

Series: Shepherd, Poet, Fugitive, King - The Life of David  
2 Samuel 1:1-27 – How the Mighty Have Fallen! / Ryan Patty /  
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Scripture Reading: 2 Samuel 1:17-27 (CSB)

There are certain moments in life that are etched into our memories so deep that we can recall everything about it. I'll be honest, I'm not the best at remembering certain things. It feels like childhood and highschool were a blur. And then you talk to Laura about hers and it feels like she can recount every hour of everyday. I don't get it... But there are other moments in my life that I remember perfectly.

I remember almost getting hit by a car that was driving down my street when I was around the age of 5. I also remember my parents letting the driver know about it.

I remember seeing a teacher crying outside the classroom and they hurriedly ushering us away from the television. It was 9/11 and the towers had just collapsed.

I remember the call that my grandpa had passed and the gut punch that that was.

I remember the text a couple years ago that Laura needed me back at the hospital asap. I walk into the room as they are putting a spinal tap in our youngest Lyla and I just hear whimpering. Someone who is not emotional became very emotional that day..

On the plus side, I remember looking up and seeing my bride walking down the aisle and the joy I felt.. I'll never forget it.

Certain moments in life can be ingrained in us. We can be expecting one thing, and a sudden change happens. Life can be going so

well... until it's not. We get the call that a parent has suddenly passed and our foundation feels shaken. We have been trying for years to get pregnant and it happens, only to lose the baby a few weeks later... Everything is going great at our job, until the boss walks in and lay-offs are happening.. They didn't want to let you go but they have to. Ingrained moments that we remember vividly. I know you have those.

Sudden changes in emotion and sudden changes in life that are hard to fathom. And I think here, at the start of 2 Samuel, we have one of those moments in the life of David. Everything going well... until it's not.

Because as we saw in the second to last chapter of 1 Samuel, David has a resounding victory. He smashes the Amalekites and the Lord's anointed is only growing in strength and recognition. Such that, if you want to flip a few pages back, we read in 1 Samuel 30:26-31

26 When David came to Ziklag, he sent some of the plunder to his friends, the elders of Judah, saying, "Here is a gift for you from the plunder of the Lord's enemies." 27 He sent gifts to those in Bethel, in Ramoth of the Negev, and in Jattir; 28 to those in Aroer, in Siphmoth, and in Eshtemoa; 29 to those in Racal, in the towns of the Jerahmeelites, and in the towns of the Kenites; 30 to those in Hormah, in Bor-ashan, and in Athach; 31 to those in Hebron, and to those in all the places where David and his men had roamed.

What's he doing here? He's a king for the people. He's sharing the spoils (this is a time for the nation to be celebrating!). He's announcing the victory that God brought about for them. This is the best of days! Now what did Jeff teach us last week? There's a break from the narrator in the text. The last chapter of 1 Samuel, 31. We saw how Saul dies. And so when we pick up in 2 Samuel 1, these books are to be read together, David doesn't know what has taken place yet in chapter 31.. They are still on the high of victory. And yet news is coming that will be ingrained in David for the rest of his life.

This morning's sermon is titled "How the Mighty have Fallen!" which is the repeated line from David's lament in the second half of this chapter that was just read for us in the Scripture reading. My hope this morning is that we would be a changed people as we sit under God's Word from 2 Samuel chapter 1. **But this is the transition chapter between the two kings..** We have to remember that. It is what links the end of one king, and the formal beginnings of another. The Lord's anointed will be king. There are four parts to the text that speak to the fallen, and the first is this:

1. Hearing of the fallen

2 Samuel 1 starting in verse 1:

After the death of Saul, David returned from defeating the Amalekites and stayed at Ziklag two days. 2 On the third day a man with torn clothes and dust on his head came from Saul's camp. When he came to David, he fell to the ground and paid homage. 3 David asked him, "Where have you come from?" He replied to him, "I've escaped from the Israelite camp." 4 "What was the outcome? Tell me," David asked him. "The troops fled from the battle," he answered. "Many of the troops have fallen and are dead. Also, Saul and his son Jonathan are dead."

5 David asked the young man who had brought him the report, "How do you know Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?"

