

“Absalom, the Rebellious Son”  
2 Samuel 13:1  
(Preached at Trinity, July 21, 2019)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 13** opens with an introduction to three of David's children, Absalom, Tamar, and Amnon. This chapter is a sad tale of lust, incest, and revenge. The story serves as a prologue to explain Absalom's rebellion against David, so the chapter introduces Absalom first.  
**2 Samuel 13:1 NAU** - "Now it was after this that Absalom the son of David had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar, and Amnon the son of David loved her."
2. We ask ourselves, why does God record this story for us in His Word? It is so graphic. It is hardly a story to read to our children, and yet it is a part of God's Word. While I'll try to be discreet, it is not meant to be withheld, as if there are certain parts of the Bible that we put off limits.  
God puts it before us because it has some important lessons to teach us. It is my prayer that God will open our hearts to these lessons.
3. The focus of the first half of **Chapter 13** is upon Amnon and Tamar. Absalom is only briefly mentioned in **Verse 1**. But Absalom will be the central focus over the course of the next seven chapters. **Verses 2-19** serve chiefly as background to the vengeance and rebellion of Absalom.
4. Before we get into the account of Amnon and Tamar, I want to introduce Absalom. It isn't an easy task since this only the second time he is mentioned in Scripture.
  - A. We have no account of his childhood, nothing before he comes on the scene here in **Chapter 13**.  
At this point Absalom is probably 19 or so years of age. He enjoys his father's good looks. In fact, we'll read in the next chapter that he was the fairest in the land.  
**2 Samuel 14:25-26 NAU** - "Now in all Israel was no one as handsome as Absalom, so highly praised; from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no defect in him. <sup>26</sup> When he cut the hair of his head (and it was at the end of every year that he cut *it*, for it was heavy on him so he cut it), he weighed the hair of his head at 200 shekels by the king's weight."
  - B. We see in **Verse 23** that he possesses land and a flock of sheep in Baal-Hazor near Ephraim; David is providing well for his sons. This tells us Absalom probably wasn't currently dwelling in Jerusalem with David. Baal-Hazor is about twelve miles from Jerusalem.
  - C. I want to introduce Absalom as the rebellious son.  
Of course, this does not diminish the sins of David's other sons, certainly not the sins of Amnon. But Absalom holds the chief place in these chapters.  
Some suppose this entire account is actually the ambition of two sons, each with his eye upon the throne.

A.A. Anderson writes: “Amnon and Absalom were, apparently, the two obvious candidates for the throne of Israel. At this stage it was Amnon who was the front runner because he was the eldest of David’s sons while Absalom must have been the next in line since Chileab may have died earlier. Absalom was, apparently, the most handsome of David’s sons as well as the son of a king’s daughter and a man of some charm. Hence it is plausible that Amnon’s love for Tamar was, largely, part of his plan to put Absalom and his family in their place!”<sup>1</sup>

5. David had six sons born in Hebron who were only half-brothers to one another, each having a different mother. This was one of the sad consequences of the marital perversion of polygamy. It divides families.

Amnon was David’s first born, from his wife, Ahinoam. As the first born, he was the likely heir to the throne. When we read God’s covenant promise in **Chapter 7** we know it is referring to Solomon. But David would have had Amnon in mind.

**2 Samuel 7:12-13 NAU** - "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup> "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."

Chileab was David’s second born, by Abigail, the widow of Nabal. Nothing more is known of Chileab although he is called Daniel in **1 Chron. 3:1**. He most likely died at a young age.

Absalom was the third born to Maacah who was the daughter of a pagan prince.

After Amnon, he was second in line to the throne.

Tamar and Absalom shared the same mother; she was the half-sister of Amnon.

5. Although we don’t have an account of his early life, we know that Absalom was a child of privilege. He was the son of the king, a prince in Israel. He would have been old enough to remember moving from Hebron into Jerusalem. He would have remembered the great celebration of the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. While the celebration of worship would have had an impact upon Absalom, it was not a lasting impact. His heart remained hard and unconverted. The seeds of rebellion continued to fester. He was not greatly different from his stepmother, Michal. Surely her bitter heart and condemning, spiteful words must have had an impact upon young Absalom.
6. We can see other contributing factors that lead to the downfall of this privileged son.

