

Legacy

2 Samuel 13:1-15:12

You know the building that we are trying to purchase on Indiana Ave? It's a nice building, big and spacious. There is a lot that we can do with it. However, as you all know, there is a big problem with the building: it's infested with mold. I mean, the walls in some areas are black. It started in one spot when a pipe burst and the mold just spread throughout the building. After we close on the building, we'll have to hire a mold removal company to take care of the problem. They will come in and eradicate the mold by removing any organic matter and filter the air for days to remove all traces of the mold. Unfortunately after all that destruction, removal, and filtration, the building will still not be able to be used. Although the mold will be gone, the effects of the mold would still be present. The damage done would be obvious: all the walls and wood would be gone and the building is still unusable unless more work is done.

Now think about this, that mold problem in the building sounds a lot like sin and it sounds a lot like what's going on in the last passage and into this one. David had sinned in a big way. With just a look, the pipe burst and the opportunity for mold to grow became apparent. The look led to questions that led to action that led to deceit that led to scheming that led to plotting that led to murder that led to taking and covering up. By that point in time, the mold had gotten all over the place and the walls were stained black. God was not happy with David on this one, and he sent the prophet Nathan to confront David about the sins that he committed. Upon confrontation, David repented of his sin with his whole heart, mind, body and soul. And then, Nathan told him, **"The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die."** (12:13) God had forgiven David's sin. All that black, nasty mold had been removed from David's life, but there were still consequences to David's sin. The baby born to Bathsheba would die and the sword would consume much of David's household. These are as much sin's consequence as they are God's judgment on David. David's sons learned much from their daddy. Isn't that the case with children? They see the good and the bad in us. David's sons saw him as the great king of Israel and Judah and they also saw him as a man who took what he wanted, to hell with the consequences. If the king wants another woman, he takes it no matter if she is another man's wife: just have the husband killed. What's the problem?

David's two sons saw his repentance. They knew that God had forgiven him, yet they still gravitated towards the sins that David committed. The king who took what he wanted was the strong king. The king who admitted his mistakes was a weak king. Just like any young man, David's sons loved the strength and didn't want to show weakness. So, they begin to follow in their father's footsteps beginning with the eldest Amnon. **"In the course of time, Amnon son of David fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom son of David. Amnon became so obsessed with his sister Tamar that he made himself ill. She was a virgin, and it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her."** (13:1-2) Amnon thought that his half-sister was hot and he wanted to have his way with her. He was so obsessed that the more he thought about her, the crazier he became. He would Facebook-stalk her by following every status update and pouring over every photo and video she posted. He'd comment every so often, "Looking good" and "That's nice dress. It looks good on you," but his heart was just aching for more and didn't want to deny his carnal desires.

Now, his friend and cousin Jonadab saw Amnon's anguish and asked him about it and began to offer him a suggestion, "Pretend to be sick and ask for Tamar to come to your house to comfort you." Amnon liked the idea and ran with it. Now, the entire plotting and planning is just sick. Tamar and Amnon are related. Jerusalem was about to go all hillbilly redneck and be on Jerry Springer. Amnon pretended to be sick and asked for Tamar to come and make him

some food. She came, made the bread and tried to feed him but he refused to eat. Amnon, then, sent everyone out of the room and had Tamar come to his bedroom. OK, to me, this raises some red flags. Why go to the bedroom? But Tamar went and Amnon forced himself on her. Now Tamar tried to resist and talk Amnon out of it, but Amnon refused to listen and he raped his sister. He took what he wanted, just like dear old dad. Then after that Amnon became infuriated and kicked Tamar out of the house, and she wandered back home a desolate woman. Amnon had what he wanted and he disposed of his sister like trash. This is the eldest son of King David: the strength and pride of the king.

Now when Absalom had seen Tamar that day, he knew what had happened. He said to Tamar, **"Has that Amnon, your brother, been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother. Don't take this thing to heart."** (13:20) Absalom comforted Tamar to never think about the incident again. He was the big brother, who was going to take care of everything, and Absalom never talked to Amnon again, but he began to plot his revenge. A couple of years later at the time of the sheep shearing, a very festive and gracious time, Absalom urged David to send Amnon to join him at the celebration. David was suspicious of this request. David must have seen that Absalom did not talk to Amnon for two years. Why, now, did Absalom want Amnon to come to the celebration? But Absalom urged David even more, and David relented and had Amnon go to the festivities.

