

April 12

2 Samuel 13 and 14

Hey again, this is Klint Bitter coming to you with the project 4:4 daily accelerator for April 12th.

Today's reading was primarily in 2 Samuel chapters 13 and 14.

Today we turned the page into another chapter of David's life and reign as Israel's king. All told, David would reign for just over 40 years. This will be a type of 'golden age' for Israel in which we see the expansion and development of Israel as a nation.

It wasn't all success for David though. David had big time family problems. The picture of David's powerful, godly dynasty is not a picture without blemish. Just as David had some personal failings, his family was far from perfect as well. I'm sure the polygamous marriages play a part in that. Aside from Polygamy being outside of God's intent for marriage, common sense just tells us that it's a recipe for dysfunction.

In today's reading, we meet that dysfunction head on. First we learn about David's oldest son, Amnon. Soon to follow, we're introduced to the next son, Absalom. Neither one of these guys are the kinds of sons David would have hoped he could pass his throne along to. Amnon's story comes to an end in today's reading, but Absalom's is just beginning – and it's sure to get darker from here.

In Exodus, Moses tells the Israelites that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation of the ones that hate God. Often, that principle carries for the fathers that fail, though they love God. This is not some hidden vengeance God waits around to carry out so that people learn their lesson. It's because dysfunction spurs on dysfunction. Simply, children learn life from their parents.

As a young parent, this has been a challenging – and frightening – truth to realize; that my kids are watching my every move. Just the other day, I was getting ready for work while watching my oldest daughter, Cora. It was teeth brushing time, so we both loaded up our toothbrushes and started in. Standing there in the mirror, I saw my daughter moving her head side to side, trying to rotate the toothbrush the same way I was mine. Besides being seriously cute, it was a reminder that my kids are watching. I've heard it said that our kids are a blank slate we're writing on every day.

This idea is certainly reflected in the stories of Old Testament leaders: Isaac lied and said his wife was his sister...something he learned from his father Abraham. David failed at maintaining his sexual purity; so it's not a complete surprise that his oldest son failed in the same area. In Bathsheba, David saw the wife of another man and took her. Amnon would follow in the steps of his fathers' moral failure. Amnon

wanted his own half-sister. He schemed, raped her and harshly cast her out – a cue that was perhaps taken from his father.

That's the first thing today's reading has me thinking about. I'm wondering, what patterns, habits are my kids learning from me?

I'm also thinking on a rhythm of sin that shows up in Amnon's offence against Tamar. It starts with temptation, which lies and tells us that "it" will make us happy. Then, like Amnon, when we've given in to the temptation we're faced with emptiness, shame and disgust. The language used to describe Amnon's feeling toward Tamar is strong. He hated her now even more than he had lusted after her before. This was sick and shameful at the very best. But a strong reminder that temptations' lure is fleeting.

I'm left thinking today about the temptations I face. I'm encouraged to remember that on the other side of temptation lies shame, regret and pain; not happiness.

It had been 2 years. While David's anger toward Amnon is noted, there is no discipline noted. This crime should have brought a severe penalty. Maybe David's past made him reluctant to bring justice. David had modeled something very similar – if you want a woman, you just go and take her. Perhaps David felt that the whole situation was part of his punishment. Whatever the reason, when David withheld his punishment, it presented Absalom with an opportunity.

Amnon doesn't receive much pity, and rightfully so. But the emerging character, Absalom, will be a greater villain. At first reading, it seems that Absalom takes justice and vengeance into his own hands. Surely that was part of his motive but there was a good bit more than vengeance on his mind.

In the broader context of the story it's easy to see that justice was not the only thing on Absalom's mind. Amnon was first in line to succeed David's throne. After him was Kileab; but all indications we have are that Kileab died while young; after his birth, he is not mentioned again. So we see a political scheme emerging here. Absalom has the perfect opportunity to kill his brother and look like the hero. And after seeing his father's response to Amnon's atrocity against Tamar, he must have felt pretty confident that he'd get away with it.

After the murder, Absalom flees and David mourns. I can wonder what's rolling around David's heart and mind during this time. Surely his grief over the loss of a son is compounded by fear for what Israel would become under Absalom's rule. Neither Amnon or Absalom showed themselves as worthy to ascend the throne upon David's death. In spite of the selfishness and scheming of these ungodly 'kings to be' God was still in control.

Our reading concludes with Joab's plan to get Absalom home. He tries his hand at a parable similar to how God spoke to David through Nathan during the ordeal with Bathseba. Take another read through that and you'll find some contrasts between

the way God spoke through Nathan and the way Joab spoke through the woman from Tekoa.

We'll be back tomorrow with the next part of David and Absalom's story. Until then, this is Klint Bitter. Go be a blessing today!