6 "I happened to be on Mount Gilboa," he replied, "and there was Saul, leaning on his spear. At that very moment the chariots and the cavalry were closing in on him. 7 When he turned around and saw me, he called out to me, so I answered: I'm at your service. 8 He asked me, 'Who are you?' I told him: I'm an Amalekite. 9 Then he begged me, 'Stand over me and kill me, for I'm mortally wounded, but my life still lingers.' 10 So I stood over him and killed him because I knew that after he had fallen he couldn't survive. I took the crown that was on his head and the armband that was on his arm, and I've brought them here to my lord."

From the joys and triumphs of victory, to news that not only has the king fallen (a king David honored throughout his life), but his son as well. The son that was like David's brother. The son that David loved as he loved himself. But before we get to David's reactions, we need to see a few things. The man comes roughly the 80 miles or so and tells David what has happened and notice he is an Amalekite. Who did David have resounding victory over? The Amalekites... something is up here.

First, this man is a liar. He's changing the circumstances around Saul's death to hopefully get some sort of reward. He probably anticipates that David will be happy at the news and changes what took place so he looks better and he gets to be a part of the anointed king's party. Up through verse 4, things seem to be relatively true.

And then in verse 6, he twists things. Saul didn't beg him to kill him, he said that to his armor-bearer! The same armor-bearer that would kill himself as well. And then he says that he himself killed Saul. Now, whether this man was a part of the fighting, or was just a scavenger, we don't know, but he does get Saul's crown and armband. Putting this account and last week's account together it seems he most likely saw that Saul was dead, removed his crown and armband, and left.

Nonetheless, falsehoods abound. And they will be dealt with in a moment as we will see. But I want to highlight something that we need to keep in mind, and might not be as apparent when we read this account. **Every word, every story of the Bible is in there for a reason.** The Lord inspired all of it and has providentially revealed exactly what he wants us to have. Contrary to some who might assume it's changed or different, it's not. It's been shown time and time again that it's not. And so when we read this account, we need to keep in mind that this is vital to showing that it is the Lord guiding David to the throne. The anointed king will be king through Yahweh's

power.

Because as we have seen, David won't raise his hand against Saul, like virtually all of us would have. And those living in Israel at this time don't have t.v., don't have radio, and they could be wondering, did David have something to do with Saul's demise? Was he secretly at work against Saul even though he was saying the right things? Even this man coming to tell him, did David secretly send him? No. The people will understand that God was ending the kingship for one man and beginning anew with another. This is how the kingship will come into David's hands, through God's providence and power. This same providence that we have seen at work time and time again throughout 1 Samuel and throughout the rest of the Scriptures.

The height of victory, the joys of victory, and news comes that changes everything. Let's look at David's first response after hearing of the fallen.

11 Then David took hold of his clothes and tore them, and all the men with him did the same. 12 They mourned, wept, and fasted until the evening for those who died by the sword—for Saul, his son Jonathan, the Lord's people, and the house of Israel.

Point number 2

## 2. Mourning the fallen

I think sometimes in the west we have lost the ability to mourn. To truly mourn. Some of that is because of the affluence and comfort we experience, some of it is the longevity of life, some of it is that relatively speaking we are not a warring culture. Well the opposite was true for Israel, and the opposite is true for the vast multitudes throughout history. Death is real and therefore they knew the experience of mourning in a profound way. And since death is real that means it is really coming. Apart from the Lord returning it is the one guarantee for all of us. And when it comes when we least expect it to those we care about, it cuts us deep. It shakes us up. And the

appropriate thing to do, the human thing to do, is to mourn, to grieve. And David and his men do that here upon hearing the news.

This was most likely the opposite reaction of what the man was expecting. He was hopeful for praise, maybe he was hopeful for joy and rewards, but no, David hears the news and it brings him to his knees. They tear their clothes, they cry out, they fast. All appropriate responses of mourning in their culture. And they mourn for Saul, Jonathan, and others in Israel. The mighty have fallen.

Verses 11-12 are the chiasmic center of this section. It is what the author is drawing the reader to. It's emphasizing both David's honor and love for Saul and in particular Jonathan, but also once more highlighting that this isn't the reaction of a man seeking to secretly kill the king. **This is a man who wanted a right relationship with the king and could never really get it.** That's the anticipation of reading this text, and that's why it's building to verses 11-12. What will David do? How will he react? He will continue to be honorable and a man of integrity by reacting out of love. He loved Saul in many ways, and sought to show that, but he especially loved Jonathan. And when you love someone deeply, the grief is real, the mourning is real. To love deeply means it hurts deeply.