Honestly, David had a reason to be suspicious. Absalom was plotting to get Amnon drunk and have him killed. It's like one big soap opera and it just continues when Absalom kills his brother. David had someone killed in cold blood to cover up his own sin, and his son Absalom killed in order to get revenge. Absalom took what he wanted: revenge. Afterwards, he fled to king of Geshur, who was actually his grandpa. Absalom knew what he did was wrong and he ran away to another family member who would understand. Then, he stayed there for three years.

While Absalom was gone, David longed for his son. He was distressed and became a pretty ineffective king. Now Joab, the commander of the army, saw this and wanted snap David out of his funk, so he concocted this plan to get David to see that it is foolish to keep Absalom in exile. It worked, but there was one condition. Absalom could return, but he would not see the king's face. Absalom came back to Jerusalem and for two years did not see his father. At that time, he became a little frustrated. **"Then Absalom sent for Joab in order to send him to the king, but Joab refused to come to him. So he sent a second time, but he refused to come. Then he said to his servants, 'Look, Joab's field is next to mine, and he has barley there. Go and set it on fire.' So Absalom's servants set the field on fire."** (14:29-30) Who in their right mind would think that in order to get someone's attention, they would have to set something of his on fire? I have no idea why he thought that that was a good idea. It worked; it caught Joab's attention, but it seems a little extreme. "Man, I am not getting my way. I know what I will do, I'll set his car on fire so that he will notice me." It sounds like something that a serial killer or terrorist would think. Nevertheless, Absalom set fire to Joab's field to get his attention and he was able to stand before David and have David kiss him. Absalom was reinstated as son, with no cost to him.

Once that happened, however, it opened a door for Absalom to figure out what he wanted next and how to get it, and what he set his sights on was his own father's throne. **"Absalom provided himself with a chariot and horses and with fifty men to run ahead of him."** (15:1) Absalom made himself look super-important and sat at the gate talking to people as they entered the city. He glad-handed the people like a politician saying, **"If only I were appointed judge in the land! Then everyone who has a complaint or case could come to me and I would**

see that they receive justice.” (15:4) The people would come and bow down to him and he would take hold of them and kiss them. For four years Absalom kept this up and the people were becoming infatuated with him. When everything was just right, Absalom lied to his dad about making an offering in Hebron in order to manipulate the people to say, “Absalom is king in Hebron.” It was all a ruse to trick the people in supporting a coup. Absalom was super-popular and ever so handsome. His face graced all the tabloids. Who wouldn’t want to follow this young strapping lad, instead of an aging king? Absalom had found a way to get the throne he wanted.

Now, in all this, how is David doing? Has he been trying to be a good influence on his two sons and failing? If you look at the passage from beginning to end, it looks like David is a little limp wrested. When he hears that Amnon raped Tamar, David becomes furious, but the Bible records no action that David took. It probably would have been hard for David to take action. He would have to take sides of either his son or his daughter. But instead, David does not act and Amnon gets off scot-free. David doesn’t confront the situation and it leads to the fact that another of David’s sons kills Amnon. After Amnon’s murder, David does not confront Absalom on his sin. Nathan confronted David on his sin, but David does not do the same for Amnon and Absalom. Absalom is exiled. When he returns David keeps his distance from Absalom and when Absalom and David finally meet, David kisses Absalom. From what is written, David doesn’t talk even once to Absalom about his sin, and that lack of confrontation emboldened Absalom. He never thought that he did anything wrong, and he would step out further and further reaching even for the throne.

Now at the beginning of the message, I mentioned that Amnon and Absalom learned from David to take what they wanted. Even though David took what he wanted, he later repented of his sin, but his two boys didn’t learn that. I don’t want to blame David for this. It is Amnon’s and Absalom’s sin that caused them to follow in the sin of their father. They saw his sin and they saw his repentance, but they chose to follow the sin and not learn from their dad’s mistakes. But isn’t that what each and every one of us would do? Paul wrote, “For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’ But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting.” (Romans 7:7-8) As soon as he knew what evil was possible, Paul wanted to do it. Amnon and Absalom saw that they could do whatever they desired and they wanted to do whatever they desired. They thought it was a great idea.

