

Sermon Title: The Greatest Sin of a Father – August 16, 2014 (Scripture is from the ESV)

The title of tonight's sermon is, "**The Greatest Sin of a Father.**"

One of my favorite people in the Bible is King David. David was described as a "man after God's own heart." He was powerful worshipper. He was a mighty warrior. He was the greatest king of Israel. But David was still a man with his own faults. David committed, in my belief, the greatest sin a father could do toward his children. I'm going to show you some Scripture about David's parenting, and I will let you decide what this sin was. Please turn to 2Samuel 13.

2Samuel 13 is a very disturbing chapter about David's firstborn son Amnon and his beautiful daughter from another wife named Tamar. Amnon lusts strongly for his half-sister, and in the chapter he successfully gets with her alone and rapes her, defiling her of her virginity and of her honor. Amnon's motives were so grievous and without love that he then sends her away in anger.

How did King David, their father, respond to this horrible affair? Look at verse 21...

2Samuel 13:21 – When King David heard of all these things he was very angry.

That's about it, from what we can read. A footnote in most Bibles adds this to the verse...

... But he would not punish his son Amnon, because he loved him, since he was his firstborn.

David seemingly does nothing to Amnon for his sin.

Tamar's brother Absalom, also a son of David, decides to take matters into his own hands for revenge. Absalom sets up a large party and invites his father, and he seems to know how his father will respond from the get go...

2Samuel 13:24-27 – And Absalom came to the king and said, "Behold, your servant has sheepshearers. Please let the king and his servants go with your servant." But the king said to Absalom, "No, my son, let us not all go, lest we be burdensome to you." He pressed him, but he would not go but gave him his blessing. Then Absalom said, "If not, please let my brother Amnon go with us." And the king said to him, "Why should he go with you?" But Absalom pressed him until he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him."

Absalom's plan all along was to get Amnon in a place where Absalom's men could isolate him and kill him. And that was what Absalom did. He and his men kill Amnon and then they flee together out of the country.

Now look down to 2Samuel 13:38-39...

2Samuel 13:38-39 – So Absalom fled and went to Geshur, and was there three years. And the spirit of the king longed to go out to Absalom, because he was comforted about Amnon, since he was dead.

Verse 39 is a bit odd. David did nothing to Amnon, but then felt compassion for his son Absalom after Absalom murdered Amnon.

In the next chapter David's military commander Joab arranges a way for Absalom to return to the kingdom by coercing David in showing mercy to Absalom. David allows his son Absalom back into the kingdom, but with this stipulation in 2Samuel 14:24...

2Samuel 14:24 – And the king said, “Let him dwell apart in his own house; he is not to come into my presence.” So Absalom lived apart in his own house and did not come into the king’s presence.

Although after two years Absalom manages to see his father once, the rest of the time he lives in isolation from his father. Absalom, perhaps out of bitterness or perhaps simply out of greed for power, then steals the hearts of the people away from their king, David, and starts a civil war within Israel. The war would end with Absalom’s death and David regaining the throne. So now David has lost two of his great sons.

In 1Kings 1 another son is introduced: Adonijah. This son also had greed for power. Please turn to 1Kings 1:5-6...

1Kings 1:5-6 – Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, “I will be king.” And he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, “Why have you done thus and so?”

The NIV reads, “His father had never interfered with him by asking, ‘Why do you behave as you do?’”

Adonijah’s foolish actions would also lead to his premature death. So three of David’s greatest sons would all die young. *And the only record of David saying a word to any of them was when Absalom asked his father to come to the party and David responded, “No, my son.”*

So what was David’s worst sin as a father? **It was silence.** Silence rotted and destroyed his sons. They all lived in very close proximity to him, but there were very little words.

The greatest sin of a father is silence. Silence leads to neglect. It leads to permissiveness. It leads to death.

Jesus describes a shepherd’s responsibility and power in John 10...

John 10:2-5 – But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, **for they know his voice.** A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of the strangers.

