



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

2 Samuel 1:1-27

“David's Elegy for Saul and Jonathan”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Now, we're turning for our Scripture reading to the 1st chapter of 2 Samuel and I'm reading the entire 27 verses. The last chapter of 1 Samuel recorded the defeat of the Israelites, the slaying of King Saul and Jonathan, and the general overthrow of the Children of Israel's armies by the Philistines. In chapter 30, 31 I should say, it was stated that Saul, because he had been wounded, severely wounded, asked his armor bearer to draw his sword and to slay him. The armor bearer, however, would not for he was greatly afraid, obviously, because of the position that King Saul occupied, the anointed of the Lord. So, therefore, Saul took his sword and fell on it. And the author said, when his armor bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died with him.

Now, you need to remember that 1st and 2nd Samuel were, in the earlier stages of the Christian church and of the collection of the Scriptures, as well, regarded as one book, as a matter of fact, Kings and Samuel, together. So we are reading what the author who wrote 1 Samuel or the authors responsible have written in 2 Samuel, and then we'll have a direct bearing upon the fact that the Amalekite comes into the presence of David, and gives a different account of the death of Saul. But now in verse 1.

“Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David had returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had stayed two days in Ziklag, on the third day, behold, it happened that a man came from Saul’s camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head. So it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the ground and prostrated himself. And David said to him, “Where have you come from?” So he said to him, “I have escaped from the camp of Israel.” Then David said to him, “How did the matter go? Please tell me.” And he answered, “The people have fled from the battle, many of the people are fallen and dead, and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also.” So David said to the young man who told him, “How do you know that Saul and Jonathan his son are dead?” Then the young man who told him said, “As I happened by chance to be on Mount Gilboa, there was Saul, leaning on his spear; and indeed the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him. Now when he looked behind him, he saw me and called to me. And I answered, ‘Here I am.’ And he said to me, ‘Who are you?’ So I answered him, ‘I am an Amalekite.’ He said to me again, ‘Please stand over me and kill me, for anguish has come upon me, but my life still remains in me.’ So I stood over him and killed him, because I was sure that he could not live after he had fallen. And I took the crown that was on his head and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them here to my lord.’

Therefore David took hold of his own clothes and tore them, and so did all the people who were with him. And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son, for the people of the Lord and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword. Then David said to the young man who told him, ‘Where are you from?’ And he answered, ‘I am the son of an alien, an Amalekite.’”

Now, it’s very important to notice that expression, the son of an alien, an Amalekite. The term alien or the Hebrew term ger, is a term that referred to someone who comes from another country and begins to live in this country, a sojourner, so Scripture puts it. Now,

by his own testimony, this individual is the son of one who had come into the land and had begun to live there. So it would be most likely that he was born in the land and, at any rate, being the son of a sojourner, he’d grown up in the land and, therefore, he was responsible to be in submission to King Saul and the government.

“So David said to him, ‘How was it you were not afraid to put forth your hand to destroy the Lord’s anointed?’ Then David called one of the young men and said, ‘Go near, and execute him!’ And he struck him so that he died. So David said to him, ‘Your blood is on your own head, for your own mouth has testified against you, saying, ‘I have killed the Lord’s anointed.’”

Now, we have the elegy, which is one of the most beautiful, poetical sections in the whole of the Old Testament. If you know anything about literature and if you know anything about music, you know that this elegy has a high place in both literature and music.

“Then David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son, and he told them to teach the children of Judah the Song of the Bow.”

Actually, the Hebrew text says simply to teach The Bow, and evidently a reference to Jonathan’s bow, because we read in verse 22, we read “The bow of Jonathan did not turn back.” The Song of the Bow; indeed it is written in the Book of Jasher.

“The beauty of Israel is slain on your high places! How the mighty have fallen Tell it not in Gath, Proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph. O mountains of Gilboa, let there

be no dew nor rain upon you, nor fields of offerings. For the shield of the mighty is cast away there! The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.”

It was customary to anoint shields after the battles to keep them in good condition. Many of them were leather shields and were also, so that arrows that struck them might glance off.

