

## David's Song for Jonathan: 2 Samuel 1:17-27 Explained

### Scriptures for Today: 2 Samuel 1:17-27

#### ""2 Samuel 1:17-27

And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son: 18 (Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jasher.) 19 The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen! 20 Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph. 21 Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil. 22 From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty. 23 Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. 24 Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel. 25 How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. 26 I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. 27 How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!""

### Intro — How We Arrived at This Moment of Grief and Glory

To understand this passage, we must understand the **story of the Bible up to this point**, and then **what has happened so far in 2 Samuel 1**.

#### The Story So Far in the Bible:

**Genesis:** God creates man, calls Abraham, makes promises of land, seed, and blessing.

**Exodus:** God forms His people into a nation and delivers them by blood of the Passover lamb.

**Leviticus:** God teaches holiness, sacrifice, atonement, and access through the priesthood.

**Numbers:** Israel learns faith through wandering, discipline, and God's faithfulness.

**Deuteronomy:** Moses gives his final words and dies, passing leadership to Joshua.

**Joshua:** Israel enters the land, conquers, divides, and serves the LORD faithfully.

**Judges:** Israel cycles through sin, oppression, repentance, and deliverance.

**Ruth:** God shows His providence in one family, preparing the lineage of David.

Now we arrive at 1 Samuel. This story is important for this sermon so please listen to what happens in 1 Samuel.

**1 Samuel:** Israel transitions from judges to kings.

- God raises Samuel. Israel rejects God's direct rule and demands a king.
- Saul becomes king but disobeys. He did good at first but then disobedience begins.
- God chooses David, a man after His own heart to become king of Israel.
- Saul becomes jealous, hunts David, and spirals spiritually.
- Jonathan, Saul's son, becomes David's dearest friend.

**2 Samuel, where we are at today, opens with heartbreak.** Saul and Jonathan are dead on Mount Gilboa. Israel is defeated. David is returning from battle. A young Amalekite arrives with news of Saul's death, claiming to have killed Saul.

### **What Happened Last Time — 2 Samuel 1:1–16:**

In the previous passage: David receives news of Saul and Jonathan's deaths, the Amalekite lies, claiming he killed Saul because he thought that would make David happy, David refuses to rejoice, he tears his clothes, weeps, fasts, and mourns, and finally David executes the Amalekite for touching the LORD's anointed who was king Saul.

Now we reach the heart of the chapter: **David's lament — a Spirit-filled song of grief, honor, and devotion.** It is one of the most emotional passages in Scripture. Let's get right into the first verse today. Look closely there with me at verse 17.

## **Verse 17 — David Laments Deeply**

### **""2 Samuel 1:17**

And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son:""

Lamentation is a passionate expression of grief. It's a pouring out of sorrow, pain, or mourning. David writes a funeral song here — not just for Jonathan, whom he loved, but **also for Saul**, the man who hunted him, lied about him, and tried to kill him. David does not mock Saul. He does not mention Saul's failures or sins. He does not rejoice in Saul's death.

This shows David's heart: He honors the position even when the person failed. He refuses to rejoice when an enemy falls. He is a man after God's own heart. That enemy was a saved man. He was a saved man that fell into doing wicked things. But David still loved that man. He is a brother in Christ.

This lament shows spiritual maturity: **The flesh celebrates when enemies fall. The Spirit mourns for what sin destroyed.**

The Bible says this (Ezekiel 33:11): "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Saul was a saved man who was doing wrong. But he wasn't overall a wicked man. He was a believer. But even God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Sin is what destroys people. That is why God hates sin. He isn't happy when someone dies an unbeliever.

God says (Ezekiel 18:23), "Have I any pleasure at all that wicked should die?" He says (Ezekiel 18:32), "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that diet, saith the Lord God." So, why should we take pleasure when a man dies. We shouldn't. If an evil man dies, we take no pleasure in that.

We don't make sermons about that man dying and we're glad that he died. There are many Baptists out there that do these things. They preach sermons where they laugh and mock people that died. They make sermon series about specific people roasting in hell. They can't see and understand God in the Bible. There's nothing within them telling them that it's wrong. Something is wrong. When you pray for a man to get hit by a bus, something is very wrong.

David lamented over Saul, his personal enemy, and Jonathan his friend.

