

# Good Grief

## How the Mighty have Fallen

The Rise of David Pt.2

1 Samuel 31:11-2 Samuel 1:27 6-28-2009

Summary: Saul received some honor in the midst of his disgraceful death as a result of the one time he acted in the power of the Spirit. God will honor the work of His Spirit. David teaches us how to grieve. First with an initial outburst of emotion, then with a structured lament (thoughtful grief) which David used to teach Israel (shepherd's heart). Grieving is appropriate (the commands for continual rejoicing notwithstanding). We should grieve over the suffering of God's people, the dishonor of His name, the loss of what was precious, and above all we must honor the Lord's anointed.

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**1 Samuel 31:11** When the people of Jabesh Gilead heard of what the Philistines had done to Saul, **12** all their valiant men journeyed through the night to Beth Shan. They took down the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth Shan and went to Jabesh, where they burned them. **13** Then they took their bones and buried them under a tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and they fasted seven days.

**2 Samuel 1:1** After the death of Saul, David returned from defeating the Amalekites and stayed in Ziklag two days. **2** On the third day a man arrived from Saul's camp, with his clothes torn and with dust on his head. When he came to David, he fell to the ground to pay him honor. **3** "Where have you come from?" David asked him. He answered, "I have escaped from the Israelite camp." **4** "What happened?" David asked. "Tell me." He said, "The men fled from the battle. Many of them fell and died. And Saul and his son Jonathan are dead." **5** Then David said to the young man who brought him the report, "How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?" **6** "I happened to be on Mount Gilboa," the young man said, "and there was Saul, leaning on his spear, with the chariots and riders almost upon him. **7** When he turned around and saw me, he called out to me, and I said, 'What can I do?' **8** "He asked me, 'Who are you?' "'An Amalekite,' I answered. **9** "Then he said to me, 'Stand over me and kill me! I am in the throes of death, but I'm still alive.' **10** "So I stood over him and killed him, because I knew that after he had fallen he could not survive. And I took the crown that was on his head and the band on his arm and have brought them here to my lord." **11** Then David and all the men with him took hold of their clothes and tore them. **12** They mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the army of the LORD and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword. **13** David said to the young man who brought him the report, "Where are you from?" "I am the son of an alien, an Amalekite," he answered. **14** David asked him, "Why were you not afraid to lift your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?" **15** Then David called one of his men and said, "Go, strike him down!" So he struck him down, and he died. **16** For David had said to him, "Your blood be on your own head. Your own mouth testified against you when you said, 'I killed the LORD's anointed.'"

**17 David took up this lament concerning Saul and his son Jonathan, 18 and ordered that the men of Judah be taught this lament of the bow (it is written in the Book of Jashar):**

**19 "Your glory, O Israel, lies slain on your heights. How the mighty have fallen! 20 "Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines be glad, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice.**

**21 "O mountains of Gilboa, may you have neither dew nor rain, nor fields that yield offerings [of grain]. For there the shield of the mighty was defiled, the shield of Saul--no longer rubbed with oil.**

**22 From the blood of the slain, from the flesh of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not turn back, the sword of Saul did not return unsatisfied. 23 "Saul and Jonathan-- in life they were loved and gracious, and in death they were not parted. They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. 24 "O daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and finery, who adorned your garments with ornaments of gold. 25 "How the mighty have fallen in battle! Jonathan lies slain on your heights.**

**26 I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women.**

**27 "How the mighty have fallen! The weapons of war have perished!"**

## **Introduction: How did David get Saul's crown and armband?**

The writer has been making a concerted effort to exonerate David of any wrongdoing in the way in which he came to the throne. A lot of things looked really bad, but the writer has answered each of the circumstances that made David look guilty. Why was David not there to protect Saul? Because Saul drove him away against his will. What about the rumors that David was conducting raids against Israel? False. What about the fact that David marched out with the Philistines against Saul? His plan was to turn and attack the Philistines from behind once the battle started. Why didn't he end up doing that? Because over his strong objections the Philistine rulers sent him home. Where was David when Saul was killed? Ninety miles away fighting the Amalekites.

So all the questions have been answered except one. How did David end up with Saul's crown and royal armband? That is a little suspicious, because everybody knows that after Saul died the Philistines cut off his head and stripped off his armor and put it in their temple. If David had nothing to do with Saul's death, how did the crown and armband end up in his possession? Let's find out.

## **God honors His Work**

We left off last time in verse 10 of 1 Samuel 31 in the middle of a gruesome scene. What is left of the headless, bloody body of Saul is hanging from the wall of Beth-Shan at the crossroads for all the travelers through Israel to see.

**1 Samuel 31:11 When the people of Jabesh Gilead heard of what the Philistines had done to Saul, 12 all their valiant men journeyed through the night to Beth Shan.**

(That would be like going from Greeley to the Fort Collins exit of I-25.)

**12 ...They took down the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth Shan and went to Jabesh, where they burned them.<sup>1</sup> 13 Then they took their bones and buried them under a tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and they fasted seven days.**

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<sup>1</sup> In Israel they did not practice cremation. Incinerating someone's body was done only as the most severe kind of capital punishment in Israel. However it does not sound like that is what they did here, because the bones are still intact. Evidently they just burned the fleshy parts at a low enough temperature so as to preserve the bones, which they buried. I don't know if they had to do that because of the fact that the body was rapidly decomposing at this point, or if they wanted to make sure the Philistines didn't recapture it, but whatever their reasoning, it seems clear to me that the text is presenting this in such a way that their actions were done for the purpose of honoring Saul's memory.

The very first military action of Saul's reign as king was the rescue of Jabesh Gilead, and it was a huge success. Chapter 11 is without a doubt Saul at his best.

Jabesh Gilead had surrendered to Nahash the Ammonite and Nahash had given them a choice – “Either you all die, or, if you want to sign a treaty, you have to let me gouge out the right eye of very one of you so I can bring disgrace on Israel.” They were in deep trouble, but then...

### **1 Samuel 11:6 When Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came upon him in power**

Look out Nahash. When the Spirit of the Lord comes upon an Israelite leader in power I do not care how big your army is – you had better run for the hills. Saul comes and wipes out Nahash and rescues Jabesh Gilead.

These valiant men from Jabesh Gilead who come take down Saul's body may not have even been born when that rescue happened 40 years earlier back in chapter 11. But they heard the stories about it, and there seems to be some gratitude on behalf of that city.