“From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not turn back, and the sword of Saul did not return empty. Saul and Jonathan were beloved and pleasant in their lives, And in their death they were not divided; They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, Who clothed you in scarlet, with luxury; Who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel. How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan was slain in your high places.”

Please notice that clause, because we’ll talk about it in the message.

“I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; You have been very pleasant to me; Your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women. How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war perished!”

May the Lord bless this reading of his word and let’s bow for a moment in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the Scriptures that Thou hast given to us. We thank Thee for the confidence that we have from them that there is a spiritual world that stands over the material, perishable world in which we live. We thank Thee that Thou hast given us some conviction that the spiritual world is the important world and the material

and perishable world, while the creation of God, is secondary in significance. Help us Lord, in our daily lives as Christians, as believers in the truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, always keep in mind the fact that over and above all of our life, there stands the Triune God in Heaven, whose principles, whose exhortations, whose words of grace in the Scriptures are authoritative for us. Help us, by Thy grace, to come to appreciate them and to willingly and lovingly submit to them.

We pray for our country. We ask Thy blessing upon our President. We pray for the whole Church of Jesus Christ, for every individual body of believers, seeking to glorify our Lord and preach his word. For Believers Chapel and its interests and ministries. And, especially Lord, do we pray for those who have requested our prayers, we pray that Thou wilt answer those petitions in accordance with Thy will and may we have numerous illustrations of the great truth that Thou hast set forth so often in Scripture, that Thou art living, Thou art listening, Thou art hearing, and Thou art answering the concerns of our hearts.

We pray, Lord, that as we sing, as we hear the word of God in this meeting, that our spiritual lives may become more conformable to Thee and to Thy word.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] Some people never learn. This morning at 8:30, when I sang that hymn, when we came to the last verse, I sang the chorus that we’d been singing on the first three stanzas, and embarrassedly looked around to see if anyone noticed and I just did it again.

[Laughter]

The subject for today is “David’s Elegy for Saul and Jonathan.” To understand David’s remarkable elegy over Saul’s death, requires knowledge of the key to history, God’s purpose to set upon earth a kingdom of God, promised in the Scriptures, progressively unfolded, and validated by the first and second coming of Our Lord, Jesus

Christ. Augustine once said, “The Old Testament, when rightly understood, is one great prophecy of the new.”

One of the famous German scholars, Wilhelm Martin Leberecht De Wette, that ought to tell you he’s a great scholar just from his name, who taught in places like Heidelberg, Berlin, and in Basel, said something one time that I think is very, very true. He said, “Christianity lay in Judaism as leaves and fruit do in the seed, although it certainly required the divine Son to bring them forth.”

To understand the magnanimous attitude of David to Saul, one must know those facts. It is incomprehensible that David should show to Saul the attitude that he did apart from his deep and fundamental commitment to Yahweh, and to his purpose in faith. This is the individual, who as a youth stood before Goliath, the Philistine, and said in verse 36, well, before hand to Saul, verse 36 and then later before Goliath, “Your servant has killed both lion and bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the Living God.” And notice the expression “uncircumcised” that means uncovenanted, not a member of the covenant. And then, in verse 46, before Saul, “This day the Lord will deliver you.” And Before Goliath, “This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand; and I will strike you, and take your head from you; and this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air, and the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that Yahweh does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give you into our hands.”

Now, if we understand David’s commitment to that, then we will understand why he mourned as he did over the death of Saul and Jonathan. Undergirding this account, incidentally, is a moving illustration of two kinds of minds. The two kinds that are found in men and women today: the secular mind and the spiritual mind. Or, put it another way, the secular mind and the biblical mind. And, the one great sacrificial love of

Jonathan, which was so moving to David and to all, I think, who understand the greatness of it.

Well, we’re looking now at the chapter. We have a limited amount of time so I may have to skip over some things, but we’ll try to do our best and hit the important things.