## **Verse 18 — Teach the Children of Judah the Bow**

### **""2 Samuel 1:18**

(Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jasher.)""

David not only mourns — he prepares. Why “the bow”? Because Saul and Jonathan died in an archer’s battle. Saul was hit by an archer. Israel had been outmatched. They needed to learn new skills. Mourning must be followed with maturity. We must learn from mistakes.

David teaches this truth: **Honor yesterday. Prepare for tomorrow. Grief should not paralyze God’s people. The work of God continues even in sorrow.** We must continue.

“Book of Jasher” is mentioned, but we know nothing more from Scripture. David quoting it does not mean it is Scripture — only that a record existed. The Bible alone is inspired and preserved.

## **Verse 19 — The Mighty Have Fallen**

### **""2 Samuel 1:19**

The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!""

Three times in this passage David repeats this line: **“How are the mighty fallen!”** (vv. 19, 25, 27). “The beauty of Israel” refers to Saul and Jonathan — the glory, the strength, the leaders of the nation.

This reminds us: Strength without obedience ends in tragedy. Leadership without faith ends in collapse. Beauty is fragile when sin is near.

Mount Gilboa becomes a monument of warning. The mighty will fall without God. Saul had went against God too many times as the anointed king of Israel. Jesus is the exact opposite of king Saul and king David is a man after the Lord's own heart. Saul tried to kill David at least 6 times and now David is lamenting over his death.

## **Verse 20 — Do Not Give the Enemy a Reason to Rejoice**

### **""2 Samuel 1:20**

Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.""

Gath is one of the major cities of the Philistines. Goliath came from Gath. David fled to Gath while running from Saul. Askelon was another major city of the Philistines.

David doesn't mean "hide the news." He means: **Do not celebrate evil among the ungodly.** Don't take pleasure in, promote, or laugh at the sins, failures, or wicked behavior of people who don't fear God. The world treats those things as entertainment or victory. We must not be like the world.

The Philistines would rejoice at Israel's loss. Their daughters would dance over Israel's downfall. But we must be different. David teaches us something powerful: Never give the world ammunition to mock God. Never celebrate sin. Never join the enemy in laughing at a believer's fall. This is all wickedness. This is all sin.

So called men of God preaching for people to die simply gives the world ammunition to mock God. People then laughing at that same man and posting his videos all over the internet is also sin. Don't give the enemy reason to rejoice.

## **Verse 21 — A Curse on Gilboa**

### **""2 Samuel 1:21**

Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.""

David curses the mountain — not people, but geography — because that place witnessed the shame of Israel. David didn't curse Saul or blame Israel. He directs the weight of the tragedy onto the place. Gilboa becomes a symbol of defeat. The land witnessed the fall of Saul and Jonathan.

"Vilely cast away" means Saul died like an ordinary man in battle, not as one whom God had anointed. He didn't die as a king but as an ordinary man fighting in battle. David is not dishonoring Saul — he is showing the tragedy:

Saul died like someone who had never been chosen, never been blessed, never been anointed — because disobedience robbed him of his potential. That's what happens. You will never reach your potential by disobeying God.

This is a warning: **Sin does not remove salvation, but it destroys blessing, testimony, fruitfulness, and honor.**

### **Verse 22 — Jonathan’s Bow and Saul’s Sword**

#### **""2 Samuel 1:22**

From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.""

David honors their courage. Jonathan fought until the last breath. Saul, though flawed, died fighting. Even though he fell on his own sword he died fighting in a battle against God's enemies. The weapons of Saul and Jonathan were never empty — meaning they did not retreat.

David is fair. He does not distort the truth. He acknowledges: Saul started well though he ended poorly. Jonathan was faithful from beginning to end.

### **Verse 23 — Together in Life and Death**

#### **""2 Samuel 1:23**

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.""

David remembers them at their best. That's we do when we mourn for someone. That's how we should look at people too. We all have had tough times. We all have had low spots. But we aren't going to focus on those times, and we aren't going to bring up those times for others either. We're going to focus on the better times.

Though Saul and his son Jonathan were very different men, they died together. Jonathan's loyalty never wavered — he fought beside his father even when he knew David was God's chosen king. Think about that. He fought for his dad even though his dad wasn't the better man. And he died fighting with his dad. That's a good son. David was a friend but he wasn't Jonathan's dad.

