sons came in, wailing loudly. The king, too, and all his attendants wept very bitterly.

[37] Absalom fled and went to Talmai son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur. But King David mourned many days for his son.

There was much sadness and brokenness in David's house. No father wants to see such an outcome for his children.

So we see how the punishment given to David was being realized by them being given over to their sin.

It is a warning. When people persist in sin, God gives them over to their sin. He gives what they want to their own detriment.

Romans 1 talks about this kind of judgment from God.

Romans 1:18 says,

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness,

and verse 24 says,

Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

and verses 28-29 say,

[28] Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. [29] They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice.

Those who persist in their sin deny one God and get filled with something. There is an exchange that occurs. In David’s house we see sexual sins and murder.

2. David longed to go to Absalom.

Look at verses 38-39.

[38] After Absalom fled and went to Geshur, he stayed there three years. [39] And King David longed to go to Absalom, for he was consoled concerning Amnon’s death.

Through this David's heart was turned to his own house and sons. It’s the first time we see him pay attention to the matter of his children. His sin exposed a problem in his own house among his children and it worked to turn his heart to them.

He says that David "longed to go to Absalom.” This is very surprising. He didn’t demand that Absalom come back. He didn’t cut off Absalom. But it says that he longed to go to Absalom. We see his heart reach out to his son.

David’s longing to go to his son is reflective of God’s heart for his lost children. Although his wrath is being revealed, his salvation is also present. God provided the solution in Jesus Christ.

God doesn’t want people to die. Yesterday’s daily bread from Ezekiel 33 spoke about this.

Ezekiel 33:11 says,

Say to them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways!’

So God sent Jesus. When Jesus came, he died for our sins and was raised to life. He didn’t just die in our place, but he unites us with him so that we also died with him and were raised with him.

Romans 6:11-13 say,

[11] In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. [12] Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. [13] Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.

We are united with Christ who died and was raised to life so that we would be set free from the power of sin, especially in the desires of our body, and live for God, being instruments of righteousness. It says, “Do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.” In Christ we have the power to do this because Christ will reign in us, rather than our sin.

So we learn to “offer” our bodies for righteousness. It means that give ourselves to God. He doesn’t take it from us. But he sets us free. And now that we’re free we ought to give ourselves for righteousness, as an offering, rather than for sin.

So Romans 6:19-23 goes on to say,

[19] I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness. [20] When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. [21] What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! [22] But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. [23] For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God sent Jesus to set us free. In this way, he becomes our guardian. He helps us in ways laws and human efforts cannot.

Colossians 2:20-23 say,

[20] Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: [21] “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? [22] These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. [23] Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

We notice that even in keeping with the strictest regulations, there lacks “any value” in restraining sensual indulgence, as with the case of Amnon. It doesn’t lacks “some value,” but “any value.” Those things canon set us free and help us, but only Christ. So, as much as we want our children or those under our case to be disciplined and trained, we have to bring them to Jesus. As with ourselves.

The solution from God is found in him.

It goes on to say in Colossians 3:1-5,

[1] Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [2] Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. [3] For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. [4] When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

[5] Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

We live newly in him. And he gives the Holy Spirit who bears fruit in us so that we become like Jesus more and more.

Galatians 5:22-25 say,

[22] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. [24] Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. [25] Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

My point is that God has also longed to restore his lost children. His heart went out and he provided the solution when we were still in sin. God doesn’t want people to die for sin or be sales to sin. He wants his people to live and be in the fellowship with him. So he sent Jesus. We died and live with Jesus, and now are called to live like him with the help of the Spirit. The Spirit bears fruit, even the fruit of self-control, just as he is self-controlled. We don’t remain as slaves, in weakness, under the power of sin. But we live by the Spirit. We learn to offer ourselves to God. He heals our brokenness from sin and brings unity with each other through unity with him.

Jesus also provided protection for his disciples by his prayers. When Jesus came he was also intervening to save his people.

On the night Jesus was arrested and was to be crucified, he went to a garden and prayed.

John 17:11-12, 15 say,

[11] I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. [12] While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

[15] My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

Jesus protected by prayer. He prayed that the power of God’s name would protect them because he build the relationship with them based on God’s name. Verse 6 says, "I have revealed you[r name] to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.”

He built a relationship based on God’s name and educated them. And his protection was good. He said, ‘None has been lost.” We don’t know how or if David prayed for his children. But we know how Jesus prayed. And he gave us the example in prayer. Jesus is our shepherd and guide. That’s why he gave his Holy Spirit to us.

Today’s passage shows us God’s punishment to David was realized through the sin in his house, yet how his heart was moved to his son. We should not persist in sin because God has given us Jesus Christ. God heals and restores brokenness through Jesus Christ. Let's be reconciled to God and each other through Jesus Christ.

So we learn to offer our bodies for righteousness and to pray for protection in his name, which comes with building a relationship and properly educating those under our care. Just as God has turned his heart to us, let’s turn our hearts to the lost, to our sons and daughters, to those with a broken relationship. Let’s pray that our houses may be guided by Jesus and the Holy Spirit, under his protection.

Let’s read verse 39 again and close.

And King David longed to go to Absalom, for he was consoled concerning Amnon’s death.