

2 Samuel 1

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[0 : 00] That's when we finished looking at 1 Samuel as a church. Some of us won't remember that at all. We weren't here or we've just forgotten that we ever looked at 1 Samuel.

! I always had in mind that we would end up in 2 Samuel not too long afterwards so that we didn't forget 1 Samuel. But 2 years have gone by, which is just crazy.

But that's where we're at. So in an attempt to remind ourselves a little bit, just a very, very little bit of 1 Samuel, let's see if this is helpful.

Because as I said at the beginning, they are one whole book, 1 and 2 Samuel. It's just our English Bibles have divided them into two. There are two kings in 1 Samuel.

Can anyone name those two kings? Saul and David. Excellent. So King Saul, he's the first king of Israel.

[1 : 11] And the people of Israel got King Saul because they were saying to Samuel, complaining to Samuel, we want a king because we want to be like the nations around us.

It wasn't necessarily a bad thing that they wanted a king. God had made provisions in his law for them to have a king at some point. But their motivation doesn't seem to be great.

Their motivation is because we don't want to be a people with God as our king. We want to be the people like the nations around us. We're seeing kings win victories. We want a king to win victories for us.

And so God gave them what they wanted, which isn't always a good thing for people. They got King Saul. And we're told about King Saul.

This is the description that we're given. He's tall and handsome. And that's what you want in a king, right? As you make your way through 1 Samuel, you think, be careful what you wish for.

[2 : 20] He looks the part. And he can go off and win victories. But he's not particularly close to the Lord. He doesn't particularly listen to God.

And there's a very sad verse in 1 Samuel where we see the spirit departs from Saul. God had equipped him with his spirit and then the spirit departs.

That's a sad day for King Saul, his reign for the people. But then, as Julia reminded us, David is also there.

He's a king in waiting. He's not the most obvious choice. Samuel goes to anoint a king amongst Jesse's sons who are all big, tall, strong men.

And he goes through them all. And God says, no, not him. No, not him. No, not him. Well, who? We've run out of options. And then he says, are there any other sons that you have, Jesse?

[3 : 19] And he says, oh, yes, David, the shepherd boy. And he's anointed. He's anointed king. And throughout the rest of the book, you sort of see this rivalry beginning to shape up between David and King Saul.

And in fact, at some point, King Saul becomes very jealous of David and tries to kill David with his spear. That's a dark little time.

And then it ends in real terrible darkness, actually, in the final chapter of 1 Samuel, which is where we left it. Where King Saul dies by falling on his sword.

Basically, he's run out of steam. He's run out of strength. Doesn't want to keep going. And so he falls on his own sword. So it's a bit of a sad end.

Before we read from 2 Samuel, there's a little video on YouTube which gives a summary of the book and will help us to get our bearings.

[4 : 23] So I'm going to play this video now. Might need some slight adjustment. Hang on. Hang on.

Hang on.

Hang on.

Hang on.

clug on the third day. Then on the third day, a man arrived from Saul's camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head. When he came to David, he fell to the ground to pay him honor.

[6 : 44] This man clearly has bad news. His clothes are torn. Dust is on his head. These are signs of people who are in deep mourning. And so David asked the man about the news that he's come to bring.

The news has come from the Israelite camp. And David naturally wants to know what happens. And we get a statement from the man in verse four. The men fled from battle, he replied.

Many of them fell and died. And Saul and his son Jonathan are dead. He brings bad news. The king is dead. The king and his son actually are dead.

And so David's like, are you sure? Have a look there at verse five. Are you sure? How do you know? How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead? And so he reports back to him what had happened. Saul wasn't doing well. He was leaning on his spear. And then he said to this Amalekite man, stand here by me and kill me. I'm in the throes of death, but I'm still alive. So I stood beside him and I killed him. The man comes, he says, I killed him. And notice in verse 10, it is very much, I think, this man speaking quite proudly. I killed him and then I took the crown off his head and I brought them here to you.

Time for you to be king, David. Surely this is good news, isn't it? David, you've been a king in waiting. Saul has been trying to kill you with his spear. This is good news. You've got the crown.

[8 : 46] Here you go. Get on with it. So what's David going to make of it? Well, actually, David feels the weight of the news that the king is dead.

