

08-20-17 – Conflict with Grief

1 Sam. 31 – 2 Sam. 3

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Epitaph: Here lies the bones of Mary Jones, for her life had no terrors; she lived and old maid; she died an old maid. No runs, not hits, no errors.

Epitaph: To follow you I'm not content, until I know which way you went.

Many handle death through humor. A bumper sticker read, "Don't take life so seriously. You won't get out of it alive."

Woody Allen said this... "It's not that I'm afraid to die. I just don't want to be there when it happens."

An Old Lady went to the tombstone-cutter's office to order a stone for her husband's grave. After explaining that all she wanted was a small one with no frills, she told him to put the words, "To My Husband," in a suitable place. When the stone was delivered she saw, to her horror, this inscription: "**To My Husband – In a Suitable Place.**"

Harry Truman told the story of a man who was hit on the head and fell into a deep coma. He stayed there for a long time. People thought he was dead so they sent him to a funeral home and stuck him in a coffin. At two o'clock in the morning, all alone in this dimly lit room, he sat up and looked around. "Good night!" he said. "What going on? If I'm alive, why am I in a casket? And, if I'm dead, why do I have to go to the bathroom?" -James Hewett

I know death is not something to joke about, and grief is one of the strongest emotions we can experience. Today, we're going to look further at the life of David and his conflict with grief.

"Our world is filled with grief. Some mourn the loss of a loved one; others the loss of a marriage or of good health. Millions grieve because of famine, earthquakes, or the devastation of disease. Ours is a world of sorrow." - Erwin W. Lutzer

Grief can be a good thing. It can be a way of God preparing us to enter a new place of existence. Grief can plague us if incorrectly handled. We can get stuck in the past. I have a sister who is in this state since our mom died in 1999. She just can't get past it all. It's not good; it's unhealthy; it's not what God wants for us. "*What we believe determines how we grieve.*" - Lutzer

King Saul and his sons are now dead. David mourns the death of Saul and his best friend Jonathan. *“His conflict with Saul is over; the friendship with Jonathan is past. It is time to mourn, to contemplate the past, and to think of what might have been. It is also time to think about tomorrow.”* - Lutzer

Let's look at some experiences David went through...

The Experience of Shock

Experiencing the death of a loved one is probably one of the deepest emotions we can face. Whether sudden or expected, the finality of the death brings us to our knees with devastation. I have experienced both in the same year in 1999. In May 1999 my close friend and mentor in the faith faced bypass surgery. We visited him in the hospital beforehand, prayed for him, and expected all to be just fine. This surgery is now routine. What could go wrong? The next day, we were told that George didn't make it – WHAT? How could this happen? We experienced SHOCK at his death. The same month and year, my mother was diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer (never a smoker). Her death was more prolonged, but in Sept. 1999 she went to be with the Lord. They went to be with the Lord, because they were believers in Christ, but it was still devastating. Whether prepared or not, death is still a shock to most. The finality is surreal.

Jonathan and his brothers were killed in the battle and Saul was badly wounded by archers. He asked his armor bearer to kill him since he was so badly wounded, and he didn't want the Philistines to find him this way and torture him. His armor-bearer could not do it, so Saul fell on his own spear and committed suicide. When the armor-bearer saw this, he fell on his sword and committed suicide as well. They were pretty barbaric back then – and gutsy.

The Philistines cut off Saul's head and took his weapons and paraded them around the city. The bodies of Saul and Jonathan were hung on the wall of the city in disgrace.

A young Amalekite came to David with Saul's jewelry to tell him Saul was dead. He brought the items to prove it was Saul. David recognized these items as Saul's and knew that Saul would have to be dead before letting someone else have these. David experienced shock! No matter how difficult these past 10 years had been running from this madman, David was still in shock when Saul was actually killed. The young Amalekite said this to David...

2 Sam. 1:6-10 (NLT) - *The man answered, “I happened to be on Mount Gilboa, and there was Saul leaning on his spear with the enemy chariots and charioteers closing in on him. ⁷When he turned and saw me, he cried out for me to come to him. ‘How can I help?’ I asked him.*

⁸ *“He responded, ‘Who are you?’*

“‘I am an Amalekite,’ I told him.

⁹ *“Then he begged me, ‘Come over here and put me out of my misery, for I am in terrible pain and want to die.’*

¹⁰ *“So I killed him,” the Amalekite told David, “for I knew he couldn’t live. Then I took his crown and his armband, and I have brought them here to you, my lord.”*

David, shocked at the news, did the normal thing in his time and culture...

2 Sam. 1:11-12 NLT – *David and his men tore their clothes in sorrow when they heard the news. ¹² They mourned and wept and fasted all day for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the LORD’s army and the nation of Israel, because they had died by the sword that day.*

It’s hard to tell if the Amalekite’s testimony was true or fabricated. He could have found Saul not quite dead yet and finished him off as he said, or maybe Saul was actually dead already, and the Amalekite took his crown and bracelet to look like a hero to David for killing his enemy. In either case, David was angry in his shock and responded with grief and violence.

2 Sam. 1:14 NLT - *“Why were you not afraid to kill the LORD’s anointed one?” David asked.*

“Since David himself would not touch the Lord’s anointed, he was angry that someone else had the audacity to do so.” ... “When we hear the news of the death of a friend or relative our first reaction is shock, a sense of disbelief.” -Lutzer

The Experience of Reflection

Even though Saul turned out to be a madman in pursuit of David for years, David knew him well and remembered how things used to be when Saul took David into his home. Saul provided David the opportunity to go up against the giant, which propelled David’s popularity among all Israel.

Jonathan, the king’s son, loved David unconditionally. There was no jealousy, no animosity, just unconditional and caring love toward David. Now Jonathan was dead, and David felt the loss deeply.