---

<sup>1</sup> David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, John D. W. Watts, and Ralph P. Martin, *2 Samuel*, 1998, 11, 172.

- I. Absalom's rebellious heart cannot be separated from the actions of his parents
- A. Sometimes rebellion is kindled by the over-indulgence of the parents
1. Amnon was loved as David's first-born and David pandered to him. What a whiney son, "Daddy, I don't feel well. Have my sister come and feed me." And David indulged him. They sound more like the words of a boy than a man. (**Verses 6-7**)  
From a female perspective, Joyce Baldwin points out: "most mothers would have had no patience with such a request."<sup>2</sup>
  2. Some parents over-indulge all of their children. Their children never learn the importance of personal responsibility, of self-control, of hard work. They tend to see themselves as greater than other people. They have an attitude of entitlement.
  3. Sometimes, it is one child singled out from all the rest as being the favorite. This always has a detrimental effect upon the life of a child. It is the exact opposite of the intentions of the parents.  
David loved Amnon, but what about Tamar? His love for Amnon kept David from holding him accountable for what he did to Tamar.
  4. We sometimes scratch our heads when a child from a good home travels down a path of rebellion.  
Sometimes, it is the result of well-meaning parents failing to hold the child accountable for his actions. We see this in the case of David's children. It is written of Adonijah, next in age to Absalom:  
**1 Kings 1:6 NAU** - "His father had never crossed him at any time by asking, "Why have you done so?"
  5. It is sad to witness in Absalom, an indulged son, a favored son turning against his father with such a vengeance. It speaks loudly to the matter of good parenting.
- B. It is remarkable that, as we consider the excellent rule of David over his kingdom, how poor a ruler he was over his own home.
1. This would disqualify David from the pastoral ministry  
**1 Timothy 3:4-5 NAU** - "*He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity* <sup>5</sup> (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?),"
  2. David's parenting serves for us, not by way of example and imitation, but by way of warning.
  3. First, there is the great fault of David's polygamy. Surely Absalom must have witnessed maternal jealousy and anarchy that he would later imitate. David's polygamy destroyed the love and unity of his family and surely contributed to Amnon's attack upon his sister, Tamar, and Absalom's murderous attack on Amnon. Divorce and remarriage today can have the same effect on the unity of the family.

---

<sup>2</sup> Cyril J. Barber, *The Books of Samuel: The Sovereignty of God Illustrated in the Life of David*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), Two:206.

4. Second, no matter how high David the principles of morality before his children, he failed to demonstrate them by his own example. Even if Absalom didn't know all of the sordid details, he would have known of his father's sin with Bathsheba.

**Chapter 13** opens, "Now it was after this . . ."

This example only served to further embolden his sinful heart. Our children will find it all too easy to imitate our sinful behavior.

4. Third, the duties of the throne must have drawn greatly upon David's time, not to mention his many wives and numerous children. But failure in the duty of rightly training and disciplining children will ultimately result in great sorrow. David's younger son, Solomon, would later write:

**Proverbs 10:1 NAU** - "A wise son makes a father glad, But a foolish son is a grief to his mother."

**Proverbs 19:26 NAU** - "He who assaults *his* father *and* drives *his* mother away Is a shameful and disgraceful son."

- C. We must not discount the heart of rebellion that is in the heart of all of our children
  1. Parents must toil hard at training up the stubborn hearts of their children  
**Proverbs 22:15 NAU** - "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him."
  2. But we must never diminish how dependent we are upon God's grace sent from above upon the rebellious hearts of our children.  
William Blackburn – Every child must be born from above, if there be a sure escape from the most deadly and disgraceful propensities of our common nature. The best instruction, alone, cannot purify the youthful heart. Unless the Dove descend from heaven, and abide upon the soul, the son of peace and of piety will not certainly be found in the home."<sup>3</sup>

