

2025-05-04

## **A Eulogy in Song**

2 Samuel 1:17-27

At funerals and memorial services there is usually time given for a eulogy. We tell of the person's birth, family history and the important events in their life. Often times family and friends share funny and meaningful stories of the person that died. These are the good words spoken about the person who has died. I have known one pastor that did his own eulogy. He recorded it before he died and it was played at his memorial service. In our scripture for today, David writes a eulogy poem for Saul and Jonathan. This was probably a popular poem of that day because David had the children of Judah **memorize the poem**. It is listed as "*the Song of the Bow*." It was recorded in a history book of Israel which was called the book of Jasher. That book does not exist or at least it has not been found yet. Although if you go onto Amazon, you can buy a copy of what people claim to be the book of Jasher. We do not find this poem, that was probably put to music, in the book of Psalms. Why? This poem of David never mentions God. I think that all 150 psalms recorded in the Book of Psalms mentions God in some way, either His past, present or future actions or in prayer. This poem of David in 2 Samuel 1 has no focus on God.

It is interesting that in this poem David only has good words to say about Saul and Jonathan. As evil as Saul was towards David, as much as Saul wanted David dead, David never mentioned these bad problems in this eulogy poem. We know there were problems between David and Saul. It is recorded in their history in the Bible. Everyone knew about these problems. Yet in David's eulogy of Saul and Jonathan, David says nothing evil or bad about Saul. It is interesting that the one person that Saul hated or feared the most only said good things about Saul after he died. And David had the children of Judah remember these good qualities about Saul. David was not trying to hide his difficulties with Saul or pretend they never happened. There was an old saying that most people followed and respected, "Only say good things about the dead." David followed that cultural belief.

As a maturing godly leader **David accepted the sovereignty of God and the mystery of His election**. Why did God select Saul? David did not know. It was enough to know that God chose Saul. David did not seek to remove from office whom God had chosen. He could have killed Saul. He could have let his men kill Saul. They wanted to, but David did not let it happen. Did God choose Saul only because he was the most handsome man in all of Israel and taller than everyone else among the Israelites (1 Samuel 9:2)? God does not choose a person because of their physical stature. He looks at a person's heart (16:7). If this was true of David, it was

true of Saul and of me and you. It is our heart, our will our motivation that matters to God. We are the ones who determine our heart. God knows who we are and He knows our hearts (Luke 6:45 / 16:15). James tells us to draw near to God and He will draw near to us and that **we are to purify our hearts** (James 4:8). Have a heart for the One True Living God. Decide to live according to His design for life. He will be there for us.

David saw both Saul and Jonathan as the “*beauty of Israel*” and the “*mighty*” of Israel. He did not want the deaths of Saul and Jonathan to be proclaimed throughout Philistia with celebration. More than likely the Philistines rejoiced in the news of Saul and Jonathan’s deaths. David did not rejoice in Saul and Jonathan’s deaths. He did not rejoice that others would boast of their deaths. The **one curse** that David gave in this eulogy was on Mount Gilboa where Saul and his three sons died along with thousands of other Israelites. David does not want dew or rain to fall upon Mount Gilboa so that the blood of the dead would remain and their deaths would be remembered (1 Samuel 1:21). At the end of this month, we will have our **Memorial Day**. On that day we will be encouraged to remember the number of lives lost during battles around the world to preserve our freedoms. We have been to some historic battlefields in the United States, the most famous was in **Gettysburg, PA**. We walked the rolling hills and over green grass where the battles were fought where over 50,000 casualties and deaths occurred. It was hard to imagine the sights and sounds of that 3-day battle so many years ago. David mentioned that Saul’s shield was “*not anointed with oil*.” Both metal and leather shields were rubbed down with oil to prepare them for the next battle. Saul’s shield would never be prepared for battle again. Implying that Saul is dead, finished with fighting.

David praised both Jonathan and Saul for **their skill at fighting** in battle. Jonathan had great skill with the **bow**. He never turned back from a fight. David praised Saul for his skill with the **sword**. It “*did not return empty*.” As they sang of Saul and David, “*Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands*” (21:11). This father and son pair were loved by the Israelites during their lives and they were not divided in their deaths. They were both swift and strong to the end. David in verse 24 **focuses on Saul**. He called on the daughters of Israel to weep for their king. He reminded them how their king clothed them in fine garments and brought them increased prosperity during his reign. David’s final words for Saul were, “*How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle*” (1:25). Then **David turns to Jonathan**. He was slain on the high place, Mount Gilboa. David remembers his great friendship and the **covenant relationship** he had with Jonathan. He spoke of Jonathan’s great commitment to their friendship. David’s final words for Jonathan were, “*How the mighty have fallen and the weapons of war perished*” (1:27). These two men, Saul

and Jonathan, leave us with two important examples in life. Saul shows us **poor leadership** and Jonathan shows us **great friendship**.

