

mp3/53/2 SAM. 1.MP3

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 July 2012

Preacher: Basil Howlett

[0 : 0 0] We're going to look at that passage we read from 2 Samuel chapter 1, 2 Samuel chapter 1, and particularly David's lament over Saul and Jonathan.

Disaster had struck in Israel on Mount Gilboa. The Philistines had attacked the Israelites, and there was a terrible, ferocious battle.

Many of the Israelites had fallen on the mountain slopes. Saul's son, Jonathan, and two of his other sons were killed.

The Philistine archers then surrounded the king Saul and wounded him critically. Saul was terrified that the Philistines would abuse and torture him, so he asked his armor-bearer to finish him off.

But the armor-bearer, honorable man that he was, wouldn't do such a thing. Didn't believe in euthanasia.

[1 : 0 9] So Saul fell on his own sword and killed himself. But the armor-bearer refused to do that.

Saul killed himself. The remnant of the Israelite army fled, and when the people in nearby towns saw that their armor had been crushed, they too fled from the towns, and the Philistines came and occupied them instead.

The Philistines cut off Saul's head, stripped off his armor, suspended his body on the walls of the city of Bashan, and sent messengers throughout the land proclaiming their victory.

And in their own pagan temples, they rejoiced at the slaughter of the Israelites. It was a terrible disaster.

The humiliating defeat of King Saul and his army. You can read all about that in 1 Samuel chapter 31. For years, Saul had hunted and hounded David, trying to kill him.

[2 : 2 2] For years, David had been on the run, living in Philistine territory. Saul was his arch-enemy. But now Saul was dead.

David didn't hear about it immediately. Remember, he was on the run, and he was staying in a place called Ziklag. But after a few days, a young fellow from Saul's army camp arrived at Ziklag.

It was obvious from this man's appearance that something was seriously wrong. He showed all the signs of Eastern mourning. His clothes were torn. He had dust on his head.

He fell to his knees before David to honor him. He then explained that the Israelite army had fled in defeat. Many of them had fallen and died.

And Saul and Jonathan were dead too. How do you know that Saul and Jonathan are dead? David asked. The young man then told the story.

[3 : 3 3] I was on Mount Gilboa, he said. And there was Saul leaning on his spear, with the Philistine chariots and riders almost upon him. He turned around and saw me, called out to me and said, and I said, what can I do?

He asked me who I was, and I told him I'm an Amalekite. He then asked me to kill him, because he was mortally wounded.

And that is what I did. I stood over him and killed him. Look, I took the crown from his head and the band that was on his arm, and I brought them here to you, my Lord.

That was the story told by this young man. Now you may be aware that there are major differences between his account of Saul's death, here in 2 Samuel 1, and the account given in 1 Samuel 31.

1 Samuel 31 says that Saul fell on his own sword and killed himself. But this fellow in 2 Samuel 1 says, I killed him, because he asked me to do so.

[4 : 51] Now modernists and others who deny the truth of the Bible leap on this text with great excitement, and look, they say, here they are, contradictions in the Bible.

There are mistakes in the Bible, and there's one of them. 1 Samuel 31 says one thing, 2 Samuel 1 says something else. The Bible can't be the word of God.

There are contradictions. But that is so foolish, so completely foolish. The fact is that this young fellow altered and embarrassed the account of Saul's death to try to ingratiate himself with King David.

He came across Saul's dead body on the battlefield. He was probably looting the dead bodies for valuables. And when he came across Saul's body, he took the crown and the bracelet from his arm.

And then because he knew that Saul was David's bitter enemy, he brought them to David and bowed before David and made up the story. Look, I brought the crown to you.

[6 : 04] I saw Saul, your enemy, and I've killed him. And he thought that would earn him brownie points with David because he said he'd killed King Saul.

After all, Saul was the person who stood in the way of David becoming King. David would surely praise him for the story that he made up.

But David wasn't at all impressed. David said to this young fellow, How dare you kill the Lord's anointed? How dare you do such a thing?

David ordered that he should be executed because he claimed to have killed King Saul. That was a made-up story.

Saul had actually killed himself. Then David went on to utter his lament for Saul and Jonathan, which is recorded for us in verses 19 to 27 of 2 Samuel.

[7 : 08] And that's what we're going to look at this evening. Later on, David had it written down in the book of Jeshua and called it the lament of the bow. And the order that men and women in Israel should be taught this lament over Saul and Jonathan is a very striking piece of poetic literature.

