

Making Space for God

Opening Prayer

Lord, teach me to listen. The times are noisy and my ears are weary with the thousand raucous sounds which continuously assault them. Give me the spirit of the boy Samuel when he said to Thee. "Speak, for thy servant heareth." Let me hear Thee speaking in my heart. Let me get used to the sound of Thy Voice, that its tones may be familiar when the sounds of earth die away and the only sound will be the music of Thy speaking Voice. Amen.

A. W. Tozar



David, Samuel, Saul

Linocut Block Print by Steven Stuckey 2014

Reflection- Looking Back

Take some times to settle yourself. Review your calendar and think back over where you have been this past month. Focus on answering this one question: **How has the Lord been present to you?** In the events of your life; in your joys and fears; in what has occupied your mind and heart; in what you dream about or long for; in what you are thankful for. Journal these thoughts and offer them to the Lord.

Scripture Study—2 Samuel 1—Tragic End for a Tragic Hero

Saul's death is spoken of three times. It was first predicted by Samuel's ghost in 1 Samuel 28:15-19. Then in 1 Samuel 31, Saul was seriously wounded on Mt. Gilboa by the Philistines. He begged his armor bearer to kill him rather than let the Philistines make sport of him. His armor bearer refused to kill the Lord's anointed so Saul fell on his sword and killed himself. The third account is described in 2 Samuel 1. Saul was again mortally wounded on Mt. Gilboa and near death. But rather than ask his armor bearer to finish him off, he asked a displaced Amalekite hiding in the bushes to do the job and he does.

Three accounts that don't line up perfectly leave the reader scratching their heads. In life as in death, Saul's story forces us to ask questions for which there are no easy answers. Where did his life, which started out so well, take a wrong turn? Why did he not repent and ask forgiveness when he had the chance? Why was Samuel so strict with him? How does the reader interpret the story and not be overwhelmed with fear and bitterness? Read 2 Samuel 1 and pay attention to David's lament as he seeks to put Saul's story into a framework will enable the country to move beyond their great national tragedy.

Reading for Reflection

"Creation has to be the greatest pleasure in the universe, but it can be pretty damned harrowing when the work's in process. When things go wrong, I don't chuck in the towel," she said... "I just slave harder than ever to make everything come right. Making everything come right," she said." That's what it's all about. No matter how many disasters happen, no matter how many difficulties I encounter, I can't rest until I've brought order out of chaos and made everything come right... of course I made a lot of mistakes," she was saying. "I turned down various blind alleys and had to rework everything to get back on course. But that's normal. You can't create

without waste and mess and sheer undiluted slog—you can't create without pain. It's all part of the process. It's in the nature of things."

"You theologians talk a lot about creation," she said, "but as far as I can see none of you know the first damn thing about it. God didn't create the world in seven days and then sit back and say: 'Gee-whiz, that's great!' He created the first outlines of his project to end all projects and he said: 'Yes that's got a lot of potential but how the hell do I realize it without making a first-class balls-up?' And then the real work began... No creator can forget! If the blast-off's successful you're hooked, and once you're hooked you're inside the work as well as outside it, it's part of you, you're welded to it, you're enslaved, and that's why it's such bloody hell when things go adrift. But no matter how much mess and distortion make you want to despair, it's absolutely woven into your soul and you know you can never rest until you've brought truth out of all the distortion and beauty out of all the mess—but it's agony, *agony*—while simultaneously being the most wonderful and rewarding experience in the world—and that's the creative process so few people understand. It involves an indestructible sort of fidelity, an insane sort of hope, an indescribable sort of ...well, it's love, isn't it? There's no other word for it. You love the work and you suffer with it and always—*always*—you're slaving away against all the odds to make everything come out right."

Susan Howatch in Absolute Truths

We learn by the bitter experience of temptation that the spiritual life is not a matter of devout feeling or mere desire to be good. It is through temptation that most of us comprehend how serious a matter it is—a very matter of life and death, involving struggles for survival which are fierce and primitive.

Reginald Somerset Ward 1881-1962

Temptation is what distracts us, beguiles us or bullies us off the path. Temptation is what makes real life different from the world of our dreams. We dream a world which is wax under the moulding of our ambition or of our aspirations; we meet a world which faces us with trials we have not the character to surmount, and with seductions we have not the virtue to resist.

Austin Farrer

"It's good to meet someone who has gone through hell lately. It makes all the difference to know there's someone else screaming alongside you—and that's the point of the Incarnation, I can see it so clearly now. God came into the world and screamed alongside of us."

Susan Howatch in Absolute Truths

The Benediction

"Fear nothing and never be afraid; and don't fret. If only your penitence fail not, God will forgive all. There is no sin, and there can be no sin on all the earth, which the Lord will not forgive to the truly repentant! Man cannot commit a sin so great as to exhaust the infinite love of God. Can there be a sin which could exceed the love of God? Think only of repentance, continual repentance, but dismiss fear altogether. Believe that God loves you as you cannot conceive; that He loves you with your sin, in your sin. It has been said of old that over one repentant sinner there is more joy in heaven than over ten righteous men. Go, and fear not. Be not bitter against men. Be not angry if you are wronged.

From *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky

Reflection Questions for 2 Samuel 1

1. David had been battling the Amalekites at the same time that Saul had been fighting the Philistines. News of Saul's death came three days after Saul was killed. How does this version differ from the version in the previous chapter?
2. What role had the Amalekites played in Saul's earlier downfall? What symbolic role might the author of the book try to convey with the story of the Amalekite executioner in 2 Samuel 1?
3. How did David and his men react to the news they heard?
4. What might be implied when David strikes down the Amalekite messenger?
4. David consistently refers to Saul as the Lord's anointed. How does that title protect David's soul when Saul treats him like an enemy? How do you refer to your own enemies?
5. Take some time to read David's lament for Saul and Jonathan. What do you learn?