

Third Presbyterian Church
Midweek Bible Study
2 Samuel - Chapter 1
Process of Lament - Dealing with Loss

2 Samuel 1:17-27 (NIV)

¹⁷ David took up this lament concerning Saul and his son Jonathan,

¹⁸ and ordered that the men of Judah be taught this lament of the bow (it is written in the Book of Jashar):

¹⁹ "Your glory, O Israel, lies slain on your heights. How the mighty have fallen!" ²⁰ "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. 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. 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. ²³ "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. ²⁴ "O daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and finery, who adorned your garments with ornaments of gold. ²⁵ "How the mighty have fallen in battle! Jonathan lies slain on your heights. ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ "How the mighty have fallen! The weapons of war have perished!"

1. God in his creation of us, never intended for us to be so attached to another human being, an animal, or an earthly possession, that in its absence we are rendered useless.
 - A. Discuss the meaning of this statement.
 - B. Does this statement mean we don't value the ones we love and lose? Why or why not?
2. Lament – A process by which we make the most out of the losses we experience.
 - A. Why is it so hard to make the most out of devastating losses?
 - B. How does God help us to make the most of our losses?
 - C. What does it look like when someone is in a pain prison brought on by loss?
3. In creating our lament,
 - A. What does it really mean to acknowledge the loss?
 - B. What does it look like to refuse to dwell on past hurts?
 - C. How do we incorporate past blessings?
 - D. Who are the others we should express our grief?
 - E. What does it look like to visualize how God is working through my loss?
4. In going through this lesson on dealing with loss, is this scripture on loss more meaningful to you?
 - A. Romans 8:28 (NIV) -And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.
5. Share your main takeaway from the sermon and the lesson?

The Report of Saul's Death and David's Song of Grief: A Lesson on Forgiveness and on Honoring God's Anointed Leader, 1:1-27

(1:1-27) **Introduction:** forgiving people who offend us is difficult, very difficult. When a person does evil against us, there is often a surge of anger aroused within us and the thought of seeking revenge crosses our minds. Forgiving an attacker, an enemy is the furthest thing from our minds.

Another difficult situation arises when we are confronted with leaders who make mistakes or who live wicked lives, committing unjust acts. Leaders who are corrupt or who make bad decisions pose a very serious problem for society. Should we show respect or disrespect to such corrupt leaders? Should we honor or dishonor corrupt leaders?

This is the subject covered by the present passage of Scripture. This is: *The Report of Saul's Death and David's Song of Grief: A Lesson on Forgiveness and on Honoring God's Anointed Leader, 1:1-27.*

1. David received news from the battlefield: a picture of lying to receive some reward (v.1-10).
2. David and his men grieved over the news from the battlefield: a lesson on forgiving one's enemy (v.11-16).
3. David composed a funeral song for Saul and his son Jonathan: a lesson on honoring God's anointed—His servant (v.17-27).

1. (1:1-10) Lying, Purposes for— Deception, Purposes for— Saul, Death of— David, Reaction to Saul's Death: David received terrible news from the battlefield, and the tragic news gripped his heart with intense grief and mourning.

1. When David received the news from the battlefield that Israel had been defeated and that Saul and Jonathan had been killed, he was home in Ziklag. He had just returned from defeating the Amalekites (2 Samuel 1:1). Remember that the Amalekites were desert marauders, fierce enemies of Israel. While David and his men had been away, the Amalekites had attacked Ziklag and burned it, taking captive their wives and children and plundering all their valuables. When David and his men returned and discovered that the Amalekites had committed this evil atrocity, they immediately pursued the Amalekites and achieved a great victory over them. Only 400 enemy soldiers had escaped on camels. (See outline— 1 Samuel 30:1-31; and notes— 1 Samuel 30:1-31 for more discussion.)

Second Samuel now begins just as First Samuel had ended: David had just returned from defeating the Amalekites. He and his men were exhausted, so they are seen resting from battle, and, no doubt, salvaging whatever they could from their destroyed homes.

2. It was on the third day after David's return that he received the report from the battlefield (2 Samuel 1:2). A man arrived from Saul's camp with a disheveled, anguished appearance. His clothes were torn and he had put dirt on his head to show that he was in mourning. When he approached David, he honored him by kneeling and prostrating himself, showing his support for David as the future king of Israel.