You may remember, David has been engaged in some rapid military movements. He had left the land, probably in unbelief, had gone to Gath, and there had become a servant of Achish, the King of Gath. When the Philistines determined that they would make another attack upon the Israelites, this time they went to the north. And so, David and his men were prepared to go and march north. And they did march to Aphek. But the Philistine lords were so disturbed over the Israelite, who obviously had unusual abilities, would be fighting with them and realizing that it would be easy for him to ingratiate himself again with Saul by turning upon them. They demanded that David go back. So he quickly made his way back to Ziklag, where Achish had given him a home. He marched so rapidly that some of the men were forced to stop at the Brook Besor because they were worn out. They arrived at Ziklag and found Ziklag destroyed, their families gone. They immediately went out after the Amalekites who had destroyed the city, and by God’s providence, an Egyptian along the way enabled them to find them and to destroy them suddenly. Coming back quickly to Ziklag, you can see, he’s moving rapidly because, again, he was there very rapidly. In fact and you’ll pardon this remark, but David’s campaigning reminds me of Stonewall Jackson’s valley campaign of the tragic war of the nineteenth century.

But, now, as the Amalekite comes into the camp, there unfolds the utter contrast of the intensely secular and the intensely spiritual man. And, I think, that is one of the things that we are to learn from this, as the Amalekite comes into the camp and stands before David. Almost all biblical scholars of a believing mentality are convinced that this

man was lying. There are evidences of it in the text but it’s not specifically stated.

However, I’m calling it the deceptive prevarication of the Amalekite.

We read that he came into the camp, having been in the north, and having observed, at least, the slaughter of the Children of Israel, by the Philistines in the battle there. He comes into the camp and we read that he came into the camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head.

Now, you can tell from this that this man was not an ordinary man. He was an observant man, he was a shrewd man because he realized coming in with his clothes torn and dust on his head that it would be thought that he was very, very supportive of the children of Israel. He’s cravenly subservient to David because when he comes in he falls to the ground, prostrates himself in the front of David.

He hoped, it seems clear, for some kind of material gain, because after all he could not conceive of anyone not rejoicing in the death of his implacable foe, knowing Saul and his hatred for David and his attempts to slay him, thinking by happening to be upon the battlefield and happening to see King Saul, that by bring the crown back and the other things that would indicate he was there, he thought surely that David would reward him in a financial way. So David listens to him. He asks him, “How did the matter go? Please tell me.” “The people have fled from battle,” the man says. “Many of the people are fallen and dead, and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also.” David, “How do you know that Saul and Jonathan his son are dead?” “Then the young man who told him said, “As I happened by chance to be on Mount Gilboa.”

Now, wait a minute! Mount Gilboa was where the battle was. A large host of Philistines, so large that King Saul was afraid of them, and Israelites gathered there as well. “I happened by chance to be on Mount Gilboa.” No, no! He didn’t happen to be by chance there. He wanted to be there because after the battle there was always hope of gathering up some of the spoil, plunder, after the battle. “I happened by chance to be on Mount Gilboa.” And behold Saul, I’m going to read this as the Hebrew text has it.

“And behold, Saul, leaning on his spear. And behold the chariots and horsemen following hard after him. Now, when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called to me. And I said, behold, me.”

Now, if you read that carefully, you’ll see that what he is doing is playing a little bit loose with the truth. And that little “behold” not rendered in the text that I have here, once as there was and then as indeed and then here, will give you an indication of the kind of speech that he was engaging in. The use of that little term *binneh* which means behold is indicative of the fact that what he is saying is a bit fictional. It’s very much like the use of “hey” and so, “I happened by chance to be on Mount Gilboa where there was a great battle and, hey, Saul leaning on his spear and, hey, the chariots and horsemen following hard after him and Saul called to me and I said, hey, I’m here.” No. This man is a liar, he’s a prevaricator. As a matter of fact, remembering these books are practically one, the author has already told us in the 31st chapter how Saul died. And, furthermore, there was no question about whether he was dead or not because we read “When the armor bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died with him.” So, he’s playing fast and loose with the truth. Saul is his own murderer, as his armor bearer knew. So, in chapter 31, we have God’s description of what happened. Now, we have the Amalekite’s fabrication of what happened.

And the remainder, of course, is a description of how it happened in these fictional words. And, finally, we read in verses 11 and 12, “David took hold of his own clothes therefore and tore them, and so did all the men who were with him. And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son, for the people of the Lord and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.”

