

## 2nd Samuel Introduction and Chapter 1 – John Karmelich

1. Do you have to be perfect in order to please God? How about 80% of the time? ☺
  - a) Why would you want to be pleasing to God? The answer is that if you truly love someone, you want to make them happy. That applies to God as well as those we love.
  - b) If you want to know how to be pleasing to God, David is a great character to study. David is the main character of 2nd Samuel. One of the most interesting facts about King David is that God said, “He (David) was a man after my own heart.” (1st Samuel 13:14).
    - i) Yet we have read in First and Second Samuel of David murdering, lying, adultery, violating biblical worship laws and treason against Israel. Those things don’t look good on a resume to be the King of Israel, let alone pleasing God. ☹ Yet God, who knew all these things in advance about David before God declared the famous statement about David, “A man after my own heart”.
  - c) So the question is, “What is it about David that makes him a man after his own heart? David’s far from perfect and the bible records lots of sinful things he did.”
    - i) The bible says more about the personality traits of David than any other character, except Jesus himself. That is more than Abraham, Noah, and more than Moses. A question to ponder is “Why does the bible spend so much time on David?”
    - ii) The answer again, is David is a “man after God’s own heart”. Despite David’s shortcomings, David is pleasing to God. David is meant to be studied so we can learn how we can be men and women after God’s own heart.
    - iii) That is the overriding lesson of 1st Samuel and 2nd Samuel. We read of David’s ups and downs and realize that God does not expect perfection, but he does want us to seek Him always. Yes there are consequences for sin and David suffers greatly for what he did. Yet, we never read of God “giving up” on David like God in a sense “gave up” on King Saul and told Saul that one day you will no longer be king.
    - iv) David is a “man after God’s own heart” as David constantly sought God through all he did. David was aware that he was accountable to God for all he did. David spent his free time writing praise songs (Psalms) to God. David sought God’s council for every major decision of his life. This was a man after God’s own heart!
2. With all that said, welcome to my study of Second Samuel. For those who weren’t with me in First Samuel, or just have short-term memories, ☺ let’s review a few of the key facts:
  - a) First of all, 1st and 2nd Samuel was originally just “Samuel”. In some Jewish bibles, there is just “Samuel”. The Christian bible breaks it up into two separate volumes. Both the Hebrew Bible and the Christian bible use the same original text.
  - b) The book is called “Samuel” as the prophet Samuel is a key character in the early chapters of First Samuel. He anoints the first two kings of Israel: Saul and David. He anointed David prophetically as a boy, announcing he would be king one day. The prophet Samuel was recognized as one of the great spiritual leaders in Israel.
  - c) The author is unknown. “Tradition” is the book was composed partially by Samuel himself and partially by two other prophets Gad and Nathan. (See 1st Chronicles 29:29) Samuel dies in Chapter 25 of First Samuel, so his contribution ends there. The book as we know it was compiled one or two generations after all the main characters have died.
  - d) The story takes place in Israel. After Moses lead the people to the Promised Land, the next leader Joshua conquered much of the Land and the Israelites settled in. For the next 400 years, the Israelites were ruled by “judges”. This is not so much courtroom judges, but more like “advisors” to settle disputes. During the time of the judges, there was no nationally organized army or central government. Then came the first king Saul and then came the next king David. Second Samuel mostly focuses on David’s reign.

