



Studies in the Life of David

Text

Second Samuel 13:1-19

Topic

David's son Amnon deceives his step-sister Tamar into feeding him a meal so that he can sexually assault her

Title

"Don't Feed the Hand that Bites You"

Introduction

Adolphus Frederick is known by Swedish children as "the king who ate himself to death." On February 12, 1771 after partaking of a banquet consisting of lobster, caviar, sauerkraut, smoked herring and champagne he moved on to his favorite dessert, Semla, a traditional bun or pastry made from semolina wheat flour served in a bowl of hot milk. One or two portions would have been sufficient but he had fourteen servings. He died shortly thereafter of digestion problems.

You may never gorge yourself to the point of death on food. But there *is* something at work in you that has a voracious appetite that can never be truly satisfied. The Bible calls it "the flesh" and, if you're a Christian, you know that you are at war with it.

A key strategy in dealing with this enemy within each of us is found in Romans 13:14.

Romans 13:14 ...put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

Our text in Second Samuel is going to provide us with a pretty graphic illustration of what happens when we **do** “make... provision for the flesh.” David’s son Amnon makes provision for his flesh to fulfill his lust for his step-sister, Tamar. The result is a sexual assault that will ultimately lead to Amnon being murdered by Tamar’s brother, Absalom.

It’s graphic for a good reason. We need to be reminded about the dangers of making provision for the flesh.

I’ll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Your Flesh Will Consume Ever Provision You Make To Fulfill It’s Lusts, and #2 Your Flesh Won’t Be Content With Any Provision You Make To Fulfill Its Lusts.

#1 Your Flesh Will Consume
Every Provision You Make To Fulfill Its Lusts
(v1-14)

The Bible speaks frequently of “the flesh,” but it also uses the term “the old man.” For example, Romans 6:6 you read, “knowing this, that our **old man** was crucified with Him, that **the body of sin** might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.” The phrase “body of sin” is synonymous with “the flesh.” Still you see there is an “old man” and “the flesh.” There’s a distinction.

The “old man” has to do with our natural birth. It is what we are at birth. Since we are descended from Adam we inherit what he passed on. Adam passes on to us a dead spirit and a sin nature. My natural state and standing as a human being is what is meant by “the old man.”

The “old man” was crucified on the Cross with Jesus! So why do I still struggle against sinful impulses? That’s where “the flesh” comes in. One commentator offers this definition: “Scripture uses the term ‘the flesh’ in a morally evil sense to describe man's unredeemed humanness, i.e., that remnant of the old man which will remain with each believer until each receives his or her glorified body.”

The flesh is something left behind after I receive a new nature when I am born-again. It resides in my as yet unredeemed physical body. It is that tendency, that inclination, those impulses, left over from my old man that impel me to use my physical body in sinful ways.

Because my “old man was crucified with [Jesus]... and is dead, the body of sin might be done away.” “Might” doesn’t mean *maybe*. It means the flesh **has** been “done away with.”

So why do we struggle with it? “Done away with” is the key phrase. It means *to render inoperative*. It is a word used to describe making something ineffective by removing its power of control.

Since my old man is dead, it need not respond to any impulses or inclinations from the flesh. When I realize the spiritual fact that my old man was crucified with Jesus, it removes the power of control from the flesh. It is this knowledge that short-circuits my impulses and inclinations to yield to those things entrenched in my physical body.

Until my physical body is redeemed at the resurrection or the rapture I will struggle with the flesh. It remains within me. It is unchangeably evil. But my knowledge of the crucifixion of my old man cuts the power cord.

I therefore choose each day, and many times in each day, to either “**make no** provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts,” or to “**make...** provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts.”

The subtle deceptions we use to make provision for the flesh is what is illustrated for us by Amnon.

2 Samuel 13:1 After this Absalom the son of David had a lovely sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her.

2 Samuel 13:2 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.

Amnon was David's eldest son by his wife Ahinoam the Jezreelite. He would have been supposed to be the heir to David's throne. It was a position of privilege.

We have a privileged position as Christians. As wonderful as that is, we must be careful. Sometimes privileged people take advantage of their position, or take it for granted.

Our privileged position by itself does not guarantee automatic victory over the flesh. We must decide. We have to choose. But no matter how difficult it may seem, unless we have some overriding physiochemical problem, we can always choose to deny the flesh.

Tamar was David's daughter by his wife Maacah the Geshurite. She was his step-sister.

Tribal cultures are a little weird to most of us. By "tribal" I mean a culture that demands its members marry within the group to folks who are closer relatives than we might expect.

- The Book of Genesis portrays Sarah as marrying Abraham, her half-brother, without criticizing the close relationship between them.
- Our text treats the marriage of a royal prince to his sister as unusual but possible rather than immoral.

Those who try to point to the Old Testament to condone things like polygamy and even incest fail to consider that the Israelites were a tribal people. We are not.

We're told Amnon "loved" Tamar. We will see that this "love" was really "lust," so why call it "love?"

I think the Holy Spirit is pointing out that we can fool ourselves into believing our lusts are just our normal human appetites. That way we can start making provision for them without admitting it is sin.

And that is exactly what Amnon began to do.

2 Samuel 13:3 But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother. Now Jonadab was a very crafty man.

The words “friend” and “a very crafty man” do not go together. You can be one or the other but not both. It was another subtle provision for the flesh to have a crafty friend around to give you sinful suggestions.

It doesn't give him an out! It was Amnon's choice to have Jonadab around to suggest plans that could make provision for his lusts. You can't blame it on a third party or something else when you're the one inviting that person or thing into your sphere of influence.