Now, I’d like to take this as an occasion, to say just a few words about one of the great truths, I think, that lies back of all of this. And what I see in it is the contrast between secularity and spirituality, spelled out so plainly here. The conduct of the Amalekite was very natural, like we find in the conduct of men in general. So far as he

had a policy, it would have commended itself to multitudes of people, take advantage of the opportunity that you have and try to make some gain out of it. One intensely secular man, and then another man, an intensely fundamentally spiritual man, many flaws in David’s character as we know, he records many of them in the psalms himself that he wrote. But, fundamentally, a man of God, an unusual man of God as anyone reading the accounts will come to understand.

So we have two distinct kinds of minds, the secular mind and the spiritual mind. This is particularly important for us in the United States of America because this country has gradually become a secular state and is becoming more and more so. So, consequently, it means that for Christians, there needs to be more commitment to the spiritual side of things and a further understanding of what Scriptures says in the light of the country in which we live.

What do secularity and spirituality consist of and how do they express themselves? Let me put it as simply as I can because we have just a few moments. The secular individual and secularism consists mainly in the tendency to look at things out of their spiritual relations. Spirituality tends to look at things in the spiritual relationships. In other words, the secular person does not understand that we have two distinct areas, two distinct yet interrelated spheres of life. The spiritual man realizes that. The secular man understands the world about him as the world. It’s perishable, it’s material and that’s it. The spiritual man recognizes this perishable, material world but he also understands that there is something up above and far more significant, and as a matter of fact, the controlling world, ultimately, the spiritual world, the immaterial world, the imperishable world of the reality of the truth of God.

So then the secular man tends to regard all events as pertaining to a fleeting earthly experience. The spiritual man understands all events in the light of the eternity of the plan and purposes of God, and of the eternity and infinity of the eternal God and the eternal life of those who are true believers in Him.

The Amalekite looked on Saul as simply a man who belonged to a mundane order of things in which men were striving for mastery with him. But David saw Saul’s existence alongside the mundane order as an individual who was God’s anointed individual, who in his kingdom looked forward to the ultimate kingdom of God that God would bring upon the earth. He was the Lord’s anointed. There was more in David’s understanding of human existence than existed in the range of vision of the Amalekite.

What a difference between individuals? What a difference between a man on one side who thinks that this world is altogether material, altogether perishable. Consequently, as the apostles tell us, “Think that there is sense in eat, drinking and being merry, for sooner or later we’ll perish.”

But, on the other hand, on the other hand and the significant other hand, the Scriptures set forth for us that there is a world above this world that is imperishable, that is eternal and immaterial. And that we are on our way as believers to the enjoyment of an eternal life and a fellowship with an eternal God and all of the principles and the laws that govern that kind of life.

Furthermore, in accordance with the essential nature of these two minds, they will respectively manifest themselves at times, the one in the use of sacred things for personal gain and the other in self denial out of reverence for what is divine; individuals who step into the so-called spiritual world but use it simply for their own personal gain. The Christian church, unfortunately, is filled with such individuals who are our reverends, our preachers, our leaders, but who do not have the eternal life of which the Scriptures speak. You know, as well as I, their presence in the Church of Jesus Christ or in the religious world.

David, on the other hand, had the kind of spirituality that fundamentally recognized that there is another world. Men can barter their religious professions for gain or carnally and irreverently handle sacred objects as though they had common meaning, or behave in the presence of sacred realities as though they were treading on unhallowed

ground. Judas was one of those men. He was a man who served the Lord out of a desire for gain; an apostle of Jesus Christ, but a crook, a thief in the midst of the apostles.

Simon Magus, who came to Peter and said, “Give me that power you have that I may have gain,” or those who stood around the Cross of Jesus Christ, reviling him in their own way, secularists. But, also, there’s a tendency in which in each case gives color to an entire life. For the secularists everything is here and now. But in the case of the spiritual man, there is something entirely different. And in the case of the secular man, his vision of life is narrow, it’s gross because he doesn’t have the divine principles of holiness and righteousness as set forth in Scripture as his guide. It’s narrow, it’s gross, and ultimately it leads to eternal death. On the other hand, the spiritual man who is a true spiritual man is a person who has a broad view of life, it’s as broad as God in heaven and therefore it is refined and beautified and actually an infinite view because it, ultimately, pertains to the infinite God.

