



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Lessons from the Life of David

2 Samuel 13:1-39

“Like Father, Like Sons”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Today we have a very lengthy chapter but we want to read the entire chapter. It is a chapter that, probably, is not very often read in the meetings of evangelical churches and not hardly ever in other kinds of churches, but it's so important that we be acquainted with the word of God itself. It's a sad story but we want to go ahead and read through it because the lessons from it are very significant for us today in nineteen ninety-one, verse 1 of 2 Samuel chapter 13.

“After this 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. But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother. Now Jonadab was a very crafty man. [That Hebrew adjective is one that commonly means, wise but in this instance it obviously is wises in the sense of an evil wisdom.] And he said to him, ‘Why are you, the king's son, becoming thinner day after day? Will you not tell me?’ Amnon 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...”

Incidentally, that tells us something about David; he was a shepherd by trade and is now the shepherd-king of Israel, but there is a genuine concern that David has for those in his family. As we’re going to see, he was a great failure in many ways, but you can see some of the traits that appear from time to time that reflect his background and also tell us something about his nature.

“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. And when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, ‘Please 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.’ So Tamar went to 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. And 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 may eat from 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 to him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, ‘Come, lie with me, my sister.’ But she answered him, ‘No, my brother, do not force me.’”

That Greek expression from the verb, *anab*, is one that means “to humiliate” -- it means to humble, and this translation is not a bad translation, but that’s the general force

of it. It means to violate, and in that sense is the sense in which it is found in this context.

“For no such thing should be done in Israel. Do not do this disgraceful thing. [This foolish thing. This folly, the original text puts it.] And I, where could I take my shame? And as for you, you would be like one of the fools in Israel. [Another Nabal, remember him?] Now, therefore, please speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you.’ However, he would not heed her voice; and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her. 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!’ [The Hebrew text, here, is very emphatic. It’s simply *quwm! Leheb!* Rise! Go!] So 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 [My text has “woman” supplied, and it is a feminine demonstrative pronoun, but obviously it’s a term of disapprobation; it’s something like, “put this person” “put this person away,”] and bolt the door after her.’

Now she had on a robe of many colors, [Evidently, the princes wore those types of robes.] for the king’s virgin daughters wore such apparel. And his servant put her out and bolted the door behind her. Then 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? 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. And when King David heard of 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. [It’s obvious he had other plans already.] And it came to pass, after two full years, that Absalom had sheepshearers 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 sheepshearers; please, let the king and his servants go with your servant.' But the king said to Absalom, 'No, my son, let us not all go now, lest we be a burden to you.' Then he urged him, but he would not go; and he blessed him. 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 Absalom had commanded his servants, [Incidentally, this was a general time of festivity, so this was going to be a party.] 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. [It's very obvious what they thought; they thought, well, he has slain Amnon and now he's going to slay the rest of us, so he will have the succession to the throne for himself.] And it came to pass, while they were on the way, that news came to David, saying, 'Absalom has killed all the king's sons, and not one of them is left!'

So the king arose and tore his garments and lay on the ground, and all his servants stood by with their clothes torn. Then Jonadab [He's the crafty one; he's the wise one and he has figured out what has happened. And it's interesting how he does it, probably.] Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother, answered and said, 'Let not my lord suppose they have killed all the young men, the king's sons, for only Amnon is dead. [Now, he didn't know that but he had surmised this.] For by the command of Absalom this has been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar.'"

The Hebrew text is very interesting and I don't know that I can say this with absolute certainty; but what it says, literally, is "for by the mouth of Absalom" the term that is translated "command" here, is the term with the pronominal suffix of, peh, el peh.

What this seems to suggest is that Jonadab figured this out by the set of Absalom’s mouth over the two years, and he could tell that he was a person who was going to do something rather severe; just as if I were to look out at you and say, you might wonder what in the world is Dr. Johnson going to say. But by the set of his mouth, evidently, Jonadab, who is wise, chakam, has figured this out, perhaps. At any rate, he has figured out the fact.

“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.” Then 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.’ [This is his nephew; and he knows, he knows David. He’s figured out David pretty well and he’s also figured out Absalom.] 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 his servants wept very bitterly. But Absalom fled and went to Talmai the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son every day. So Absalom fled and went to Geshur, and was there three years. And King David longed to go to Absalom; for he had been comforted concerning Amnon, because he was dead.”