As I can imagine, all of us sort of can resonate a little bit with. All of us in the last few years heard the news the queen is dead. Do you remember that day? Queen Elizabeth II died.

After all her years as our monarch, someone we thought would sort of just carry on forever died.

And that was a weighty piece of news. The country was in mourning. Ten days of national mourning. Things were a little bit odd. TV, radio is a little bit odd. As we remember, the queen has died.

And things become a little somber in this passage. This Malachite man thought he was bringing David good news. Here's the crown. Get on with it. You're king now.

[10 : 10] But look at how David reacts. Verse 11. Then David and all the men with him took hold of their clothes and tore them.

They mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan.

You might think, well, perhaps David's been waiting for this. He's excited. I'm finally king. But no. He enters into mourning. The king has died.

Because David, in spite of all of Saul's attempts to get rid of him, has a huge respect for Saul as king. Let me just remind you of that respect.

1 Samuel 24. 1 Samuel chapter 24. Read a few verses from there.

[11 : 18] So verse 3. He came to the sheepfolds along the way. A cave was there. And Saul went in to relieve himself.

David and his men were in the cave. The men said to David, This is the day God spoke to you about when he said, I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.

Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul's robe. Afterwards, David was conscience stricken for having cut off the corner of his robe.

He said to his men, The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, Or lay my hand on him, for he is the anointed of the Lord's.

Do you see that David's deep respect for Saul as king? The men alongside David said, Here's your chance. Go get him.

[12 : 23] Go get rid of Saul. Then you'll be king. And David cuts off a corner of his robe, I guess kingly robe. And he feels terrible.

This is not honoring the one that the Lord has anointed king for this time. And you see more of his respect as he speaks to Saul.

Verse 9. He said to Saul, Why do you listen when men say David is bent on harming you? This day you have seen with your own eyes How the Lord gave you into my hands in the cave.

Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you. I said, I will not lay my hand on the Lord because he is the Lord's anointed. That's why he has such deep respect for Saul.

Because he has been anointed by the Lord, Israel's God. It's not right, David says, for me to force my way to be king.

[13:33] This is the king God has placed for this time. So David is not rejoicing in 2 Samuel 1 about the news of the death of Saul. And he's certainly not rejoicing in the death of his son Jonathan.

His son Jonathan, who they had a really deep friendship. We'll see that a bit later. After all, here David has been given some bad news.

This Amalekite is not winning any favors with the king by saying, Here's the crown. He also lies to David.

The report about Saul's death doesn't add up with 1 Samuel 31 verse 4. According to the Amalekite in 2 Samuel 1, he killed Saul.

But in 1 Samuel 31 verse 4, we read this. Saul said to his armor bearer, Draw your sword and run me through, Or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me.

[14:47] But the armor bearer was terrified and would not do it. So Saul himself took his own sword and fell on it. It wasn't that this Amalekite murdered the king.

Saul himself landed on his own sword. What's the motivation of this Amalekite?

Well, I do think it's to win favor with David. To try and think, well, David's the next king. If I take him the crown, perhaps he'll honor me with a high position in his palace.

And I think we get that detail when we read chapter 4 verse 10, Which says this, When someone told me Saul is dead, And thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and put him to death.

This man thought he was bringing good news. But this is terrible news. He had murdered the Lord's anointed.

[15:57] This is not a good thing. And so here's the consequences. Verse 14, If there is ever an illustration to why it's bad to be lying, about the details.

Well, here's a very graphic one, isn't it? The results of this lie, to try and win favor with the king, is death.

Which fits with the law of the Lord. Leviticus 24 verse 17, Anyone who takes the life of a human is to be put to death.

And so David here is simply upholding God's law. And so already we're seeing in David something very different from Saul.

He's a man who's upholding God's word. He's making sure that justice is being done. The Amalekite finds no favor with this new king.

[17:18] Rather the awful but just judgment of death. He took a life so his life must go. And in all this lies and scheming, perhaps we ourselves now this side of the cross can remind ourselves of another king who was put to death through the lies and the scheming of others.

the Lord Jesus Christ who is a king in David's life. He was sentenced to crucifixion on a cross.

And yet surely if people knew when they were crucifying Jesus to the cross, surely if people knew that he was God's anointed king, they wouldn't lay a hand on him.

