

Indulgence or Gift

2 Samuel 13:1–5

Today we enter into the second half of our reflections on King David's struggle with sloth. Moving forward we will focus more on the remedy for sloth in embracing the call to greater spiritual fatherhood.

For any men joining us for at the midpoint, please see an overview and welcome to Exodus. In the first half of 2 Samuel, we saw how through his faithfulness to God, David came into the kingship of Judah and Israel and manifested God's heart through his love for his enemies. Once he came to peace over his enemies, however, he no longer went out with his armies and fell into sloth. This led to his great fall into sin through adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah. We will continue to see the effects of this sin as well as their needed remedy.

Cast off all sluggishness today to follow the Lord's royal way.

How is the Lord calling you to enter into spiritual battle right now?

You are in the royal palace in Jerusalem. David succumbs to temptation when he allows his desires to take him away from his present responsibilities. He has taken for granted what he has and lost sight of the glory of God.

Pray that the Lord draws you out of sloth to embrace the kingly mission he has given you. Pray for the grace of freedom and humility for all Exodus Men, just as they are praying for you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord and Master of my life, spare me from the spirit of indifference, despair, lust for power, and idle chatter. Instead, bestow on me, your servant, the spirit of integrity, humility, patience, and love. Yes, O Lord and King, let me see my own sins and not judge my brothers and sisters; for you are blessed forever and ever. Amen.

A Reading from the Second Book of Samuel

Now Absalom, David's son, had a beautiful sister, whose name was Tamar; and after a time Amnon, David's son, loved her. And Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her. But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shime-ah, David's brother; and Jonadab was a very crafty man. And he said to him, "O son of the king, why are you so haggard morning after morning? Will you not tell me?" Amnon said to him, "I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister." 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, 'Let my sister Tamar come and give me bread to eat, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see it, and eat it from her hand.'"

Reflection

Sloth, which diverts us from our duties, and, even more significantly, from

the love of God, creates disorder. David's disorder now spreads within his family. Just as David lusted for Bathsheba, his son, Amnon, now lusts after his half-sister, Tamar. David certainly did not love Bathsheba when he took her, because he did not even know who she was. Similarly, instead of loving his sister as he should, Amnon lusts after her and conspires to take her virginity from her.

David is noticeably absent from the story. He is not around to notice his son's gloomy disposition and counsel him. In his absence, the father's role is left to one of Amnon's crafty friends. The dynamic that plays out is the opposite of man's mission and vocation. Instead of making a gift of himself, the entitled Amnon makes plans to take what he wants through deceit. This is manhood, and even more so fatherhood, gone awry. Self-gift has been perverted by selfishness.

Are you immune to the temptations that befell Amnon and David? It is easy to get busy and not be around for the people who need you. It is easy to ask a "crafty" friend for advice instead of seeking the wisdom of your Heavenly Father. Most young people today learn about life from their peers instead of their parents. It is easy to lust, but more difficult to love. When you are looking at someone with lust, for example, you do not care about that person's name, dreams, or life story. You only want what you can get from that person. It is easy to lie—even to yourself. It is often convenient to use deceit in order to mask your true identity and obscure your sinful intentions.

Sloth will only be overcome through a loving focus on God and others, which enables us to take up our responsibilities firmly and faithfully. True fatherhood requires the death of self. Just as in David's life, your sins also have consequences, not only for you, but for the whole world—and especially for your family and friends. Men are called to be sons, brothers, friends, husbands and, ultimately, fathers. Fatherhood requires great generosity. How are you doing in your journey to fatherhood? Do you generate life, provide for others and protect them? Your mission is to bless, not to curse those around you.

"Generativity" and "generosity" come from the same root word. Like Jesus, you must come not to be served, but to serve and to give your life so that others may live. A good definition of character is "who you are when no one is watching." The bedrock of your spiritual life must be integrity and authenticity. Take off your mask when you pray. God knows when you are trying to persuade him that you are really a good guy. If you need to practice this, take the risk of being your true self in your fraternity. If you want to hide from your own brothers, what is the point of getting together? Be real in your prayer. Tell God what you really think, feel and desire.

Now place yourself before God, and converse with him.

Week 6 Action Items
Pray for your fraternity.

Keep up regular exercise.

Reflect on your vacation plan.

Invite men to join your fraternity for Kings of Summer, Part 2 beginning today.