May the Lord bless this reading of his word and let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee for the many ways in which, through the Scriptures, Thou dost address us in the Holy Spirit. These ancient incidents recorded in Holy Scripture for the instruction of us who read them thousands of years later are so important for us. And help us, Lord, to be responsive to them, help us to look

at our lives in the light of Thy word. And by the help of the Holy Spirit become conformable to that which is pleasing to Thee.

We thank Thee for the Old Testament Scriptures which Thou hast preserved and made available to us. We know that when we hold them in our hands we surely hold in our hands a wonderful treasure. Lord, let us not neglect what Thou hast written for our instruction. We thank Thee for this day in which Thou hast placed us, those lessons of the centuries long ago are lessons that are very appropriate for us today.

Lord, we pray for our country; we ask Thy blessing upon the United States of America, upon our President, upon others in government, upon our armed forces, give wisdom and guidance in these still critical days in which we are living.

We especially pray for the whole Church of Jesus Christ, wherever the individual members may be, we lift them all up before Thee and ask Lord that Thou wilt accomplish all of the promises that Thou hast given in Thy word for each one who belongs to Jesus Christ. We especially pray, Lord, if there should be someone in this audience who does not have the assurance of eternal life, that they may be pointed to the saving sacrifice of Christ, the saving Savior, who has accomplished that sacrifice on the Cross of Golgotha. And may we all, if we have not turned to him, turn to him and become his forever.

We pray for this church and for its leadership and for the members and friends and the visitors who are with us here today, we ask Thy blessing upon them. Upon the sick whose names are in our bulletin, we pray for each one of them; and for others, too, of our friends and families who need the healing ministry of our Great God in heaven. We pray, Lord, that Thou wilt accomplish that which is according to Thy will in the lives of all of us and especially for these who have requested our prayers. And some are in the hospital at the moment and have made known to us that they want to be on our list of individuals for whom we pray, help us to be faithful in praying for them.

Bless our meeting today, the singing of the hymn, the ministry of the word of God.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today as we continue our exposition of themes from the Life of David is, “Like Father, Like Sons.” The eternal consequences of sin find striking but pathetic illustration here. David’s adultery and David’s murder of Uriah stain his family permanently, and from those sins his family never completely recovers. His sin is put away but the consequences of it, as we noted two weeks ago, continue. Sin has its inevitable fruit in the individual, in the family, in society, and in God’s people. It cannot be hid. But Scripture says, “Be sure your sin will find you out,” and its fruit is certain. The wages of sin is death.

The law of dynamics by which every wave of motion produces an effect, forever, holds good, also in the mental and moral sphere. Sin is a wave of evil; it’s a force in an oblique direction. It’s like a seed that germinates and it produces and reproduces after its kind. And David’s dreadful deed could not but be an instance of this inevitable law. One can see, at first glance, reading through the section of how David’s great sin is reflected in the life of his own family.

On the divine side, one sees the inevitable fulfillment of God’s word about righteous judgment. He has said, “Now, therefore, David,” Nathan speaking, “The sword shall never depart from your house because you have despised Me. You have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. I will raise up adversity to you from your own house. I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor. And he shall lie with your wives in the sight of the sun. For you did it secretly; and I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.” And it all began, as you’ll remember, with the death of the infant, which we say described in chapter 12. The first fruits of David’s dreadful sin now unfold.

It might seem strange to you why such a chapter as this is recorded in the word of God. We turn, sometimes, with distaste as we read the depths of the sensual passions

that are described in the word of God and which seem to us to be so illegal and unlawful. But those who object to such passages do not know the principle on which this book is written. One of the great principles of the book is the fulfillment of the righteous judgments of God brought to pass in the fact and consequence of their occurrences. So in the deeds recorded here, we have a graphic description of the first fruits of David's dreadful sin.