Surely this Amalekite, if he knew this was the Lord's anointed king, surely he wouldn't have laid a hand on him. Surely if he knew how David felt about him, he wouldn't have laid a hand on him.

And yet this king, this Lord Jesus Christ was willing to go through that awful injustice that led him, the Lord's anointed king, to the cross, to wearing that awful crown of thorns.

[18:55] Because unlike Saul, he wasn't a king who was sort of self-interested, absorbed in himself. He wasn't choosing to fall on his own sword and die in a tragic way.

He was choosing to give his life for his people. Even though a bit like the Amalekite, all of us at some point lie.

All of us sort of try and scheme evil plans. All of us actually deserve death for our lies and our evil scheming.

And yet in Jesus, we find a king who has taken our judgment, our death in his place, in our place, in order that we may live, in order that we may go free from the penalty of death.

And so to find favor from the king, from God the king, we don't need to try and lie and say, look how good I am.

[20 : 04] Look what I can offer you like the Amalekite does. In order to find favor with God the king, we simply need to look to Jesus by faith and say, I am not worthy of your favor.

But because of your son, the king Jesus, and his death for me, please grant me forgiveness. How not to win favor of the king.

Secondly, how to do something. How to grieve the king and his son. Firstly, how to grieve the king, King Saul.

David grieved for Saul in spite of the fact Saul hated David by the end. In spite of the fact Saul had tried to kill him several times by hurling his spear at him.

It's just astonishing to see that David is in such grief about his enemy.

[21 : 15] David mourns his predecessor. He has the greatest respect for his friend Jonathan's dad.

And he grants him the respect that is due to the Lord's anointed one and I think it's extraordinary.

And that's why we read this lament towards the end of the chapter.

lament this passionate expression of grief and sorrow. And it's not just David lamenting. Actually, he writes this in order that the people would lament, would grieve the king.

Verse 17, David took up this lament concerning Saul and his son Jonathan and he ordered that the people of Judah be taught this lament of the bow. He is leading his people in grief for the king, in grief for the Lord's anointed.

And he honors Saul by saying how the mighty have fallen there in verse 18. how the mighty have fallen of Saul who ended in such weakness and yet this is the Lord's king.

[22 : 47] The Lord's anointed one. David sees there was a might about him. And he doesn't want people rejoicing in the news of the death.

Verse 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.

Gath is Philistine territory. He doesn't want Philistines, the enemies of God's people, to be rejoicing about the death of Saul who actually became an enemy of David.

Take it off the news broadcast, he says. Don't proclaim it. Don't celebrate that the king is dying. Of course, he couldn't actually do anything about the Philistines rejoicing.

I'm sure they were rejoicing in the death of Israel's king. But that's how he's feeling. Don't rejoice.

This is a sad news, a sad day.

[23 : 49] The Lord's anointed has died. that's not something to rejoice about. And then verse 21, speaking about where the deaths happened.

Mountains of Gilboa, may you have neither dune or rain, may no showers fall on your terraced fields, for there the shield of the mighty was despised, the shield of Saul no longer rubbed with oil. He's saying, I don't want those mountains where lay the remnants of Saul and his son, I don't want them to be flourishing.

I don't want them to be doing well because of what lays on them, of the king and his son who's died. And I guess death does that to you, doesn't it?

It doesn't feel good and you don't really want the world to just carry on and forget about those who have gone before. I felt this a little bit last Sunday.

[25 : 02] We took a trip up to the church we grew up in, up in Hurstbury Point. And when the service was about to start, I was looking around thinking, I don't recognize half these people anymore.

And I was thinking about those who had gone on before. Those who had gone to be with the Lord, but had been there for years and years and years and thinking, how does this church work without them anymore?

It doesn't feel quite right without them. And that's what David's saying about these mountains. They shouldn't thrive because of the king who's died and the shield that's left there.

It's what David is going through in his grief. Why? Verse 22. Because of the blood that's been shed. 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. Saul and Jonathan in life, they were loved and admired, and in death, they were not parted, they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

[26 : 21] And it's incredibly generous of David to say that, of Saul. Naturally say that about Jonathan, but to say of Saul, he was swifter than an eagle and stronger than a lion.

He's been loved and admired. It's extraordinary. Surely a reminder to us not just of how David views the Lord's anointed, but how he views human life.