So Saul's life ends in mostly disgrace, however there is one little glimmer of honor. And it is honor that comes from the one time, years and years ago, when Saul acted under the power of the Holy Spirit. When you do something in the power of the Spirit it is amazing the impact it has – impact that can outlast your lifetime, and that can bring some benefits even after a life of rebellion against God. God honors the work of His own hands. So when the Holy Spirit works through you, expect God to honor that work – even if it is after you die. The Lord will not let the work of His own Spirit fall to the ground.

## **David's Reaction to the Death of Saul**

**2 Samuel 1:1 After the death of Saul, David returned from defeating the Amalekites and stayed in Ziklag two days. 2 On the third day a man arrived from Saul's camp, with his clothes torn and with dust on his head.**

That is never a good sign. When a messenger shows up from a battle site with torn clothes and dust on his head that means he is bringing really bad news. Those were signs of mourning.<sup>2</sup>

**2 ... When he came to David, he fell to the ground to pay him honor. 3 "Where have you come from?" David asked him. He answered, "I have escaped from the Israelite camp." 4 "What happened?" David asked. "Tell me." He said, "The men fled from the battle. Many of them fell and died. And Saul and his son Jonathan are dead."**

Israel was routed by the Philistines. That is terrible news, but David is more focused on the other thing he said – Saul and Jonathan died in the battle.

**5 Then David said to the young man who brought him the report, "How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?"**

Is this a rumor, or do you know this for sure?

**6 "I happened to be on Mount Gilboa," the young man said, "and there was Saul, leaning on his spear, with the chariots and riders almost upon him. 7 When he turned around and saw me, he called out to me, and I said, 'What can I do?' 8 "He asked me, 'Who are you?' "'An Amalekite,' I answered. 9 "Then he said to me, 'Stand over me and kill me! I am in the throes of death, but I'm still alive.' 10 "So I stood**

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<sup>2</sup> That's exactly the same description as the guy who came and reported to Eli back in 1 Sam.4.

**1 Samuel 4:12 That same day a Benjamite ran from the battle line and went to Shiloh, his clothes torn and dust on his head. And then he gave his report - 16 He told Eli, "I have just come from the battle line; I fled from it this very day." ... 17 "Israel fled before the Philistines, and the army has suffered heavy losses. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead**  
This situation here is very similar. A messenger shows up from the battle with his clothes torn and dust on his head, and gives a very similar report.

**over him and killed him, because I knew that after he had fallen he could not survive. And I took the crown that was on his head and the band on his arm and have brought them here to my lord."**

Interesting story. Is it true? There are definitely some parts that are hard to swallow – even if you did not know the information from 1 Samuel 31 (which David didn't). He just happened to be on Mt. Gilboa? Doesn't that sound a little strange to you? An epic battle between the two superpowers of the Mideast is taking place and this guy just happens to be wandering around out there on the battlefield? What is he doing? He is just out for a walk and happens to pass by Saul right in the heat of the battle with chariots closing in and arrows flying, and this guy is just out there bird watching? That just seems kind of strange to me.

The chariot thing also sounds a little sketchy. The northeast side of Gilboa that faces Jezreel is a little steep for chariots. And if Saul was trying to avoid being killed by Philistines, why would he ask an Amalekite to do it?

I have always assumed this guy was just lying - however, there has to be some truth to his story. For one thing, we know that he ended up with Saul's crown and armband. Obviously he was there at some point between Saul's death and the Philistines finding the body the next day.

Secondly, he seems to have some idea of how the whole thing happened. If he is just making up a story out of whole cloth, it is quite a coincidence that he just happens to dream up a story in which Saul gets mortally wounded and requests an assisted suicide. That is exactly what happened in the real story.

So we know this guy was there at the scene of Saul's death, and it sounds like he probably witnessed Saul's suicide request. But I do not see how he could have killed Saul. 1 Samuel 31 tells us that Saul fell on his own sword and died, and the armor bearer saw that he was dead. This Amalekite must have been involved in some way with the battle, and witnessed Saul's death. I am guessing he made up the story about killing Saul so he would not appear to be what he was – just a scavenger who stripped the dead.

And he came to David because he thought he was bringing David good news (and no doubt figured he would be rewarded). He knew the news about the loss was bad news, but he thought the news about Saul would be welcome news for David (we see that later in chapter 4).

## **Justice**

So this guy is probably hoping for a government job, or some reward of some kind. Let's skip ahead and see the reward he gets.

**13 David said to the young man who brought him the report, "Where are you from?" "I am the son of an alien, an Amalekite," he answered. 14 David asked him, "Why were you not afraid to lift your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?"**

That is interesting.

**1 Samuel 31:4 Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through ... But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it**

David says, "Why were you not afraid to kill the Lord's anointed?" And it turns out the person Saul really did ask to finish him off was afraid to kill the Lord's anointed. This guy should have been like Saul's armor bearer.

Here comes his reward:

**15 Then David called one of his men and said, "Go, strike him down!" So he struck him down, and he died. 16 For David had said to him, "Your blood be on your own head. Your own mouth testified against you when you said, 'I killed the LORD's anointed.'"**

Was this an injustice? Most likely this man did not kill Saul. I do not think David killed him just for killing Saul. In fact, I think David may have had serious doubts about whether this fellow actually did kill Saul. The reason David put him to death was mainly for thinking that Saul's death was good news.

**2 Samuel 4:10 when a man told me, 'Saul is dead,' and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and put him to death in Ziklag. That was the reward I gave him for his news!**

David is explaining why he put the guy to death and he does not even mention him killing Saul. He just says it was because he thought news of the death of Saul was good news.

So whether or not you agree with David's justice system one thing you cannot argue with is David's loyalty to Saul. When David is in charge if you so much as think Saul's death is good news you are a dead man. That is how loyal David was.

### ***The Last of the Amalekites***

So David drops this Amalekite where he stands. And that is the last we hear of any Amalekites for the rest of David's life and the rest of the book of 2 Samuel. The Amalekites were a problem all through the book of 1 Samuel.<sup>3</sup> But then David defeats them at the end of 1 Samuel, and here he dispatches one last one, and after this the Amalekites are never heard from again in the rest of the book. David had taken care of the Amalekites.