Why does the Bible devote so much space to this sordid story? What is the spiritual profit of it? David Payne has suggested this, “First of all, the story describes part of David's punishment and that publicly.” In other words, we see the word of God as being fulfilled in David's life. “It explains the subsequent events.” David's sin is seen as the cause and is having an effect upon Absalom.” Amnon might not have raped Tamar and Absalom might not have murdered Amnon. Illicit sexual indulgence is no private sin, without serious consequences, as so many of our contemporaries today in our society seem to imply. In fact, our society, which is so filled with sexual abuses and illegalities, divorce, adultery, homosexuality, and various other types of manifestation of the nature of man. We sometimes, because we are so often exposed to this, take the viewpoint that it's really not something that's very important after all. And, in fact, in large parts of our profession Christendom, some of those things are regarded as being all right. So I'm thankful for chapters like this. It offers a cautionary tale. Amnon saw himself as a prince; he was the heir apparently. It warns against the moral dangers of a high position in society. And it shows God's goodness to his people.”

Wouldn't it have been terrible if Amnon had succeeded David as king? Solomon was not without his faults, but Solomon is something of a saint in comparison with Amnon. He eliminated himself and the Israelites, later on, must have thanked themselves, at least the spiritual ones, they must have thanked themselves constantly for the fact that Amnon or Absalom was not ruling over them.

So God's determined King Solomon came to be king by God's divine providences in judgment. The things that happen in the word of God all proceed according to the counsel of the Lord God. As Paul puts it in Ephesians chapter 1 in verse 1, “All things work together according to the counsel of God's will.” He brings them all to pass.

Well, the chapter is the story of the violation of Tamar, the murder of Amnon, and the mourning of David, and the flight of Absalom. And we'll try, in the limited time that we have to give an exposition of this lengthy chapter. You'll remember that in chapter 11, David's sin is described and the murder of Uriah is also described. And then, in chapter 12, Nathan is sent by the Lord God to rebuke David. And David acknowledges his sin. He says, “I have sinned against the Lord.” But Nathan goes on to point out, “Your sin is forgiven,” that's true, but the consequences of it persist. And, as a matter of fact, they persist throughout the whole of your life, David. “The sword shall never depart from your house because you have despised Me.” You can see from God's standpoint, the sin of King David was most serious.

So now we come to chapter 13, and we almost have a replay in the children of David of the kinds of sins that he has committed, all because looking at it from the human standpoint only, David instead of going to war as he should have gone, stayed and went out on his porch and looked out and saw Bathsheba.

There's a story about a history class that was studying the Revolutionary Battle of Saratoga, which was probably lost because General William Howe chose to remain in Philadelphia. And the teacher who was teaching the class asked the class to explain this major British defeat. And a little child from the back of the classroom said, “Lack of no Howe.” [Laughter] Well, it was lack of no Howe, capital H-O-W-E, but it was also lack of know how, how a general ought to conduct a battle and command his forces and do what he ought to do.

So for twenty years now David will sit on the throne and he will sit on the throne as a culprit with all of the sorrows and the might-have-beens that must have gone through

his mind over and over again. I must say, I agree with one of the commentators who has said, “When you look at David’s life and you see this tremendous fall that has taken place, and you realize that he lived on for twenty years and that he wrote many of his great psalms during this period of time, it’s one of the things that is, ultimately, inexplicable by us.” How can a man, under the judgment of God and having committed the sins that he has committed, write the magnificent things that he wrote in so many of those psalms?

And even our Lord Jesus, remember, when he talks with the Pharisees on the day of questions, refers to David and his writing in Psalm 110 and he says, “How does David then in Spirit say?” Acknowledging, David wrote by the Spirit of God. And that’s the ultimate explanation that God can and does use sinners, sinners is what we are, sinners, and great sinners, in the writing of things in the word of God that we, who are great sinners, may profit from them.

Now, the story is the story of Amnon’s lust. The house of polygamy is bearing its wretched fruit. “Polygamy,” Alexander White once said, “Is just Greek for a dung hill.” And one sees it here. Polygamy is the source of so many evils and it finds its illustration here. This institution, one Hebrew commentator who was not known for his conservative things says, “Is the absolute irrepressible source of numberless evils of this description. It ever furnishes a ready stimulus to unbounded sensual desire in the sovereign,” that is the king, “and should he be exalted above it, is likely to introduce a dissolute life among the very different children of different mothers.” And so you can imagine David’s home, probably all were on that little hill of Zion, each had his little place where he lived, his little apartment, so to speak, his little home. And all of those wives with all of the children that belonged to them, living together, looking at the things that were happening, and, as little children, learning things about the nature of human sin. It’s no wonder that we read what we read.