Remember those words of Psalm 139? I praise you because I'm fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, I know that for what? Human life is precious. He's praising the Lord here that even Saul has been fearfully and wonderfully made. And his work through Saul, wonderful. David's a man of great integrity here. Honoring someone created by God in God's image. There'd been times when they were against each other, but now in death it's right that he honors and mourns him.

[27 : 34] God will be to God and I think this is a challenge to us today as we look at the rulers of the world at the moment and perhaps thinking there must be people who can do a better job.

God why are they making these decisions of war and not peace?

And perhaps we can't wait till certain rulers have gone. And on the day that they die we're probably not going to be mourning them like David does Saul here.

and yet actually if we take for a moment David's attitude towards King Saul a questionable king who didn't honor the Lord and yet realize with David that it's the Lord who raises up rulers and it's the Lord who brings them down.

If we take that attitude on board then we can sort of rest in God's sovereignty that for this time in history these people are in power and though we don't love all that they're doing and saying actually we can look to a higher power and a higher throne.

[29 : 11] We can look to the throne of the living God who has made this world and everything in it and who is sovereign over the appointment of all rulers and be reminded that his kingdom is the one that will last forever.

His king who he has established in the Lord Jesus Christ is the king who will rule forever and one day all things will be under his feet. but until that day though we might not love the rulers that are around in our world we keep resting in the one who is sovereign and reigning above them and we remember that like us they are human beings made in God's image and we need to think carefully about how we speak about them how we view them yes very okay to disagree with them and the things that they might stand for but remember they are made by God and appointed by him and at the very least we could pray for them it's a challenge secondly and this will be an encouragement hopefully

David also greets the king's son David's friend David's greatest friend Jonathan and it's rather wonderful to read these words about his friends who's gone verse 20 how the mighty have fallen Jonathan lies slain on your heights 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 you can just see their just how close their friendship was what a wonderful thing to see a really strong male friendship it's a good thing remember Jonathan's words to David in 1 Samuel 23 verse 17 don't be afraid he said he says to David as Saul continues to be after

David's life Jonathan says don't be afraid my father Saul will not lay a hand on you you shall be king over Israel and I will be second to you even my father knows this and it's astonishing to see hear Jonathan say those words I will be second to you because actually Jonathan rightly was in the king's line actually Jonathan should be king really but this is not how the lord was wanting it to play out and Jonathan had the greatest respect and love for David and said I'm going to be second to you you will be king what an encouragement from his friends what a wonderful friendship but now that what love that David says was just so wonderful it's now come to an end even the best human friendships come to an end death but by death but in the future

David's son Solomon wrote some wonderful words in the book of Proverbs worth turning to Proverbs 18 verse 24 Proverbs 18 verse 24 one who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother and surely David and Jonathan in their lives in their friendship together they had one he stuck closer than a brother but now Jonathan's gone but friends this morning however great some of our friendships are there really is one who will stick closer to you than a brother one who will stick so closely to you that he'll go through death with you and will be with you for all eternity and that one is the Lord

[34 : 29] Jesus Christ he will love us with a love that will never ever run dry John Newton the hardened slave trader who knew God's amazing grace wrote that hymn amazing grace but he wrote other hymns as well and there's a hymn I don't think we've sung it before certainly not since I've been here but it's a wonderful hymn about the Lord Jesus and his friendship and his love one there is above all others well deserves the name of friend his is love beyond a brother's costly free

and knows no end they who once his kindness prove find it everlasting love the wonderful description of the Lord Jesus Christ who is a friend who sticks closer than a brother the Lord Jesus who is also a great saviour king in who we find undeserved favour a king who is above all kings as we look in despair at times at a world full of questionable kings he is a king who is good and whose rule will never run out and it will always be a very wise rule the wise rule of a wonderful friend who will stick closer to you than a brother whose love is more wonderful than that of any human being let's pray father god thank you that we in our prayers come before your great throne of grace thank you that as we turn to you we turn to you because of the lord jesus christ and his wonderful love for us his wonderful love which will never run dry a love which sticks closer than a brother greater than the greatest of human loves love thank you for our security in him and in knowing his good reign in this world and thank you that we are blessed to be a part of his kingdom which will never end help us to keep looking to him and we ask this in Jesus name amen we're going to sing