## **Sorrow**

Now you may have noticed that I skipped verses 11-12. When the writer tells us the story of the Amalekite he does not tell it like you and I would tell it. Right in the middle of the account he places verses 11-12.

**11 Then David and all the men with him took hold of their clothes and tore them. 12 They mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the army of the LORD and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.**

That takes us all the way until evening. And then in verse 13 he goes back and finishes telling us about the conversation with the Amalekite. By arraigning the material that way the writer is showing us that verses 11-12 are the main emphasis. He sets them right at the structural center of the narrative so everything points to those verses. More than anything else he wants us to know that when David heard the news about the death of Saul he mourned and wept and fasted and grieved.

## **Lament**

That was David's immediate response. And then later he grieved in another way.

**17 David took up this lament<sup>4</sup> concerning Saul and his son Jonathan 18 and ordered that the men of Judah be taught this lament of the bow (it is written in the Book of Jashar):**

The book of Jashar is mentioned here and in Joshua 10:13. It seems to have been a book that recorded various elements of Israelite history, but it has been out of print for over 3000 years now.

David taught Judah how to grieve for Saul by means of a lament. I find that absolutely fascinating. You might think if anything is a personal matter it would be how you grieve or do not grieve when someone dies. But that is not the case. There was an appropriate way to respond to the death of Saul emotionally, and David's very first national act after the death of Saul was to teach the people of God the right way to grieve.

David really was a shepherd for God's people. The very first thing he does when Saul dies is not a move to secure the throne, or some political maneuver, or even to move back to Israel. The first recorded thing that David does on the national stage is teaching. That tells us something of the heart of David for the people.

It is also an act that shows a certain amount of influence. He is not king – he does not even live in Israel, and yet his influence in the south is strong enough where he can actually decree that something be taught throughout Judah.

So this lament is a sort of authorized version of sorrow over Saul. So let's sit with the people of Judah and learn what we can about godly grieving. David teaches us at least three things about responding to tragedy.

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<sup>3</sup> Saul lost his kingship because of them. They are the ones who burned Ziklag and took David's wives and possessions. If you look up the word Amalekite in a concordance you'll see that word pop up 15 times during the reign of Saul.

<sup>4</sup> Lit. **David lamented this lament.**

# 1) Grieving is appropriate

David is weeping and mourning and fasting and crying and grieving - how does all that square with

**James 1:2 – Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds?**

**Romans 5:3 we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance**

If we are supposed to rejoice over suffering and trials, was David wrong to grieve and teach the people to grieve? Is grieving wrong? Was Job wrong to weep when his children all died? Was Paul wrong in...

**Romans 9:2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ... for the sake of my brothers...?**

Was Jesus wrong to weep in the garden the night before He died or lament over Jerusalem at the end of Matthew 23? Of course not. Obviously there is a place for sorrow in the Christian life. But how do we reconcile that with the passages that tell us to rejoice even in our trials? There is an interesting line in 1 Thessalonians 4:13. Paul is talking about fellow Christians who have died and he says, **Brothers, we do not want you to ... grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.** People who have hope and people who have no hope both grieve, but they do not grieve the same way. People who have no hope either hold the sorrow at arm's length so they never really come to grips with the reality of it, or they do face the reality of it and it drives them to despair. They either think about it in the shallowest, most superficial terms, because they cannot handle the grief connected with acknowledging the full weight of it; or they do acknowledge the full weight and it drives them into hopelessness and depression and despair. That is how people with no real hope grieve.

As Christians we still grieve, but not like that.

**2 Corinthians 4:8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair<sup>5</sup>**

We come to the point where we do not know what to do, but it does not cause us to drop off into despair.

You hear a lot from this pulpit about joy. Joy in Christ is right at the center of what it means to be a Christian. But there is also sorrow. In fact, there is a sense in which our sorrow is deeper and sharper than the world's sorrow, because they grieve over temporal things and we grieve over eternal things.

So we grieve and yet we are to always have joy.

**2 Corinthians 6:10 [as servants of God we are] sorrowful, yet always rejoicing**

How can you be sorrowful and rejoice at the same time? As strange as it sounds, we actually do that all the time. When something sad happens, but at the same time a much greater, much more important good thing is happening, you can have a measure of sadness over the small thing even while there is a greater joy in your heart over the bigger thing. You are cooking dinner, you burn the dinner rolls, and just then your husband comes in the door and says, "I got the promotion - a huge raise and much better hours." You are still not happy about the rolls, but the happiness over this other thing overshadows the frustration with dinner.

Grieving like those who have no hope is when you burn the rolls and there is no greater joy in your life anywhere and so even though you know it should not be any big deal you find yourself breaking down in tears or falling into depression. It does not take a very big sorrow to bring you to despair if there is not some greater joy in your life. But if the joy in your life is big enough, you can handle any sorrow.

You might hear the illustration with the dinner rolls and think, "You're going to compare being fired or losing a loved one or getting a diagnosis of cancer with burning the rolls?" Actually – yes. I do not say that to minimize the importance of those great sorrows in life. I say it to point to the fact that we have access to a joy so transcendent and overpowering that it overshadows even the most excruciating kind of suffering in this

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<sup>5</sup> The word translated perplexed is *aporeo* and the word translated despair is *ex-aporeo*. So it is the same Greek work except the second one has a prefix that intensifies it. So Paul is saying, "We get perplexed – we get to the point where we are at a loss and just don't know what to do or where to turn, but we never get so were totally at a loss."

world. Paul endured suffering that most of us cannot even imagine, and yet he referred to that as “light and momentary” compared with his joy.

## **2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. ... 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal weight of glory**

That is how you can have sorrow and joy at the same time. You grieve over those things that are grievous, but that grief does not drive you to despair because of hope. There is a greater joy as you look forward to your great hope. When Jesus was “very sorrowful, even to death” in Gethsemane he was sustained by “the joy that was set before him” (Heb.12:2). Did He feel the fullness of that joy while He was on the cross? No. But His hope and anticipation of that joy was a greater force in His heart than the suffering. What is the greatest force in your heart – the sorrow or the joy?