What is the most important tool for shepherding sheep? **The shepherd’s voice.** Without the voice the sheep will not know where to go or who to follow. Without the voice the sheep are lost to themselves. Without the voice there is no hope. If a shepherd remains silent, then the sheep are doomed.

Even for adults, the worst punishment is complete silence. Even the most introverted people can only handle so much silence. Think about this, “What is the worst long-term punishment in most prisons?” If you’ve seen the movie Shawshank Redemption, you would know: solitary confinement. “Put him in the hole.”

Solitary confinement is when a person, usually a prisoner, is put by himself in confined place for an extended amount of time. The effects of solitary confinement are disturbing. The stories and accounts are chilling. Here is a very light, simple summary of what happens to people in solitary confinement...

Consistent patterns emerge... extreme anxiety, anger, hallucinations, mood swings and flatness, and loss of impulse control (*loss of impulse control basically means the person snaps and goes wild at random things, which can lead to self-mutilation or other wild responses*). In the absence of stimuli, prisoners may also become hypersensitive to any stimuli at all. Often they obsess uncontrollably, as if their minds didn’t belong to them, over tiny details or personal grievances. Panic attacks are routine, as is depression and loss of memory and cognitive function.¹

The effects of solitary confinement are not contained to just when a person is enduring it, but also long after they have been set free. Quoting another study...

There are also long-term effects which may persist for decades. These not only include persistent symptoms of post traumatic stress (such as flashbacks, chronic hypervigilance, and a pervasive sense of hopelessness), but also lasting personality changes—especially including a continuing pattern of intolerance of social interaction, leaving the individual socially impoverished and withdrawn, subtly angry and fearful when forced into social interaction... patterns dramatically different from their functioning prior to solitary confinement.²

Due to these psychological studies, many now classify solitary confinement as a form of torture.

What was God’s first observation of man after He created him?

Genesis 2:18 – “It is not good that the man should be alone.”

Not good, indeed. Hell is hell not so much because of the fire and the brimstone, but because of the absence of God’s presence. God’s voice cannot be heard in Hell. God’s presence cannot be felt. That is what true Hell is: complete separation from the Father. We were not created to be alone and live in silence.

To demonstrate the damaging power of silence, I’m going to show a somewhat controversial experiment by a Japanese author, Masuro Emoto. He has done some interesting experiments on the power of words on water and on rice. Check out this short video on one of his experiments...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wc-ZmvxfBxE> (only show to 1:12)

Masuro Emoto is by no means Christian. His experiments have been replicated by many people, with many peoples’ experiments turning out very similar while for some others a bit

different. I personally believe there is some truth to his experiments. Words and sound have power. Experiments have shown that if you play classical music over plants they will usually grow well, but if you play heavy metal the plants tend to bend away from the sound and wilt.

So why do a number of peoples replicas of his experiment get the same results as Emoto while the experiments don't work for the skeptics who replicate them? I believe that it is not just the voice that is powerful, but the weight and sincerity behind the voice.

The High Priest Eli in 1Samuel is another example of a poor father in the Bible. In 1Samuel 2 Eli at least "tries" to rebuke his sons for their evil ways, but they don't listen to him. After his seemingly attempt at a rebuke, Eli is then personally rebuked by a man of God for honoring his sons over honoring God. Eli's words to his sons had no weight with them, and they had no weight with God. Clearly, Eli's rebuke had zero authority. His words were meaningless. Just as a skeptic doing Emoto's experiment would have no faith in speaking the words while carrying out the experiment, so did Eli have no power in his own words. Your words must have weight. They must speak into the heart.

One of the greatest examples of how damaging isolation can be is for many of the prostitutes who escape the sex industry. Rescue groups and ministries have been astounded at how many prostitutes, who have been rescued from perpetual violence and rape, will soon return back to their pimps. As wicked as the pimps and sex traffickers treated them, they had been the sole source of emotional connection for a long time for the girls. As bad as that connection was, it was at least connection, and so many of the girls return to it.