Well, Amnon, the text says, loved Tamar. Later on, love is given its proper definition, it’s lust. And when the lust is satisfied, it’s hatred, which, incidentally, is in

thorough harmony with the definition of love that is practiced in our society today. The love that our society speaks about so often is lust, and lust after its satisfied, psychologically, frequently, turns to hatred as we find in this instance.

So Amnon has lust for Tamar. Tamar was a beautiful girl. She was Absalom's sister, and the two were two beautiful people. Absalom, from the top of his head to the sole of his feet is a beautiful man. Scriptures says, with reference to him, “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 Tamar, his sister, was evidently a beautiful young girl. And Amnon lusts for her, his half-sister.

Now, as a result of it, in recognizing that this was going to be difficult, fortunately, he had a cousin whose name is Jonadab. And Jonadab was the son of Shimeah, David's brother. And he was a very crafty man. He was wise in the sense that he understood people; and in understanding people, he was able to discern the things that were going through Amnon's mind. And, later on, the things that were going through Absalom's mind as well. So he devises a little scheme after he has been told the facts. He said, Amnon, what you need to do is to lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill. And when your father comes, isn't it interesting that he knew that his father was going to come, he's the pastor, so he'll be around, and so he comes, he's the shepherd. And he does come.

There's some good things about David. Not all of the things about him are bad; but this chapter puts him in a very poor light as we will see. But, at any rate, he does come. He does do what Jonadab suggests that Amnon ask him to do. And the result is that Tamar comes and cooks for him. And then, when the time comes, we read, he says to her, come to the bedroom, bring the food there, I want to eat from your hand. Tamar took the cakes which she had made, brought them to Amnon her brother in the bedroom and when she had brought them, he took hold of her and said, “Come, lie with me, my sister.”

So this dishonest, unscrupulous moral plague in David’s family, Jonadab, has given Amnon the way by which he can commit his great sin. You cannot help but feel pity for Tamar, a beautiful young lady. I suggest she was young; I really don’t know. She probably was twenty or so maybe a few years less. It doesn’t say how old she is, which is true to our society, isn’t it? The age of some women, someone said, is like the speedometer on a used car. You know its set back, but you don’t know how far.

[Laughter]

Bob Murphy, a friend of mine who is a humorist, who does nothing but this, and a Christian man, incidentally, he said, “Ask any woman her age and nine times out of ten she’ll guess wrong.” [More laughter] We can see this in our newspapers, too. Zsa Zsa Gabor, so I understand was born before Ava, but now she’s younger than Ava. That’s a trick that very people are able to accomplish but, evidently, she’s accomplished, or at least, she gets people to write about it. [More laughter]

But Tamar is a beautiful, modest, obedient, she does what King David asks, tender hearted, pious because it’s she in a moment who will say, “these things are not done in Israel,” a modest, pious princess on an errand of mercy. You cannot help but feel a bit sorry for Tamar. And so when Amnon takes her hand and says, “Come, lie with me, my sister.” She says, “No, my brother, do not force me,” do not humble me, do not humiliate me, do not violate me. Look, chastity was a crown of honor to Hebrew women. And folly if one disobeyed the principle of chastity, even to men. Read Genesis chapter 38, for example, about Shechem and Dinah and how the brothers of Dinah regarded it as folly what Shechem had done when he took Dinah and raped her. So do not force me, chastity. Chastity is something that doesn’t stand in very high places of honor today, but there is something about it that is fundamentally pleasing to God. And, my young people, those of you who are here, if you lose your virginity illegally, it’s something that is absolutely recoverable. You’re never the same again. Oh, how important it is for Christians to retain their chastity until their marriage.

So don't force me. Such a thing is not done in Israel. Isn't that interesting? In the next verse she says if this takes place, as for you, you'll be like one of the fools in Israel. So she understands that Israel is different. To be a member of Israel is different from being a member of the nations. The nation is apart from the nations, and always is so. And in the present day, the people of God are different from the nations, from the peoples of the world, different. And so she recognizes that to live as the nations do is a disgraceful thing. It's folly.

Our Lord talks about fools. The Old Testament talks about a fool, Nabal was a fool. The word *nabalab* is the word for foolishness. The fool is not simply the stupid person but the immoral person as well. And it's pathetic how she tries to fight off Amnon and even suggests things that are unscriptural, perhaps, because she didn't realize it. But she says, for example, “Now therefore, please speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you.” But that, itself, was contrary to Scripture. So there's a lack of knowledge of the word of God there as well.

