

- Pray for those who have been abused by men (and occasionally women) who have used their strength and sexual desires to take advantage of others. Pray for all involved with helping such people.

Final Prayer

You, Lord God, have given to each of us our home, our families, our places of work and our places of worship. May we honour You by respecting all who share these blessings with us, and by fulfilling Your command to 'love one another'. Hear this our prayer, Lord God, and establish Your Kingdom in our midst. AMEN

Prayer

Lord Jesus, meet us today wherever we are, whatever we do and wherever we go. May we recognise Your voice, feel Your touch and be warmed in our hearts. May we make a conscious effort to do what is right in Your eyes, not because You might condemn us for what goes wrong, but because You love to empower us to do Your will. Thank You for Your real presence with us in the world by Your Spirit, Lord Jesus: AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: The Seasons

It is winter in the Northern hemisphere, but people living south of the equator are currently enjoying summer! Thank God for the seasons and the ever changing state of our world.

On-going prayers

- Give thanks to the Lord for the health you enjoy
- Pray for those charged with the care of children in need
- Pray for all who suffer and have no access to medical care

Meditation

Show us Your glorious power O Lord;
Come to the help of those who need You.

Come to the aid of the poor and needy,
Raise them up and show Your love!

Come to the aid of the are sick and distressed,
Restore and heal, help and deliver!

Come to the aid of those who are lost,
Rescue and love them, lead them to faith!

Come to the aid of Your broken people,
Renew Your church and rekindle its zeal!

Come to the aid of Your waiting people,
Revive their hope and lead them to glory!

Show us Your glorious power, O Lord;
All is possible in Your love and care.

Bible Study - 2 Samuel 13:15-22

¹⁵ Then Amnon hated her with very great hatred; 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.' ¹⁶ But she said to him, 'No, my brother; for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other which you did to me.' But he would not listen to her. ¹⁷ He called the young man who served him and said, 'Put this woman out of my presence, and bolt the door after her.'

¹⁸ Now she was wearing a long robe with sleeves; as this was how the virgin daughters of the king were dressed in those days. So his servant put her out, and bolted the door after her. ¹⁹ Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore the

long robe which she wore; and with her hand on her head, she went away, crying aloud.

²⁰ *And her brother Absalom said to her, 'Has Amnon your brother been with you? Now hold your peace, my sister; he is your brother; do not take this to heart.' So Tamar dwelt, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom's house.*

²¹ *When King David heard of all this, he was very angry. ²² But Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor bad; for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar.*

Review

Chapter 13 of 2 Samuel begins, as we discovered yesterday, with the story of the rape of Tamar (13:1-14), by Amnon, David's eldest son and heir. Tamar was the sister of Amnon's younger brother Absalom, and as soon as we read in this passage about the appalling manner in which he treated Tamar, especially after the rape, we know immediately that this is not a son of David worthy of the throne of Israel. There was no hint of repentance in Amnon concerning what he had done; he has his father's weakness in sexual matters, but not his walk with God, through which he might recognise his own faults and seek a higher path of righteousness.

The question on our minds, and that of the writer of 2 Samuel is this. Who then of David's sons is best suited to be heir to the throne? God's Messianic covenant must be sustained through a faithful heir, but although we who know our Bibles are aware that the next king will be Solomon, there is no hint of this yet in the narrative of 2 Samuel. So the spotlight now begins to turn on Absalom as the likely successor to David.

Amon's immaturity Our text today begins with story of Amnon's disgraceful response to the rape of his half sister. He shows himself to immature and a slave to sexual gratification, for having pined for the woman of his desire, he became aggressive towards her as soon as she responded to him. She demonstrated that she was a real person, with real feelings, who had to be dealt with in a mature manner (13:13,16) and Amnon's response to her words was appalling, despite the fact that she had previously indicated that she would accept his advances if the king gave his permission (13:13). His only interest was the fulfilment of his sexual desires; so when he had finished, he dismissed her from his presence with infantile anger.

The manic swing from passion to anger exhibited by Amnon had more in common with the mood swings of Saul rather than his father, David, confirming that he was not suitable kingship material. Having raped a woman in passion, it was expected of an Israelite man that he would take the woman immediately as his wife, and formally declare this to his family and hers. Tamar begged for this legal consideration, which would preserve her dignity and family standing, but Amnon was simply inflamed by her resistance.

Tamar's shame In despair because her whole life had now been compromised, Tamar left Amnon in shame, with her head in her hands and having torn her royal robes in the distress of the moment (3:19). This was not simply an emotional response. She had no choice, for her shame would be made public, and there was no point in trying to hide what had been done to her. She would now be unable to marry as a royal princess, and the robes befitting her previous status were, in effect, no longer hers to wear. Her brother Absalom caught sight of her (13:20) and spoke to her. It was immediately obvious to him what had happened, and he spoke only to confirm his suspicions; 'has Amnon your brother been with you?'

One would have expected a more vigorous response from Absalom than to caution Tamar to be patient and 'hold your peace' (13:20), however, in its context, what Absalom did was probably wise. He did not throw out his sister Tamar because of her rape although he could have done so, but accepted her back as part of his own family, meaning that she was provided for at court, even though as scripture makes clear, she was now a 'desolate woman'.

Absalom's response The final verse of the passage tells us what Absalom thought of the whole affair. He was furious with his half brother for defiling his sister, but because Amnon was the eldest of David's sons and therefore the heir apparent to the kingdom, it would be unwise of Absalom to confront one of Amnon's position and power whilst he was in anger. He bade his time, and although scripture does not say so directly, it appears that he immediately decided to take vengeance against Amnon. It was better for him to keep his peace and maintain his own position in line to the throne (13:22) and act when he had an opportunity; if his brother Amnon did not have the maturity to control his emotions, then Absalom did. In the meantime, David himself had discovered what had been happening, and as any parent in such a situation, he was very angry. Yet David appeared to be neither able nor willing to do anything about what happened (13:21), there is no mention of action against Amnon. Perhaps David was too aware of his own sexual sins and was at a loss as to how to handle those of his son.

The story line of scripture has now been set in place, and the focus is now on Absalom as the more emotionally secure, yet motivated, son of David. The story has some way to run, but it is clear that we must now consider Absalom as the possible successor to David.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Should sexual matters be open knowledge, as in this text, or only private and unspoken of, as in many societies today?
2. Discuss what do you think of Absalom's response to the whole affair; was his treatment of his sister adequate?
3. How should society deal with people like Amnon who abuse their positions of power for their own gratification?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

I find myself somewhat upset to read in scripture about rape, largely because its inclusion in scripture represents the experience of countless women and children (and sometimes men) who have been sexually abused over the centuries. No one can tell whether the availability of pornography today has increased the incidence of sexual crime, though I feel personally that the open display of sexuality expected of especially younger women, fed by the marketing of all kinds of clothing, fashion and beauty accessories, is a source of far more social stress than most realise. However, the Bible confirms that inappropriate sexual desire has been a powerful force for evil throughout history, and society may be judged on how we treat the victims of its excess.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Have you experienced times when although you have felt deeply about something and wanted to act immediately, it has been better to wait? Try to recall such moments. They may well be important events, when God has stretched you and tested your resolve.*