

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

A Thoughtful Grief

II Samuel 1:17-27

Intro: The topic of ***grief*** appeared in last weeks study as David & his men engaged in expressive sorrow & mourning upon hearing the news of the death of Saul & his sons & the defeat of Israel at Mt. Gilboa. Grief is not a very popular topic in most pulpits unless the speaker is delivering some insight on how 2 recover from grief, or move beyond it. Contemporary church culture often expresses an impatience w/ grief. “Why is Bob still mourning over Sally’s death? It’s been 6 months; you’d think he’d have gotten over it by now.” Many times prolonged grief is associated w/ some kind of emotional problem. This is far removed from mourning practices of the 19th century; where people were expected 2 mourned the passing of a family member 4 at least 6 months & a year of mourning was commonplace.

Our text today deals w/ grief but not 4 the purpose of teaching us how to get over it but in the value of expressing it. David doesn’t give us a 5 point plan 4 beating grief. On the contrary, he reveals 2 us that sorrow isn’t just attached 2 an event but is a continuing process. Grief not only interrupts, it abides & b/c it abides, David employs a literary mechanism, a procedure by which he can express his grief. David pens a lament over Saul, Jonathan & Israel & in doing so, he provides a vehicle that the people of Israel can use 2 participate in & continue their mourning.

B/4 we launch into our study, we must 1st deal w/ the obvious problem of how it is possible 4 David 2 sincerely mourn over the death of his arch enemy. Saul had treated David w/ jealousy, hatred & spite; not just 4 a few months but for over a decade – for yrs! He took from David his family, home, career, security, access 2 the **YHWH**’s presence; yrs of his life! Yet, here, David mourns over Saul. How is that possible? How could David suffer so much at the hand of Saul & still express genuine, sincere sorrow at his death?

David is a man who’s taken hold of God’s grace. See, David had taken hundreds of Israelites into Philistine territory & jeopardized their lives & those of their wives & children. David was so wrong in his thinking & actions that he got 2 the point where he became Saul. His own men were discontented again ([as at Adullum](#)); they were discontented & angry but this

time it was w/ David. They threatened him w/ death! But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God! He sought the Lord – it broke David all the way down. David realized he's no better than Saul except 4 God's grace & God's calling on his life.

Amazingly, **w/o** the **NT**, **w/o** the **full exhortation** we have today, **w/o** being **indwelt by the Holy Spirit**; David makes a decision: that bitterness, hatred & such things are **wrong!** This should teach us something important – critical even: that bitterness, hatred & unforgiveness are things that are chosen, they are not imposed upon us. Each of these things are ultimately a choice & no 1 is forced or pressured into accepting them. If we bring our hearts b/4 the Lord & realize that we are sinners saved by grace like every other believer, it will demand something of us. If David, **w/o** any of our advantages, was able 2 mourn 4 the man who had tortured him for yrs, what does that say 4 us when we are slighted by someone else – even a brother or sister. We want instant retribution 4 even the smallest offenses. David chose 2 put those emotions aside & chose 2 remember the positive things concerning Saul & his service 2 Israel. There's sincerity in David's grief but there is also value 4 us today

17-18- lamented- 1st) There's **discipline** in David's grief. David was an accomplished writer & in his sorrow over Saul & Jonathan, he crafted a song (**lament**) 2 express the depth of his feelings. A **lament** is a **formal expression of grief or distress**; 1 that can be written, read & learned. It's different from the informal, spontaneous outburst of grief like we saw in **vs11-12**. That was the immediate, sincere response 2 such tragic news, but a lament is no less sorrowful or sincere; it's just a **more deliberate, ordered** way of expressing real, raw emotions. David took the time 2 consider the situation, reflect on what it meant 4 him & 4 Israel; then write it all down. **Lament**= the expression of **thoughtful grief**.

In our lives, when tragedy strikes, what do we do? Fall 2 pieces? There's nothing wrong w/ that as long as that's not all we do. It's 1 things 2 vent our emotions but we run the risk of missing the valuable lesson we take the time 2 reflect on the loss in light of God's providence. Usually, the pain hurts so much, we just want 2 move past it. But, in trying so hard 2 forget, we oft-times fail 2 remember that there are blessings 2/b had in evaluating & analyzing a loss.

19- beauty- Who? **Saul & his sons!** This shows the great love & generosity that David had in his heart towards Saul. It also shows that not only did David **not** kill Saul w/ his own hands but he also **did not** kill Saul in his heart. This kind of sincere expression of love 4 a enemy can only come from a heart that is resting in the providence & provision of God. David had come 2 the conclusion that Saul was never a real threat 2 the promises of God on his life.

How- this is both an exclamation as well as a question. It appears 3Xs in the lament = important!

20- Tell it not- too late! Philistines already did that but David mourns over it b/c the **honor** of **YHWH** is at stake here.

21- curses Gilboa not out of spite but 2 request that creation join him in mourning over Israel's defeat & Saul's death.

2nd) **There's disgrace in David's grief.** Shame aggravates grief & the shame David feels is associated w/ 2 places: Philistia & Gilboa. Gilboa is a national disgrace but the shame in Philistia is more appalling! David knows his command is futile, there's no way 2 censor Philistine media. It **will** be broadcast in every big TV in every sports bar in Gath & Ashkelon. But what really miffs David is how the Philistine women w/b trash-talking not just Israel but Israel's God! The shame here is not just military – it's religious. Every Philistine w/b praising the sorry excuse 4 a god that they think gave them this victory. That's what gripes every faithful Israelite, the most – **YHWH's** sullied honor. But, disgrace can be useful. At least David **intends** 2 make good use of it. In the preface of the lament (18a) it says David **told** (ordered) **them 2 teach the sons of Judah** "The Bow." David wanted the fighting men of his own tribe 2 learn this sad song, 2 know it by heart, 2 have it crammed into their brains & thought processes. Why? Why should warriors learn poetry? Why does he want the verses of this funeral dirge ringing in their ears? B/c David intends it 2/b part of their motivational military training. Gilboa's not the **last** time Israel would fight Philistines & David wanted his men 2 remember Gilboa, remember the tragedy, remember the pagan arrogance. Common in American history: **remember** the **Alamo**, the **Maine**, **Pearl Harbor**. David wanted them 2/b deeply stirred & moved – 4 the next time.