3. So what's the main difference between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel? Two words: "Saul's dead". ☺
- a) First Samuel focuses on the rise and fall of King Saul. First Samuel is mainly a living contrast between the life of King Saul and the early life of David. First Samuel constantly goes back and forth between the lives of Saul and David. The contrast is to show their differences in leadership and how one was pleasing to God and the other was not.
  - b) At the end of 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel, King Saul dies. Therefore, David will be the next king. This doesn't happen all at once. The public acceptance of David took seven years after Saul's death before all of Israel accepted David as the king. Therefore, Second Samuel mainly focuses on era of king David.
  - c) Here is an important application for Second Samuel: Just because you have power, doesn't mean your problems will go away:
    - i) Young people will often think, "If I can make twice as much income, my problems will go away". They might think, "If I was the boss at work, then I won't have the problems I have right now. I know better than anyone how to run this place".
      - a) The answer to those questions are, "money and power won't solve your problems, they just create new ones".
  - d) In First Samuel, David spends many years on the run from Saul. David lives a good part of his life as a fugitive due to Saul's jealousy over David's rise to power.
  - e) In Second Samuel, Saul is no longer trying to kill David. Yet we'll read David has a whole new set of problems. What's the point? The point is that's the way life works. Your problems don't magically go away if say, you're now the boss or you now have lots of money. You just have new problems to replace your old ones.
  - f) OK John, so if things don't get any better as I get older, what's the point in living? Good question! David's son Solomon gives us our "duty" in life: "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13 NIV)
    - i) "Fearing God" is not about being afraid, it is about understanding that we are accountable to God and therefore, fear God's judgment.
    - ii) Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes near the end of his life after he contemplated all the mistakes he made. He understands that pleasing God, and living for God (i.e., keeping the commandments of the bible) is the entire duty of a person. That's doesn't mean you spend 100% of your time in bible study. It means you study and pray over what God wants you to do, and then go live your life.
    - iii) Which leads us back to David in Second Samuel: We'll read of David making many mistakes. David had to pay during "this" lifetime for those mistakes. Further innocent people get hurt by those mistakes, the same way that when we sin, it hurts innocent people. When leaders make mistakes, it cost lives (e.g., think about when a general makes a "mistake").
    - iv) In other words, you can't read, "David was pleasing to God and David made mistakes so it is ok for me to sin". David had to suffer for his mistakes, as do we. Being pleasing to God is not about your good deeds outweighing your bad deeds. It is about constantly being aware of God's presence. It is about understanding that we are accountable to God. It is about studying your bible and taking it seriously. It is about seeking God on a constant basis for praise, guidance and forgiveness. It is about doing what God commands us to do through His Word.
    - v) David is pleasing to God, because when David realized his mistakes, he confessed them to God and (here's the important part) changed his life afterward to not make the same mistakes again. David learned from his faults and constantly sought God to make his life better. That is what is to be learned from studying Second Samuel: How to live a life pleasing to God. Not be being perfect, but by seeking God in all that we do. When we mess up, we are to confess the sin, accept the consequences of our actions, and then "move on".

4. Second Samuel also contains one of the most important chapters in the bible: "Chapter 7".
  - a) Remember that the chapter breaks were not added until centuries later. In Chapter 7, God tells David that one of his descendants will sit on the throne of Jerusalem "forever". This is a prediction of the coming Messiah (Hebrew for "king"). It ties to both Jesus first and second comings and we'll discuss it in detail when we get there.
  - b) I bring this up now as to understand that David was "so pleasing" to God, that God makes this announcement to David, as opposed to one of his children or say, to all of Israel. Further, after David's son Solomon, Israel splits into two kingdoms. Because of God's promise to David, one of David's descendants remains on the throne for generations simply due to God's unconditional promise to David.
  - c) What's my point? There are "perks" to being pleasing to God. ☺ I'm not saying God will give you special revelation if you are pleasing to Him, but there are rewards in heaven based on our actions.
5. Now, let's discuss Chapter 1. This chapter deals with the death of Saul and more importantly how David reacts to his death. Chapter 1 focuses on David's reaction to Saul's death as well as Saul's son-Jonathan's death. Much of the chapter is a poem written about the death of Saul and his son Jonathan, who also died in the same battle.
  - a) Our first "clue" as to how David is a man after God's own heart deals with David's reaction to Saul's death. Remember Saul spent years trying to kill David. David never celebrates Saul's death. If anything, he reacts in sorrow and teaches his men to act the same way. The "why" is the key question of Chapter 1, and I'll get to that as we go.
  - b) OK, time to break down and actually get to Verse 1. ☺
6. Chapter 1, Verse 1: After the death of Saul, David returned from defeating the Amalekites and stayed in Ziklag two days. <sup>2</sup> On the third day a man arrived from Saul's camp, with his clothes torn and with dust on his head. When he came to David, he fell to the ground to pay him honor.
  - a) In the last chapter of First Samuel, we read of the death of King Saul. Let me summarize:
    - i) There was a big battle between the Israelites and the Philistines. The Philistines won the battle. First Samuel 31:2 says the Philistines killed Saul and his three sons. One of his three sons was Jonathan, who was one of David's best friends.
    - ii) Saul was wounded in the battle. Saul, in his pain, asked his personal assistant (his "armor bearer") to take his sword and kill Saul. The armor bearer refused, so Saul "fell on his own sword" and committed suicide. When Saul's armor bearer also saw that Saul was dead, he did likewise and also died (Reference: 1 Sam. 31:4-5).
    - iii) David was living as a fugitive. Several times in 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel, Saul tried to kill him. David finally sought refuge among an enemy to the Israelites - the Philistines. David and his men volunteered to be in the Philistine army to attack Saul. The Philistine generals did not let David fight with them, as they were afraid David might turn against the Philistines and once again show loyalty to his fellow Jews.
    - iv) David's base camp in Philistine country was in a town called Ziklag. When he came back from the Philistine army campground, another group called the Amalekites had raided Ziklag. They captured all of David's soldiers families and possessions. David and his men went after them, caught them, killed Amalekites and then returned to Ziklag with their families and their possessions.
  - b) Now we're up to Second Samuel Chapter 1, Verse 1: On the third day of David and his men being back in Ziklag, a man arrives in Ziklag and brings David a report of what happened in the big battle between the Philistines and King Saul.
  - c) This messenger had "clothes torn and with dust on his head". This was a way of showing sorrow. It is like our Western culture custom of wearing black clothes at a funeral. When this messenger showed up, David knew it was bad news.
  - d) Let me move on, bring in some more verses, and then I'll tie them all together.