3. David immediately asked the man where he had come from. In response, the man gave a grim report of the battle between the Israelites and the Philistines (2 Samuel 1:3-4). The Philistines had achieved a sweeping victory over the Israelite army and had killed King Saul and his son Jonathan, the heir to the throne. (See outline— 1 Samuel 28:1-25; outline— 1 Samuel 29:1-11; outline— 1 Samuel 31:1-13; notes— 1 Samuel 28:1-25; notes— 1 Samuel 29:1-11; and notes— 1 Samuel 31:1-13 for more discussion.)

In giving his report to David, the messenger claimed to have seen the Israelite army routed, fleeing from the battlefield. And many of the soldiers had been wounded and killed. In addition, he claimed to have witnessed the death of King Saul and his son Jonathan.

4. Shocked at hearing the news that Saul and Jonathan were dead, David immediately asked the messenger for confirmation (2 Samuel 1:5). How did the messenger know that Saul and his son Jonathan were dead?

5. In response to David's question, the messenger gave a detailed report on Saul's death, but the report was false (2 Samuel 1:6-10). As described in the last chapter of First Samuel, Saul died by committing suicide (1 Samuel 31:1-6). But note how the messenger's report differs from the account in First Samuel. He claimed to

have personally found Saul wounded and leaning on his own spear, with the enemy almost upon him. He also claimed that Saul had called out to him, asking for his identity. When he identified himself as an Amalekite, he claimed that Saul requested to be killed, for he was suffering terrible pain from his wounds. Implying that he had acted in mercy, the messenger falsely claimed that he himself had killed Saul: a clear contradiction of the account of Saul's suicide given in First Samuel (1 Samuel 31:1-6). To prove his false claim, the Amalekite acted as though he were mourning their deaths. In addition, he presented two items that he had obviously stolen from Saul's body: Saul's royal crown and his royal armband (2 Samuel 1:10).

Obviously the mourning was a deception, a lie in order to secure the favor of David. The man hoped to be richly rewarded for having killed the king. For he knew how fiercely King Saul had pursued David, seeking to kill him and remove him as a threat to his throne. By lying, he hoped to deceive David and to receive credit for having removed one of David's archenemies. No doubt he hoped that David might reward him either with wealth or some important position in the new government David would be establishing as king of Israel.

Thought 1. How often do we lie? Lie by deliberately attempting to deceive someone or by simply twisting the truth? How often do we lie in order to secure favor with someone or credit for having done something? How often do we lie to escape the consequences of failures or mistakes? We lie and deceive people for many reasons:

- ⇒ to secure favor or attention
- ⇒ to secure recognition, honor, or some position
- ⇒ to secure money or property
- ⇒ to escape reprimand, correction, bad grades, being fired, or some other penalty
- ⇒ to subject a person to one's own lust and desires and to secure their favor
- ⇒ to avoid facing the truth and dealing with shortcomings, failures, mistakes, and evil behavior

Lies and deception are wrong, always causing problems for people and sometimes destroying reputations, lives, businesses, organizations, and sometimes even nations. Lies and deception are terrible evils. When we lie to a person, that person acts upon our lie. If we lie to a loved one, we can destroy the relationship. If we lie to an employer, we can lose our jobs. If an employer lies to his workers, production can suffer. If a student lies to a teacher, either verbally or by cheating on a test, the student suffers bad grades and a lost opportunity to gain more knowledge.

Illustration after illustration could be given on the consequences suffered due to lies and deception. The Holy Word of God warns us against lying and deceiving:

"Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips" (Romans 3:13).

"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds" (Col. 3:9).

"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).

"Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another" (Leviticus 19:11).

"Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing [lying]: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man" (Psalms 5:6).

"But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped" (Psalms 63:11).

"He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight" (Psalms 101:7).

"Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight" (Proverbs 12:22).

"A false witness shall not be unpunished, and *he that speaketh lies shall not escape*" (Proverbs 19:5).

"The getting of treasures by a lying tongue *is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death*" (Proverbs 21:6).

"And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, *and weary themselves to commit iniquity*" (Jeremiah 9:5).

"The heart *is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*" (Jeremiah 17:9).

2. (1:11-16) Grief, Example of— Forgiveness, Human, of Enemies— David, Heart of: David and his men grieved over the news from the battlefield, the tragic news that Saul and his son Jonathan had been killed.

