

David Laments Saul and Jonathan

Call to Worship: Psalm 34:1-3

1st Scripture: 2 Samuel 1:1-16

2nd Scripture: 2 Samuel 1:17-27

Hymn #487- *Faith of Our Fathers*

Hymn #579- *Be Still My Soul*

Hymn #5 (Supp.)- *I Sing the Mighty Power of God*

Introduction:

Having just returned from slaughtering the Amalekites, and retrieving his wives and possessions from them, David receives word that Israel has suffered a great and tragic loss in her battle against the Philistines. And furthermore, Saul and his sons were killed in the battle. David and his men then tear their clothes, weep, mourn and fast until evening. It is a sad day for Israel and for Israel's first king, and so, David mourns for them.

In our text for this morning, the Holy Spirit has given us a lamentation to consider (an "Ode," as it were), written by David, as a means of commemorating, especially the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. And as we consider the content of this lamentation, I believe that it will ultimately tell us more about *David* than anyone else, though he himself is not a subject of the lamentation itself. This morning, we will consider then, this lamentation written by David, and in doing so, I hope that we might greatly benefit from viewing the heart that lies behind the ink, which penned it!

I. David's Mournful Reflection of Saul and Jonathan

[Read verses 17-18 again]. David penned this lamentation and spoke it in the presence of all who were with him (probably all of his men and their families). And as he addressed them, he prefaced his comments by exhorting them to train their children in the art of archery, that skill, which was mastered by the Philistines, and probably led to Israel's great defeat. This art was taught in the Book of Jasher, a book mentioned in Joshua 10:13 (when God caused the sun to stand still for a time), as well. It may be that various significant events and/or poems, along with important instructions, were written in this book. Whatever the case, it would seem to be that David prefaced his lamentation with an exhortation to his men, directing them to train their children in the art of war,

particularly with the use of the bow. [Otherwise, he might be exhorting them to teach their children the following lamentation, to be titled, "The Bow" or "The Song of the Bow"]

Let us then do a general survey of the lamentation, which David had written and spoken before the people:

1) Verses 19 and 27, the opening and concluding words of the song, give us the general word of mourning/lamentation, which David seeks to express. We might see them as the main "chorus" lines, as it were. And in between these two stanzas, we are given the specific details, which help explain the purpose of the general chorus.

"The beauty of Israel is slain on your high places! How the mighty have fallen!"...verse 27, "How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war perished." "We gather together to mourn, why? Because the mighty have fallen! Those who were of high regard and greatly esteemed among the people; the beauty of Israel; decorated warriors, have been killed on Israel's high places/mountains."

When a prominent, recognized, noble, and well respected figure dies in our country, generally a eulogy is given, perhaps followed by a moment of silence. Or when a large group of a country's citizens are unexpectedly killed, a traditional lamentation might be given on the anniversary of their death. The flag might be flown half staff, names of the slain may be read off...etc. [Examples: The 9/11 victims; JFK...etc]. Well here, David wants to highlight, especially Saul and Jonathan, on the billboard of Israel's renown, to be remembered as very important persons, who are no more. This is a certain call for Israel's tears of lamenting and mourning, as they suffer, what David considers to be a great and tragic loss. All who love Israel, in truth, therefore, will mourn. And what then are the details, which are attached to this main theme and chorus?

2) "Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon--lest the daughter of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph" (vs. 20).

Obviously, David knew very well, that news of Israel's defeat, and of the deaths of Saul and his sons would get back to all of the major Philistine cities. What he means by these words, is that he could wish that the news of Israel's great loss, would not be

permitted to get back to the Philistine cities. He is lamenting the utter shame and mockery, of which Israel would become the object, when the news of the battle made its way back to Gath, Ashkelon, and all of the Philistine cities. He mourns the fact that the ungodly; the uncircumcised heathen, would be given the opportunity to boast and rejoice in their triumph over the people of God! David's jealousy for the glory of God, and for the glory of His people Israel, provoked such grief in his heart.

3) "O mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew nor rain upon you, nor fields of offerings. For the shield of the mighty is cast away there! The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil" (vs. 21).

