

Introduction: We all live in the 'East of Eden' world (Genesis 3:20-24). A fundamental truth of this world is that a deeper and more intimate relationship with God almost always requires we go through a season of pain, grief and suffering. *** This truth is a theme threaded through the Psalms. The pious priest who wrote the longest psalm greatly desired to be taught by Yahweh because he believed His commands; and he said he sees affliction as good because through it he learned obedience (Psalm 119:65-72). Another songwriter praised God for testing, burdens and torture because these refined and purified God's people and brought them refreshing abundance (Psalm 66:8-12)! *** Jesus' death on the Cross for us is the ultimate example of good coming out of suffering. And, His resurrection from the dead empowers all who have surrendered everything to Him, as the Lord of their lives by faith to obey all He commanded, to receive His power to endure suffering because they know the result will be their character will become like His character (Romans 5:1-4). Paul said when he lost everything for the sake of Christ Jesus his Lord, he then received Christ's righteousness by sharing in His suffering (Philippians 3:7-11). Peter said grief and trials purify faith and result in love to Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:6-9). James said many kinds of trials endured can result in mature character (James 1:2-4). *** David always had great character flaws; but, in his lament over Saul and Jonathan he recognizes the special selfless and sacrificial love Jonathan had for him. It was greater than any other human love. *** Asaph, the first chosen musician and songwriter for the Temple (1 Chronicles 25:6-9) teaches us that grief over the loss of the joy of God's love can be overcome by remembering God's past wonderful works of redemption, especially the exodus from slavery in Egypt through God's chosen man, Moses. *** With this introduction we are ready to hear and be challenged to change our attitudes, priorities and daily habits by today's Bible passages.

I. David lamented Saul and Jonathan, and said to teach about them dying in battle and enemy women rejoicing;

he calls Israelite women to mourn and concludes with the death of his godly friend Jonathan. (2 Samuel 1:17-27)

- A. David composes a lament for a father and son who died fighting God's battle, and prays the enemy's women will not rejoice. (Verses 17-22)

1. Then David lamented this lament over Saul and his son Jonathan; then he said to teach it to the people of Judah:

'(The) Bow'; Behold! It has been written in 'The Book of Jashar'. (Verses 17-18)

Lament: David was from Judah, distinct from the ten northern tribes; and, from which Jacob-Israel prophesied the eternal King would come (Genesis 49:8-10). David wanted this lament song to be especially known by his tribe, so they would respect Saul of the tribe of Benjamin. It helps to know the word 'jashar' means upright! What follows is poetry.

2. The beautiful glory (of) Israel is slain on (your) high places / how the mighty have fallen! (Verse 19)

Slain: David calls Saul and Jonathan Israel's 'beautiful glory' now slain. The term was later used to describe the land Yahweh told Abraham would be given to his descendants (Ezekiel 20:6, 15), and of the branch and righteous one who would rule Israel (Isaiah 4:2; 24:14-16).

3. Y'all must not tell it in Gath / y'all must not proclaim it in the streets of Ashkelon // Lest the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice / lest the daughters of the uncircumcised will shout in triumph. (Verse 20)

Not tell Philistines: David names two of the five Philistine cities, starting with the one from which he had his home base within a day's journey. His concern is that women outside of God's covenant people will mock God's people.

4. Mountains of Gilboa / not (will be) dew or rain on you (and not) fields of offerings //

Because there was defiled the shield of the mighty / the shield of Saul, not anointed with oil. (Verse 21)

Gilboah: Mount Gilboa was where Saul and Jonathan died in battle (1 Samuel 31). Saul had been told that due to disobedience in fulfilling his duty, he had lost the right to his anointing as king (1 Samuel 13:5-14). Here David also concludes that Saul lost his anointing as a soldier.

5. From the blood of the slain / from the fat of the mighty // The bow of Jonathan was not turned back / and the sword of Saul will not come back empty. (Verse 22)

Fought and died valiantly: David's lament song portrays both Saul and Jonathan as fighting valiantly for God's covenant people, even in defeat and death. David was always generous in his dealings with Saul and shows it in the lament he composed for Saul and his son.

The deaths of those who fight for God's people are lamented

- B. Mighty men dying in battle should be mourned by their women; and, David's friend Jonathan died as Jesus would later die as the Savior King of kings. (Verses 23-27)

1. Saul and Jonathan, being loved and pleasant in their lives / and in their death, they were not separated //

They were swifter than eagles / they were stronger than lions. (Verse 23)

Metaphors: Saul and Jonathan's relationship was strained (1 Samuel 20:27-34), but David idealizes it.

The first metaphor about eagles was used by Isaiah two hundred fifty years later for their strength to rise up to great heights on their wings (Isaiah 40:31). The second metaphor about lions is applied to Jesus, the King of kings, descended from David, in the last book of the Bible (Revelation 5:1-10).

2. Daughters of Israel, you must weep over Saul / who clothed you (in) scarlet finery / putting gold ornaments on your clothing. (Verse 24)

Women weep: David now addresses the women of God's covenant people, requesting they weep for Saul whose past victories in war had made their lives better. Contrast this with David's concern how the women of Saul's enemies would respond to his death (verse 20).