No event in the life of David reveals his heart any more than his grief over the death of Saul. For years, Saul had fiercely pursued David, seeking to kill him and to eliminate what he perceived to be David's threat to his throne. Because of Saul's determination to eliminate David, David had been forced to live as a fugitive, suffering the constant pressure of being hunted down like a wild animal. Time and again, David faced desperate, distressful situations because of the fierce pursuit of Saul. He suffered unbearable pain and agony, often feeling there was no way out, no solution to Saul's insane pursuit. David suffered hardship and adversity beyond imagination, and he often felt helpless and hopeless. Saul had charged David with a capital crime and was determined either to assassinate or to arrest and execute him. For seven years David lived under the most distressing circumstances imaginable, that of being a fugitive hunted down by a king who was determined to kill him. David never knew when King Saul would be coming around the next hill to attack him. Being fiercely pursued for seven long years weighed ever so heavily upon his shoulders. Saul had forced him to live in the desert wilderness, having no settled home. Every day during the seven years David had faced the threat of death, never knowing when Saul and his army would appear and attack him and his men. Constantly David had to break camp in order to escape the fierce pursuit of King Saul. Moreover, David had to bear the constant pressure of providing food and supplies for over 600 men and their families, which probably totaled over 2000 people. Keep in mind that he was also married, and his two wives were accompanying him, being forced to suffer the same hardship and threat to their lives.

For over seven years, David had borne the weight, pressure, stress, and strain of being intensely hunted by Saul. Therefore, upon hearing the news of Saul's death, David had every reason to rejoice over the death of his determined enemy. But instead of rejoicing, David portrayed a heart of tenderness and love for Saul and for his dear friend Jonathan. He also grieved for the army and for the nation as a whole. Note that David and his men mourned, wept, and fasted till evening.

After spending the day in mourning, David wanted to confirm just who the messenger was (2 Samuel 1:13). Questioning him again, David discovered that the messenger was a foreigner, an Amalekite who lived in Israel. By living in Israel, the man should have known that the LORD's anointed was to be respected, that to harm the LORD's anointed was the same as rejecting the LORD Himself. By killing King Saul, the man was rejecting the man anointed by God to be the leader of His people Israel. Once a person had been anointed by God to be king, he had the divine right to be respected and honored. A sacred relationship between God and the king existed. Thus the king was not to be harmed by any citizen of the nation (1 Samuel 10:1; 1 Samuel 24:6; 1 Samuel 26:9; 2 Samuel 1:14).

The young Amalekite messenger had lied, seeking to be rewarded by David, but his lie now sealed his doom. Because he had killed God's anointed, David gave the verdict: the Amalekite messenger was to be executed (2 Samuel 1:15). David laid out the evidence against him: he had confessed the crime and committed murder by killing God's anointed leader.

Thought 1. David's forgiveness of Saul is a dynamic example for us. We must forgive those who offend us. Sometimes the offense is just a simple mistake that a person has made, never intending any evil

against us. Nevertheless, the person's act or behavior offended us. But at other times, people do wish us evil and commit evil acts against us. In all cases, we are to have a forgiving spirit. No matter how minor or serious the offense—no matter how difficult it is to forgive—we are to extend forgiveness to those who offend us.

But this fact must be kept in mind when dealing with forgiveness: forgiveness does not abolish justice. Justice is to be executed against all evil-doers. Forgiveness and justice are to walk hand-in-hand. We must execute justice against all evil-doers, but we must also demonstrate a spirit of forgiveness toward them. A spirit of forgiveness means that we do not hold grudges nor seek revenge, but it does not mean that justice is not to be executed. Justice is to be executed from the basis of law, not from a heart of vengeance or retaliation. We are not to render evil for evil, stooping to the level of those who do evil against us. This is the clear teaching of God's Holy Word:

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12).

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15).

"But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you" (Luke 6:27).

"But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" (Luke 6:35).

"Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head" (Romans 12:20).

"See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men" (1 Thes. 5:15).

"Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:18).

"Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth" (Proverbs 24:17).

"If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee" (Proverbs 25:21-22).

3. (1:17-27) Funeral, Song Concerning— Respect, Example of— Rulers, Honor of— Leaders, Honor of— Anointed, Importance of— David, Respect of Saul— Honor, of God's Anointed— Song, of David: David composed one of the most passionate funeral songs ever recorded, a song in honor of Saul and his son Jonathan. Overwhelmed with emotion and sensing deep agony of soul, David memorialized forever the deaths of his dear friend Jonathan and of *God's anointed ruler* King Saul.

1. David commanded that this song be taught to the people of Judah, and note, the poem was later written in the *Book of Jashar* (2 Samuel 1:18). The poem was actually entitled *The Song or Lament of the Bow*. Some commentators suggest that the song was sung by soldiers as they practiced using the bow, sung as a motivation to master the weapon so they would not suffer a similar fate as Saul and Jonathan. However, it is also possible that the title refers to the tune for the song. Whatever the case, the song or poem touches upon five subjects and can be outlined into five stanzas.