Secularity, my Christian friend, means debasement. Spirituality means holiness and righteousness and the beauty of it as well. Here are two men standing together; one representing the principles of secularity, the other spirituality. Although David had his faults but fundamentally he was different.

We read of the execution of the Amalekite. David seems stunned to hear of Saul’s death and Jonathan’s death because he didn’t do anything for the rest of the afternoon. They mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and Jonathan his son. And David was not through with that Amalekite. And whether he called him in late in the evening or whether he called him in the next morning, there ensued a brief conversation. “Where are you from?” “I’m the son of an alien, an Amalekite.” “How was it you were not afraid to put forth your hand to destroy the Lord’s anointed?” And, evidently he didn’t receive any satisfactory answer. He called one of the young men and he said, “Go near and execute him!” And he struck him so that he died. But as he was dying, David said, “Your blood is on your own head, for your own mouth has testified against you, saying ‘I

have killed the Lord’s anointed.” This is no hasty act. He didn’t say, one of you fellows come over here and croak him. No. This was a judicial decision that was based upon this man’s own statement, that he had slain the Lord’s anointed.

Look, to slay the Lord’s anointed in Israel, is to turn against Yahweh himself. It’s Yahweh who has anointed King Saul. And as long as King Saul lived, David would not touch him, thus, the spiritual man. But here is a man who is will to slay him. In other words, to turn against the anointed king is to turn against Yahweh himself and to force his hand, to make him select a new king immediately at his own choice.

I think I can understand exactly why David did what he did. And, furthermore, when we add to it that in the word of God they were told by Law of Moses to kill the Amalekites because of the way they had treated the Children of Israel, Deuteronomy chapter 25, then David’s action is certainly a sensible one.

But David doesn’t stop with the slaying. We read, he lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son, and he told them to teach the children of Israel The Song of the Bow; indeed, it is written in the Book of Jasher.”

Now, this lamentation is a remarkable thing; one of the finest examples of Hebrew poetry in the Old Testament and unrivaled as a dirge. Anyone who knows anything about literature, anyone who knows anything about music, knows that the dirge for Saul is something that will stand forever as outstanding, a *qiynab*, an elegy for the dead, forgetting all his sufferings at Saul’s hand.

Can you imagine David forced out by the enmity of Saul, sitting with Saul in his court and dodging the spears of Saul, forced out finally, convinced, humanly speaking that he might perish at the hand of Saul, constantly his life in danger for months and years. And now forgetting all of his sufferings at Saul’s hand, David sees Saul, not as a jealous implacable foe, but as a brave king fallen in Israel’s cause and then bursts out in tender remembrance of Jonathan’s love.

There’s a Latin saying *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*, concerning the dead nothing but good. Which means, essentially, don’t say anything about the dead unless it’s good. Like the fellow who was called upon to give a eulogy for a fellow who was a noted bad man in the community. And he couldn’t think of anything that he could say and so he got up and he said, “I’ll say this about John. He wasn’t always as mean, [laughter] he wasn’t always as mean as he sometimes was.” And, I guess he had heard this expression concerning the dead, don’t say anything unless it’s good. So he said something good.

Now, the tragedy of the defeat is first sung by David in verses 17 through 21 and I want to suggest to you that when he says “The beauty of Israel” in verse 19 that he really fundamentally means Jonathan. And the reason is because if you read verse 19A, “The beauty of Israel is slain on your high places!” And then read verse 25B, “Jonathan was slain in your high places.” The impression one gets is that Jonathan is fundamentally on his mind. But he says the good things about Saul that can be said about him. He says, “Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.”

In other words, that uncircumcised individuals, that people outside the covenant, people who have no relationship to the God, the true God, above. Secular people! That secular people should exalt over Israel’s king is too painful for spiritual David to contemplate. Great is the loss of Israel in the loss of her king. Don’t tell it in Gath. Don’t tell it in Ashkelon. We don’t want the daughters of the Philistines to rejoice about it, the daughters of the uncircumcised to feel triumph. And then, rather surprisingly, he says, “O mountains of Gilboa,” that’s where they died. Let there be no dew nor rain upon you, nor fields of offerings. For the shield of the mighty is cast away. The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.” The overwhelming agony of the bereavement causes him as best he can to put a curse upon Gilboa, as if responsible for the defeat.