7. Verse 3: "Where have you come from?" David asked him. He answered, "I have escaped from the Israelite camp." <sup>4</sup> "What happened?" David asked. "Tell me." He said, "The men fled from the battle. Many of them fell and died. And Saul and his son Jonathan are dead." <sup>5</sup> Then David said to the young man who brought him the report, "How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?"
- a) This is David first hearing of the death of Saul and Jonathan. Apparently, the word was out that David was in line to be the next king. Further, word was out that Jonathan and David were friends. Therefore, the messenger pointed out both were dead.
  - b) David, in his shock, logically asks the question, "How do you know they were dead?"
8. Verse 6: "I happened to be on Mount Gilboa," the young man said, "and there was Saul, leaning on his spear, with the chariots and riders almost upon him." <sup>7</sup> When he turned around and saw me, he called out to me, and I said, 'What can I do?' <sup>8</sup> "He asked me, 'Who are you?' " 'An Amalekite,' I answered. <sup>9</sup> "Then he said to me, 'Stand over me and kill me! I am in the throes of death, but I'm still alive.' <sup>10</sup> "So I stood over him and killed him, because I knew that after he had fallen he could not survive. And I took the crown that was on his head and the band on his arm and have brought them here to my lord."
- a) This messenger's who brought the bad news of Saul's death is the story from Verses 3 through 10. Let's recap some key points:
    - i) The messenger stated he saw Saul "leaning on his spear". In Chapter 31 of First Samuel, it mentioned how Saul tried to commit suicide by leaning on his spear. In first Samuel, it said King Saul fell on his sword. Different Hebrew words are used. This may be an indication the guy is lying, which we'll get to in a moment.
    - ii) In the messenger's story, Saul was still alive when he fell on his spear. The messenger stated in his story, "Saul asked me to kill him and put him out of his misery, so I killed him after I figured out he couldn't survive".
    - iii) The messenger admitted he was an Amalekite. If you remember from 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel, he is part of a tribe that is a sworn enemy of Israel. God pronounced judgment on this group. (Reference: Exodus 17:16, 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 15:2) Further, King Saul was told he would lose his kingdom one day as he failed to kill all the Amalekites. (Ref: 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 15:23). Now in this story, the irony is Saul is killed by an Amalekite.
    - iv) Finally, we read of this Amalekite messenger bringing to David the crown and armband worn by Saul as proof that Saul was dead.
  - b) Although it is not stated, you get the impression this Amalekite was an opportunist. The logical speculation is that he was hoping for a reward. He knew Saul tried to kill David and figured David would be happy by the news of Saul being dead.
  - c) If you remember from 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel, David had several opportunities to kill Saul, and did not as David understood that Saul was appointed king by God. David thought back then, "I understand that God said I would be king one day. It is not my (David's) job to speed up the process. I, David will wait on God's timing and will not kill King Saul. "
9. Verse 11: Then David and all the men with him took hold of their clothes and tore them. <sup>12</sup> They mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the army of the LORD and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.
- a) David and his men's reaction was one of sorrow. Despite the fact they had deserted to the Philistines, they were still Israelites by birth. The fact that their fellow countrymen lost "big" in a battle was a time for sorrow. They also understood that King Saul was dead which meant Israel had no leader. Further, Jonathan, who was loyal to David, was also dead. David's men, who were very loyal to David, were "sad because their leader was sad". There is something about a loved-leader being in sorrow that causes those under him or her to also be in sorrow. They all shared in the grief.

