

## **2 SAMUEL 1** **WEEP FOR SAUL**

This seems a small thing, but it reveals big things about my heart - and maybe yours.

You are driving, and you are trying to obey the speed limit. Someone blows by you - quickly and even recklessly.

You say to yourself, "I really hope a police officer is around the next bend, with his radar gun on. Wouldn't it be great, in a couple of miles, to drive past that guy, pulled over? I might have to honk, or even wave and smile, as I go by."

Maybe that guy deserves a ticket, but what am I revealing about myself, with thoughts like that? I possess the human instinct to wish not only justice, but even harm, to come to the one who has harmed me. Get him good.

As we read through the Old Testament, we are at a turning point. God is relating to his people Israel, yet his plan is for all nations to know and follow a Savior from Israel, named Jesus. That plan will leap forward, as God places a young man named David upon the throne of Israel.

But first, we read the story of Saul and David, and at the end of this story, we discover something of David's heart, as he lives before the Lord.

In 2 Samuel 1, David hears of Saul's death, and he weeps. Saul has sought to harm him, in far more ways than someone speeding past us, and David responds to Saul's death, by weeping.

**WHY SHOULD DAVID WEEP FOR SAUL?** If you know the story, you will surely ask this question.

You read through the last half of the first book of Samuel, and you read the strange and sad tale of these two men.

Here is how it starts: **SAUL DISOBEYS, AND DAVID SERVES.**

As we saw last week, the Israelites want a king, so Samuel appoints Saul as king. But soon things begin to fall apart.

First, Saul offers a burnt offering, against Samuel's clear instruction. Priests were supposed to offer these offerings, not kings.

Then, Saul takes some of the "profits" from a military victory, against Samuel's clear instruction. These "profits" were to have been destroyed.

Saul disobeys, and the Lord rejects Samuel as king, and tells Samuel to anoint David as the next king. But David will not become king until Saul dies.

Then we read of how David enters Saul's service. Saul is a tortured soul, but when David plays the harp for Saul, Saul's soul is soothed.

Saul disobeys, and David serves.

Then **SAUL DESPISES, AND DAVID SUFFERS.**

David slays the giant Goliath. The women dance and sing, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands!" Saul grows jealous. He tries to kill David, then he begins to pursue David all over Israel and beyond.

David must flee. He and his band of men must beg for food and shelter. They must seek refuge in different places, including in the land of the hated Philistines, for if the armies of Saul capture David, he will be killed.

Yet David can change this. He can be rid of Saul. Not once, but twice, he has a golden opportunity to take Saul's life, but he refuses, for he wants no part of taking the life of God's anointed king.

We sense David's suffering, as we read Psalms such as Psalm 57: "Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for in you my soul takes refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings, until the disaster has passed..."

"I am in the midst of lions; I lie among ravenous beasts - men whose feet are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords."

David serves Saul, but Saul despises David, and David suffers.

But then, in the last chapter of 1 Samuel, the army of Israel goes to war. Saul is wounded in battle, and he takes his own life.

A messenger comes from the battle, and he tells David that Saul is dead. The messenger wants to get on the good side of David, so he lies and says he killed Saul. The next king should rejoice. He might reward me.

But instead, David weeps. In his grief, he orders the death of this man, who seems to have taken the life of the Lord's anointed king.

David weeps. We say, why? Why should David weep for Saul? Why should David weep for

this one who has made him suffer?

If you listen to your heart, and if you listen to the hearts of the people around you, and if you listen to the heart of our culture, he should not weep. He should rejoice! He should sing, dance and proclaim how glorious it is, that the corpse of his enemy lies rotting on the slopes of Mount Gilboa.

Yet he weeps. Why? WHY DOES DAVID WEEP FOR SAUL?

We read his lament. We understand why he weeps for Jonathan. This son of Saul has been the best of friends to David. But why weep for Saul?

I offer two reasons. I believe I see a heart in David, that is the heart of his Son Jesus, and that should be our heart, toward people who harm us.

First, David weeps, because of HIS PASSION FOR GOD.

This passion is a passion for God's plan, and a passion for God's glory.

Listen to his passion for God's plan: "Your glory, O Israel, lies slain on the heights." As we saw last week, God sticks with his plan, even when his people make bad choices. God's plan has been for Saul to defend his people.

David could have seized the kingdom. David could have installed himself as the king of Israel. Saul was deeply flawed and ultimately rejected. But God's plan was to keep Saul in power, for a season. In God's plan, Saul was "Israel's glory." Now he is dead. So David weeps.

Now listen to his passion for God's glory: "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."

What are Gath and Ashkelon? God's enemies live there. They will hear about Saul's death, and they will proclaim victory for themselves, and victory for their gods, over the God of Israel. So in David's passion for God's glory, he weeps.

The story is told of a day in 1944, when a German general was to visit a town in France. The Germans had conquered and destroyed France, and most of the French worked quietly but tirelessly to resist and defeat the Germans.

On this day, the word went out from the Germans to the French: when the German general appears, you will raise your caps toward him, to display your respect for him, in a salute to him.

"Very quickly," said a Frenchman who was there, "the word was spread, and when (the general) came, there was not a single man...wearing a cap or hat..." So no one saluted him.

They would salute no other. In their passion for their homeland, they would salute no other. In David's passion for his Lord, he could only weep when he pondered people saluting false gods.

Why did David weep for Saul? His passion for God. But also, I believe David weeps for Saul, because of his compassion for people.

David's compassion is not flawless! We wonder at his lack of compassion for this messenger. Yet his heart is upon Saul and Jonathan. As he thinks about their deaths, he laments with compassion.

Again, we easily understand his compassion for Jonathan, his great friend. But how amazing it is, that we also see such compassion for Saul.

