

SONG OF SORROW

Sometimes people act as if money and things (material possessions) are more important to them than people and relationships. You know people that really get upset with family members if they thought that someone else was getting more inheritance than they were. People will fight each other over a trivial amount of money. But I really wonder if we are actually that shallow as human beings. I don't think that we are and I base that opinion on how we handle our losses. If we lose money or material possessions then we may be angry with ourselves or sad for a brief time, but we soon get over it and things pretty much return to normal. On the other hand, if we lose a close relationship (a friend moves away or divorce happens), the hurt, sorrow and grief goes on for years. If we lose someone that is close to us through death, then the sorrow and grief touches us deeply and sometime permanently. Because of the way we are put together emotionally, relationships and people really are more important to us than money and things and we are more aligned with our true self and what we are intended to be when we recognize this fact and act accordingly before losses actually occur.

If we live long enough, we will experience losses that cause intense sorrow and grief. Understanding our grief is helpful. There are several phases that we pass through in the grief experience. Many times that first stage is shock. Things happen that we just don't expect to happen and we are shocked. We are not usually prepared fully for the death of a loved one. Usually we will go through a period of denial -- "this is just not happening." Somewhere along the way we experience a release of the pent up emotions that we accumulated. There may be anger and/or guilt that we feel. If the grief is deep and intense, we may go through a struggle between reality and fantasy where we come around to actually accepting the loss that we are experiencing. We learn to live with our memories and then finally come around to the realization that life goes on in spite of the loss and that we can experience joy even after the sorrow.

Anytime we experience loss we touch our emotions and when our emotions are touched these usually find expression. Songs and poems are sometimes used to convey the expression of our emotions. Many ballads are sad songs that mourn the loss of youth, wealth, position or the death of a loved one. When the song is about a person that dies, the ideas usually attempt to capture the desirable and attractive feature about that person. We see this in a song of sorrow that David wrote concerning the death of Saul and Jonathan.

II SAMUEL 1:17-18 Saul was the first king of Israel and the choice of the people; however, he allowed his pride or jealousy with regard to David to ruin his life. Because of the desperation he felt when someone else received attention or credit he tried to take matters into his own hands and did not trust God but turned to witchcraft, instead. Because of this, the kingdom was removed from him and given to David. Saul was still king, but he was no longer God's choice for the job. He died in a battle with the Philistines. He had been seriously wounded and as the Philistines closed in, Saul choose to take his own life rather than be captured by them. When word of the death of Saul and Jonathan was brought to David, he was grief stricken and out of grief came this song.

The reference to the use of the bow is thought to be with regard to training that young men received as soldiers. This song was to be learned by the archers as a remembrance of the first king of Israel and as an encouragement for the soldiers to be vigilant in defense of Judah.

II SAMUEL 1:19-21 The battle in which Saul was killed was in Mount Gilboa. This is the high places to which David referred in the song. Kings were always dressed with the finest and had the very best the nation could provide and in that sense he represented the glory or beauty of the

nation. He was expected to be an expression of the best of everything for which they stood. Every leader ought to conduct himself in such a way that he expresses the best of all the people. In that way the leader would lead the people to be their best at all times. We seem to be missing this in our nation today. Our heroes are not the good and the beautiful but the bad and the ugly. Beverly Sills is quoted as saying that "we are relentlessly and systematically desensitized to almost every form of disgusting behavior. Youngsters think that freedom means doing your own thing, and because we have no standards for them and have given them no proper sense of values, the lowest common denominator of human behavior doesn't shock them. Their responsibilities and obligation to their fellow human beings simply are not being taught to them. A civilization rises on the strength of its values." Those in leadership must realize their responsibility to set the right values.

The phrase "How are the mighty fallen!" is used even today. It is a reminder to us that no matter how powerful we as people may become, no matter how important we may be in our own eyes and in the eyes of others, we are still vulnerable to dangers and problems that we are not able ourselves to overcome.

David was concerned that the enemies of Judah would find joy in the sorrow of the Jews. He did not want to give them anything over which to gloat. We could probably learn from such caution. We in the church sometimes tell everyone about the problems we have in the church. When a fellow Christian stumbles and falls, we are the first to spread the bad news around and those that are the enemy of Christ find occasion to rejoice and to justify their own position.

It was almost as if David were pronouncing a curse upon the place where Saul was killed. "Let there be no rain or dew." David was upset that the enemy took the shield of Saul and displayed it as a trophy of war and had no respect for it or for Saul. The shield might have carried the equivalent of the coat of arms of Saul's family and the disrespect shown for the shield was really disrespect for Saul and the fact that he had been anointed to be the king of God's chosen people.

II SAMUEL 1:22-24 David recalled the bravery and triumphs of both Saul and Jonathan. He found significance in that, even though Jonathan and Saul did not always agree in life, that they were fighting for the same cause in their death. David had no room for criticism in his song as he referred to Saul as an eagle and a lion.

II SAMUEL 1:25-27 David was especially grieved over the loss of his true friend Jonathan who had befriended him even though his father Saul was intent on killing David.

Having and expressing grief is normal. That expression may find its way into a beautiful poem or song and that may be helpful to others. Those that have experience grief can understand what others are experiencing such sorrow. We owe it to each other to bear one another's burden in such times.