- b) Remember that this is a group that has just been through an emotional roller coaster. They were on the run chasing the Amalekites. They won and just got back a few days ago. Now they get word that “their” king of Israel was dead and the Philistines won a major battle. This sets up the next scene. Let me take on the next few verses and then we’ll tie the whole thing together and explain how this is relevant to us today.
10. Verse 13: David said to the young man who brought him the report, "Where are you from?" "I am the son of an alien, an Amalekite," he answered. <sup>14</sup> David asked him, "Why were you not afraid to lift your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?" <sup>15</sup> Then David called one of his men and said, "Go, strike him down!" So he struck him down, and he died. <sup>16</sup> For David had said to him, "Your blood be on your own head. Your own mouth testified against you when you said, 'I killed the LORD's anointed.'"
- a) In Verses 13-16, we have the story of David interrogating the Amalekite messenger who brought David the news. David pronounced him guilty of killing the king, and ordered that one of his men kill this messenger. David’s men just spent a lot of time being at war with the Amalekites, so “one more Amalekite” was probably not a difficult thing to do.
    - i) The Amalekite stated as part of his story that he killed Saul. Therefore, he knew that he killed the King of Israel. David wondered, “Why was this guy not afraid to kill the king? He must be guilty of murder in that regard”.
  - b) Notice is that David “waited until evening” (Verse 11) before interrogating the story of the Amalekite messenger.
    - i) I picture David, during this time thinking about what the messenger said. David was thinking, “Wait a minute, he said he was an Amalekite. What’s an Amalekite doing in a battle between the Israelites and the Philistines? Could he just have been there to go raid the dead bodies? Further, if this guy knew Saul was the king, how could he have so little respect for Saul that he was not afraid to kill Saul?”
    - ii) My point is David began this interrogation late in the day after David had time to think about the facts. David didn’t just kill the guy in rash anger over the news.
  - c) What David did is pronounce the Amalekite guilty of murder. He murdered King Saul. Just because King Saul asked to be killed is not an excuse for killing him.
    - i) This gets into the immoral concept of “assisted suicide”. In Jewish thought, there is no such thing as assisted suicide. It is murder, pure and simple. If someone is suffering and asks to be killed, it is not our job to “pull the plug”. God gives life and only God can take life.
    - ii) We can do things to comfort one in their suffering. I don’t have a problem of giving pain-numbing drugs to someone in pain. Remember that Paul told Timothy to drink wine for his stomach pain (Reference 1 Timothy 5:23).
    - iii) In the bible, God calls for killing those who murder others. This is the only law mentioned in all five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Further, killing someone who kills others is a “just” punishment for the sake of society. It is up to God to pronounce eternal judgment on a murder. The specific commandment says you shall not murder. It never says you shall not kill. (Reference Exodus 20:13).
  - d) Next, we need to discuss the “contradictions” between 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel on this story. In the last chapter of first Samuel, it stated Saul was dead:
    - i) “When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him.” (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 31:5 NIV) Here in 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel, the Amalekite messenger stated that Saul was still alive when he found him.
    - ii) This “apparent” contradiction can be explained two ways:
      - a) One possibility is that Saul’s armor-bearer “thought” he was dead, but Saul had just past out at this point, but was not dead.

- b) The other possibility is that the Amalekite was lying. Maybe the Amalekite found Saul's dead body, took the crown and armband and brought them to David thinking he would get a reward. This would explain the reference to "falling on his spear" in 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel and the reference to "falling on his sword" in 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel.
  - c) Either way, the contradictions can be explained. Whenever you come to an apparent contradiction in the bible, there are reasons to explain the differences in the text.
- e) We now come to the end of the text-section of Chapter 1. The remainder of Chapter 1 is a poem by David. It is a eulogy for King Saul and for his son Jonathan. Before I wrap up this section, let's talk a little about how this relates to us today.
  - i) The great lesson to learn is how David reacted to the death of Saul.
  - ii) David didn't jump for joy. Remember Saul spent years trying to kill David. David had to live as a fugitive for years on end to remain alive. You would think David and his men would be having a big party right now. They no longer have to live on the run. Their "enemy" is dead. Further, David knew he would be king one day, and so did his men. David now could think, "This is the time, Saul is dead and its time for my big promotion. ☺"
  - iii) Yet, what did David do? David mourned. Yes, he mourned for the loss of his best friend Jonathan. Yes, he mourned for the loss to the Nation of Israel, of which David was part of that heritage. However, it is also a mourning for Saul himself.
- f) OK, John, and your point is? ☺ God does not want us to see people as our enemies. God loves all and He wants us to have the same attitude.
  - i) Jesus said, "But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:44-48, NIV)
  - ii) This is the last paragraph of the Sermon on the Mount. It is a three-chapter long speech given by Jesus. He ends the sermon with praying for your enemies. Why?
    - a) For starters, when we pray diligently and specifically for people who hurt us, we start to see people as God sees people. God sees us as imperfect people who need His love.
    - b) It also helps to defuse our anger as we now care for these people when we seriously pray for their well being.
    - c) Jesus said, He (God) causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good". That is Jesus saying God cares for all people, not just those who are "saved".
    - d) Jesus is saying "everyone" love their friends and hates their enemies. If we Christians do the same, how are we any better than anyone else? What makes Christians special is the command to love one another (See John 13:34). That applies especially to fellow Christians but it is also a command to have love to those who want to do us harm.
  - iii) I was once angry at someone who borrowed a good sum of money from me and never paid me back. The way I finally got over it was to pray for him daily. I never got my money back, but I developed peace over the situation. Praying for him got me to care about him as a person. To this day, I was never repaid. I've gotten to a point where it doesn't bother me anymore and I moved on. I believe that is what God wants from us. That is what "praying for your enemies does: It gets you to have peace with God by seeing your enemies from God's perspective.