And we're going to look at it together. First, David's lament of King Saul. Then David's lament for Jonathan.

We might well have expected David to rejoice and be glad that Saul had at last gone. The young Amalekite fellow certainly expected David to rejoice and be glad.

After all, Saul was David's archenemy. Saul had tried to kill David on more than one occasion. Saul had made his life wretched.

Saul had forced David to be a fugitive for many years. You might expect David to say, well, good riddance, Saul. I'm glad you've gone. Glad to be rid of you.

[8 : 20] But no, we must never gloat or rejoice over the downfall of even our enemies. That's the sort of thing the world does.

That's the sort of thing the Philistines do. The Christians should never do that. The Bible says, Proverbs 24, verse 17, Do not gloat when your enemy falls.

When he stumbles, do not let your heart rejoice or the Lord will see it and disapprove. So when that person has caused you endless trouble, suddenly comes the grief.

You mustn't gloat over that. The Lord will see it and will disapprove. Instead of saying, good riddance, Saul, David gives the lament over Saul.

He wept. And he urged the daughters of Jerusalem to weep as well. Why? Why did David weep over the death of King Saul?

[9 : 35] Well, he wept because he regarded Saul's death as a great and terrible tragedy. That's obvious from the language he uses. He says, don't tell the people of the Philistine city of Gath that Saul has died.

Don't shout it aloud in the Philistine city of Ascalon. Don't mention it in these places. Otherwise, the daughters of the Philistines will be glad and rejoice.

A terrible tragedy has happened. In verse 21, David addresses in this poem the mountains of Gilboa. Mountains of Gilboa, he says, may you have neither dew nor rain.

May your fields be bad forever because there the shield of the mighty Saul was thrown away and defiled as though he had never been anointed.

All that is poetic language. But it's saying that the death of Saul was a terrible, terrible tragedy. That's why David wept.

[10 : 47] In what way was the death of Saul a terrible tragedy? Well, first of all, it was the tragedy of a man who finished up far away from God in total hopelessness and despair.

Saul had spent most of his life disobeying God, rebelling against God.

Go back to 1 Samuel 13. This is what God said to Saul through Samuel. God said to Saul, you have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandments of the Lord which he commanded you.

Chapter 15, verse 1 of 1 Samuel. Saul said, it grieves me that I've made Saul king because he's turned away from me and not carried out my instructions.

Saul's life was a life of terrible rebellion against Almighty God. He wouldn't listen to Samuel the prophet. He opposed David, the child of God, and he finished up in utter despair.

[12 : 12] Do you remember one of the last things Saul did was to go and visit the spiritus medium, the witch of Endor? 1 Samuel 28.

And sitting there in the medium's consulting room, he blurted out these words. I am in great distress. The Philistines are fighting against me and God has turned away from me.

God no longer answers me, either by prophets or dreams. So I call on you, the spiritus medium, to tell me what to do.

That's why David wept. Saul's death was the end of a man who rebelled against God time and time again.

See Saul dying on the battlefield, mortally wounded, taking his own life. His head severed, his body hung on the walls of Beth Shand.

[13 : 21] What a dreadful end. But that's a picture of his dreadful spiritual end too. A man who lived most of his life rebelling against God and his commands.

That's why David wept. My friend, can I ask you, is that the way you are heading? You're here in church. You thank God for that.

But most of your life, you live rebelling against God, ignoring his word, doing your own thing. Is that the way you're going?

Living a life of rebelling against God. Your end will be disastrous. But there were certain things that made Saul's end even more tragic than that.

things that must have increased David's sorrow. You see, Saul had a great deal going for him. David starts his lament over Saul by saying, how are the mighty fallen?

[14 : 34] Verse 19. It is to David's credit that in his lament he doesn't mention Saul's bad points. He recognizes that Saul had a lot going for him.

That's what made his end so much more tragic. So much going for him. For to start, Saul was a fit and strong and healthy man.

Verse 23. David says that Saul and his son Jonathan were swifter than eagles. Stronger than the lions. Saul was a strong, athletic, athletic, mature man if ever there was one.

1 Samuel 9 verse 2 tells us he was a head taller than most men. You see that man leading the procession of the United Olympic Games? One of the groups of countries?

Seven feet tall. Saul was something like that. Strong, athletic, mature man. It's good to be fit.