Mourning is appropriate in life in this fallen world. And while our culture tries to keep us busy and distracted nonstop, there are times we just need to stop and mourn. Mourning at death, mourning over wayward children or a spouse, mourning over the effect of sin and Satan in this world and towards the church. Mourning and grief are real things that are a part of the human experience, and it will hit all of us at one point or another.

- And so mourning and grieving are appropriate because it shows you loved, it shows you cared, it shows that you desire something more and it points us towards eternity. The reason we have to mourn this side of eternity, the reason we

experience grief, and sorrow, and distress is because of sin and it's effects. But this is not how it will be forever. My favorite OT book is Ecclesiastes and in chapter 3 is a well-known verse that says God has put eternity in our hearts. We long to know the beginning from the end, but we can't. And so mourning and grieving doesn't always answer our questions, but it does drive us to the one who can.

Because the Christian never mourns without hope. The Christian never mourns without the sure foundation of the love of Christ and his finished work on the cross. The Christian is driven, in their grief and in their mourning, to the God who knows all things, sees all things, and will one day wipe every tear because sin and death and mourning will be no more! Praise God for that. But this side of eternity, we experience it, we go through it.

And so I want to highlight this: David's mourning instructs us in the church today as well. It reminds us that there are things we should be mourning in the church today... and yet I think many do not. Just as our affections should be stirred for the things of God, so when we see rampant unbelief, apostasy, or just a coldness to the faith, should we not mourn? Are we so busy, so indifferent to the things of God that we no longer care about what's happening at times either in our church or in the church at large in the world today? Should we not grieve over these things?

- I mourn over broken marriages and spouses who do not behave as a Christian husband or a Christian wife. I mourn for students who seem to love the Lord and then want nothing to do with him later on. I mourn for those who think the church is optional in the life of being a disciple of Christ. I mourn for a Christianity that loves to show up on Sunday mornings but fails to materialize throughout the rest of the week.

Now do I have theological answers for those things? Yes. Do I still

have hope that Christ is building his church and the gates of hell won't prevail against it? Of course. But let us not divorce head and heart, and let us not fail to grieve and mourn over our sin and the sins of others. There is a healthy tension of holding these things together, and collectively we need one another in order to do that well.

And for those mourning even now, for those who did not want to get out of bed this morning, didn't really want to come, but God kept nudging you and you got out of bed and here you are. For those mourning, God has not left you alone. I challenge you to meditate on Psalm 34 this week. Everyday. Verses 15-18 in particular:

15 The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,  
and his ears are open to their cry for help. (He sees you. He sees you crying out, he sees your tears, your prayers are not unheard)

16 The face of the Lord is set  
against those who do what is evil,  
to remove all memory of them from the earth. (One day the reason for your mourning, the root cause, the sin and death that affect all of us will be gone, it will be judged)

17 The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears,  
and rescues them from all their troubles. (Deliverance is coming, he is a rescuer, and he has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son. Look to the cross in your grief, not away from it)

18 The Lord is near the brokenhearted;  
he saves those crushed in spirit. (He is near you, he has not forgotten you. You are brokenhearted, you are crushed, he saves. Cling to that).

And so here in our text, mourning does not remain. It is appropriate for a time, and then by the grace of God we continue on. And many times that looks like day-by-day trusting in the Lord; day by day reminding yourself of the promises of God and what Christ accomplished for you. Not knowing how you might make it, but



trusting the One whose mercies are new every morning and provides us the strength needed for each day. And as we continue on in life, it Doesn't mean we forget our reasons for mourning or our experiences that we walked through, doesn't mean it doesn't affect us, (grief can always flare up at different times) but we continue on, by the grace of God.

David mourns, and then he continues on.

### 3. Honoring the fallen

Read with me starting in verse 13

13 David inquired of the young man who had brought him the report, "Where are you from?"

"I'm the son of a resident alien," he said. "I'm an Amalekite."

14 David questioned him, "How is it that you were not afraid to lift your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?" 15 Then David summoned one of his servants and said, "Come here and kill him!" The servant struck him, and he died. 16 For David had said to the Amalekite, "Your blood is on your own head because your own mouth testified against you by saying, 'I killed the Lord's anointed.'"

David's speech is direct throughout, even in his questioning. And here David is going to right some wrongs. This liar is going to be found out. Ironically, he truly didn't kill Saul, but he will die as one who did.