So the first thing we learn here from David is the fact that grieving is appropriate. If you are sad, and someone puts a guilt trip on you and points to Romans 8:28 and makes it sound like it is wrong to ever be sad, and that everyone who is sad should just cheer up, realize that sometimes sadness is appropriate. David grieved. He did not grieve like Saul, who had no hope. He did not grieve like Eli, who got the bad news from the battle and fell off his chair and died. He grieved and then he moved ahead with one of the most joy-filled lives ever recorded in history. Just five chapters later we see him literally dancing with all his might for joy. So when you hear me week after week talking about the importance of joy at all times, do not fall into the error of thinking there is no place for sorrow or grieving.

## **2) How to grieve (spontaneous sorrow and thoughtful lament)**

The second thing we learn in this section is how to grieve. When David first heard the news there was a sudden outpouring of weeping and sorrow that is the immediate reaction of the heart to painful news. But then later he writes a lament. We all understand spontaneous grief, but a lament is something different. A lament is a carefully worded expression of sorrow. You can think of it as *thoughtful* grief – or coherent mourning. A lament is when the intensity of the emotions and the discipline of the mind join forces to produce a structured sorrow. We have a need for that because we are rational beings.

When you suffer some great loss – a loss great enough to generate significant distress in your heart- a death, a broken relationship, a major financial or career setback, a health problem; after the initial response of grief why not take the time to compose a reasoned, thoughtful, articulated lament? If you did that you could carefully select the words and thoughts of your sorrow, making sure they reflect biblical principles and consider the loss from a spiritual point of view, and then you can have that to present to God as worship and to read over and over when your soul is out of words and you need to express grief.

One thing that will do is guard you from veering into error or heresy in your grief. When we just let our emotions run it is just about guaranteed that at some point our thoughts will swerve outside the bounds of truth and push us into thinking about the loss in worldly ways. And having a kind of authorized sorrow in the form of a lament will guard you from that.

## **3) What to grieve**

So we learn from David that grieving is appropriate, and we learn how to do it. And a third thing we learn is what to grieve for.

And when you hear that you might think, “Do we really need to be taught what to grieve for? Why not just grieve whenever something makes you sad? Do we really need David to teach us which things should make us sad?” Yes! There are some things that ought to make us sad that don’t – just as there are things that ought to make us happy and don’t. And we need training from God’s Word to correct that. Emotions are to a large extent a function of what you love and hate. And Scripture commands us to love good things and hate evil things, and if you do that it will have an impact on your emotions.

## **Amos 6:4 ... You dine on choice lambs and fattened calves. ...6 but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph. 7 Therefore you will be among the first to go into exile; your feasting and lounging will end.**

God has and will punish people for failure to grieve over that which should make us sad.

**Ezekiel 9:4 [the LORD] said to him, "Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it." 5 As I listened, he said to the others, "Follow him through the city and kill, without showing pity or compassion. 6 Slaughter old men, young men and maidens, women and children, but do not touch anyone who has the mark. Begin at my sanctuary."**

Everyone who was grieving and lamenting the sin in Jerusalem was given a mark, and everyone without the mark was put to death – including children. It is very important that the things that grieve God also grieve us.

So David taught the people of Judah this lament in order to instruct them not to be like that Amalekite. They needed to be taught that the death of Saul was a sad thing, not a happy thing.

## **1. Israel (the harm of God's people)**

So what kinds of things should grieve us? David laments three things. He begins with the nation of Israel.

**19 "Your glory,<sup>6</sup> O Israel, lies slain on your heights.**

Saul and Jonathan were the symbols of Israel's strength and beauty and glory, and they now lie slain on the side of Mt. Gilboa.

**... How the mighty have fallen! 20 "Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon,<sup>7</sup> lest the daughters of the Philistines be glad, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice.**

David is grieving for the nation of Israel. The chosen people of God were in for some hard times. The people of the Most High were going to suffer with the Philistines in charge, and that calls for a lament. What should we lament? The suffering of God's people. Grieve over the pain and suffering of our brothers and sisters in Christ who are being beaten and tortured and imprisoned and killed in India or the Philippines or the entire Muslim world. In the ultimate perspective of God's perfect plan we can rejoice that God is working all things for good. But from the perspective of looking at human sin and temporal suffering the mistreatment of the people of God should bring grief to our hearts.

So David grieved over Israel's defeat, but his sorrow over that went a lot deeper than just the fact that it would involve suffering. God had tied the glory of His name to Israel, and so when Israel was defeated it dishonored the name of the LORD in the eyes of the nations. And that grieved the heart of David. David cared about nothing more than the glory and renown and fame of the Lord. And the thought of the enemies of the Lord singing and dancing in their pagan temples praising their idols and false gods for giving victory over the people of Yahweh caused grief in the man after God's own heart.

What should we grieve over? Anything that hurts God's people and anything that blasphemes or insults or belittles the name of the Lord. Jokes about God, movies that mock Him and His Word and His laws and ways, laws being passed that are detestable to God (like the legalized killing of unborn babies or making June national Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Bisexual pride month). It should grieve us when someone gets on TV claiming to be a spokesman for Jesus Christ and preaches that the gospel is all about health and wealth and getting rich. It should grieve us when someone like Theado Reed would rather hold on to his sin than repent and prefer fellowship with God over the things of this world. It should grieve us when we ourselves dishonor the name of our Lord in the way we speak or act or feel.

David says, "Tell it not in Gath," but that is a dream. You better believe they are going to be telling it from one end of Philistia to the other for many years to come. And David knows that, which is why he is

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<sup>6</sup> The word for beauty or glory was spelled exactly the same as the word for gazelle. The only way to know the difference is the context, and mighty warriors were often referred to as being like gazelles. So it is very possible that verse 19 actually says, "**Your gazelle, O Israel, lies slain on your heights.**" This word is never translated any other way that "gazelle" prior to the time of Isaiah except here. And in the fairly near context David's cousin Azebel and many of the mighty men who came to join David were compared to gazelles in connection with being mighty warriors. The gazelle was a symbol of beauty and elegance as well as military prowess and speed.

<sup>7</sup> Gath and Ashkelon were the major cities on opposite ends of Philistia. So this is like saying, "from New York to L.A. – it is a way of referring to the whole nation."



grieving. We hear about something that dishonors the name of Christ and we say, “Tell it not on ABC News,” but we know full well it will be the lead story.

What should we grieve over? The suffering of God’s people and the dishonoring of His name. We see both of those in David’s grieving over Israel.