- iv) This leads us back to David. God called David “a man after his own heart”. That is one of my themes for all of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel. What made David special was he had the ability to show love to the unloved. He understood that God called people to special positions and we have to respect that position no matter what we think of the character of that person.
  - v) Further, David showed his leadership. Not only did David mourn for Saul, but David got his men to mourn for Saul! The men under David were also sick and tired of being fugitives. David taught how to “love your enemies” by showing remorse for Saul.
11. Verse 17: David took up this lament concerning Saul and his son Jonathan,<sup>18</sup> and ordered that the men of Judah be taught this lament of the bow (it is written in the Book of Jashar):
- a) From here to the end of Chapter 1, is the poem about the death of Saul and Jonathan. The poem itself begins in Verse 19. These two verses are the introductory comments.
  - b) I want you to stop and think for a moment, “Why is this 13-line poem in the bible?”
    - i) Here we have a poetic eulogy mainly written about King Saul.
    - ii) The bible doesn’t record a half-chapter long poetic eulogy of Moses by his successor. Solomon, the son of David, never records a poetic eulogy of David. In the New Testament, we don’t have any letters written by Timothy that give a poetic eulogy of his mentor Paul.
    - iii) Yet here we have a God-inspired poetry by David praising King Saul.
      - a) This is the same King Saul who God “dethroned” for disobedience!
      - b) This is the same King Saul who spent years trying to kill David.
      - c) This is the same King Saul who had priests murdered because he mistakenly thought they were helping David. (Ref. 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 22).
      - d) There is no mention of any of these facts in this poem by David.
    - iv) So I kept pondering, “Why should Saul get a nice eulogy in the bible while the other great men of the bible don’t? Grant it, you can read for example, how the people mourned for Moses after he died, (Reference: Deuteronomy 34:8) but there is no eulogy-poem like this one.
    - v) Then it hit me: The point is not to see the greatness of Saul, the point is to see the greatness of David. David understood that Saul was appointed by God to be the first king. David respected God’s will for others. David records this prayer for us to see people not in their faults, but from God’s perspective.
      - a) This is an example of David being “a man after God’s own heart”!
    - vi) Let me give an application: You may know a pastor or a church elder who has a immoral personal life. He may not be living up to the reputation that God desires for a pastor. If God raised them to be a pastor (or whatever), it’s “God’ job” to bring them down if God so chooses. That person is still “God’s anointed”.
      - a) That sinning person is still accountable both to God and to those under him. Jesus did lay out how we are to approach such a person (See Matthew 18:15-17). My point is we are to respect the fact that God did appoint them for that leadership position. All leaders, be it of the church or government are God-appointed (See Romans 13:1) and they command our respect.
    - vii) Here’s another example: God has raised up your spouse to be your spouse and maybe the mother or father of your children. Is that person perfect? No, but they are still called by God to that role and we are to respect that role.
      - a) Disclaimer time: ☺ Of course there are exceptions for abusive situations. I’m not talking about the extreme cases, just the “typical” day-to-day situations of living out life.