## II. Absalom cannot be excused from the course he chose to follow

- A. No child is raised by perfect parents
  1. Absalom saw the sins of his father but was not compelled to follow them.
  2. In spite of David's failure with Bathsheba he was consistently a model of piety. He loved God. He was a loyal friend.
  3. No child in our church is being raised by perfect parents, but each must strive to follow God and live in a manner pleasing to Him.
- B. We have focused upon the negative aspects of Absalom's upbringing, consider the rich benefits, benefits that Absalom hardened his heart against.
  1. Absalom had the benefit of a loving father. David's failure to properly restrain his son does not erase the riches of his love.  
Absalom's wickedness is intensified at he despised the love of his father. There are few accounts as touching as the grief of David over the death of Absalom.  
**2 Samuel 19:4 NAU** - "The king covered his face and cried out with a loud voice, "O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

---

<sup>3</sup> William M. Blackburn, *The Rebel Prince*, (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books, facsimile from the 1864 edition), Page 19.

2. Absalom would have understood the holiness of God. The presence of the Ark of God was always prominent. He would have witnessed when it was brought into Jerusalem. He also saw the consequences when God was not treated as holy and Uzza was smitten.
  3. The Law of God would have been read to him often. David would have known and followed his covenant duty.  
**Deuteronomy 6:6-9 NAU** - "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. <sup>8</sup> "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. <sup>9</sup> "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."
  4. How blessed our children are to be taught the Scriptures and catechized from an early age. How wicked to harden their hearts against them.
  5. Absalom had the benefit of Nathan the prophet. He could have sought Godly counsel when faced with the sin of Amnon. It is the stubborn child that does not heed the counsel of sound wisdom.  
**Proverbs 1:7-9 NAU** - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction. <sup>8</sup> Hear, my son, your father's instruction And do not forsake your mother's teaching; <sup>9</sup> Indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head And ornaments about your neck."
- C. Many children with far less benefits enjoyed by Absalom grow up as examples of piety and excellence.
1. Absalom made a conscious choice to rebel against God
  2. He made conscious choices to silence the stirrings of his conscience, the reproof of God convicting the heart. He turned away from every word of wisdom.  
**Proverbs 1:29-31 NAU** - "Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the LORD. <sup>30</sup> "They would not accept my counsel, They spurned all my reproof. <sup>31</sup> "So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way And be satiated with their own devices."

### Conclusion:

1. Many times a child will do fine until there is a trigger that unleashes hostility and corruption previously unknown. Absalom experienced one of those triggers.
2. We need to train our children to have high principles, high standards—to be people of integrity, so when the fiery time to testing comes they will make the proper choices.
  - a. Ultimately, this will come to pass as they embrace Christ.  
But sometimes unbelievers can be people of integrity, and sometimes there are Christians who demonstrate a lack integrity.
  - b. From an early age we need to teach our children that there are unchanging, absolute standards that we do not break.
2. Of course, this means we must be people of integrity. Your children are watching you! Do they see you maintaining absolutes? This is important. It is one thing to teach your children the Ten Commandments. It is another thing for them to see you living them. It is harmful for them to see you disregard Biblical standards when it is suitable to you.
3. Absalom witnessed David abandoning his standards.  
At one point he refused to lay a hand upon Saul because he was God's anointed. This was a high standard David was not willing to break.  
But when he laid his eyes upon Bathsheba he gave up his standards. And when he feared being exposed he cast his standards aside and murdered her husband.
4. And then came the trigger for Absalom. Amnon raped the sister of Absalom and once again, David abandoned his standards and did nothing. Absalom decided to take things into his own hands.  
Absalom had been taught the Ten Commandments but he didn't see them as absolutes, and neither did his father. Absalom killed his brother and then he directed his anger and hatred towards his father, David.
5. Do you see the importance of maintaining your integrity before your children? They are witnessing your high view of Christ, your high view of the church, your high view of moral and ethical purity. They are seeing your commitment to your spouse and to your children. They are witnessing your life.
6. What they see is forever shaping their lives. When they face one of the many triggers of life, they will either stand firm and maintain their integrity, or they may make a decision that will destroy their life and the lives of others.