[15 : 42] It's good to be strong. It's good to be swift as an eagle. It's good to be athletic and good at sport. Saul cut a fine figure of a man when you looked at him.

But that made a spiritual failure even more acute and tragic. What's the point of being physically fit on earth when you're unfit for heaven?

What's the point of having a perfect body but a sinful soul? What's the point of winning gold at the Olympics in London?

Or winning at school sports day? But losing your own soul in hell? Are you faced after that? Maybe you're a fitness fanatic.

When they speak about you they say my word he's strong. My word he's as fit as a fiddle. How he can run so fast.

[16 : 59] Look at her how she can hit the tennis ball. So fit. But what's the point of being so fit on earth if you miss heaven?

Winning gold on earth but losing out on heaven. what should it prove a man if he wins all the prizes for fitness and agility and loses his own soul?

Furthermore secondly Saul had some great achievements military achievements leadership achievements. Verse 22 refers to some of his and Jonathan's achievements on the battlefield in earlier days.

The sword of Saul we're told did not return for the battlefield unsatisfied. Great achievements. 1 Samuel 14 verse 47 tells us how he achieved great victories over the Moabites and the Ammonites the Philistines and the Amalekites.

1 Samuel tells us how he delivered Israel from the hands of those who plundered them. make no mistake Saul had many fine achievements in his life and David recognizes them but that made his spiritual failures even more tragic.

[18 : 31] What's the point of being successful in the eyes of men if you're a failure in the sight of God? you may be a great success story academically but what's the point of gaining a first at the best university of the land if you fail to reach heaven?

That's what made Saul's end even more tragic. He had so much going for him. Great achievements following on from that Saul had reached a high position.

He'd been anointed as king. Verse 21 2 Samuel 1 is a lot of obscure but it mentions that Saul's shield had been defiled and cast away on Mount Gilber no longer rubbed or rather anointed with oil.

That's a reference to the way in which the king's shield was regularly anointed with oil. Not only to make it more shiny but to acknowledge the fact that this was the king's shield.

So Saul had reached a high position. He'd risen to be king of the land but all that ceased at Mount Gilber.

[19 : 57] His shield was no longer anointed with oil but he had been king. He'd risen to great heights in the land. David acknowledges that.

what's the point of gaining the highest position in the land if you finish up in the lowest position in hell?

Ever thought about that? Great ambitions to reach the top. Good for you. But what's the point of gaining the highest position on earth if you finish up in the lowest place in hell?

I go further. Saul did a lot of good to improve the lot of his people. You see David urges in his lament, David urges the daughters of Jerusalem to weep for Saul and he reminds them that during his reign he had improved their standard of living.

He'd done a great deal of good for them. He clothed them in scarlet and finery and adorned them with ornaments of gold. All credit to him for that. Saul had improved the lot of many of his people in Israel.

[21 : 20] he'd done a great deal of good. But you know you can do a great deal of good in your life and still finish up a total failure in the sight of Almighty God.

Are we clear about that? My friend, when it comes to the end of your life, they may write up the record of your life and they might mention the many good works that you've done, the many good things you've done, to improve the lot of other people.

You've given to charity, you've helped people in Africa, you've helped people in India, you've given away things and you've done a great deal of good for other people. Well done! But that won't earn your place in heaven.

You can do a great deal of good on earth and still finish up in hell because we're not saved by our good works at all.

Do you see the point I'm making? All these good things about Saul that David could list, his achievements, just underline the tragedy of this man.

[22 : 34] He had so much going for him, so fit, so strong, such an achiever, done great good. but he died, a rebel against God and was lost.

But the tragedy gets worse. Saul had had many opportunities to turn from sin and get right with God. You see, he'd heard the word of God many times.

Saul lived alongside Samuel, one of the greatest preachers of the Old Testament. We're told about Samuel that the Lord allowed none of his words to fall to the ground.

We're told about Samuel that all Israel, from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south, heard the word of God from Samuel. Many times Saul had heard Samuel preach the truth of God.

But he still finished up, a rebel, hopefully lost. Is there anything more tragic than that? Here's a man, here's a woman, living a life of sin and rebellion.

[23 : 54] They keep hearing the word of God. Time and time again they've heard the word of God in church. Time and time again they've heard the word of God at the funeral. Time and time again they've heard the word of God at a wedding.

Time and time again they've heard God's word but they continue to live in rebellion and die like that. That's why David wept.

