

“How Long Will You Grieve”  
1 Samuel 15:35-16:1  
(Preached at Trinity, May 14, 2017)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Chapter 15** we saw the sad fall of King Saul. Because of his disobedience to the command of God his reign was about to come to a crashing end.  
**1 Samuel 15:23 NAU** - "Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from *being* king."  
**1 Samuel 15:26 NAU** - "I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel."
2. This was highly grievous to Samuel.  
**1 Samuel 15:10-11 NAU** - "Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, <sup>11</sup> "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands." And Samuel was distressed and cried out to the LORD all night."
  - A. We aren't given details regarding Samuel's all-night prayer. Was it for Saul and his rejection or was it for Israel as they would be without a leader.
  - B. Most likely Samuel prayed all night that Saul might be granted repentance and that God might restore him. This would not be possible.  
**1 Samuel 15:27-29 NAU** - "As Samuel turned to go, *Saul* seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. <sup>28</sup> So Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor, who is better than you. <sup>29</sup> "Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind."
3. But Samuel could not shake the grief that filled his heart.  
**1 Samuel 15:35 NAU** - "Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death; for Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel."
4. Finally, as we enter **Chapter 16** we find God speaking to Samuel with a voice of correction. God's rebuke comes not because Samuel was grieving but because of the extent of his grief.  
**1 Samuel 16:1 NAU** - "Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons."
5. These words are very instructive for us. In this life there are times that grief and sorrow encroach into our lives. The joy and comforts that otherwise characterize our life is a wonderful token of God's mercy. In this fallen world we deserve only God's condemnation.

6. As God's people we find great comfort even in the midst of affliction. We are assured of His Divine presence and of His unfailing love. We find comfort in the absolute sovereign dominion of God and of His promise that He is working for our good. Paul wrote: **Romans 8:28 NAU** - "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose."
  7. The chief element of grief is loss. In other words, it is a recognition that everything in this world is temporary and failing. Everything we enjoy and find comfort in will ultimately come to an end.
    - a. Jesus described our material possessions as "treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal."
    - b. Our comforts in life are fleeting and will often come to an end.
    - c. Loved ones are often lost through death.
    - d. Sin aggravates our losses – friends are lost, marriages come to an end, houses are foreclosed on, health fails, etc.
  8. All human beings experience grief. It is expected that we will grieve during adversity—but Christians respond differently. This is at the heart of God's words to Samuel – "How long will you grieve over Saul?"
  9. Tonight I want us to consider the subject of grief. Grief comes in many situations and in many degrees. Some grief is mild, some grief comes over us like a crushing weight. It is important for us to understand the Christian response to grief.
- I. First of all, we must remember that God is sovereign over every trial
- A. God has an eternal purpose
    1. God's activity upon the earth is the carrying out of His eternal covenant of redemption. History is simply God carrying out His purpose
    2. God has a plan for this earth – He is accomplishing His redemptive purpose
      - a. Nations rise and fall. People are born and die. Time marches on, yet all is ordained of God and all is designed to a particular end.
      - b. History has a purpose
    3. We may not see and understand the reason for everything that happens in our life. We must understand that it is by God's design and it is good. Goodness is one of God's attributes and He delights in doing good for His children.
  - B. God's judgments and His actions are always right
    1. Samuel was grieved in his heart regarding all that has transpired with Saul. We have to be careful that our grief isn't motivated by anger towards God. The word for "distressed" in **Verse 11** is רָחַץ which is the Hebrew word for anger.  
**1 Samuel 15:11 NAU** - "And Samuel was distressed and cried out to the LORD all night."  
**1 Samuel 15:11 ESV** - "And Samuel was angry, and he cried to the LORD all night."
    2. Never was it a question in the infinite mind of God  
 God wasn't caught off guard.

3. We must understand the anthropopathic passages in light of God's divine nature.  
**1 Samuel 15:35 NAU** - "And the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel."
  - a. God took no pleasure in the sinful actions of Saul. Saul's rebellious heart was grievous in God's eyes.
  - b. But we must not pretend for a moment that God was surprised by Saul's actions.
4. Samuel grieved over Saul. God reminds Him that He ordained it.  
Shall we grieve over that which God has ordained?  
**1 Samuel 16:1 NAU** - "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel?"

II. While grief is normal and expected it must always be restrained

- A. God is telling Samuel that he had grieved enough  
**1 Samuel 16:1 NAU** - "How long will you grieve over Saul"
  1. There is a time for grief but there is also a time grief must come to an end. Several reasons:
    - a. Because we trust God's purposes  
**Psalm 23:4 NAU** - "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."  
 The staff was tool for leading. The rod was a tool for correcting. We must trust in both.  
 Samuel had no right to be angry at God.
    - b. Because we find our comfort in Christ – in a world characterized by loss He will never fail.  
**Isaiah 66:13 NAU** - "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you"  
**2 Corinthians 1:5 NAU** - "For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ."
  2. We must grieve when it is appropriate and end our grief at the right time. There is a time for grief and a time to put it away.  
**1 Samuel 16:1 NAU** - "How long will you grieve over Saul"  
**Ecclesiastes 3:1-4 NAU** - "There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven-- <sup>2</sup> A time to give birth and a time to die; A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted. <sup>3</sup> A time to kill and a time to heal; A time to tear down and a time to build up. <sup>4</sup> A time to weep and a time to laugh; A time to mourn and a time to dance."
- B. There are many times when grief is the appropriate response
  1. It is a good thing to weep at the death of a loved one
    - a. To lose a child is one of life's great tragedies
    - b. To lose a spouse is the greatest of sorrows  
 Half of the married people here tonight will experience this trial  
 It is a trial of great measure. A husband and wife have become one flesh. Death is to lose a part of ourselves