Did you ever notice that at a memorial service, the deceased are always elevated and praised? We look only at the good they have done and not the bad or the hurt caused. So, David

eulogized Saul and Jonathan and spoke of how they were loved, and how beautiful they were together. He didn't mention that Saul threw a spear at his son to kill him while enraged. David expressed concern that their deaths would cause their enemies to gloat...

2 Sam. 1:19-20 NLT - *Your pride and joy, O Israel, lies dead on the hills! Oh, how the mighty heroes have fallen! Don't announce the news in Gath, don't proclaim it in the streets of Ashkelon, the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice and the pagans will laugh in triumph.*

Next, David concentrated on the good memories he had of them both.

2 Sam. 1:23 NLT - *How beloved and gracious were Saul and Jonathan! They were together in life and in death. They were swifter than eagles, stronger than lions.*

Finally, David brought a tribute to the only man who really loved him...

2 Sam. 1:26-27 NLT – *How I weep for you, my brother Jonathan! Oh, how much I loved you! And your love for me was deep, deeper than the love of women! Oh, how the mighty heroes have fallen! Stripped of their weapons, they lie dead.*

David reflected on the good. He reflected even on his own role in all this, and how he remained loyal to the king and to God. The men who came with him were volunteers in loyal service to David. **David now knew that the years of waiting had been worthwhile.**

The Experience of Understanding

David attempted to understand the deaths of Saul and Jonathan from God's perspective. We can't do that or go there. However, we all try to answer that ever-nagging question, WHY? In our time today, we wrestle with the question, WHY?, forever regarding death. In Saul's time, God spoke to let us know why, and then we can apply that many times to our current question.

1 Chron. 10:13-14 NLT – *So Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD. He failed to obey the LORD's command, and he even consulted a medium instead of asking the LORD for guidance. So the LORD killed him and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse.*

Seems pretty clear why Saul died – Right?

“Just as God killed Nabal, so also God killed Saul, using the Philistines to accomplish His will. Nabal died of a heart attack; Saul died by the sword; but both died as appointed by God. Their deaths were divine judgment. The lives of the wicked are often cut short when God chooses to end their rebellion.” -Lutzer

What about Jonathan? We don't see anything he did wrong or in rebellion to God. WHY? The lives of the just are sometimes linked to the lives of the wicked. We can't answer the WHY question. The death of all people is ultimately subject to a divine plan that includes: accidents, disease, murder, and even war. Even Jesus, who died as a victim of murder or assignation or execution, died at the appointed time set by God. All of us will die in God's plan as well.

David felt the deep sting of losing a friend (as many of us have felt). But it was all part of the training program of God to prepare him for the next phase of his life and position.

The Experience of Rebuilding

Someone said, "A man can put off making up his mind, but he can't put off making up his life." As long as one is alive, life is to be lived. A business man prayed, "O God, keep me alive until I die."

David, not knowing what to do now, inquired of the Lord – prayer! We are praying for what to do now. Please join us for 15 minutes before service for prayer for our service, our church, our future. God is waiting to hear from us.

God answered David's prayer...

2 Sam. 2:1-4 NLT – *After this, David asked the LORD, "Should I move back to one of the towns of Judah?"*

"Yes," the LORD replied.

Then David asked, "Which town should I go to?"

"To Hebron," the LORD answered.

David's two wives were Ahinoam from Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal from Carmel. So David and his wives and his men and their families all moved to Judah, and they settled in the villages near Hebron. Then the men of Judah came to David and anointed him king over the people of Judah.

In an attempt to rebuild, Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was anointed king over Israel (north country). His name means "man of shame." David was king over Judah (south country). This meant civil war among the Hebrew people (North vs. South). They decided to have a contest rather than a civil war. Warriors were sent out against each other, but it ended in a tie – all 24 died on each side. A long war took place between the house of Saul and the house of David (sound familiar?) David grew stronger while Saul grew weaker. Lots of bloodshed, and the war ended.

All acknowledged David as king over all Israel. This occurred 14 years after David was anointed the next king of Israel by Samuel. The promises of God are sure, but we may have to wait years for them to take place. Don't give up on that promise you hear god make to you. It is still in the works. God is faithful and will bring it to pass at just the right time. His time.

In David's darkest moment during this process, he wrote some of the best poems/songs that would sooth hearts of millions all throughout history to this day. Only God could make something like this happen.

Lessons on Death and Dying

"The deaths of Saul and Jonathan remind us that ultimately only God can evaluate a man's life."
- Lutzer

So, what is the outcome of Saul? He was God's appointed and anointed first king of Israel. He went off along the way, but... where does he stand with God for eternity? We don't know. We want everything to be very definitive, and we pass judgment accordingly, but only God knows the heart of the dead. God gave Saul the Spirit to prophesy on several occasions. On the other side, Jonathan seemed all good, but still his eternal destiny lies with God alone.

Saul lived and died a vengeful man, steeped in jealousy. He never fully repented. He tried to repent five times, but it was not totally sincere. What about you? How sincere is your repentance?

Ultimately, our eternal destiny is in God's hands, and we need to live a life of trust in God on earth. God sustained David during his heavy time of grief, and He comforted him in his sorrow.

David wrote:

Ps. 27:1-3 NLT – *The LORD is my light and my salvation— so why should I be afraid? The LORD is my fortress, protecting me from danger, so why should I tremble? When evil people come to devour me, when my enemies and foes attack me, they will stumble and fall. Though a mighty army surrounds me, my heart will not be afraid. Even if I am attacked, I will remain confident.*

This was David's conflict with Grief, but we all grieve.

"In a world of change, God is the one constant who is always there when we need Him. Our grief and fears are under His providential control." - Lutzer