While ministering to the orphans these past eight plus years I have seen this yearning for connection time and time again. The neediest kids are usually the ones who are the loudest and most rebellious. They yearn for attention and some sort of emotional connection, even if it is a negative connection. They have learned that in order to get the connection quickly they just need to act poorly. If a dorm mom walks into a room and finds nine boys quietly studying and one boy goofing off loudly, her response won't be to praise the nine obedient boys but rather to focus on the boy goofing off. And while her anger at the boy might not be positive attention, it is attention nonetheless.

Personally, I've found with such kids a desire to just ignore them. They can be really irritating, especially when they refuse to listen to discipline. But every time I want to ignore them I feel the conviction of the Holy Spirit telling me to give them attention, positive attention.

There is a young kindergarten boy at my children's home named Hee Sung. He is considered to be the most disobedient of the young kids. The boy can be a bit wild at times. He uses rude language (**반말**) and exasperates the other kids. He will blatantly disobey often. When I play games outside with the kids he will usually try and take the ball away from the kids and run away with it while laughing mischievously, causing all the kids to be upset. *Hee Sung...*

Recently I've gotten a chance to spend more time with Hee Sung and I resolved in my heart to not be impatient with him but to keep speaking love over him. I will correct him of his rude language, but then be quick to speak life over him. **희성이 좋아! 멋있다!** (I like Hee Sung. He's so cool!). I've really kept at it. And now when I see him, the boy smiles and uses polite language with me. He is always excited to see me now. I know as long as I continue to affirm him, along with the discipline he needs, he will shine more and more.

Orphans act like orphans not because of some genetic disorder or because they are inherently bad, they act like orphans because of the neglect they have experienced. For a lot of the more troubled kids, it wasn't that their parents spoke evil over them; it was that their parents never said a word. So the kids wonder why they are now in the children's home, why their parents abandoned them. It's one thing for a kid to be told he is stupid or ugly. That is just one part of his being. **But for a kid to hear nothing but silence before being abandoned, that silence could mean anything. The silence eats away at the kids just like it eats away at the prisoners in solitary confinement.** Such kids lack confidence in everything. It could be any reason why they were abandoned. Just like a sheep without a shepherd, without the voice the children are left to themselves. Without a voice of life, they are doomed.

The greatest sin of a father is silence.

Numbers chapter 30 is one of the clearest places in the Bible about how important it is for a father to be vocal. Let's read the first five verses...

Numbers 30:1-5 – Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes of the people of Israel, saying, “This is what the Lord has commanded. If a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself to a pledge, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth. If a woman vows a vow to the Lord and binds herself by a pledge, while within her father’s house in her youth, and her father hears of her vow and of her pledge by which she has bound herself **and says nothing** to her, then all her vows shall stand, and every pledge by which she has bound herself shall stand. But if her father opposes her on the day that he hears of it, no vow of hers, no pledge by which she has bound herself shall stand. And the Lord will forgive her, because her father opposed her.

The passage goes on and describes the same power a husband has with his wife. If the husband is silent, then his wife is vulnerable and must account for her mistakes. But if the husband speaks up, he has the authority to cover her with grace.

I've shared these statistics a number of times with my Jerusalem Ministry volunteers. Those who are raised in a fatherless home, thus never having a father's voice in their lives, have these odds against them...

90% of runaways and homeless kids are from fatherless homes, 32 times the average
85% of kids with behavior disorders come from fatherless homes, 14 times the average
80% of rapists with anger problems come from fatherless homes, 14 times the average
71% of high school dropouts come from fatherless homes, 9 times the average
63% of youth suicides are from fatherless homes, 5 times the average
85% of youth in prisons come from fatherless homes, 20 times the average³

Those are just some of the tough statistics for kids raised without a father. Sheep without a shepherd's voice are doomed. Mothers can step in and by God's grace succeed, but fathers with a sincere voice have great power.

A few years ago I preached about the “Generational Blessing” Christians pass on to their offspring. **A great part of the generational blessing is the words a father passes to his children.** Everything I have learned I want to pass along to my kids so that they won't make the same mistakes that I did. Like we read in Numbers 30, if I am silent then my children are

vulnerable. They will likely make the same mistakes I did, or perhaps even worse. But if I choose to speak into their lives, my words can rescue them from a multitude of sin.