3. How the mighty have fallen in the midst of battle / Jonathan slain on your high places. (Verse 25)

Repeat: Repeating a phrase he used for Saul and Jonathan, David now focuses on his best friend Jonathan. He is still addressing the mountains of Gilboa where the fatal battle took place (verse 21). David is taking his lament to a higher level.

The deaths of those who fight for God's people are lamented

4. Distress (is) to me, my brother Jonathan / you have been very pleasant to me //
Your love to me had been wonderful / more than love of women. (Verse 26)

Wonderful love: The word for love is human family or friendship love. It is modified by a word always applied to who God is and what He does: wonderful, as in the wonderful deliverance from slavery in Egypt. Jonathan's love to David was selfless and sacrificial, much as the love Jesus showed on the Cross, more than human covenantal marriage. (We will soon see David was a horrible husband!)

5. How the mighty have fallen / then the weapons of war perished. (Verse 27)

Third time: A fitting conclusion: for the third time David laments the fall of Saul and Jonathan equating them to human weapons who perished on the battlefield.

The deaths of those who fight for God's people are lamented

Application: Jonathan is a beautiful 'type' of Jesus. We must be moved to seek God to be as Christ-like as Jonathan to God-seekers He brings into our lives.

II. God's people experience grief over the loss of His great love; but, they can remember His past wonderful works of redemption. (Psalm 77:7-15)

- A. God's faithful people can and do experience grief when they do not experience God's strong love, grace and compassion. (Verses 7-10)

1. Will Adonai cast off forever? / And will He still never again be pleased? //
Has His steadfast love perpetually ceased? / Has His 'word' ended from generation to generation? //
Has God forgotten to be gracious? / Has He shut up in anger His compassion? *Selah* (Verses 7-9)

Six questions: Asaph leads the Temple worshippers in six rapid-fire questions directed at Adonai (Jesus in His own words: Psalm 110:1; Matthew 22:42-45). The first four are for all time, will He: cast them off, not be pleased, no longer love them strongly, and stop 'speaking' to them. They conclude questioning His grace and compassion.

2. Then I said: It is my grief / to have changed the Right Hand of the Most High. (Verse 10)

Grief: Asaph's fear for himself and God's people is that the highest God's protection, symbolized by a strong right hand, has changed and will never be what it was. This causes him grief!

- B. They must remember God's covenant wonders, and meditate on His holy deeds, by which He makes Himself known to all who experience redemption, ultimately in Christ Jesus. (Verses 11-15)

1. I will remember the deeds of Yah / surely I will remember Your wonders of old // I will meditate on all Your work / and I will muse on Your deeds. (Verses 11-12)

Mind: Asaph exhorts God's people to remember and meditate on all the wonders the covenant God, Yahweh, did for them in Egypt to deliver them: the song Moses taught (Exodus 15:1-18); Israel's declaration before the priest as Moses commanded before he died (Deuteronomy 26:4-9); as Joshua said when he was about to lead the people over the Jordan River (Joshua 3:1-5); Psalms (105:23-45; 135:1-13); and Nehemiah's prayer (9:9-15). Now, we can remember what Peter said about the 'good news' of Jesus on the Pentecost (Acts 2:22-40); and what the author of Hebrews said (2:1-18).

2. God, in holiness is Your way / who is great 'god' as God? (Verse 13)

Holy and great: The God of Israel is both great and holy. He is greater than any other (created) spirit being! He walks in holiness! For anyone to enjoy God's strong, life-giving, life-changing love, that person must be cleansed and purified from sin by grace through the faith of Jesus! Those who refuse to do this will be the cause of Asaph's grief.

3. You (are) the God working wonders / You have made known Your strength among the people //
You have redeemed Your people in Your strong arm / the sons of Jacob and Joseph. *Selah* (Verses 14-15)

Wonder of being redeemed: Redemption comes to all who mourn their sins before God; confess their sins to God; and, surrender themselves, their plans, desires and dreams to the Lord Jesus Christ. He will then forgive them and reconcile them to Himself so they no longer live for themselves but for Jesus who suffered and died for them in love (2 Corinthians 5:14-21). So, in grief, remember Yahweh's past redeeming wonders.

Application: We must commit to love God with all that is in us, above everything and everyone in our lives, surrendering ourselves to know and do God's will, going beyond human wisdom, to godly wisdom gained by knowing and meditating on the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, through the Holy Spirit residing in us.

Corollary: Those who do not read or listen to the whole Bible every year, praying as they read, or listen, to be corrected and directed to obey God's instruction by faith, should not be surprised if someday Jesus says to them: 'Depart from Me, I never knew you' (Matthew 7:16-23; 25:38-43; Luke 18:24-27).

Conclusion: David lamented Saul and Jonathan, saying to teach about them dying in battle; and, enemy women rejoicing. He calls Israelite women to mourn, and then concludes with the death of his godly friend Jonathan.

God's people experience grief over the loss of His great love. But they can remember His past wonderful works of redemption.

The deaths of those who fight for God's people are lamented

In grief, remember Yahweh's past redeeming wonders.