You know, when you have a fool, you have something that's very bad. But a fool in the family of God is the worst kind of fool. Let me tell you why. Think of the Church of Jesus Christ. A fool in the world is, perhaps, understandable. But a fool in the Church of Jesus Christ is a worst, the worst, kind of fool; first of all, because of the light that shines in the body of Christ. There, one finds truths concerning God. There, one finds the truth. There, one knows of duty, as God understands it. There, one understands what sin is, what holiness is, what life is, ultimately, and what death is, ultimately. And the fool in the family of God who sins rebels against the light that exists in the church of Christ; think of the influences that are enjoyed by individuals who are in the family of God; the examples of good men? We looked back over the centuries and think of the great men of God and the examples they are for us members of the church of Jesus Christ. The institutions of Israel and the church and the life that characterizes that people of God, the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit within us, the privileges that are

accessible to us, the friendship of our Lord, the friendship and love of Christians, the approach to the throne of grace that we have as believers in Christ, the opportunity to pray for divine guidance and expect that we will have guidance and strength to do the will of God, and the convictions that are produced there, and the heavier doom that is incurred there by those who are only professing members of the church of Christ. Those who are in our midst but not really of us, to them belong the many stripes in judgment that our Lord speaks about or the sorer punishment that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks about.

It's bad to be a fool; but the worst kind of fool is the person who sits in the professed body of believers in Christ and does not possess our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Oh, my friend, if you are here today and you have never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, the worst kind of fool is the one who has all of the advantages that you have, and does not respond to them. That word fool, we commented on in the chapter on Nabal, and pointed out the fact that there is a relationship in our Lord's use of the term *reyqam* which is related to the Aramaic term *raqa* which means “empty.” And so the fool is a person who is characterized by emptiness. And I made the suggestion that when we talk about an “air head” in spiritual things, the spiritual fool is the spiritual “air head.” These are the things that are important.

Now, when the act takes place, you are not surprised then when you read, “Then Amnon hated her exceedingly.” It had been lust all along. It was called love, but it was really lust. That's all it was. He just wanted to have sexual intercourse with Tamar. So when the act takes place, he hates her exceedingly, since the lust is gratified and now it turns to hatred. That's in accordance with what modern psychology often has suggested. Actually, what Amnon does is three significant wrongs. First place, he violated, humiliated, humbled, raped Tamar. And then, not only did he do that, but he hated her. And then, thirdly, he told her to get out of his house and told his servants to bolt the door against her. Some great fellow isn't he? You know, if there is anybody who deserved

murder, this fellow richly deserved murder by Absalom. You certainly can understand why Absalom committed this particular murder.

She puts ashes on her head. She goes out. Her clothes are torn; her princess garments. She walks the street. Everybody can see her. Weeping bitterly. And I want to tell you something, if only David, before he took Bathsheba had looked down his history just a bit, and thought about his children, and thought about how the influence of his action would take effect there, upon his children, and realized that just such incidents as this might happen, then he might not have been so bold, so sinful, so wicked, so iniquitous, as to get Bathsheba and bring her up into the royal palace. Oh, if we just had a bit of foresight, my Christian friend, to realize what are the effects of our sins on our family, on our society, on the Church of Jesus Christ?

So we read, King David heard all these things and he was very angry. Now, you might read that and think that that's pretty good. He's very angry. But what was David's duty? His duty was to carry out the Law of Moses. And what is the statement of the Law of Moses with respect to adultery like this? This man is to be cut off. But all we read about David is that he's very angry. But, let me tell you, one of the reasons that David acts like this is how can you expect a person to carry out the law when his own son is following his example? Which is precisely what is taking place! So incidentally, the Greek Old Testament adds a line here. It's not found in the Hebrew text. But this is the way it reads. “But he would not hurt Amnon because he was his eldest son and he loved him.” It may well be true but think of what he ought to have done, and what that tells you about David, and what it tells you about the consequences of his own sin and the effects of it in his own life. So he's angry, that's all. You can see from this and you can see later on that David was, in many ways, a very sympathetic and affectionate person. But at the same time, he was indulgent toward his children. He allowed his natural affections to override his better judgment. His judgment does not guide his affections; his affections guide his judgment.