Now, if you’ll think about this for a moment, I think you will see that for David one can see immediately the secondary importance of culture for the fundamental things

that most concerned him was the spiritual realities of the event. And so, in the case of Gilboa, a curse on Gilboa, the created world. God created it but, in so far as it is to be compared with the spiritual world of God and the relationship to him and to the covenantal principles and the covenantal laws, “Let there be no dew nor rain upon you, nor fields of offerings. For the shield of the mighty is cast away there!” Oh, something we need to learn, the secondary importance of this world about us for Christians as well.

In verse 22 through verse 24, he praises both Jonathan and Saul. In fact, this touching look at the two almost shaded into a victory song when he says in the middle of it, “They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.” And then, concludes, “O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, Who clothed you in scarlet, with luxury; who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.”

He recognizes the fact that in Saul’s reign, economic conditions were better, but nevertheless, even though they were better, he now mourns over what has happened in the spiritual world. But at the close, the special tribute to Jonathan always attracts our attention. From the beginning, he really wanted to honor Jonathan. “You are the beauty of Israel is slain on your high places,” is the first thing that he states.

That word beauty, *tsbiy* is a word that can mean glory or beauty, but it also can mean gazelle. And, in fact, in the next chapter it is found in the sense of the gazelle. Now, the gazelle, I don’t have a gazelle around my house, I have secondary acquaintance with a gazelle. But a gazelle is a very swift, small deer, especially known for the eyes; soft eyes. And, it’s possible there is some illusion to Jonathan in this. But, let’s leave it as “The beauty of Israel.” And then, in verse 25, “Jonathan was slain in your high places.” He weeps for Jonathan, addresses him now in the first person for the first time, as if he’s still living. Listen to those words, verse 26, “I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; You have been very pleasant to me; Your love to me was wonderful, Surpassing the love of women.” No more beautiful picture of sacrificial love than the love of Jonathan for David. Go back to that day when David stood over against Goliath, the Philistine. And in

a remarkable exhibition of faith in the Lord God, by the power of God, slew that giant with some stones out of a brook. Amazing! Still think about it. It’s one of the great triumphs of the years that have passed.

And then, we remember what happened afterwards, as David appeared before Saul and Jonathan was there, the crowned prince, and he heard David speak to Saul, and from that time on, Scripture says, “his heart was touched by David. He loved him as his own soul. Twice, he loved him as his own soul.” And then, later on, he made a covenant with him, because he loved him. “For he loved him as he loved his own soul.” So, the love that Jonathan had for David was a sovereign love; it was a love that reflected an appreciation for David, not so much of what he was as what God was going to do with him.

For, what he does following the expression of his love; he took off the robe that was on him. He’s the crowned prince. He took off the robe that was on him. He gave it to David. He gave him his armor, he even gave him his sword, his bow and his belt, and signified the fact that so far as he was concerned, he was renouncing the kingdom and giving the kingdom to David, whom he recognized as one upon whom God had put his hand. Self-sacrificial love. The only illustration that seems to go beyond it is the self-sacrificial love of the Son of God, who came from Heaven, as the God-man and offered himself in redemptive work on Calvary’s Cross for us who are the great sinners. That he has done.

David says, “His love was more wonderful than the love of women.” That’s a remarkable statement because, in the final analysis, it evidently means that even the love of a man for a woman in that love, the woman expects something in return and properly so. But in the case of Jonathan, it was a love, David says, surpassing the love of women. And so, our Lord is the ultimate illustration.

He concludes for the third time by saying, “How the mighty have fallen.” That’s a kind of catch line for this whole incident. And it is illustrated by what happened to King

Saul. How the mighty have fallen. The sword of Saul is cast away. His shield is covered with blood and rust. His scepter is broken. His diadem and his bracelet are pilfered by the Amalekite. His head, you’ll remember, was cut off and taken by the Philistines and put in the temple of Dagon. There’s a remarkable little statement. It said, “It was told in temple” as if you have to tell the idols of the Philistines. They don’t know. Those gods don’t know unless you tell them. And, the head was placed in the temple of Dagon. His body was fastened to the wall of Beth-shan. And his sons were slain. His dynasty was destroyed. O, how the mighty have fallen.