But notice his first question. Where are you from? David recognizes that much is off in his tale, and he just "admitted" to delivering the final blow to the king, but David wants to know, where are you from. I'm the son of a resident alien. I'm an Amalekite. And that tells David everything he needs to know. When someone moves into another country, as a resident alien would, it is incumbent upon them to know the laws of that land, to know the customs even. **You cannot be driving here and run a stop sign and just say,** "well, back in my home

country we don't have stop signs, only yield signs (which might be a good thing but that's besides the point). The officer will not care. The laws of the land are to be followed.

And so this Amalekite, being the son of a resident alien, would have been in Israel for some time. He should have known better, such that David can say "how is it that you were not afraid to lift your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?" As we have seen time and time again, this is a guiding truth for David. He will not raise his hand against the Lord's anointed. The Lord would have to do it. And so for this man to do so, at least by his own confession, is to go against, in part, what David and his kingship stands for (that the Lord must move and act). And so he honors them by having the man killed. Again, in an ANE culture this was normal. Sometimes hard for us to understand, but the honor and shame of such a thing would have been understood and David's actions would have been well received. He honors the fallen.

But I want to draw your attention to two things. The lie and the fear here. First the lie.

This young man's lie is his own demise. As David said his blood is on his own head. Now no one wants to be known as a liar, no one wants to be known as someone who lies often. But maybe we don't think much about the one off. Just the little lie here and there that we tell. Let's imagine for a moment that this young man had never lied before this moment. He sees an opportunity and he takes it, to try to make his life better. It ultimately doesn't matter, does it. One small lie friends can lead to any of our undoing.

And we always like to justify what's a big or small lie in our heads, don't we? As if we are the arbiter of lies. No, I didn't look at that website the other night. No, I didn't take a few extra dollars from work. No, I didn't gossip about another.

It's always small, at least in our minds, right? **Until it's not.** If this judgment here teaches us anything it's that our lies will always be found out. The judgment of God found this man out, found him in his lie, and repaid him. And the rest of Scripture teaches us this. We are confronted with the God who sees all things, the God who exposes us, who as Ps. 51 says "delights in truth in our inward parts." He is the God of truth, and the Scripture passages concerning liars is a sobering reality. **So don't buy the lie, because that's what it is, that it's just a small lie here and there.** It's not. It hurts you, it hurts others, and sin should never be flirted with. Remember what happened to Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 (that could possibly be described as just a little lie, couldn't it)? Lying about the money they had received for selling land. The Lord took both of their lives. There are no small lies and as much as we love to convince ourselves that no one will find out, that no one will see, it's not true under the reign of God. He knows, he sees. Does the one keeping a lie here fear that? Or just want to push it away and not think about it?

I'll close out this thought on lying with Luke 12:2–3 2 There is nothing covered that won't be uncovered, nothing hidden that won't be made known. 3 Therefore, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in an ear in private rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. He knows all, he sees all, don't play around with sin.

So what do we do? What do we do with that lie we have shoved deep, or that tendency to lie over "small" things? We confess it. We realize that there will be consequences, but we confess it and we look to the cross, where lies and every sin is forgiven by the sacrifice of Christ. And for those who struggle in this area, for teenagers who struggle in this area, my second subpoint helps us to combat lying.

Fear. Notice David's question to the man once more. Were you not

afraid? Literally fearful, or an awed tremble. This man did not fear the Lord and therefore did not think much of lying. And yet, it is a right fear that can often keep us from sinning. I mentioned God's restraining grace some weeks back, but throughout the Scriptures there is also a healthy fear of God that is expected, that is commanded, and that also preserves us and controls us. It keeps us from thinking lightly of that lie, it keeps us from thinking lightly of sin. Just as David can ask, "do you not fear God?" so we need to be asked that this morning. Do we rightly fear God.

I am reminded of 2 Corinthians 7:1 – So then, dear friends, since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from every impurity of the flesh and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

Notice here, bringing holiness to completion. How do you combat that sin, how do you combat those lies or that persistent struggle? The fear of the Lord. Beholding him rightly as Lord and savior. And instead of running from him, instead of trying to hide more and more from him or to keep it hidden, you run to Him instead. You experience the grace that only he can show. You experience the forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

May we learn from this man's folly and be reminded of both the severity of any sin and the call to rightly fear God.