Like I said, are we any different? We are sinful. If we were given an opportunity, more likely than not, we would follow the path of sin. It looks more attractive to sin. We see the sin of our parents, of our siblings, and of the people around us and we are drawn to it like a moth to a flame. Other people, be it friends, children, classmates or total strangers, see our sin and they drawn to it. It is not necessarily an active thought. We just absorb the sins of others like a sponge. There are countless sins that I see in both my parents and me. I learned how to become frustrated and angry from my dad. I am not blaming him, but I learned it from him and made it my very own sin. Now, I didn’t one day say that I wanted to learn how to be frustrated and angry, but I just soaked it up over the course of many years. In fact, I made a mental note not to be like that, but strangely enough, I still ended up with the same sin because my sinful nature learned how to do it.

I wish it were just as easy to be a good influence, but because of who we are, it is the exact opposite, and just a little bit goes a long way. There is a saying in the Bible in regard to sin: “A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.” (Galatians 5:9) That saying means that a little sin can corrupt a large group. It can reach everybody. Like a little bit of yeast that

goes to town spreading throughout the dough, a little bit of sin can be absorbed into everyone around us. That is the power of sin and that is the sad reality of our sinful nature.

This news can be actually disconcerting. We can try not to sin, but that is impossible because we are sinners. Next, we can try to be like David and repent for the sins that we do, but the influence of David's sins was still felt through his sons. I'm certain that David taught his sons God's ways. It says in Psalm 51 that he would teach God's ways, but even that didn't seem to help. Does that mean it's futile to influence others in a good way? Is there nothing that we can do? The answer to that question is, "There is nothing that we can do, but...". There is nothing that we can do to guarantee a positive influence on others. That is so scary for those of us who are parents. There is nothing that I can do to ensure that my daughter does not follow my life of sin. I can teach her the consequences and I can teach her about God. I can show her my repentance and I can show her my broken heart, but none of that guarantees the result I want. Now, don't get me wrong. I need to do those things. If I don't, then all hope is truly lost. I can only share what the Lord has told me, but it is up to my daughter to make the decision to follow Jesus herself.

And there is the great "but" in the answer. There is nothing that we can do, but we have a God who can break the cycle of sin. Paul also wrote, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:24-25) The deliverance from the wretched cycle of sin is only found in Jesus. It is only by his blood that we have redemption and healing. "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us." (Ephesians 1:7-8) Not only are we forgiven, but also the verse says that lavishes his grace on us. It overflows from our hearts to others and what Jesus did was not a band-aid to the sin problem. Jesus breaks the power of sin once for all. "He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself." (Hebrews 7:27) The power of sin is death and Jesus forgave our sins as he died on the cross and he overcame death to crush sin's power over us. By the grace of God, we are no longer slaves of the vicious cycle that we find ourselves in.

In chapter 14, there is a nugget of truth, but it is wrapped around a lie, "But God does not take away life; instead, he devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from him." (14:14 NIV1984) God does devise ways to bring a banished person back to him. That is why he sent Jesus to this world. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) That part of 14:14 is true, but the first part, the part about God not taking away life, is not true. We know that God does take away life and the vast majority of people will end up in hell. But God does say in Ezekiel 18:32, "For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!" The Lord takes no pleasure in the death of anyone, but since God is just, he sometimes demands someone's life, and for the sinner who does not repent, God casts him into the lake of burning sulfur.

For the one who repents and believes in Jesus, there is not death, but life everlasting, and that brings us consolation that our influence to ours, our legacy, is one not of sin, but of God. Without God, we are destined to pass down the legacy of sin to the people around us. Mayor Daley just stepped down from being mayor of Chicago. What will he be remembered for? I'll remember him as the mayor who had bulldozers come in the middle of the night and carve huge X's in the runways at Meigs Field, stranding planes at the airport. Daley took the airport without following proper procedures to turn it into the park at Northerly Island. That is part of his legacy. What is our legacy? Do we pass down our sin? Or do we pray to God to

change the hearts of the people around us to accept Jesus dearly and have their own lives changed?

On my own, I cannot guarantee that I will be a good influence on my wife and daughter. They will more likely than not pick up on my sins and mimic them because of the sin that is in them. But, thank Jesus that there is hope that this will not happen. Jesus died for the people around me to break the cycle of sin...to break the curse of my sin. David's legacy to Amnon and Absalom was to take what they wanted regardless of the costs. Without Jesus, that will be our legacy too. The effects of our sin will be seen down the generations. With repentance, prayer, and especially Jesus, the effects of God's righteousness will be seen down the generations. There is hope that you will not influence your children and the people around you, but God will influence them. Pray that everyone around you can accept Jesus personally, because that is the only way that the cycle can be broken.