

Worship Material
Let's talk about grief and loss
Material from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 30th June

Begin with opening prayer

Lord Jesus, 'man of sorrows', you know what it is to be full of sadness.
Lord Jesus, friend of sinners, you love us in all our brokenness.
Lord Jesus, like a mother, you care for us and soothe our pain.
As we worship you today, touch us in our need, and help us to love and care for one another.

Amen.

Read the passage 2 Samuel 1:1,17-27

Bible notes

Following David's victory over Goliath, he built a reputation as a soldier and leader. He grew in popularity, but was scrupulously loyal to Saul, even though the king was behaving increasingly erratically. His friendship with Saul's son Jonathan deepened and both protected each other.

Saul faced greater and greater challenges as king, and was finally defeated in battle. His sons died round him and he fell on his own sword – a tragic end. 2 Samuel begins by mentioning David's success in battle, giving focus to the contrast between the two leaders. It then tells of how the news of the deaths came to David, and describes his subsequent lament. David's song uses the 'rhyming thought' of parallelism, typical of Hebrew poetry, where each statement is repeated in two different forms, doubling the imagery and impact of the ideas. It begins by naming the king as 'Israel's glory' and there is a pattern of praise-filled images throughout the song, focusing on Saul and Jonathan as heroes in life who shared a common death. Their glory is further highlighted by the comparison to lions' strength and eagles' speed, and by the song's refrain 'How the mighty have fallen!'.

David calls for a reversal of the natural order itself. There is to be no more water for the mountains where Saul and Jonathan died. Gilboa is condemned to drought and barrenness, as though the land itself is in perpetual mourning for them. The song of lament is intensified by the painful expectation that the women will sing songs of joy in the coastal Philistine cities of Gath and Ashkelon. This contrasts with the mourning of the women of Israel, whom Saul enriched with the richest clothing of the time.

Perhaps some of the notes of lament echo tradition and convention in David's desire to praise his predecessor and emphasise the glory of the king, but the song ends with a broken-hearted cry of distress for David's friend and brother, Jonathan, their relationship smashed by death. David's lament is recorded in a collection of songs, the Book of Jashar (cf. Joshua 10:13), and becomes one of the core songs of the people in times of grief.

Prayer

A prayer of thanksgiving

Thank you for the pictures we have seen today, Lord: the joy of Jairus' daughter raised; the esteem of David for Saul and Jonathan. We praise you for the picture of deep relationships you give us. We thank you for our friends and family, praying that we will experience such bonds; that we will be there for each other in your strength. We know that you accompany us, whether in joy or pain. You enable us to show your love. We thank you for all the hues and shades of the life we share with you and our brothers and sisters.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

Lord, be with us on our journeys with others and open our eyes to you.

Amen.