There is a text of Scripture that is right on the point. “Man that is in honor and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.” Man that is in honor and understandeth not, secular man, is like the beasts that perish. That’s it.

Well, I must conclude. One of the great Old Testament scholars, S. R. Driver, once said, “It’s remarkable that no religious thought of any kind appears in the poem. The feeling expressed by it is purely human.” And then, an evangelical scholar has written that, “It is an eloquent and moving statement of human greatness and a fitting end to the lament.”

Well, I’d like to say that that’s generally true. But there is one thing of interest to me and that is, David is not a liar. He’s writing by the inspiration of the Spirit of God, giving what God has given to him. And you’ll notice, he says nothing whatsoever about Saul’s piety, about his spiritual life. That’s very instructive. He’s not like the man who stands behind the pulpit in a memorial service and gives a eulogy of a man who has died. Nothing about his piety, other things he honestly and suitably praises.

I’d like to suggest there is something spiritual in it. And when David says, in verse 20, “Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.” There it is. The uncovenanted, those who belong outside the covenant; who are not within it. Those who do not have the relationship to the Lord God that Israel had; those who were not chosen

in sovereign love. No, there is something fundamentally underneath in David’s thought. The fundamental thought is the purpose of God in sovereign grace to bless a particular people called over here, the people of the Lord, called the House of Israel. There is something very, very significant and spiritual underneath it all. The entire elegy in its pathetic, tender tone is set in the tragedy of the failure of Saul to realize in his life all that the typical establishment of the kingdom on earth was intended to anticipate. For when Saul was given the kingdom, God was not happy over it. He wanted Israel to remember that he was the king. But when they persisted, we want a king like the peoples about. Oh, how that spirit permeates the Christian church today. We want to have things like the people outside. And God then gave them a king, King Saul. And his kingdom was designed to anticipate the great messianic kingdom that would come in the future.

And so the tragedies, the failure of Saul to realize in his life all that the typical establishment of his kingdom on earth was intended to anticipate; the kingdom that the Lord Jesus proclaimed when he said, “Repent! For the kingdom of the heavens is at hand!” in his first preaching. And then, when John the Apostle, in the Book of Revelation in chapter 11 in verse 15 gives the message of the Seventh Angel, I believe, it too has to do with the kingdom of God upon the earth and we read in verse 15 of chapter 11.

“Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Messiah, and He shall reign forever and ever!’”

That’s the tragedy of King Saul. That which he was, was intended to be first in the long line that would lead up, ultimately, to the messianic kingdom of our Lord, Jesus Christ. But as David sees, that is the tragedy of his failure. The rejoicing of the daughters of the Philistines, the uncircumcised alludes by contrast to the bedrock of the Bible, the

messianic promises soon to be expanded to the young king, David, by Nathan the prophet in chapter 7 of this book.

So, I say to you as I close just this one word. The issue, you see, is are we spiritual men or are we secular men? And, in the light of our society, let me say it again. Are we secular men and women? Or are we spiritual men and women? Do we recognize that there is another sphere besides this that is about us? And do we recognize that the word of God has a great deal to say about that sphere and even goes on so far as to say, that’s the important sphere. It’s applications to you men in your business and your family life. And you ladies, to your family life and among your friends and any business in which you may be involved is obvious to all of us. Our first responsibility is to the spiritual, above all else, our relationship with the Lord God is fundamental. I just say the gospel. Christ died for sinners. We are sinners. We need his redemption. He offered an atoning sacrifice satisfactory to the Lord God in Heaven, by which men may come to life.

Come to Him! Believe in Him! Acknowledge your sin. Trust Him and what he has done and enter into eternal life and the spiritual sphere where things are really counting, ultimately.

Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for David and the remarkable things that Thou didst do in this young man’s life. We thank Thee for the way in which, by Thy grace, he came to trust Thee as the Lord God of Israel. And we pray Lord that we, too, may have something of the same faith that recognizes the world that is above this everyday world in which we are called upon to live. Help us in the midst of the secular society in which we live, to have a voice that is from the eternal God.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.