Yesterday, I read something, I never paid any attention to it before, but Arthur Pink makes the comment that it was his judgment guiding his affections, “It’s not without reason and meaning that the head is set above the heart in our physical bodies.” And, I confess, I never thought of that. There are lots of people who go around talking about how we ought to feel affectionate about spiritual things, but they are not interested in really what Scripture actually says. I won’t use the word theology; it might offend you. But, it’s certainly true that what we think is to guide our feelings, always, our mind above our heart. The heart’s important; but when your mind’s right, your heart will be right too. And your affections and the result of proper affection will show. But, it is first mind, first the head then the heart, always.

Now, the murder of Amnon takes place. We don’t have time to talk about it. It’s pretty clear. Absalom’s outward indifference where it says for two years he didn’t speak to his brother Amnon, either good or bad. He didn’t want to commit himself. He was planning all along the ways by which he might avenge his sister, Tamar. And the time came and he did avenge her. And the result was that as someone has put it, “David saw the ghastly reflection of his unbridled passion in his eldest son’s foul crime, and of his murderous craft in his second son’s bloody revenge.” So everything is working out in his children just as in his own life it worked out. And so David is not the father that he ought to be. The sentence of the Mosaic Law not enforced. The result is, “Physician heal thyself!” It’s something he cannot really carry out because he, himself, has failed.

Now, the chapter ends with David mourning, the servants forgetting Absalom’s specific anger against Amnon, assuming all to be slain. But then, Jonadab, smarter than the rest, in realizing that what we have is the murder of Amnon; but the other sons go free. Jonadab is smart and guessed the truth. And Absalom becomes the rod of David’s chastisement. Absalom flees, and he flees to his grandfather. Absalom and Tamar, both, had heathen backgrounds. And so he flees to his grandfather; and there he stays for about three years. And David is left with the memory of Nathan’s words to him. “Now

therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house because you have despised me and taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.”

I read about a person who stood up, I guess it was in a sermon like this, and he said, “I have only ten minutes and hardly know where to begin.” A voice came out of the congregation and said, “Begin at the 9th.” [Laughter] So we have five minutes and I’m going to begin at the 1st rather than the 4th as some of you might hope. The lessons are too many for the time, of course. But let me just point to a few of them that ought to stand out.

All sin, sooner or later, touches society. The universe after the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden is a changed place and every time that sin is committed in this universe, it is a changed place. And David learned that in his own family and you will learn it in your own life too. In the acts of sin our lives change.

Sin, conspicuous or not, weakens the ability to resist evil. The man who commits sin becomes the slave of sin. And David has been guilty of great sin and the result is he doesn’t have the strength and ability to contend with sin as he might have had had he overcome.

Open sin paralyzes action toward similar sin. All we read about David is that he was angry. He did not carry out the sentence of the Mosaic Law, his own sin paralyzed his will and ability to deal with sin. The liar’s tongue, someone has said, is deprived of its power in reproving the lies in others. The deceiver, in business affairs, cannot with energy force and warn others against fraud. Men who have openly indulged in the lusts of the flesh speak with bated breath and act with indecision when public questions concerning the suppression and punishment of licentiousness are discussed.

We find it all in our society. I remember, Wilbur Mills, one of our Congressmen, Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, who was discovered in the process of his life in Washington of spending a lot of time with a woman in the area, and I remember Walter Cronkite saying, “It was just peccadilloes.” Those were his words.

Now, if you know what a peccadillo is, you know that it's an inconsequential sin. It comes from the Greek word, *peccata*, which means sin. The Latin word *peccatum*, which means sin. A peccadillo is a Spanish word that means something like, a little sin. But no sin is really little, ultimately.

Oriental harems and modern evils have a lot in common. Polygamy was terrible. The harem was terrible. We don't have harems. We don't have to do it. It's less expensive, so we just divorce, divorce, and divorce and divorce.

And then, we also have our society filled with things like homosexuality; and even in our churches, in our professing Christian churches, we have individuals who affirm that homosexuality is just another lifestyle. Well, if we're going to take that view, we shouldn't hold the Bible in one hand, my friend.