2 Samuel 13:4 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."

Jonadab makes the classic argument. **“You deserve it!”** was his approach. So much of our making provision for the flesh occurs when we convince ourselves we are denying ourselves, or being denied, someone or something we deserve.

2 Samuel 13:5 So Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill. And 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.' "

You'll notice that Jonadab doesn't finish his thought by saying, “and then you will force yourself upon her and sexually assault her.” Or even the more subtle, “and then she will give herself to you and you will have illicit sex out of wedlock.”

A danger inherent in making any provision for the flesh, especially in our thought life, is that we don't think we will follow through in reality. We're trying to satisfy the flesh by giving it just a little, indulging ourselves but short of committing sin.

Hey, it's already sin to be thinking about committing sin!

2 Samuel 13:6 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."

2 Samuel 13:7 And David sent home to Tamar, saying, "Now go to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare food for him."

I'm slower to criticize David as a dad than I once was. Amnon is an adult. There were other folks around when Tamar went to cook for Amnon. Maybe David should have been more aware but that's not the point. The fingers aren't pointing at David, but at anyone and everyone who makes provision for the flesh.

2 Samuel 13:8 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.

2 Samuel 13:9 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.

2 Samuel 13:10 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.

Yes, this was a huge red flag, but let's never criticize Tamar. She is presented throughout this account as totally innocent. If she was naive, how is that a fault? Besides, she may have been much younger than we might imagine - just a young teen.

Please don't be one of those people who thinks sexual assault can somehow be blamed on the person who was assaulted because "they should have known better." Being naive and lacking discernment doesn't translate into being responsible for what happens.

Amnon was willing to destroy someone that was pure and innocent in order to satisfy his own lusts. The flesh is not just immoral. It is **amoral**, having no moral restraints or principles. It's terrifying the lengths an amoral person will go to to gratify himself or herself.

2 Samuel 13:11 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."

2 Samuel 13:12 But she answered him, "No, my brother, do not force me, for no such thing should be done in Israel. Do not do this disgraceful thing!"

2 Samuel 13:13 And I, where could I take my shame? And as for you, you would be like one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you."

It was "disgraceful." It would bring "shame." We don't hear words like that much anymore. Someone said, "People should be ashamed of how shameless they are."

It was the act of "one of the fools." A "fool" in the Bible isn't a simpleton. We're told that "the fools has said in his heart, There is no God." Or it can be translated, "the fool has said in his heart "No" [to] God."

When you make provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts you are saying "No" to God Who has provided everything you need to to instead say "No" to sin. **You are acting just like a nonbeliever.**

2 Samuel 13:14 However, he would not heed her voice; and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her.

He was given one last way out. He didn't take it. It's not that it was too late so much as it shows us the strength of the flesh. It has a power of its own. We can't think we can indulge it and still keep it under our control.

The act of feeding his flesh was preceded by a lot of planning, a lot of making provision for it.

- The subtle deceptions of thinking yourself privileged.
- Fooling yourself into thinking your lusts are normal drives.
- Having some sort of 'companion' that suggests sin to you.
- Convincing yourself you deserve what is being withheld.
- Not considering the final outcome because you think you have the flesh under control.

The battle is won or lost in your mind. Start there, with your thought life, and bring every thought captive to Jesus.

As bad as this story is thus far, it only gets worse.

#2 Your Flesh Won't Be Content
With Any Provision You Make To Fulfill Its Lusts
(v15-19)

It is a myth to think you can ever satisfy the flesh. It is **never** satisfied when you make provision for it. Amnon's reaction illustrates the total lack of satisfaction.

2 Samuel 13:15 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!"

You might call this the "im-moral of the story": **The flesh never has enough flesh to satisfy the flesh.**

2 Samuel 13:16 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.

2 Samuel 13:17 Then he called his servant who attended him, and said, "Here! Put this woman out, away from me, and bolt the door behind her."

The flesh is not remorseful. It has no checks and balances. It is altogether wicked. It will consume until it kills and then want to continue or to start over.

2 Samuel 13:18 Now she had on a robe of many colors, for the king's virgin daughters wore such apparel. And his servant put her out and bolted the door behind her.

2 Samuel 13:19 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.

Sexual assault is awful. Please teach your daughters to be discerning and your sons to be respectful. Then see that they are properly chaperoned. Another important strategy for making no provision for the flesh is to avoid any opportunity to indulge it.

Amnon was not satisfied. In fact, he was totally dissatisfied. You cannot satisfy the flesh. Ever.

There was no happy ending to this story. There never is when the flesh is provided for.

We, however, can experience a very different story!

We quoted from Romans 6:6 earlier Romans 6:7 reads,

Romans 6:7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.

Our “old man” was crucified. It is dead. The word “freed” introduces another metaphor by comparing the Christian to a slave. Death freed a slave from his master’s control. The master could bark all kinds of orders but the slave could no longer respond.

We are set free from sin because the old man has died with Jesus on the cross. Now a *new* man, a *free* man, lives.

In the 1960 film Spartacus, Kirk Douglas played the escaped slave who led a brief but widespread slave rebellion in ancient Rome. At one point in the movie Spartacus says: “Death is the only freedom a slave knows. That’s why he is not afraid of it.”

The old man has ceased to have dominion over you, just as a master ceases to have power over a slave when he is dead.

We *will* sin, however, if we make provision for the flesh.

So don’t! Don’t make provision for the flesh.

The Bible never asks us to do something we cannot do. Our point today, from the tragic tale of Amnon and Tamar, is that we are already sinning way before we act if and when we are allowing our minds to be deceived like Amnon was.

Instead we are to have the mind of Christ, bring our thoughts captive to Him, and think on those things that are “true... noble... just... pure... lovely... of good report... [that are virtuous and] praiseworthy...” (Philippians 4:8).