Again, David is not really hoping that Mount Gilboa would become and remain forever barren of vegetation, but rather, he is lamenting the terrible events that have happened there. Like Job, who could curse the womb that bore him, and the day of his birth (as if to wish it was skipped over in time), because of his present grief, David, as it were, desires the mountain, where Israel had fallen slain (where the soldiers had shamefully cast away their shields and fled, where Saul and his sons had died)...David desires, as it were, that that mountain would properly express and manifest its grief, by failing to receive rain, by producing no vegetation and nothing worthy of an offering for the Lord's Tabernacle. Something terrible has happened there; something shameful and heart wrenching has taken place there, and how could that place ever show signs of life and fruitfulness, as if to somehow decrease the significance of the event, by moving on. "For the shield of the mighty is cast away there!"

4) "From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not turn back, and the sword of Saul did not return empty" (vs. 32).

Here, David commemorates the valiant fighting of Saul and Jonathan. Jonathan did not flee away from the mighty, who were pursuing him, even when it was clear that the Israelites were losing the battle. He fought valiantly to the end, and died with great bravery and dignity. And Saul made use of his sword as well. Saul did not come up empty in the battle, his sword was not found clean, as if it found no use in striking the enemy. Both Jonathan and Saul fought the battle hard, and though they died, they boldly

took down some of their enemies. Again, David is here painting an honorary and respectful picture of bravery, so as to commend Saul and Jonathan for their valiance in the battle, even though they ultimately lost their lives, and Israel was defeated.

5) "Saul and Jonathan were beloved and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided; they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions" (vs. 23).

Here again, David commends Saul and Jonathan together, and following this, he will address them individually, before closing with the main choral theme. He notes that Saul and Jonathan were both loved by many and received as pleasant by the people (in general). And then, he again decorates them with high honor, using superlative language, as it were, describing the brave and valiant way, in which they have fought in battle. They were "swifter than eagles." They speedily came down upon their enemies and fearlessly attacked them. And they were "stronger than lions." They fiercely and powerfully overcame many, as they fought valiantly in the battle. [*They died together]

6) "O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with luxury; who put ornaments of gold on your apparel" (vs. 24).

Here we find one of the reasons that David describes Saul as the "beauty of Israel" in verse 19. During his reign, he helped advance them economically, and he led them to material success, such that they became a wealthy and prosperous people. David, here commends Saul for his success in this way.

7) "How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan was slain in your high places" (vs. 25).

David, again brings out that main choral line, as he transfers his attention from Saul (individually) to Jonathan (individually). He had highlighted their glory together. He had highlighted the glory of Saul as an individual. And now, he will highlight the glory of Jonathan (Saul's firstborn son) as an individual. This lamentation is meant to commemorate Israel as a whole, but it is especially given to commemorate the king and his first born son, both of whom have fallen on Mount Gilboa.

8) "I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; You have been very pleasant to me; your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women" (vs. 26).

While David could commemorate Saul in a favorable way, from the standpoint of Israel, he could not do so, in a personal way, without being dishonest. But Jonathan is different. David could address Jonathan, even (and especially) in a very personal way, because they had a precious and unique friendship. David grieved over Saul, especially in so far as he ruled over the people of God, and David's own kinsmen. But David was distressed over Jonathan, because of the very personal connection they had as friends. In fact, he here calls Jonathan, his "brother." Indeed, having been married to Michal, Jonathan's sister, might warrant this, but the love that David and Jonathan had for each other, far surpassed any bloodline connection. They enjoyed a closeness; indeed, a sweet fellowship in Christ, that exceeded even the love that a woman has for her husband. David experienced something with Jonathan, which he had not even experienced with his own wives. Now brethren, this has nothing to do with sexual intimacy, whatsoever (as we will confirm in a short time), but rather, it was a fervent and heartfelt commitment to each other, grounded in a very unique and precious fellowship, given them by God, in Christ! Again, we will address this kind of love further, in a few moments. Needless to say, David was weighed down, especially by the loss of Jonathan. He had intended on having Jonathan with him, by his side, when God was pleased to bring David to Israel's throne.