I think this has found such beautiful illustration, I said beautiful, in the sense that it's such an apt illustration, in what is happening in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. And, probably, you've read in the newspapers or somewhere about the task force in the Presbyterian Church which has been drawing up a pastoral letter on interfaith relations or has been drawing up a task report on inter-sex relations, and is to make a declaration that will be a recommendation to the General Assembly that gay and lesbian persons be accepted as full participating members of the church and ordained as officers. That has not taken place yet, but the committee is forming a recommendation along those lines.

The task force established seven ethical principles or values of human sexuality. I'll read them very quickly. The goodness of sexuality, and you'll find when you finish these seven things it doesn't sound so bad, the goodness of sexuality, sexual and spiritual holiness, mutuality, bodily integrity, and self direction of every person, the reclaiming of *eros* and passion, responsibility for choices and actions, fidelity in relationships. Now, what is self-evident about these things is, as you study them, is that these values are

unisex, or ambi-sex. No reference is made to the creation norm of heterosexual sexuality. Fidelity does not mean monogamy. Marriage takes a back seat in the discussion.

One member of the task force saying publicly that it should be treated as only one choice among other, quote “equally valid” choices. Now, what is interesting about this is not so much the opinions, because these are the opinions of our society today in large part, but what’s interesting is this is in the midst of a church that historically has held to the Christian faith. And, furthermore, has held to the Christian faith according to the Calvinistic interpretation of the Christian faith. That’s why it touches me, to some extent.

So what they have had to do is to repudiate the Presbyterian, the historic commitment to the Bible as the word of God, the final authority in all matters of faith and practice, which is fundamental doctrine for them. So how do they do that? Well, they simply say, Scripture teaches patriarchal patterns, sanctions male privilege and power, denigrates women, subordinates them, advances heterosexist and homophobic notion that heterosexual marriage is the only legitimate pattern of sexual expression, and under such circumstances, it’s hard to see why the Presbyterians bother with the Bible at all. What’s the point of the Bible if you’re not going to follow the teaching of the word of God?

Incidentally, not all the Presbyterians believe that and there are several groups among them that stand for biblical teaching. Two of the members of the committee, one a well-known Princeton Theological faculty member, resigned because they discovered that every vote of the fifteen people wound up 13 to 2. And they were the two. And so they resigned in protest.

I look at this and I think about what my Presbyterian friends and what I grew up in and what I learned about reformed theology that when a church exists, it exists when people hear the word of God, when they observe the ordinances, and when they exercise discipline. Now, if this is a church, then the members of that committee should be disciplined. But we shall see.

You know, we learn some very important things when we read the Bible; and one of them is that chastisement without love is wrong. No father is at liberty to plague or torture his child. But, on the other hand, a love that cannot chastise is no love. And it reaps a poor reward. A child that does not at the proper time feel the father's rod becomes at last a rod for his father. And that's precisely what Absalom and Amnon become for David, because he did not use the rod at the time when he should have.

I think it's interesting that they are responsible, even though by provident, they are involved in God's chastisement of David. But they are still responsible. In other words, they could have looked and said, well, all of these things have just happened because God is judging our father for his wrongs and, therefore, we are not responsible. But the Scriptures make David responsible and make his sons and family responsible, too.

And, finally, Amnon, Absalom and David learn that the way of the transgressor is, as Scripture says, hard.

May God deliver us from the kind of sin that means suffering for us and for our family and for our family and our family's children. We are dealing with very serious things. And David's the great illustration for us. It is astonishing, isn't it? How a man like this, in the midst of this, by God's marvelous grace, can write inspired Scripture? That's a puzzle.

If you are here today and you have never believed in Christ, we invite you to turn to him, who offered the sacrifice for sinners by which you, too, may come into the family of God with your sins forgiven, possessing eternal life. May God move your heart to turn to Christ, and may you by his grace believe in him and come to the forgiveness of sins and by God's grace join the company of the saints of God. Paul exhorts them, “Let not fornication and other forms of sin be found among you as becometh saints.” Tamar was right. These things are not done in Israel. They are not done in the true Church of Jesus Christ.

Let's stand for the Benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee for the way in which the word of God speaks to our needs so frankly, so forthrightly, warning us of the consequences of disobedience of the word of God. So often we have failed and so often we have suffered consequences, O God, by Thy grace, call us to Thyself, and in the time that Thou dost give us, enable us to live pleasing lives before Thee. For those, God, who do not know our Lord, O by Thy grace, draw them to him to know is live eternal.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.