- b) If we can see the people around us as “God’s anointed” for a particular job, it can help us appreciate them and get us to pray for them as opposed to focusing on their problems.
  - c) What makes David “special” here is that he saw Saul not as a man trying to kill him, but as God’s appointed first-king of Israel. He “respected the office” too much to harm Saul.
- viii) Grant it, this poem is also about the loss of David’ best friend Jonathan and also about the loss of the Israelite battle to the Philistines. However, I specifically wanted to spend a few moments teaching how David can praise Saul.
  - a) Here’s the kicker: If God can inspire David to write and record something special about Saul, imagine what He can do with you and me! If God can get David to say positive things about Saul, imagine how God can inspire us to do wonderful things to those who try to harm us.
  - b) This leads us back to Jesus statement of “love your enemies”. David’s ode to Saul is a perfect example of that.
  - c) More disclaimers: ☺ Notice that “loving your enemies” does not mean to stand there and let your enemies harm you. David ran when Saul tried to kill him. Yet in the end, we don’t read of David dancing on Saul’s grave. We read of David paying tribute to Saul because David respected God’s anointing of Saul. That is “loving your enemies!”
  - d) Meanwhile, back at Verse 17. ☺
- c) Notice that David states his purpose for writing this lament. In Verse 18, David “ordered that men of Judah could learn it”. What does that mean?
  - i) David was from the tribe of Judah. That was one of the 12 tribes of Israel. David understood that the tribe of Judah was more likely to accept David as a king before any of the other tribes did. Israel at this point in its history was still a “loose confederacy” of 12 separate tribes.
  - ii) Would you respect a leader more if he took the trouble to pay homage to the former leader, even if the former leader tried to kill him? I have to admit, I would. The reason, if David was that respectful to Saul, David would be that more respectful to those “anointed by God” to serve under him.
  - iii) David wanted to teach the tribe of Judah to pay homage to Saul and Jonathan. It is one thing for David to love his enemies. It is another for those under David’ rule to also respect the king appointed by God, no matter what the king is like.
  - iv) Remember that all of Israel just felt defeat by war. This dirge is designed to help the people of Judah, and all of Israel for that matter have a healthy way to deal with that pain.
- d) If you notice, the poem itself has a title. It is translated here, “The lament of the bow”.
  - i) That’s “bow” as in “bow and arrow”. The warfare of this time involved bows and arrows as well as swordplay. There are clues in the bible that Saul and Jonathan, as well as their fellow tribesmen of the tribe of Benjamin were experts at the bow and arrow (See 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 12:2, 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 17:17).
- e) Finally, this verse mentions that the lament was written in the Book of Jashar.
  - i) This book is “long gone”. If God had meant for this book of Jashar to be preserved throughout all of history, than God would have found a way.
  - ii) This Book of Jashar is not God-inspired. Just because the bible mentions a specific book such as the Book of Jashar, that does not mean it is God-inspired.
- f) Now that I’ve gotten all of that out of my system, ☺ it’s time to get into the poem itself!



12. Verse 19: "Your glory, O Israel, lies slain on your heights. How the mighty have fallen! <sup>20</sup>"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.
- a) There is one line repeated three times in this poem: "How the mighty have fallen".
    - i) The poem itself can be divided into three sections, each tying to that reference.
    - ii) The first part is about the fall of Israel and an ode to its' leader Saul.
  - b) Both Gath and Askelon are two of the main cities of the Philistines. They were in the opposite ends of this geographic location. It would be like an American saying, "Tell it not in Maine; tell it not in California or Hawaii".
  - c) There was a custom of that time when you win a war, the young women would lead a procession of victory. (See 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 18:6). Therefore, David is saying in effect, "Don't spread the word about Israel's loss in this war so the Philistine daughters don't go dancing in the streets".
  - d) This is a good spot to stop and contemplate the idea of "dealing with our losses".
    - i) God gives Christians the ultimate victory. Read the end of the bible: We win. ☺
    - ii) In the meantime, life has lots of defeats. God allows those defeats to happen, ultimately for His glory. We may not understand it, but God does.
    - iii) Here is David saying, "Don't go proclaiming your defeats to nonbelievers". Why does David make that proclamation?
    - iv) For starters, who wants to hang around negative people? Nobody likes a complainer. Yes, grieving is a healthy way to deal with pain. But does that mean we go tell strangers about everything wrong in our life? There are times when things go wrong. We know that God has the ultimate victory, but it doesn't stop the pain in the short term. Still, why go spread our temporary suffering to those who are hostile to God? They'll just think that, "Your God let you down".
    - v) The one thing I know for sure in life is that there is a God and He is in control of things. I don't understand why disasters happen, but I accept the fact there is a God and there is a purpose for all that happens.
13. Verse 21: "O mountains of Gilboa, may you have neither dew nor rain, nor fields that yield offerings of grain. For there the shield of the mighty was defiled, the shield of Saul--no longer rubbed with oil.
- a) In this verse, David is placing a "curse" on the mountains of Giboa. David is saying in effect, "Attention mountain range of Gilboa, may nothing ever grow on you again!" That way this mountain will be a monument to remember this war. This is the spot where Israel was defeated.
  - b) If you ever travel to Mount Gilboa, the top of the mountain remains bare to this day, as if God is honoring the curse. That theory is debatable as part of David's curse is that this mountain never has any rain. That hasn't happened, although it is interesting that there is no significant growth on this spot throughout all of modern history!
  - c) The last part says, "the shield of Saul, no longer rubbed with oil". When a king or a priest was anointed in Israel, oil was poured upon him. The "sword rubbed with oil" is a reference to Saul's being anointed as the king. It is a poetic way of saying that the King of Israel, anointed by God is now dead.
14. Verse 22: From the blood of the slain, from the flesh of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not turn back, the sword of Saul did not return unsatisfied. <sup>23</sup> "Saul and Jonathan-- in life they were loved and gracious, and in death they were not parted. They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.
- a) What does this mean? For starters, it refers to the fact the Israelites army did not run away in defeat. Further, many Philistines were killed in this battle.
  - b) David is "looking on the bright side" of the defeat. David is pointing out some of the positive things that happened, including the killing of some of their enemies.