## **2. Jonathan (Loss)**

The second category of grieving we learn from David’s lament is from his sorrow over the loss of Jonathan.

### **23 "Saul and Jonathan-- in life they were loved and gracious, and in death they were not parted.**

The fact that they were not parted in death is a tribute to Jonathan. His father had tried to put him to death – once by ordering it and another time by hurling his own spear at him. And yet Jonathan died protecting his father.

### **25 "How the mighty have fallen in battle!**

(That is the refrain of this lament – he repeats it three times.)

#### **Jonathan lies slain on your heights.**

And now the pain and agony just comes oozing out of David’s heart.

### **26 I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women. 27 "How the mighty have fallen!**

#### ***The love of women***

Some commentators have made a point here to say that in that culture wives were mainly for procreation and not so much friendship. But I do not think that is the point at all. No –David is making a point to say how wonderful Jonathan’s love was, and so he compares it not to a small love but to the greatest love there is in the natural realm. I think it is fair to say that women naturally are generally better at love than men. That is why the New Testament has to remind men over and over, “Husbands, love your wives!”<sup>8</sup>

This tells us something about God’s design for marriage. The aspect of love that David is speaking of here is companionship and by using marital love as the high standard David is showing us that friendship is a big part of what a marriage is supposed to be. If it is really saying something to say you have a friend who is even a closer friend than your wife – if it is a big deal for David to say that – that must mean that normally you would expect that no way would it be possible to have a friendship that close with anyone but your spouse. Your friendship with your spouse should be such a delight to your spouse, that if he or she said, “My best friend’s love is even more delightful” that would REALLY be saying something. I am afraid for many couples just about any friendship is more delightful than their friendship with each other. That is not as it should be.

So David just really, really loved Jonathan. I know that some people have wanted to twist this into a homosexual thing, but people who do that demonstrate that they have no understanding of either God’s law or of ancient Jewish culture.<sup>9</sup> God’s Word clearly condemns homosexual behavior as sin and there is no way the original readers would have assumed that is what is being described here.

#### ***David grieves more for Jonathan than for Saul.***

What is being described is a beautiful friendship that was exceedingly precious to David. And now it is lost. Jonathan is gone. Those of you who have lost someone you really loved understand the intensity of this kind of sorrow. It is obvious from the lament that David grieves more for Jonathan than for Saul. David honored Saul as the Lord’s anointed, but he deeply, deeply loved Jonathan as a friend. And the greater the love

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<sup>8</sup> That is not to say women don’t need any instruction on how to love properly. **Titus 2:4 train the younger women to love their husbands and children.** We all need training on how to love.

<sup>9</sup> See the Appendix for an argument against the idea that this was a homosexual relationship.

the greater the grief. (But that did not stop David from loving deeply. People who avoid relationships because they do not want to get hurt again are fools. The pain of love is intense, but it is much better than the emptiness of life without love. Not to mention the fact that God has not given us the option of withdrawing from deep love relationships.)

David loved Jonathan with all his heart and so now he grieves with all his heart as Jonathan lies slain on the heights of Gilboa. What kinds of things should we grieve? Grieve over the suffering of God's people and the dishonoring of God's name, and grieve over the loss of what was precious to you. And third, and most importantly, David grieved the death of Saul.

### **3. Saul (the Lord's anointed)**

The death of Saul was such a horrible thing David pronounces a curse on the site where Saul died.

**21 "O mountains of Gilboa, may you have neither dew<sup>10</sup> nor rain, nor fields that yield offerings [of grain]. For there the shield of the mighty was defiled, the shield of Saul--no longer rubbed with oil.<sup>11</sup>  
22 From the blood of the slain, from the flesh of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not turn back, the sword of Saul did not return unsatisfied.**

With all his faults, Saul was still a mighty warrior. You do not survive 40 years on the throne in that world if you are a wimp.

**23 "Saul and Jonathan-- in life they were loved and gracious, and in death they were not parted.**

We have seen the ugly side of Saul in his unfaithfulness to God, but in general he was a gracious, likable man – and a fierce warrior.

**23 ... They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.**

Saul and Jonathan were an awesome team in battle. They were like a bird of prey – swooping down on some poor, hapless enemy before he could even see anything coming. And once he got a hold of you it was like being in the grip of a lion.

Overall Saul was very successful in battle.

**1 Samuel 14:47 After Saul had assumed rule over Israel, he fought against their enemies on every side: Moab, the Ammonites, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines. Wherever he turned, he inflicted punishment on them. 48 He fought valiantly and defeated the Amalekites, delivering Israel from the hands of those who had plundered them.**

And so the loss of Saul was a great loss for Israel.

**24 "O daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and finery, who adorned your garments with ornaments of gold.**

When Saul took over Israel had just come out of the horrific period of the Judges. But in the course of his reign he not only had great success in defending Israel against her enemies but he also brought considerable wealth to Israel.

**27 "How the mighty have fallen! The weapons of war have perished!"**

David says nothing negative about Saul. Can you imagine writing a eulogy for someone as wicked as Saul and saying nothing negative? We do not want to be naïve about the sins of loved ones who have died. But when we eulogize them is not the time to bring those sins up. It is OK to take some time to just remember the

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<sup>10</sup> In Hebrew thought, dew was often a symbol of resurrection or the renewing of life (cf. Ps 110:3; Isa 26:19).

<sup>11</sup> Their shields were coated with leather and treated with oil. But now Saul's shield will never be prepared for battle again.

good things – even if they are few and far between. There is no reason to dwell on past sin once they are gone. The past belongs to God.

You see, part of the purpose of a lament is to function as a remembrance – like a eulogy. When someone dies it is good to have some formal process of remembrance and memorial. And there is nothing wrong with remembering just the good things.

### ***David was loyal***

Many writers and teachers assume that David was wrong to go to Philistia. They say it was a time of spiritual backsliding and disloyalty to God and to Israel. Some even assume that when David wanted to march out with the Philistines to this very war that he was telling Achish the truth and he really did want to fight against Israel and help the Philistines win. And when we studied those sections I gave you some arguments from the context back then for why I believe the writer would have us be assured that none of that was true, and that David was indeed loyal to God and Saul and Israel. But if my arguments then did not convince, surely this chapter should. I do not know how anyone could see David's response in this chapter and conclude that David was rooting for the Philistines in that war. David was devastated when he heard the news that the Philistines won. David was supremely loyal to Saul.