In our own Christian walk there's not a 1 of us that hasn't slipped up, we let

down our guard, we stopped being vigilant & have wandered off the path 2 pursue some unhealthy longing of the flesh. We may not fall deep into sin but we still experience the pain of **loss**: of sweet fellowship w/ the Lord; of a sense of the Holy Spirit's presence; of forward progress in spiritual maturity; of effectiveness 4 the kingdom; of valuable **time**! We might not recognize it at 1st but we're miserable; we miss those things we have gotten used 2 having & it's painful. It's supposed 2/b painful! That pain & sense of loss are meant 2 drive us 2 repentance but also serve 2 strengthen our resolve in the face of future temptation. When the flesh just wants us 2 "give it a rest" & go do something fun, we'll hopefully remember how it felt 2 fall on our face spiritually, 2 miss out on close intimate fellowship & refuse 2 turn aside from our path.

22-23- beloved- 3rd) There's **gratitude** in David's grief. Here David expresses his thankfulness & appreciation 4 Saul & Jonathan. These feelings are obviously important 2 David b/c he places them at the very center of the lament. Everything written b/4 & after this is in the form of an address but these 2 vs are descriptive. David offers a description of the prowess of Saul 7 Jonathan as warriors (22; 23b) but between those descriptions, in the most central position of the entire song, David offers a description of the personal character of Saul & Jonathan: **beloved, pleasant** in life, **not divided** in death. 4 all of Saul's failures, you can't call him a coward. He was told by Samuel that he would die in battle but he still went out 2 fight. Jonathan knew his father was on the wrong side of **YHWH**'s will but he never left Saul's side. He was a friend of friends 2 David but that didn't stop him from being loyal 2 his father or from standing w/ him 2 the last. David's gratitude highlights Jonathan's faithfulness 2 his calling, even when it was unrewarded & in the world's estimation, hopeless. This characteristic would be valuable 4 a disciple of Christ!

I wonder how much ministry never took place b/c some "disciple" thought it wasn't worth it, didn't meet their expectations or wasn't "fulfilling" enough. If God directs us, who are we 2 question it? I often quote Paul's declaration in **1 Cor 4:2**, "**Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.**" There's a certain encouragement in that vs but also responsibility. We're required 2/b faithful in whatever endeavor the Lord has called us to. Jonathan didn't strive 2 retain the kingdom 4 his father or himself; he recognized David's anointing & his own responsibility!

24-27- 4th) There's **love** in David's grief. David turns over the task of grieving 4 Saul 2 the women of Israel while he turns 2 mourn over Jonathan alone. Saul may have clothed Israel's women in scarlet but Saul's son had extended a love 2 David that surpassed the love of women. I must say that this is not an inference of anything unclean going on between David & Jonathan. We live in such a perverse society / culture that it's nearly impossible 2 imagine genuine love w/o attaching or inferring something sexual 2 it. There's no evidence at all that there was anything unclean here. Its difficult 4 us 2 imagine their common ground. Like soldiers who fought in the same foxhole, battle, or theater of war; there's a love, a deep respect between those men that's impossible 4 anyone 2 fathom except the members of that exclusive club. Add 2 that the reverence Jonathan showed 2 David, realizing he was the anointed king of Israel, even 2 the point of rescuing David from his own father. The depth of feeling between them had 2 do w/ honor, fidelity, w/ something that was valiant & noble & 2 drag that down & tarnish it by suggesting there was something filthy going on is merely a reflection of the foul, perverted culture that we live in today. **Lost: right honorable & good.**

How the mighty have fallen- 3Xs= must be a lesson here. Saul was chosen of the Lord, head & shoulders above the rest of the men of Israel; empowered by the Spirit & used by **YHWH** in tremendous ways. How did his life come 2 such a low, distressing point? It didn't happen over night. Actually, it happens the same way spiritual growth happens (**Isa 28:9-10**) That's the way we grow, the way we learn, in increments: **precept upon precept, line upon line; here a little, there a little.** This is how the mighty are fallen: here a little, there a little. We must see that Saul fell long b/4 he fell on Mt. Gilboa. Saul fell a little when he hardened his heart against **YHWH**, he fell more when he hardened his heart against **YHWH's** word thru Samuel & even more when he hardened his heart against **YHWH's** anointed. Saul's death on Gilboa was just the sad, logical conclusion of his lifelong downward spiral.

It's the same 4 believers: a compromise is made, it seems insignificant but the Spirit says, "**Don't do it!**" but we say, "**Don't worry about me, I got this.**" Then we slide another increment. Note: Satan's content 2 take yrs 2 effect our demise. He's content 2 remove our foundation 1 little chip at a time. He's in no rush. Christians fall the same way they grow: little by little. We desensitize ourselves 2 the Holy Spirits leading; we create a world of illusion

thinking we got it handled but when that temptation comes (& it will) we will fall b/c we have no strength. We've abdicated our position of strength by pursuing the lust's of our flesh little by little. Pray 4 me, pray 4 others & pray 4 yourself. It's the little foxes that spoil the vines. We must be vigilant in every area. Don't think you can sin in order 2 learn not 2 sin. Experience is a good teacher & a fool knows no other. We can learn all we need from David's grief over Saul's sin! 😊