- c) Notice what the prayer doesn't include:
  - i) There is no verse saying, "Here lies dead Saul. The guy who spent years trying to kill me. It's about time someone knocked him off!" ☺
  - ii) Instead, David is looking for ways to praise Saul. David takes the time to praise both Saul and Jonathan in battle.
  - iii) This is a good time to ask all of us, "What do we think of our fellow Christians? If we had a chance to speak at the funeral of a fellow Christian who was a pain in the behind to us, what would we say? Would we act like David here?"
- d) Another aspect to point out here is Jonathan's loyalty to his father.
  - i) Jonathan was more loyal to David than to his father Saul. At one point, Saul even tried to kill Jonathan for his support of David (Reference 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 20:33). Jonathan even understood that David would be king one day instead of himself (Reference: 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel, Chapter 20).
  - ii) Remember Saul had three sons who died in this battle. (Ref.: 1st Samuel 31:7, 12). Yet only Jonathan is mentioned in this poem, and not his two brothers who died in the same battle. I suspect it was because Jonathan was known for being loyal to David. A purpose of this section of the poem is to show how Jonathan can be loyal to his father Saul despite his personal disrespect for him.
  - iii) We never read of Jonathan abandoning his father and being one of David's men. We never read of Jonathan leading a treasonous revolt against his father. Why is that? Because Jonathan also understood that his father was appointed by God to be the leader of Israel. His "job" as the king's son was to stand by the king and support the king in battle.
  - iv) One of the Ten Commandments is to "Honor your father and mother" (Exodus 20:12). I can't think of a better example of doing that correctly than Jonathan. Jonathan understood his father was a "loser" in comparison to David. ☺ Yet, he stood by his father as Jonathan understood his appointed role in life.
  - v) Which leads us back to Verses 22-23: The verse mentions Jonathan standing by his father's side in the time of battle. That is an ode to Jonathan's loyalty to the Nation of Israel. Jonathan understood what his father was like. Jonathan knew that David would be king one day. Jonathan also knew what "his place" was to be and David pays homage to that fact here in Verse 22.]

15. Verse 24: "O daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and finery, who adorned your garments with ornaments of gold.

- a) Let's start with what the verse doesn't say, "Hey everybody, let's spit on Saul's grave! Saul's the guy that lead us fellow Israelites to defeat and is the source of our problems! ☺
- b) If you recall in the early chapters of 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel, the reason God picked Saul to be the king is because "that's what the people wanted". When Saul was first anointed king by the prophet Samuel, he gave a speech saying in effect, "God doesn't really want you to have a king just yet. In fact, the type of king you want is going to cause problems, but since that's what you really want, I'll give that to you. With no further introduction necessary, meet your new King, Saul!" ☺ (This is my paraphrase of the prophet Samuel's speech in to the Israelite nation in Chapter 12 of 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel.)
- c) Instead of all of that, we read of David saying positive things about Saul. David is mentioning the prosperity of Israel under Saul's rule. When David says, "clothed you in scarlet and finery...", David is referring to how Israel prospered during his reign.
  - i) This speaks of the grace of God. God knew that Saul was not going to be a great king. In fact, God, through the prophet Samuel warned the Israelites about the problems King Saul would cause (again, the speech of Chapter 12, et.al.)