## **Conclusion: Honor the Lord's Anointed**

What kind of application can we make of this passage in our lives today? The most obvious is we can grieve in proper ways, since that is what the passage is designed to teach. But I think there is an even greater application than that. The most striking thing about this passage as well as the entire second half of the book of 1 Samuel is the supreme honor David had for the Lord's anointed. A man or woman after God's own heart will honor those chosen by God.

We have talked about the implications for honoring those chosen by God for positions of authority. By honoring your parents, your husband, government officials, leaders in the church – you are showing honor to God because they bear His authority. But by far the greatest application of this principle is seen in your response to Christ Himself, who is the one to whom all of this pointed.

David remembered three parties in his eulogy – Israel, Jonathan, and Saul. Israel, because they were God's chosen people, Jonathan because of his great love, and Saul because he was the Lord's anointed. So if Israel was to be honored for being the picture, how much more should we honor the true Son? And if Jonathan's love was more delightful than any other love what can we say about the love of Christ? And if wicked, foolish Saul was to be honored supremely simply because he was the Lord's anointed (even though his character was not worthy of any honor), how much more the final anointed One who is also righteous and fully worthy and deserving of honor?

You know what I think the greatest application of this text may be? Communion. What is communion if not a memorial of the death of the Lord's Anointed?

The Amalekite thought he would be accepted by David even after killing the Lord's anointed. He was rightfully put to death. And if he was rightfully put to death for lifting his hand against Saul, what does that say about people today who reject God's anointed Messiah, the great Son of David, Jesus Christ, and then come to God expecting to be accepted? God will deal more harshly with them than David dealt with the Amalekite. But David is favored by God because he had a heart that honored and loved God so much that anyone God had chosen received David's unreserved honor. And if God blessed David for honoring Saul, how much more will He favor us for honoring the Lord Jesus Christ?

As we partake of the Lord's table this morning let's let this act of worship say three things to the Lord:

David honored Israel because they were like a son to You. This morning we honor Your true Son.

David honored Jonathan because of his love. Lord, we honor You now because Your love is more delightful to us than the love of women or men, or anyone else. We are satisfied with Your love even if we don't get anyone else's.

And our greatest goal of all is that David's amazing honor for unworthy Saul would not outstrip our honor for the supremely worthy Messiah. Let our honor for Him be *at least* as great as David's for Saul.

**Benediction: 1 Timothy 6:15,16 God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, <sup>16</sup> who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.**

## **Appendix: Was David and Jonathan's friendship a homosexual relationship?**

When people are committed to hanging on to a particular sin, but they also want to be a Christian, they will try to find a justification for that sin in the Bible. That is a pretty tough thing to do for the sin of homosexuality because the Bible is so crystal clear in condemning that behavior as sinful. But those who try will inevitably point to David and Jonathan.

The reasoning seems to be something like this – if David said the love of Jonathan was even better than that of women that must refer to a sexual relationship because anything having to do with women must be sexual. The fact that they think that way tells you something about their mindset. As soon as women are mentioned they think of one thing. And they cannot imagine any expression of love other than a sexual one. That is a symptom of a perverse society that is unable to appreciate the fullness of what is wonderful about either love or women. Someone needs to tell those people that not all love is sexual.

There is nothing in the context that would support that kind of interpretation. The relationship between David and Jonathan is presented in the text as being righteous and good. Homosexuality, on the other hand, is always presented in Scripture as being sinful. (And when I say “homosexuality” I am referring to the behavior, not just the temptation.)

**Leviticus 18:22 Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.**

**Leviticus 20:13 If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.**

The wicked men of Sodom were characterized by homosexuality. And lest anyone think this was merely an issue of ritual purity rather than morality, the New Testament condemns homosexual behavior as well.

**Romans 1:26 God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. 27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.**

**1 Corinthians 6:9 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10 ... will inherit the kingdom of God.**

So Scripture strongly condemns homosexuality, and as a result it was very much a taboo in ancient Jewish culture, which means if the writer had wanted to portray a homosexual relationship between Jonathan and David as being good he would have had to have given some clear indication that that is what he was talking about. He certainly would have had to say a lot more than just the fact that there was love between the two men.

And one other interesting fact about the historical context – there was a very famous piece of ancient Babylonian literature that dates back to well before the time of David in which a similar statement is used. It is called the Gilgamesh Epic, and it is about King Gilgamesh who is informed in a dream that a friend is going to come into his life who will match him in strength and whom he will end up loving like a woman. As the story goes on this guy arrives and ends up in a massive battle against Gilgamesh. And it is a tie – they are equal in strength. And after that they become very close friends. And that friendship is described in the rest of the story, and it has nothing to do with anything sexual. They are just good friends who go through all kinds of adventures together. So the idea of the love between two men being equal to or greater than the love of women simply refers to a very close companionship.

# Devotionals

## Day 1 – God Honors His own Work

What is left of the headless, bloody body of Saul is hanging from the wall of Beth-Shan at the crossroads for all the travelers through Israel to see.

**1 Samuel 31:11 When the people of Jabesh Gilead heard of what the Philistines had done to Saul, 12 all their valiant men journeyed through the night to Beth Shan.**

(That would be like going from Greeley to the Fort Collins exit of I-25.)

**12 ...They took down the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth Shan and went to Jabesh, where they burned them. 13 Then they took their bones and buried them under a tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and they fasted seven days.**

The very first military action of Saul's reign as king was the rescue of Jabesh Gilead, and it was a huge success. Chapter 11 is without a doubt Saul at his best.

Jabesh Gilead had surrendered to Nahash the Ammonite and Nahash had given them a choice – “Either you all die, or, if you want to sign a treaty, you have to let me gouge out the right eye of every one of you so I can bring disgrace on Israel.” They were in deep trouble, but then...

**1 Samuel 11:6 When Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came upon him in power**

Look out Nahash. When the Spirit of the Lord comes upon an Israelite leader in power I do not care how big your army is – you had better run for the hills. Saul comes and wipes out Nahash and rescues Jabesh Gilead.

These valiant men from Jabesh Gilead who come take down Saul's body may not have even been born when that rescue happened 40 years earlier back in chapter 11. But they heard the stories about it, and there seems to be some gratitude on behalf of that city.