9) "How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war perished!" (vs. 27)

And again, here we have that concluding, choral phrase. The details have been given; the blanks have been filled in, and we are now led back to the general statement of lamentation. The "weapons of war" (the mighty ones in battle) have perished. "Weep with me, and let us lament and honor their precious memory!"

And so ends David's public lamentation, on behalf of Israel, Saul and Jonathan.

II. Concluding Thoughts and Applications

Brethren, let me then leave you with three concluding thoughts and applications:

1) Note the sincere love that David had for Israel, God's chosen people. David had a sincere love for his people, and he especially recognized the fact that God's glory (His Name) was attached to them. We find this to be true, both by the fact that David tore his clothes, fasted and wept on behalf of Israel, and also by the concern that he had for the reality that the uncircumcised Philistines would rejoice in their triumph over Israel.

You see, brethren, while we could say, "Yes, David loved Israel, because he himself was Jewish," I would say that the greatest pull on his heart, for the people of Israel, was that they were God's people. In other words, brethren, David was first and foremost concerned for the glory of God. And that being the case, Israel's loss and even Saul's death, brought grief to his heart.

Brethren, let me ask you, does the state of Christ's church concern you? When immorality or indifference or spiritual decline or scandal of any sort, erupts in the church, does that grieve you at all? Are you so consumed with the glory of Christ, that when the church hurts, you feel it; you mourn and you cry out to God on her behalf? Or is it only when you are "directly" affected, that you find this kind of grief within you? Are you zealous for the unity of the body of Christ, seeing that Christ's glory (that the authentic power of the Gospel itself) is attached to the church; that the church is that pillar and support, which has been ordained by God to uphold His truth...do you find yourself zealous for the unity and purity of the body in these lights? Does schism and conflict in the body, trouble you, or are you indifferent to it, or dare I say, even entertained by it? Do you find your lips quick to sow seeds of discord, by gossiping, or are you careful to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, seeing that the church is the apple of Christ's eye? David's love for Christ; his hunger and passion to see God glorified by a holy and pure Israel, drove him to grieve over her defeat, even though it opened the door for his own reign to begin. May God give us such a heart as this! May we plead with God for such a heart as this, brethren!

2) Notice, the way in which David laments and honors Saul, in this lamentation. Could not David have said, "Saul was an ungodly, envious, paranoid, rebellious king, who got what he deserved"? David had a lot of information on Saul; much negative

information, especially concerning Saul's unjust treatment of David himself, which he swallowed, leading him to rather honor Saul, in whatever way he could be honest in doing so.

In other words, brethren, David was able to cover the much that was unrelentingly wicked about Saul, while digging up the more positive things, and highlighting those things, as a means of honoring him. He could speak of his military valiance and bravery; he could speak of the way in which he fearlessly fought in battle (at times); he could speak of the way in which he decked Israel with beauty and material splendor, and he could do all of this, while holding back from pouring out the many horrible, wretched things that Saul had done. He doesn't mention what Saul did to the priests of Nob. He doesn't mention the ways in which Saul rebelled against God, leading to his loss of the throne and ultimate demise. He doesn't mention the ways in which Saul had lied, blasphemed God, and continually, unjustly hunted David down. He doesn't mention the fact that Saul was a madman, taunted by a distressing spirit...etc. Read again this lamentation, pretend you knew nothing of the chapters preceding this, and what impression has David given you about Saul?