It was out of this heart that I preached, “Sex, Soul Ties, and Pornography” earlier this year at New Philadelphia Church. Sexual purity is one of the most important topics for the younger generation to learn about, but sadly there are too few father figures speaking into their lives. So instead they are learning from the media to “be free” with themselves. It isn’t that this generation is more perverse than the previous generation; it’s that the previous generation has been silent. Silent shepherds lead to lost sheep. Lost sheep become easy prey for the wolves.

It isn’t the sheep’s fault for becoming lost; the blame actually goes on the shepherd.

Romans 10:13-14 – For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And **how are they to hear without someone preaching?**

How are they to hear without someone preaching? **You are that someone!**

We gather at this Joint Prayer Meeting once a month to pray for Korea. We intercede for the revival of this peninsula, both for the north and for the south. There is a responsibility we are unknowingly asking for when we pray for the revival of a nation. Psalm 2:8 says, “Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.” Inheriting a nation gives us the responsibility to be a father to that nation. We cannot be silent towards the people. We cannot ignore the tough cases. We cannot remain in a, “Feed me” mentality. A father never expects to be fed by his children; rather it is the responsibility of the father to provide for the children.

We can’t expect anything of Korea if we don’t speak into the nation. If we are silent with the children, with our coworkers, with those around us, then they are left to their devices just like King David’s sons were. We must pledge to be a voice to this nation; to not be silent. And if we lack confidence, then we need to meditate on God’s Word and proclaim it by faith.

If you are here at this prayer meeting then you are more than capable to be a voice to this nation. If you have the title of leader at your church, no matter the rank, then you are definitely called to speak into others, no matter your age. I have seen orphans in high school be voices on behalf of the younger kids in the children homes. If they can be a voice, then you definitely can be a voice.

Early in this message I highlighted David’s failures, but with one son David succeeded. If you read 1Kings 1, David is old and lying in bed. He is woken to hear his son Adonijah is power hungry and trying to take the throne from his son Solomon. And it’s in that moment David remembers God’s call for Solomon and God’s plan for the temple and for what is to come during Solomon’s reign.

I want to make this clear: many believe David came from a broken home. When his father Jessi was told by the great prophet Samuel to line up his sons, Jesse chose to not include David. In Psalm 51 David says, “Surely I was brought forth in iniquity, I was conceived in sin.” Many scholars believe David was not born of Jesse’s wife but was born of an affair and thus neglected. So some believe this was why David failed as a father because he didn’t have

a father for himself. But even David in the Old Testament before everyone received the Holy Spirit still succeeded.

As he was lying in the bed he remembers the calling on his son Solomon. He stands up in his bed and calls Solomon in and anoints him as king. And that wasn't the end of his life. Many thought he was about to die. But starting in 1Chronicles 23 we see David anoints Solomon, and in the following chapters to the end of 1Chronicles David teaches Solomon, prepares him, and encourages him ("Be strong and courageous! You can do this!"). He speaks identity into Solomon and also speaks on his behalf to the people of Israel. And so during Solomon's reign Israel prospered more than any other time in history.

David was Old Testament. He didn't have what we have today. We have the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. His blood covers us. His Spirit has filled us. We can do all things through him who gives us strength. He has called us. He has anointed us. He will enable us. We can all succeed as fathers. We are all called to be a voice.

*Altar Call

- Repent of ignoring those our heart has gone out to or choosing to neglect or not speak into those in need.
- Renounce any lies that you cannot be a voice or cannot be a good father. Declare the truth that God can use you just as He used David. God will do even greater things through you by His Spirit within you.
- Pledge to be a voice for those around you.

References...

1 <http://www.wired.com/2013/07/solitary-confinement-2/>

2 <http://law.wustl.edu/journal/22/p325grassian.pdf>

3 <http://thefatherlessgeneration.wordpress.com/statistics/>