So Saul's life ends in mostly disgrace, however there is one little glimmer of honor. And it is honor that comes from the one time, years and years ago, when Saul acted under the power of the Holy Spirit. When you do something in the power of the Spirit it is amazing the impact it has – impact that can outlast your lifetime, and that can bring some benefits even after a life of rebellion against God. God honors the work of His own hands. So when the Holy Spirit works through you, expect God to honor that work – even if it is after you die. The Lord will not let the work of His own Spirit fall to the ground.

## Day 2: Grieving is appropriate

David is weeping and mourning and fasting and crying and grieving – how does all that square with

**James 1:2 – Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds?**

**Romans 5:3 we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance**

If we are supposed to rejoice over suffering and trials, was David wrong to grieve and teach the people to grieve? Is grieving wrong? Was Job wrong to weep when his children all died?

Was Paul wrong in

**Romans 9:2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ... for the sake of my brothers...?**

Was Jesus wrong to weep in the garden the night before He died or lament over Jerusalem at the end of Matthew 23? Of course not. Obviously there is a place for sorrow in the Christian life. But how do we reconcile that with the passages that tell us to rejoice even in our trials? There is an interesting line in 1 Thessalonians 4:13. Paul is talking about fellow Christians who have died and he says,

**Brothers, we do not want you to ... grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.**

People who have hope and people who have no hope both grieve, but they do not grieve the same way. People who have no hope either hold the sorrow at arm's length so they never really come to grips with the reality of it, or they do face the reality of it and it drives them to despair. They either think about it in the shallowest, most superficial terms, because they cannot handle the grief connected with acknowledging the full weight of it; or they do acknowledge the full weight and it drives them into hopelessness and depression and despair. That is how people with no real hope grieve.

As Christians we still grieve, but not like that.

**2 Corinthians 4:8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair<sup>12</sup>**

We come to the point where we don't know what to do, but it does not cause us to drop off into despair.

You hear a lot from this pulpit about joy. Joy in Christ is right at the center of what it means to be a Christian. But there is also sorrow. In fact, there is a sense in which our sorrow is deeper and sharper than the world's sorrow, because they grieve over temporal things and we grieve over eternal things.

So we grieve and yet we are to always have joy.

**2 Corinthians 6:10 [as servants of God we are] sorrowful, yet always rejoicing**

How can you be sorrowful and rejoice at the same time? As strange as it sounds, we actually do that all the time. When something sad happens, but at the same time a much greater, much more important good thing is happening, you can have a measure of sadness over the small thing even while there is a greater joy in your heart over the bigger thing. You are cooking dinner, you burn the dinner rolls, and just then your husband comes in the door and says, "I got the promotion - a huge raise and much better hours." You are still not happy about the rolls, but the happiness over this other thing overshadows the frustration with dinner.

Grieving like those who have no hope is when you burn the rolls and there is no greater joy in your life anywhere and so even though you know it should not be any big deal you find yourself breaking down in tears or falling into depression. It does not take a very big sorrow to bring you to despair if there is not some greater joy in your life. But if the joy in your life is big enough you can handle any sorrow.

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<sup>12</sup> The word translated perplexed is *aporeo* and the word translated despair is *ex-aporeo*. So it is the same Greek work except the second one has a prefix that intensifies it. So Paul is saying, "We get perplexed – we get to the point where we are at a loss and just don't know what to do or where to turn, but we never get so were totally at a loss."

You might hear the illustration with the dinner rolls and think, “You’re going to compare being fired or losing a loved one or getting a diagnosis of cancer with burning the rolls?” Actually – yes. I do not say that to minimize the importance of those great sorrows in life. I say it to point to the fact that we have access to a joy so transcendent and overpowering that it overshadows even the most excruciating kind of suffering in this world. Paul endured suffering that most of us cannot even imagine, and yet he referred to that as “light and momentary” compared with his joy.

**2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. ... 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal weight of glory**

That is how you can have sorrow and joy at the same time. You grieve over those things that are grievous, but that grief does not drive you to despair because of hope. There is a greater joy as you look forward to your great hope. When Jesus was “very sorrowful, even to death” in Gethsemane he was sustained by “the joy that was set before him” (Heb.12:2). Did He feel the fullness of that joy while He was on the cross? No. But His hope and anticipation of that joy was a greater force in His heart than the suffering. What is the greatest force in your heart – the sorrow or the joy?

So the first thing we learn here from David is the fact that grieving is appropriate. If you are sad, and someone puts a guilt trip on you and points to Romans 8:28 and makes it sound like it’s wrong to ever be sad, and that everyone who is sad should just cheer up, realize that sometimes sadness is appropriate. David grieved. He did not grieve like Saul, who had no hope. He did not grieve like Eli, who got the bad news from the battle and fell off his chair and died. He grieved and then he moved ahead with one of the most joy-filled lives ever recorded in history. Just five chapters later we see him literally dancing with all his might for joy. So when you hear me week after week talking about the importance of joy at all times, do not fall into the error of thinking there is no place for sorrow or grieving.



### **Day 3: How to Grieve**

David taught Judah how to grieve for Saul by means of a lament. I find that absolutely fascinating. You might think if anything is a personal matter it would be how you grieve or do not grieve when someone dies. But that is not the case. There was an appropriate way to respond to the death of Saul emotionally, and David's very first national act after the death of Saul was to teach the people of God the right way to grieve.

David really was a shepherd for God's people. The very first thing he does when Saul dies is not a move to secure the throne, or some political maneuver, or even to move back to Israel. The first recorded thing that David does on the national stage is teaching. That tells us something of the heart of David for the people.

It is also an act that shows a certain amount of influence. He is not king – he does not even live in Israel, and yet his influence in the south is strong enough where he can actually decree that something be taught throughout Judah.

So this lament is a sort of authorized version of sorrow over Saul. So let's sit with the people of Judah and learn what we can about godly grieving. David teaches us at least three things about responding to tragedy.

A lament is when the intensity of the emotions and the discipline of the mind join forces to produce a structured sorrow. We have a need for that because we are rational beings.

When you suffer some great loss – a loss great enough to generate significant distress in your heart- a death, a broken relationship, a major financial or career setback, a health problem; after the initial response of grief why not take the time to compose a reasoned, thoughtful, articulated lament? If you did that you could carefully select the words and thoughts of your sorrow, making sure they reflect biblical principles and consider the loss from a spiritual point of view, and then you can have that to present to God as worship and to read over and over when your soul is out of words and you need to express grief.