And if David could do this with Saul, brethren; If David could do this with a man, who made himself David's greatest burden, thorn in the flesh and arch-enemy; if David could locate some good in Saul, and highlight it in the presence of all, so as to honor Saul at his death, I ask you, is it really that difficult to find the good in those, who are not our enemies, but rather our brethren in Christ!? Indeed, we all have sin, do we not? Spend a few months with me; live with me, and I will easily fill a few pages of hand written frustration for you to jot down, based on the unloveable things you find in me. We all have them, do we not? And, in the church, we could easily document all of the faults of others, forgetting our own faults, while neglecting to recognize their graces! I want to encourage you this morning, brethren, to examine your own heart, and to consider whether you are more apt to recognize the negatives in others, than the positives? I want to challenge us to pursue the good in others, while covering the bad, with a blanket of love. I am not saying that we ought not to confront each other regarding ongoing,

habitual sin, but rather, recognizing the graces, will lead us to even do that with a gracious and tender heart, sincerely concerned for the good of others, rather than seeking to enact some form of retribution upon them. If David can do this for an unsaved Saul, we ought to be able to do this for our brethren, who have been purchased as precious trophies of grace, by the precious blood of Christ.

And brethren, consider what God does for us! Look at the disastrously offensive lives we have lived; indeed, look even at our failures as redeemed children of God (in the present), and see how God treats us! What will happen when we stand before God, on the Day of Judgment, brethren? Will we, with our damnable, immeasurable weight of sin baggage, stand before God, only to hear the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord?" Will God recognize the minimal ways in which we have invested His talents, wholly by the use of His grace and by the total direction of His Spirit, giving us golden crowns, as it were, only to cast aside the mountainous vat of sinful offenses, we have committed against Him?! If we are to criticize David's lamenting of Saul, as beyond unbalanced, and as incomprehensibly gracious and favorable toward Saul, what ought we to say about anything positive God should say about us, brethren, when He is pure light, and within Him, there is no darkness at all? For David, we can add, "Well, David was not perfect, and so, he could easily extend grace to a like sinner," but we cannot say that about Christ, can we! Christ is an immeasurably bright light; He is the very purity of purity itself; He is the truth of truth, and what are we in comparison? Dung is too light and merciful a term, I think. Well, needless to say, brethren, I think we can find enough motivation in all of these contemplations, for highlighting the good and graces in our brethren (finding the best in them), while overlooking even many faults.

3) And then lastly, brethren, let's talk about the type of love which David had described, as existing between him and Jonathan; that love, which is better than the love of a woman. Some hypocritical, liberal, so-called "Christians" would dare rob this text of its true and proper glory, by attempting to make Jonathan and David, homosexual lovers

of some sort. What an absolute mountain of slander! What blasphemy of the text of Scripture!

Brethren, what we have here, is a marvelous picture, a shadowy illustration, of the type of love that Christ has for His people, that His people ought to have for Him, and that which ought to be exhibited in the love that is exchanged among the people of God, directed toward one another. Can any Christian here tell me that Christ's love is not infinitely greater than the "eros"; than the passionate love making that exists in the bed room of a married couple, or even in the marriage itself? No offense spouses, but is not Christ's love, far more precious to us, than the love that exists between us and anyone else, for that matter! Now, we would not dare insinuate that Christ's love for us is of a sexual nature, in any sense, would we? Men, you love Christ, and He loves you, and there is no thought of sexual intimacy at all, is there? And yet, that love is far stronger, indeed ought to be, far stronger than any other form of love that exists, even between a man and his wife.

Well, that love, which is exhibited between Christ and his people, is reflected in the love that his people have for each other. And there are times, where the experience of that kind of love, can be of a greater depth, than the love that is experienced between a man and a woman. It is a Christ-like love, which David and Jonathan shared...an example *par excellence* of the type of love, God desires to see His people share with one another. And that is what David means by these precious words, regarding the love, which he shared with Jonathan. To relate it to homosexuality, a gross and heinous crime (in the sight of God), is to take the loveliest flower of a well watered garden, and to bury it in manure! Let us rather rejoice in the reflection of Christ's love *for* and union *with* His people, which is revealed here, and let us see it as a barometer for the kind of love, God desires to see exhibited among His children, and within His church! Go back and process the friendship, which Jonathan and David had; return to the texts, which we have considered, and stick a spiritual hypodermic needle into each scene, draw from them all, and inject them into your own soul, and into the life of sincere, sacrificial love, which ought to be patterned in the life of this church, brethren!

The Gospel! [Regarding such love!]

AMEN!!!

The Lord's Supper!