Saul has had so many opportunities to hear the word of God. My friend, you may have had many opportunities to hear the word of God.

you may have heard the word of God every Sunday of your life almost but that doesn't make you a Christian. There have been people who've heard the word of God week after week after week but they've carried on living as rebels against God.

Saul was like that and David wept because of that. But it gets even worse. Now and again through his life, Saul's conscience had troubled him.

[25 : 09] The Holy Spirit had troubled him. There was that time, you remember, when David spared his life in the desert of Ziph. you remember 1 Samuel 26, Saul was asleep in the camp at night.

David could so easily have killed him but he spared him. And that convicted Saul had troubled him that he'd been so vicious to David but David had spared his life.

And Saul cried out on that occasion, I've acted like a fool. I've heard greatly. I've sinned. He knew that. Convicted.

But he still went on, for betting against God. I can remember in my unconverted days, being taken by someone to hear Stephen Alford, a preacher in a big hall in the center of knowledge.

And Stephen Alford was a powerful preacher. And I can remember that speaking to me and saying, what a sinner you are. But I went on, rebelling against God.

[26 : 33] Saul did that all his life, hearing God's word but carrying on rebelling. That's what made his life so tragic. That's why David wept.

He had so much going for him. But died in utter despair. Poor Saul, says David, weep for him.

Daughters of Jerusalem, weep for him. He had so much going for him. He was fit and strong and tall and handsome.

He had great achievements on the battlefield. He won all the awards. He reached the highest position in the land. He'd heard the word of God so many times. But he's dead and gone and he's died, a rebel against the Lord.

Don't hear like that. My dear friend David, weep over you. Can I tell you more? David is a preacher of a greater than himself.

[27 : 40] he's a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. And you remember Jesus Christ wept over Jerusalem. Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I would have gathered you to me, but you wouldn't.

You carried on in your stubborn rebellion even though you were so privileged. that is David's lament over Saul.

Let's turn now to David's lament over Jonathan. His lament for Jonathan. Verse 25. How the mighty have fallen in battle.

Jonathan lies slain on your heights. I grieve for you, Jonathan, my brother. My brother. You were very dear to me.

your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women. How the mighty have fallen. David's lament for Jonathan.

[28 : 50] grief was genuine. It was a different kind of grief to that which he felt for Saul. With regard to Saul, David's grief was sincere, it was genuine, but it was so hopeless and despairing because Saul had been so rebellious, an enemy of God and of the truth.

He genuinely agreed to Saul. But there was no hope in it. But with Jonathan, David recognized that he was a child of God, a believing brother and friend.

Jonathan was someone who'd shown him special love, Christian love. Sadly, there are some these days who misuse that phrase about love in verse 26.

your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women. They tried to make out that David and Jonathan had a homosexual relationship, but that is false, that is vile, that is awful.

That's twisting scripture. It means nothing of the kind. David and Jonathan were both full-blooded men, full of male hormones, and they were both married men.

[30 : 15] what David is saying here is that Jonathan was a very special believing friend who had shown him Christian love and affection.

True Jonathan, like his father, was mighty and strong. True Jonathan, like his father, was swifter than the eagle and stronger than the lion.

Jonathan, like his father, was a man of courage, who had great military achievements. He was a fine archer, his bow didn't turn back, and so forth.

David admired all that and lamented the fall of such a mighty man. But the thing about Jonathan was this, that Jonathan was a believing brother, a friend in the Lord.

David lamented his loss. It's sad, isn't it, to lose fellow believers like that. It's like losing a member of the family, God's family.

[31 : 23] It's sad to lose their encouragement and to lose their help and to lose their support. How Jonathan had encouraged David during those terrible days when David was a fugitive from Saul.

You remember that wonderful statement in 1 Samuel 23 verse 16, Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him to find strength in the Lord.

Jonathan was a fine believing brother. It was natural for David to grieve over him. There is nothing wrong with such grief and sorrow.

sorrow. I once walked out of a hospital early one morning with a poor widow. We had sat by her husband's bed most of the night watching him die.

Obviously she was very, very distressed. I was distressed too. He was our church secretary and he was only 50 years of age.

[32 : 30] I was walking out of the hospital with this poor widow. On the hospital steps we met one of these bright and breezy Christians. cheer up he said to her you look so miserable.

I said just a moment Sybil has just lodged yours her husband. And then this insensitive Pharaoh said if we're Christians we shouldn't be weeping.