Why? David knew both Saul's brokenness, and his greatness.

Saul had been a mystery, a frustration, and a threat. David had fought anxiety and anger, as he suffered at the hands of this broken man.

Yet in the midst of that brokenness, David saw greatness. "Saul and Jonathan," he declared, "in life they were loved and gracious, and in death they were not parted. They were swifter than eagles; they were stronger than lions."

Somehow, David saw God's image in this broken man. Even with all he had suffered at Saul's hands, David could appreciate how God had gifted and used Saul, in carrying out his sovereign and perfect plan. He saw the tragedy that beset Saul's soul, but he also saw the nobility in Saul's life, and he wept at his demise.

Speaking of France...after General Eisenhower, the U.S. military, and the allies freed France from Nazi Germany, we would forever remember the day it all began as D-Day.

Twenty years later, Eisenhower returned to the beaches of France. He was asked what he thought about when he saw those beaches. Was it planes, ships, guns, tanks? No, said Eisenhower, he thought of the families of all the men buried there. He thought of how blessed he was to have grandchildren - and how so many couples in our land never had that blessing, because their son was buried in France.

That is compassion for people. That is in David's heart.

By God's grace, can it be in our hearts? Can we have such a passion for God, and a compassion for people, that we would weep over the "Sauls" in our lives?

\* You are a young person, and you have a fellow student, who is nothing but trouble. Words cannot express the pain she causes you, as she messes with peoples' minds, cheats on tests, demands attention, and generally gives out large doses of misery on a daily basis.

Then she gets what she has coming. Suspension. Even expulsion. Even better, humiliation. She is a fool for all to see.

Maybe she deserves it. But what is in your heart? You want to laugh. You want to mock. You want to gloat.

But instead, with a passion for God, you keep quiet, for you know your Savior does not rejoice in the demise of the wicked, or even the irritating.

With a compassion for her, you pray for her. Maybe you even try to encourage her. She is a broken young person, but she is also made in God's image, and who knows what God may have for her? Will you weep for Saul?

\* You are young or not-so-young, and you have been the victim of abuse. Maybe horrible abuse. Maybe indescribable abuse.

The abuser is caught. The abuser is sentenced. The abuser will live a miserable life, and the abuser will die a miserable death, in or out of prison.

The sentence is right. You can do nothing, and you should do nothing, to rescue this person from the results of his crimes. But what is in your heart?

Does it glorify God, to fill your heart with hatred, and feed that hatred with the thoughts within you, and the words that flow from you? Or can you express your passion for God, by praising him for how he has helped you to go forward from this? Can you express your compassion, even for him, while you express an attitude of forgiveness, even if he will not admit his sin? What a waste of a life! Will you weep for Saul?

\* You feel old, for your spouse is now your former spouse, and you see his addictions and actions ruling him, even killing him. You see how this is crushing your children, and you know there is much to repair, in their broken hearts.

He may well die in his addictions, and from his addictions. But what is in your heart?

With a passion for God in your heart, you cry, "O Lord, somehow redeem what seems so senseless. Change my heart, that I might love you more.

"Change my heart, that I might weep for him, and pray for him, and please you when I see him." Will you weep for Saul?

\* Young or old, this is getting old. Someone claims to follow Jesus Christ, but has brought shame to his name. Sex. Money. Whatever else.

What is in your heart?

Will you weep, because this will encourage people to reject the true God, and give them an excuse for continuing to follow their false "gods"?

Will you weep, because of the wreck that will be made of a church, or of a family, or even of just a man?

You want to gloat, even in this. You want to say, "Boy, I am glad that I would never do that. I am so pleased, that I am so much better."

But what does that reveal about the pride in your heart? Will you weep for Saul?

Maybe you are thinking, what about those Psalms where David and others seem pretty happy about the demise of the wicked?

Justice is good. Justice is right. In all of these examples, justice may have been served.

But ultimately, the issue for you and me is whether we have a passion for God and a compassion for people. Even if we are glad to see justice, we ought to weep over the brokenness of someone who is made in God's image, but who is now but a shell of that image, for he or she has wasted such gifts and graces, and given them to the service of hell.

Will you weep for Saul? Will I weep for Saul? How will we weep for Saul? It's easy to stand here and say, or sit there and hear. But will it happen?

When you read into the next chapter, you read of David's anointing as the king over the tribe of Judah. Soon he will be anointed king over all of Israel.

Then what? His sons would reign, until a Son of David would come, who would say things like this:

"...I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."

Then this Son of David would do this. He would love his enemies, do good to those who hated him, bless those who cursed him, and pray for those who mistreated him, even as he suffered and died on the cross for them.

In the end, David is not the hero in this story.

But his heart directs our hearts, as it directs our hearts to Jesus Christ, who would weep over the sins of sinners, then die for sinners, like you and me.

How will we weep over Saul? As we walk with the One who wept over the Sauls of the universe, then died and rose for them.

This is hard. If you think this is hard, then Jesus Christ has you right where he wants you. Only his Spirit can change your heart, so that you will weep for Saul.

And when he does this, what will be your testimony to Jesus?

What will be the radical, life-changing proclamation you offer, as you weep for the Saul in your life, instead of mocking the Saul in your life?

What do you tell others of Jesus, when you weep over the demise of those you have called your enemies?

How do you honor Jesus, when you admit that you are no better, but he is so great, because he is so merciful?

Where is the Saul in your life? In your workplace? On your street? In your school? In this place? In your home?

You want to say, "Get him!" "Get her!" "Harm him, for he has so badly harmed me!"

But because of Jesus, and with the help of Jesus, you weep for Saul.

And you pray that as you weep, you will show a little more of Jesus to the people in your life - even to Saul.