2. The first stanza covers the painful tragedy of the Philistine war (2 Samuel 1:19-20). Saul and Jonathan are referred to as the beauty or glory of Israel, the mighty heroes who had fallen. Robert D. Bergen suggests that the

picture is that of a majestic buck on the rugged hills of Israel. But instead of the creature standing with his head held high and ruling over the other creatures of the hills, he is stricken dead, fallen from the majestic heights of his rule.

Another painful tragedy of the Philistine war was the rejoicing of the Philistines. They rejoiced over their victory and over the death of King Saul and his son Jonathan who was the crown prince, the heir to the throne. In the song, David cries out for the news not to be announced, appealing for the rejoicing and celebration over Israel's defeat to be stopped. The death of God's anointed and the defeat of God's people were not reasons for rejoicing, especially by the uncircumcised, the unbelieving pagans of the world.

3. The second stanza issues a curse upon the battlefield (2 Samuel 1:21). David poetically calls for the mountains of Gilboa to be made barren, to receive neither dew nor rain, and to bear no harvest. Note the reason why: because the shield of a mighty king had been defiled on the ground of the mountain. The shield had not been anointed, had not protected him.

4. The third stanza proclaims that the royal family was to be praised, for both Saul and Jonathan fought with skill and courage (2 Samuel 1:22-23). Using graphic language, David declared that neither Jonathan nor Saul shrunk from spilling the blood of the slain. They had faced and killed some of the mightiest soldiers of the enemy.

Moreover, the royal family was to be praised because they were loved and had demonstrated a graciousness in life (2 Samuel 1:23). Even in death, they demonstrated loyalty to one another by dying together. In combat, they had proven to be swifter than eagles and stronger than lions.

5. The fourth stanza cries out for the daughters of Israel to mourn for the royal family, for Saul, the king who had brought some security and prosperity to the nation, had been killed (2 Samuel 1:24-25). Through the power and conquest of his military, Saul had provided the people with a stable government and society that enabled them to live in peace and to secure some prosperity.

But the daughters of Israel should also weep, because Jonathan had been killed in battle (2 Samuel 1:25). No doubt David himself was weeping at this point in the Psalm, for his "brother"—closest friend and confidante who had so sacrificially supported him—was now dead (2 Samuel 1:26). In writing these words of the song, David obviously sensed deep agony of soul. He expressed his agonizing grief by addressing Jonathan as "my brother." He declared that Jonathan was very dear to him and that the love they shared was the closest bond that could be shared between brothers.

6. The fifth stanza declares the painful, agonizing tragedy and outcome of war. Many soldiers had fallen in battle, with some being wounded and others being killed (2 Samuel 1:19, 25, 27).

Thought 1. The major thrust of this Scripture is David's respect and honor for God's *anointed ruler*, King Saul. Rulers and leaders are to be honored and respected. No matter what position of leadership is held, a minor office in an organization or the highest office of a nation, the leader is to be honored and respected. No body of people can long survive without leadership. Leadership is an absolute essential. Even if a relationship involves just two people, one person has to take the lead or else indecision, aggravation, purposelessness, disappointment, and chaos eventually rule within the relationship. Leadership is always necessary to establish strong relationships and to give meaning, purpose, fulfillment, and fruitfulness within life.

However, respecting a leader does not mean that he is never opposed. When a leader commits wickedness or simply makes a wrong decision, he is to be corrected. Neither his mistake nor his wicked behavior are to be condoned. We are never to give license to nor indulge corruption, whether simple mistakes or wicked behavior. But while executing justice, discipline, and correction, we are to continue honoring the position of leadership, the office the leader holds. For most offices of leadership are essential for an orderly, peaceful, just, and productive society.

Leadership positions must be filled by persons of character and morality, persons who will responsibly execute the duties of the office. This is the clear declaration of God's Holy Word:

"Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose *is* this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:19-21).

"Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people" (Acts 23:5).

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Romans 13:1).

"Receive him therefore in the LORD with all gladness; and hold such in reputation" (Phil. 2:29).

"Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work" (Titus 3:1).

"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the LORD, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselve " (1 Thes. 5:12-13).

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation [behavior, conduct]" (Hebrews 13:7).

"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the LORD's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well" (1 Peter 2:13-14).

"Honour all *men*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king" (1 Peter 2:17).

"But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go" (Exodus 10:20).

"Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people" (Exodus 22:28).

"By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked" (Proverbs 11:11).

"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin *is* a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

"*It is* an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness" (Proverbs 16:12).

"I *counsel thee* to keep the king's commandment, and *that* in regard of the oath of God" (Eccles. 8:2).