#### 4. Lamenting the fallen

David hears of the fallen, he mourns the fallen, he honors the fallen, and now he laments them. A lament is a formal expression of grief or distress (x2), one that can be written, read, learned, practiced, repeated. Daniel Mueller did our Scripture reading and read this beautiful lament for us. It is a song of intense grief and sorrow, and David writes it so that they will be remembered. He writes it so that the people of God will remember. So I'm not going to read the whole thing again, but I do want to draw out a few things from it. Just like

mourning is a right and appropriate response, so is lament in the Christian life.

So look with me starting at v. 17

17 David sang the following lament for Saul and his son Jonathan, 18 and he ordered that the Judahites be taught The Song of the Bow. It is written in the Book of Jashar:

He orders fighting men, the warriors, to be taught it. He wants them stirred to action next time they face the Philistines. He wants all of Judah to know it. There is something to teaching God's people to remember those who have come before. To remember sacrifice. It's why going to a war memorial is so moving. You remember what took place, you don't forget it, you allow it to shape how you live going forward. So it is the same for David and his men. Saul and Jonathan and the others who died are to be commemorated.

And then in his song of lament there is imagery to notice. We can't just psychologize what David is doing here, these are intense emotions and a stirring commemoration of the fallen.

In v. 21 he curses Mt. Gilboa where Saul died. In 22-23 he commemorates their bravery and their boldness. He calls the women in the next verse to weep for Saul, and then in v. 26 he grieves for Jonathan his brother, who he had the deepest of friendships with. He says "Your love for me was more wondrous than the love of women." I have already spoken before about how this relationship was the farthest thing from homosexual despite what others try to read into this text, but he had a covenant of friendship, he experienced love for his brother like no other. And the reality is that we relate to one another of the same sex in specific ways. At times, men can relate to men in ways that women can't, and women can relate to other women in ways men cannot. So I'm not going to preach that sermon again but this is a deep abiding friendship. This is his brother that he's lost.

Even further, think on how Jonathan showed his love for David.

Despite his father being king, despite him being next in line, despite him having the opportunity to chase the kingship, he recognizes the Lord's anointed and tells David, "You will be king! God has said it and it is so." THAT is the true love of a brother and friend.

And so three times the refrain is repeated for us: how the mighty have fallen (x3).

It can be easy to be cynical about this lament and say this isn't true... "we clearly know how Saul behaved and it's not true." But that misses the point. We all want to be treated like this and remembered like this when we die. We all want the good things to be remembered, and none of our bad. Contrary to what the world likes to do in digging up every imperfection from someone in the past, none of us want that for ourselves. Remember the hall of faith, Hebrews 11? There are some messed up people. Some very sinful people. Some people, that if you and I were writing that book, would probably be left out... But not in God's book. Because praise God that for the Christian here this morning it is not by our sins that we are judged but by the blood of Christ. And that repeated refrain my friends, found throughout the hall of faith, "by faith, by faith, by faith" is the same message held out to you today.

It is "by faith" that you can be redeemed, forgiven, and called a child of God. By faith in the Son of God, who lived the life you and I can't (all the good works we try to do to earn salvation or add to our salvation are like filthy rags God's Word tells us) they contribute zero percent to our salvation), so he lived the life you and I couldn't, he died the death you and I deserved, and He is the firstborn of the new creation that you and I will one day experience.

Hear me here clearly, if you are relying on *anything* other than faith in the finished work of Christ for your salvation (for your standing before God), for your sanctification, for your Christian life, then you have it wrong. It is faith in Jesus Christ and his person and work alone that is

sufficient for you. Not what we do, but everything He did.

And so this passage hits on so many themes. To the one mourning, to the one grieving and needing to lament, may you look to Christ, the man of sorrows as Isaiah 53 says who knew sorrow, and is able to minister to you. He knows and sees what you are walking through. Turn to him, not something or someone else, but turn to him who alone is able to provide comfort and peace. We do not serve just a transcendent God but an immanent one as well, Immanuel, God with us. God the Son who is able to minister to you in your sorrow.

To the one taking their lies and their sin lightly and not fearing God, look to that same man, Jesus Christ, who had to die on the cross for your sins. God sent his own son because of that sin. Do not take it lightly. Think on the work of Christ on the cross. And look to the one who died for you. You know the sin, you know what you have done, God's law makes that clear, now look to the one who did something about your problem. The one who is able to save.

That is what defines us this morning, as those who have, by faith, looked to the Son of God. Would you pray with me?