One thing that will do is guard you from veering into error or heresy in your grief. When we just let our emotions run it is just about guaranteed that at some point our thoughts will swerve outside the bounds of truth and push us into thinking about the loss in worldly ways. And having a kind of authorized sorrow in the form of a lament will guard you from that.

## Day 4: What to Grieve

Do we really need David to teach us which things should make us sad? Yes! There are some things that ought to make us sad that don't – just as there are things that ought to make us happy and don't. And we need training from God's Word to correct that. Emotions are to a large extent a function of what you love and hate. And Scripture commands us to love good things and hate evil things, and if you do that it will have an impact on your emotions.

**Amos 6:4 ... You dine on choice lambs and fattened calves. ...6 but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph. 7 Therefore you will be among the first to go into exile; your feasting and lounging will end.**

God has and will punish people for failure to grieve over that which should make us sad.

**Ezekiel 9:4 [the LORD] said to him, "Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it." 5 As I listened, he said to the others, "Follow him through the city and kill, without showing pity or compassion. 6 Slaughter old men, young men and maidens, women and children, but do not touch anyone who has the mark. Begin at my sanctuary."**

Everyone who was grieving and lamenting the sin in Jerusalem was given a mark, and everyone without the mark was put to death – including children. It is very important that the things that grieve God also grieve us.

So David taught the people of Judah this lament in order to instruct them not to be like that Amalekite. They needed to be taught that the death of Saul was a sad thing, not a happy thing.

So what kinds of things should grieve us? David laments three things. He begins with the nation of Israel.

**19 "Your glory, O Israel, lies slain on your heights.**

Saul and Jonathan were the symbols of Israel's strength and beauty and glory, and they now lie slain on the side of Mt. Gilboa.

**... How the mighty have fallen! 20 "Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines be glad, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice.**

David is grieving for the nation of Israel. The chosen people of God were in for some hard times. The people of the Most High were going to suffer with the Philistines in charge, and that calls for a lament. What should we lament? The suffering of God's people. Grieve over the pain and suffering of our brothers and sisters in Christ who are being beaten and tortured and imprisoned and killed in India or the Philippines or the entire Muslim world. In the ultimate perspective of God's perfect plan we can rejoice that God is working all things for good. But from the perspective of looking at human sin and temporal suffering the mistreatment of the people of God should bring grief to our hearts.

So David grieved over Israel's defeat, but his sorrow over that went a lot deeper than just the fact that it would involve suffering. God had tied the glory of His name to Israel, so when Israel was defeated it dishonored the name of the LORD in the eyes of the nations, and that grieved the heart of David. David cared about nothing more than the glory and renown and fame of the Lord. And the thought of the enemies of the Lord singing and dancing in their pagan temples praising their idols and false gods for giving victory over the people of Yahweh caused grief in the man after God's own heart.

What should we grieve over? Anything that hurts God's people and anything that blasphemes or insults or belittles the name of the Lord. Jokes about God, movies that mock Him and His Word and His laws and ways, laws being passed that are detestable to God (like the legalized killing of unborn babies or making June national Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Bisexual pride month). It should grieve us when someone gets on TV claiming to be a spokesman for Jesus Christ and preaches that the gospel is all about health and wealth and

getting rich. It should grieve us when someone like Theado Reed would rather hold on to his sin than repent and prefer fellowship with God over the things of this world. It should grieve us when we ourselves dishonor the name of our Lord in the way we speak or act or feel.

David says, "Tell it not in Gath," but that is a dream. You better believe they are going to be telling it from one end of Philistia to the other for many years to come. And David knows that, which is why he is grieving. We hear about something that dishonors the name of Christ and we say, "Tell it not on ABC News," but we know full well it will be the lead story.

What should we grieve over? The suffering of God's people and the dishonoring of His name. We see both of those in David's grieving over Israel.

## Day 5: Honor the Lord's Anointed

What kind of application can we make of this passage in our lives today? The most obvious is we can grieve in proper ways, since that is what the passage is designed to teach. But I think there is an even greater application than that. The most striking thing about this passage as well as the entire second half of the book of 1 Samuel is the supreme honor David had for the Lord's anointed. A man or woman after God's own heart will honor those chosen by God.

We have talked about the implications for honoring those chosen by God for positions of authority. By honoring your parents, your husband, government officials, leaders in the church – you are showing honor to God because they bear His authority. But by far the greatest application of this principle is seen in your response to Christ Himself, who is the one to whom all of this pointed.

David remembered three parties in his eulogy – Israel, Jonathan, and Saul. Israel, because they were God's chosen people, Jonathan because of his great love, and Saul because he was the Lord's anointed. So if Israel was to be honored for being the picture, how much more should we honor the true Son? And if Jonathan's love was more delightful than any other love what can we say about the love of Christ? And if wicked, foolish Saul was to be honored supremely simply because he was the Lord's anointed (even though his character was not worthy of any honor), how much more the final anointed One who is also righteous and fully worthy and deserving of honor?

You know what I think the greatest application of this text may be? Communion. What is communion if not a memorial of the death of the Lord's Anointed?

The Amalekite thought he would be accepted by David even after killing the Lord's anointed. He was rightfully put to death. And if he was rightfully put to death for lifting his hand against Saul, what does that say about people today who reject God's anointed Messiah, the great Son of David, Jesus Christ, and then come to God expecting to be accepted? God will deal more harshly with them than David dealt with the Amalekite. But David is favored by God because he had a heart that honored and loved God so much that anyone God had chosen received David's unreserved honor. And if God blessed David for honoring Saul, how much more will He favor us for honoring the Lord Jesus Christ?

When you partake of the Lord's Table let that act of worship say three things from your heart to the Lord:

- 1) David honored Israel because they were like a son to You. Now I honor Your true Son.
- 2) David honored Jonathan because of his love. Lord, I honor You now because Your love is more delightful to me than the love of women or men, or anyone else. I am satisfied with Your love even if I don't get anyone else's.
- 3) My greatest goal of all is that David's amazing honor for unworthy Saul would not outstrip my honor for the supremely worthy Messiah. Let my honor for Him be *at least* as great as David's for Saul.