That is nonsense. That is false. Our Lord Jesus Christ wept over the death of his friend Lazarus.

We're not insensitive as Christians. When we meet people that are weeping we weep with them. And there's nothing wrong in weeping over the death of a dear Christian brother or sister.

We miss them. We love them dearly and they were such an encouragement to us. David laments over Jonathan because of that. Jonathan was a true believer but it's not a despairing kind of grief.

[33 : 47] You remember 1 Thessalonians 4 verse 13 we grieve but we do not grieve like those who have no hope. David knew that Jonathan had gone to heaven.

True Jonathan's body lay somewhere on Mount Gilboa but David knew that his soul had already gone to heaven. After all David was the man who wrote the 23rd Psalm surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and then I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

David knew that when he died he would be in the house of the Lord forever and David knew that now his friend Jonathan had died he was in the house of the Lord forever so we grieve over the loss of a friend and a brother but we do not grieve without hope.

We know this dearly beloved brother will be there in heaven. That's why there's all the difference in the world between the funeral of an unbeliever and the funeral of believers like any pastor I've taken many funeral services for unbelievers and I've taken many funeral services for believers and there's all the difference in the world between them.

There is grief in both of them but the first like Saul amid the grief there is no hope at all.

[35 : 29] In a believer's case like Jonathan there is grief but there's also hope. We know that this person is now with the Lord.

The sadness is alleviated and illuminated by hope. In the case of a believer you can not only refer to their earthly achievements he was a good accountant he was a good solicitor he was good at sport he won many medals in sport you not only refer to those things but you can say ah yes he was also a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and all his sin was forgiven and now he's in heaven.

She was a wonderful mother yes she was a wonderful cook yes but more than that she was a sister in Christ and she's now the Lord. Do you see David's lament over Saul hopeless?

The tragedy of Saul had so much going for him but he had no hope. The tragedy of Jonathan he was a fine fit young man ah but more than that he was a brother in the Lord he was a true believer and he's now with the Lord in heaven.

What I'm asking really this evening is this my friend when your end comes will it be one of hopelessness and despair or hope and certainty?

[37 : 09] Will you go to eternal remorse in hell or to an eternal home in heaven? There's no more important question for you to answer than that.

years ago people used to be asked where will you spend eternity? It's a bit old fashioned to answer that question now but it's still important.

Where will you spend eternity? How can I be sure how can I make sure that my death will not be a tragedy of despair like Saul's?

How can I make sure that I'll die in hope like Jonathan and go to heaven? There's only one way. This man David had a great and wonderful descendant the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ is often referred to as great David's greater son. He was and is the son of David by human birth.

[38 : 21] He was and is the son of God because he was equal with God the Father and lived in heaven. The son of God came into this world and became the son of David.

He didn't cease to be the son of God. He became the son of David by human birth. and he lived a perfect life. And then he died upon the cross.

And when he died upon the cross he bore the punishment of sinners like you and me to take away our sin in order that we might be forgiven and go to heaven when we die.

There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin. He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in. And if we trust in him when we die it won't be the tragic end that Saul's was.

When we die if we trust in Christ we'll go on immediately to be with him forever and forever. So my friend trust in him if you've never done so believe in him ask him to forgive your sin and to put you right with God.

[39 : 41] like Saul you may have spent many years rebelling against God. Like Saul you may have heard the word of God many times but you refused it and turned your back on it.

Well turn from that tonight and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. Plead with him to be your Lord and Savior. Do it if you like in the words of our last hymn abide with me fast falls the even tide the darkness deepens Lord with me abide when other helpers fail and comforts flee help of the helpless or abide with me swift to its close ebbs out life's little day earth's joys grow dim its glories pass away all your gold medals its glories pass away change and decay all around I see oh thou who changes not abide with me I fear no foe with thee at hand of breath ills have no weight and tears no bitterness where is death's thing where grave your victory I triumph still if thou abide with me ask him to be your

Savior ask him to make you ready for that great day when your life will be called away father we thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus Christ we praise you that through him we can be saved we thank you that through him we can be ready to die father we realize that we could be called away at any time Saul was an older man Jonathan was a younger man both were called away at the same time help us to be ready for that momentous day father help us if we've never done so to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ help us to realize that to be religious is not enough to be self-righteous is not enough help us to realize that Jesus

Christ is our only hope in his name we pray amen