2. We must not be swallowed up in grief; of sitting alone in melancholy  
When Sarah died Abraham came, grieved, and then rose from his grief  
**Gen. 23:1-3 NAU** - "Now Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; *these were* the years of the life of Sarah. <sup>2</sup> Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. <sup>3</sup> Then Abraham rose from before his dead"
  3. As much as we might grieve, we have eternal hope. We must always keep our focus upon Christ.
- C. There are several stages of our grief process, particularly the grief of death
1. First there is the shock of the death, especially if it is sudden. It all seems unreal. We see this with Joseph when his father Jacob died.  
**Gen. 49:33-50:1 NAU** - "When Jacob finished charging his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people. Then Joseph fell on his father's face, and wept over him and kissed him."
  2. Second, there is a sense of numbness. What will I do now?  
C.S. Lewis wrote in his journal after the death of his wife:  
"There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me. I find it hard to take in what anyone says. Or perhaps, hard to want to take it in. It is so uninteresting. Yet I want the others to be about me. I dread the moments when the house is empty. If only they would talk to one another and not to me."
  3. Third, there is renewed activity. The beginning of normalcy. We can see this after Joseph buried his father. He returned to Egypt.  
**Gen. 50:14 NAU** - "After he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers, and all who had gone up with him to bury his father."
  4. Finally, there is a return to life. This doesn't mean the pain ceases to burn in our heart but for the Christian we remember our reason for life – to glorify God. We must never become consumed with any creature – even our most beloved loved one. The Christian finds that Christ is faithful even in death.
  5. Elizabeth Eliot, who lost two husbands in death cites six Biblical concepts that helped her through her grief.
    - a. Be still and know that God is God – God rules over all things.
    - b. Give thanks – Although it may be difficult to be thankful for the death we can be thankful for God's promises as we grieve.
    - c. Refuse self-pity – Eliot says, "This is a death that has no resurrection." We must never buy into the idea that we deserve better or that we are experiencing something others have not known.
    - d. Accept your loneliness – Our contentment is always in Christ. His presence is always sufficient
    - e. Offer your loneliness to God – If God has ordained our condition give it back to Him to use and transform as He pleases.
    - f. Do something for somebody else – Instead of focusing upon what we need look to the needs of others.

## Conclusion:

1. God gives us the promise of comfort, even in the greatest of trials when our grief might threaten to consume us.
  - A. God promises His sweet comfort
    1. God is the “God of all comfort” – He is by nature a merciful Comforter  
**2 Corinthians 1:3-4 NAU** - "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our affliction"
    2. The Holy Spirit comforts us in all our affliction  
**John 14:26-27 NAU** - "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. <sup>27</sup> "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."
    3. Jesus told us to take courage in Him in the face of affliction  
**John 16:33 NAU** - "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."
  - B. If we have been promised comfort in trials, we can rest assured that it will come  
**Psalm 34:17-19** – “*The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. <sup>18</sup> The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. <sup>19</sup> Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.*”  
**Psalm 34:7-8** – “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. <sup>8</sup> O taste and see that the LORD *is* good: blessed *is* the man *that* trusteth in him.”
2. No trial is too great for us to find the comfort of God  
Horatio Gates Spafford was a prominent lawyer and well known in 1860’s Chicago. He was close friends with Dwight L. Moody. In 1870 Horatio suffered a loss that would turn out to be one in a series of great trials.  
First, his only son was killed by scarlet fever at the age of four. Then he suffered a terrible financial blow. Horatio Spafford’s family was heavily infested in real estate on the shores of Lake Michigan and in 1871 all of his holdings were destroyed by the Chicago fire.  
Aware of the affect these disasters had taken on the family, Horatio decided to take his wife and four daughters on a holiday to England. Not only did they need the rest -- DL Moody was on one of his evangelistic campaigns and had requested Horatio’s help  
Just before they set sail, a last-minute business development forced Horatio to delay. Not wanting to ruin the family holiday, Spafford persuaded his family to go as planned and he would follow on later. With this decided, Anna and their four daughters sailed East to Europe while Spafford returned West to Chicago. Just nine days later, Spafford received a telegram from his wife in Wales. It read: "SAVED ALONE."

On November 22nd 1873, the steamer carrying the Spafford family had collided with an English vessel. It sank in only 12 minutes, claiming the lives of 226 people. Anna Spafford had stood bravely on the deck, with her daughters Annie, Maggie, Bessie and Tanetta clinging desperately to her. Her last memory had been of her baby being torn violently from her arms by the force of the waters. Anna was only saved from the fate of her daughters by a plank which floated beneath her unconscious body and propped her up.

Horatio caught a ship to meet his grieving wife. On the journey the captain of the ship called him to the bridge. "A careful reckoning has been made", he said, "and I believe we are now passing the place where the ships collided. The water is three miles deep." Horatio then returned to his cabin and penned the lyrics of his great hymn.

When peace like a river attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea-billows roll,  
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,  
"It is well, it is well with my soul."

3. This puts the grief of Samuel in the proper perspective. It was for him a powerful grief. Perhaps it wasn't as powerful as a death, and yet it had kept him awake an entire night as he cried out to God with powerful feeling ranging from grief to anger. After God had granted him his grief He spoke to Samuel,  
**1 Samuel 16:1 NAU** - "How long will you grieve over Saul"
4. May God grant us to find our comfort in Him even in the greatest of affliction and always be prepared to end our grief and look to Christ.