- ii) Yet, despite that God allowed some prosperity to exist under Saul's reign. What does that say about God? It says, "I love you despite the bad choices you made. You are still accountable for those choices and will have to suffer for it. Despite that, I still love and care for you and will allow some prosperity to exist!"
  - d) David is encouraging the people of Israel to weep for Saul.
    - i) This is the man who tried to kill David and everyone knew it! Again, this comes back to the idea that David wanted to teach the people of Israel to respect the "office" of the king and respect the fact that God did choose Saul. Therefore, David is looking for positive things to say about the reign of Saul.
16. Verse 25: "How the mighty have fallen in battle! Jonathan lies slain on your heights. <sup>26</sup> I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women.
- a) I stated a few pages back that the line, "How the mighty have fallen" is repeated three times in this poem. Now we come to the second time. The reason why it is repeated is now the poem specifically focuses upon Jonathan.
    - i) David is going to take the time to pay homage to his best friend.
  - b) Notice that David focused on Saul in the early verses of this poem before his focus here upon Jonathan. David understood the father is superior in rank to the son, and one must pay homage to the father first.
  - c) Next, David states that the love Jonathan showed David was greater than any love David had from any woman.
    - i) Let's get one thing straight right now. This has nothing to do with homosexuality. There is no hint anywhere in the bible that David had a physical attraction to Jonathan or vice-versa. David feared God and obeyed His commandments. One of those commandments forbade the practice of homosexuality (see Lev. 20:13).
    - ii) The reference has to do with loyalty. Jonathan risked his own life to save David's. Jonathan was more loyal to David than he was to his father the king.
    - iii) What made Jonathan special was he was able to honor his father and stand by his side as the king's son, yet at the same time understand that David was more special than his-father-the-king and treat him as such.
    - iv) If Jonathan had abandoned his father and became one of David's men, he would probably still be living beyond this battle. Jonathan showed his loyalty to his family and to David by all of his actions. That is worth remembering.
    - v) "Love" in the biblical sense is about putting other's needs before one's own needs. David appreciated Jonathan's loyalty more than he appreciated the loyalty of his wives. In that sense Jonathan showed more love than David's wives because Jonathan "risked more" to show his loyalty to David.
17. Verse 27: "How the mighty have fallen! The weapons of war have perished!"
- a) Here the phrase, "How the mighty have fallen" is repeated a third time. In this final verse, it is a "collective dirge" to honor all the Israelites that died in the battle.
  - b) The main purpose of this poem is to pay homage to Saul and Jonathan. A final purpose is to pay homage for all of the Israelites who died in this battle as well.
  - c) Historically, this is a low point for the Jewish people. The Philistines now controlled much of Israel by winning this big battle. David, as the next king has to win back the land that was lost as well as win the hearts of the people as the next leader.
  - d) To motivate the Israelites David commands his fellow Jews to learn this poem. This poem is David saying, "God has not abandoned his people. God has allowed this defeat, but God has not abandoned us. Great men have died in this battle. Men that were appointed by God to lead. God allowed this for some purpose. Now is the time to grieve over them, and then we'll move on and let God lead us again to victory."

18. What is to be learned by this prayer is that God is still on the throne, despite the worse of times.
- a) During times of sorrow, we need to take time and grieve our losses and then move on.
  - b) We need to remember those who support us and fought on our behalf, and then move on.
  - c) When someone dies, it is time to focus the good things they have accomplished and then move on. Be grateful to God for what they have done and how God has used them.
  - d) Did David “hurt” over how Saul tried to kill him? Sure. Did David’s men suffer over how Saul tried to kill them? Sure. How do you deal with that pain? You give it to God. You turn to God for comfort. You pray for your enemies. You pay homage to them when God brings them down. You remember that those are people loved by God. God didn’t want them to hurt you, their own sinful nature and free-will hurt you. I’m not excusing bad behavior. What the bible is teaching here is how to deal with suffering.
  - e) The reason Saul gets this “ode” in the bible is not because Saul was so special, it is because God is giving us an example of how to deal with suffering. God is showing us through David how to be “positive” during the difficult moments in life. David is a writer and a leader. He uses both of those traits to help others and himself deal with this grief.
  - f) Further, this poem is God-inspired as it teaches us how to “see” difficult people in our lives. In times of sorrow, we are to focus on the good things they have accomplished. It is not so much to praise them, but to help us deal with our own grief.
    - i) What if the “Saul’s” of your life and my life are still living? What if God hasn’t brought them down yet? Well, that’s what First Samuel is all about. ☺ The book of Second Samuel most deals with the times of our lives when we are in power and the troubles we face during those days. (The first few chapters of 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel are the transition from David the fugitive to David the king.)
  - g) Remember David ran from Saul to spare his life. There are times when God wants us to run away, especially in life-threatening situations. If a car is coming right at you, God expects you to get out of the way, not say “It’s God will” and allow yourself to be hurt.
  - h) Here in Chapter 1 of Second Samuel we get to the point where God finally takes away the source of David’s trouble. The great story in Chapter 1 is to learn of how David deals with the death of his “enemy”. What does David do? He kills the person who actually kills Saul and then writes a positive eulogy. That’s Chapter 1 in one sentence. David is teaching us how to properly “cope” with those who want to do us harm, especially by those whom God has appointed as a leader.
    - i) That is an example of how to be a “man after God’s own heart”. That is an example of how to be pleasing to God.
19. I normally end these lessons with my own prayer. However, this time, a bible-prayer popped in my head that deals with how to be pleasing to God. Therefore, I’ll end this lesson with a prayer by Paul in Colossians, Chapter 1, Verses 9 through 12.
20. Let’s pray: “For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.” For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.