What did Saul as the king of Israel do to build the kingdom of Israel? Was he a good leader? David did mention that Saul brought some prosperity to Israel. Did that make him a good king? Remember the responsibilities of a king? (Sermon from July 21, 2024) The three major responsibilities of a king are **1)** providing rules and teaching people to follow them, **2)** keeping people safe from their enemies and **3)** uniting the people together as one nation. Instead of doing these, Saul was more concerned that his **family line** would continue to reign over Israel through Jonathan. Even after God told Saul that this was not going to happen (13:14), Saul still tried to make it happen by his attempts to kill David. We do not hear of Saul establishing any rules and teaching the people to follow them. We will find that David taught Solomon and hopefully all of his children wisdom (Proverbs 1:8, 10 / 2:1 / 3:1, 11, 21 / 4:1, 10, 20). Saul seems to have no concern for the Tabernacle or the building of a Temple. An emphasis in the Tabernacle could have brought unity among the people. Instead, as David begins his reign, there is division between the northern tribes and Judah, the southern tribe from which David is a part of. Saul's constant pursuit of David did nothing to unite all the tribes of Israel. Saul did fight the enemies of Israel (1 Samuel 14:47-48, 52) but it seems he did little if anything to expand the kingdom.

**Leadership is God's design for society.** A society will not survive without some form of leadership, good or bad. Good leadership is always better for the people. There has to be someone responsible to make the final decisions. **God always raises up leaders.** Many times, those people that God raises up may have no official training as a leader and may not have a plan. Those leaders like Saul need to turn to God and trust His guidance. In reality, all leaders need to seek God and trust Him. Saul did not continue to do this. Yes, Saul did seek the Lord (1 Samuel 28:6). Saul even followed the Lord at first (11:1-15). But very quickly Saul started doing what he thought was best without waiting on the Lord (13:8-14). And the last time, when the Lord did not answer him, **he went to a medium.** Saul was always too quick to try something else. Do you know the plural of medium? It is **media.** Too often today people are too quick to turn to the media for their guidance, just as Saul turned to a medium, instead of waiting on the Lord. If Saul would have been doing what all kings were supposed to do, he would not have been in this mess. God had already given plenty of direction without needing a direct answer to a prayer. He has done the same for us. Every king of Israel was to **write and read God's word every day** (Deuteronomy 17:16-20). If Saul would have done this, His life could have turned out very differently **if** he would have followed God's written instructions. The same is true for us. You want an answer from God? God has given us plenty of guidance,

instruction and direction in His word. **Read His word daily.** Through His word and your reading, He will show you what to do as you seek Him. Your choice will be to follow God's leadership in your life.

**Leaders should also know that there will be those who will oppose them.** It seems that every leader at some point has to deal with people who do not like them and want to cause them harm. This comes with being a leader. So, it is important that **Godly leaders stay committed and connected to God.** They do not give up or quit. It goes back to the word of God. Joshua wrote, *"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success"* (Joshua 1:8). Leaders understand their aging process as well. They know there is an end to their leadership and **a need for a successor.** Every society and their leaders need to trust God to raise up the right person to continue building preserving their kingdom.

Not everyone enjoys having a friendship like David and Jonathan. Theirs was a covenantal friendship (1 Samuel 18:3). They were not going to let anything come between their friendship, although Saul almost did. Jonathan struggled with believing David or believing his dad. Then Saul, his dad, proved his hatred for David by almost killing his own son Jonathan (18:31-34). It is important to have friendships and to keep your friendships. When your friendships are important, you won't let things destroy those friendships. Put in the effort to keep your friendships. Because of your friendships, honesty and truth can be shared. How does it all get started? How do we make friends? Solomon, who received lots of his wisdom from his father, David, wrote, *"A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother"* (Proverbs 18:24). Do you want a friend? Be a friend. It won't be automatic. It could take lots of time and effort. Don't give up.

One final observation from David's eulogy poem. Do what David did. Sometimes writing out your feelings can bring healing to yourself and to help others. Research Joseph Scriven, Horatio Spafford and John Newton. God remains with us in tragedy.

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