“Swifter than eagles... stronger than lions” — hyperbole used to honor their bravery. Even failures have moments worth honoring. And that's what we should do. Focus on the good of these saved men.

### **Verse 24 — Israel’s Daughters Weep**

#### **""2 Samuel 1:24**

Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.""

Saul did bring prosperity. He did bring victory in earlier years. He blessed the nation materially, even if he failed spiritually over time. He simply allowed the power to lead to disobedience of God.

David says: Remember the good Saul did. Weep for what has been lost. Recognize the tragedy of wasted potential. Saul could have done so much more if he would have increased faith in the Lord. But he disobeyed God and decreased faith in the Lord.

He was much larger physically than the young man, David, when Goliath stood out there taunting the children of Israel. Saul was afraid. David wasn't afraid. Why? Faith. That's it.

### **Verse 25 — The Second Cry of the Fallen Mighty**

#### **""2 Samuel 1:25**

How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places.""

David shifts fully to Jonathan. Jonathan died faithfully, bravely, honorably — “in his high places,” meaning in battle, on the heights of Gilboa.

Jonathan fought for God even when his family crumbled. That is integrity.

### **Verse 26 — One of the Most Misused Verses in the Bible**

#### **""2 Samuel 1:26**

I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.""

This is friendship, not romance. David speaks of loyalty, honor, sacrifice, covenant love — not sensual love. Why “passing the love of women”? Because: Jonathan risked the throne to protect David. He loved David enough to surrender his own future. Even David’s wives did not make that level of sacrifice.

David is saying that Jonathan’s loyalty was unmatched. He knew David was doing right. He knew his dad Saul was doing wrong. But he still supported his Dad by fighting in that war. He still loved David by doing good to David. Jonathan’s support for David was unwavering. Jonathan’s heart was noble.

He was stuck between Saul and David but he still honored them both. David and Jonathan loved each other. And it's okay for two men to love each other. Love is fulfilling God's commandments. Breaking God's commandments is not love. Two men, as in homosexual men, is not love. David and Jonathan were not that.

## Verse 27 — The Final Cry

### ""2 Samuel 1:27

How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!""

That is the last verse in 2 Samuel 1. The lament here ends with deep pain. Israel's warriors are gone. Israel's leadership is broken. Israel's glory has fallen. "How are the mighty fallen! How are the weapons of war perished!"

Remember, Saul was the king of Israel. The king was killed. That would be similar to an enemy killing our President. Even if you didn't like him, it should not be a glorious day for you. We are supposed to be one nation under God here. David is showing you how you should act when someone dies.

The chapter ends with hope because David is rising. God's plan continues. A greater kingdom is coming.

## Practical Applications from 2 Samuel 1:17–27

- 1. Honor even those who hurt you.** David honored Saul — the man who made his life miserable. Maturity means you do not speak evil of people God used, even if they later failed. If you do, be ready for failure.
- 2. Grief does not stop God's work.** David mourns, but he also commands Judah to learn the bow. Faith grieves but keeps going. They didn't quit. They didn't stop.
- 3. Partial obedience leads to tragic endings.** Saul was anointed, gifted, and blessed — yet ended in shame because he chose disobedience.
- 4. Godly friendship is rare and priceless.** Jonathan loved David with sacrificial loyalty. He risked everything to protect God's chosen king.
- 5. The world should never rejoice over the fall of God's people.** David said, "Tell it not in Gath." When a believer falls, the world mocks God — not just the person. But, in this world today, you have many Baptists mocking people that die. You need to stop out there. There is no integrity left out there. We all need to do better.
- 6. You can be brave and still die in battle — but dying faithful is victory.** Jonathan died fighting for the Lord. His story is not defeat — it is honor.

## Conclusion — When the Mighty Fall, God Still Rises

Saul fell. Jonathan fell. Israel fell. The weapons of war perished. But God did not fall.

His plan moved forward. His king was rising. His kingdom was advancing.

This lament ends in sorrow, but the book of 2 Samuel will rise in glory — because **the fall of man never stops the faithfulness of God.**

Even when the mighty fall, God's purpose stands — and His plan continues through those who walk in faith. And I know that's why you're here. Let's walk in faith together and let's continue in faith together.

Let's pray.