

Eulogy for Albert Jennings

By Mark Mayberry

Presented at the Scotts Funeral Home in Alvin, Texas on Friday, March 28, 2008

In Second Samuel Chapter One and Verse Seventeen, David, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, sang “The Song of the Bow,” a beautiful outpouring of grief for King Saul and his son, Jonathan, after they were slain on the heights of Mt. Gilboa and fell in battle before the Philistines.

2 Samuel 1:17-27 ... 17 And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son: 18 (Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jasher.) 19 The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen! 20 Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph. 21 Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil. 22 From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty. 23 Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. 24 Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel. 25 How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. 26 I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. 27 How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished! (KJV)

2 Samuel 1:17-27 ... 17 Then David chanted with this lament over Saul and Jonathan his son, 18 and he told them to teach the sons of Judah the song of the bow; behold, it is written in the book of Jasher. 19 “Your beauty, O Israel, is slain on your high places! How have the mighty fallen! 20 “Tell it not in Gath, Proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon, Or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice, The daughters of the uncircumcised will exult. 21 “O mountains of Gilboa, Let not dew or rain be on you, nor fields of offerings; For there the shield of the mighty was defiled, The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil. 22 “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. 23 “Saul and Jonathan, beloved and pleasant in their life, And in their death they were not parted; They were swifter than eagles, They were stronger than lions. 24 “O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, Who clothed you luxuriously in scarlet, Who put ornaments of gold on your apparel. 25 “How have the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan is slain on your high places. 26 “I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; You have been very pleasant to me. Your love to me was more wonderful Than the love of women. 27 “How have the mighty fallen, And the weapons of war perished!” (NASB95)

Verse 17 says, “And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son.” A lament/lamentation refers to a passionate expression of grief or regret, an outpouring of the heart in song or verse, often at the passing of a loved one (Gen. 50:7-11). Despite its associated sadness, there is something positive to be gained: “It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, because that is the end of every man, and the living takes it to heart” (Eccl. 7:1-8, esp. vs. 2).

Genesis 50:7-11 ... 7 So Joseph went up to bury his father, and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household and all the elders of the land of Egypt, 8 and all the household of Joseph and his brothers and his father’s household; they left only their little ones and their flocks and their herds in the land of Goshen. 9 There also went up with him both chariots and horsemen; and it was a very great company. 10 When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they lamented there with a very great and sorrowful lamentation; and he observed seven days mourning for his father. 11 Now when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, “This is a grievous mourning for the Egyptians.” Therefore it was named Abel-mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan. (NASB95)

Ecclesiastes 7:1-8 ... 1 A good name is better than a good ointment, And the day of one’s death is better than the day of one’s birth. 2 It is better to go to a house of mourning Than to go to a house of feasting, Because that is the end of every man, And the living takes it to heart. 3 Sorrow is better than laughter, For when a face is sad a heart may be happy. 4 The mind of the wise is in the house of mourning, While the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure. 5 It is better to listen to the rebuke of a wise man Than for one to listen to the song of fools. 6 For as the crackling of thorn bushes under a pot, So is the laughter of the fool; And this too is futility. 7 For oppression makes a wise man mad, And a bribe corrupts the heart. 8 The end of a matter is better than its beginning; Patience of spirit is better than haughtiness of spirit. (NASB95)

Verse 18 says, “(Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow (or alternatively, the song of the bow): behold, it is written in the book of Jasher.)” This book was apparently a collection of verses, non-canonical and now lost, which chronicled heroic events in the history of Israel. It contained Joshua’s pronouncement of praise at the battle of Gibeon (Joshua 10:12-13), and also the “Song of the Bow,” David’s outpouring of grief over the death of Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1:17–27).

Memory of momentous things should be preserved: the Word of the Lord, His mighty works; the lives of great and faithful men, along with their heroic deeds. Let us acknowledge the legacy of those who shaped us as individuals, as a family, as a community, and as a congregation. Albert Jennings, the one whom we today honor, played a role in all of these. In a culture shorn of virtue, in a society low and debased, in a day devoid of heroes, it is good to remember the life of one so noble.

Verse 19 says, “The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!” Here the author eulogizes Saul, the fallen king of Israel, and his beloved son, Jonathan. Saul’s beginning was praiseworthy, but his end is a sad testament to the corrosiveness of sin. In contrast, Jonathan’s nobility remained undiminished, even in death. David graciously overlooks

Saul's past mendacity, and remembers his prior majesty, and those qualities that caused God to choose him as king.

Man who is made in the image of God is crowned with glory and honor (Ps. 8:4-8). God made men upright, but, sadly, we have sought out many sinful devices. Yet, the divine work of redemption restores the lost greatness of fallen humanity (Jer. 15:19; Acts 15:15-18). Like David, Saul, and Jonathan of old, Albert Jennings was one who fell short of the glory of God. Yet, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, he found forgiveness, restoration, and redemption. Albert is thus remembered with affection, esteem, and honor.

Psalm 8:4-8 ... 4 What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him? 5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty! 6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, 7 All sheep and oxen, And also the beasts of the field, 8 The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, Whatever passes through the paths of the seas. (NASB95)

Jeremiah 15:19 ... 19 Therefore, thus says the Lord, "If you return, then I will restore you— Before Me you will stand; And if you extract the precious from the worthless, You will become My spokesman. They for their part may turn to you, But as for you, you must not turn to them. (NASB95)

Acts 15:15-18 ... 15 "With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, 16 'After these things I will return, And I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, And I will rebuild its ruins, And I will restore it, 17 So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,' 18 Says the Lord, who makes these things known from long ago. (NASB95)

Verse 20 says, "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph."

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints, but not all men deem it so. A man is known by his friends, and also by his enemies. As the Philistines were enemies of Israel, so sinful men stand in opposition to those who stand for truth. Albert's adherence to truth endeared him to the faithful, but engendered opposition among the factious and faithless; yet, he willingly accepted such persecutions as the price of discipleship (John 15:18-21; 17:13-19).

John 15:18-21 ... 18 "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. 20 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. 21 "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. (NASB95)

John 17:13-19 ... 13 "But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. 14 "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the

world. 15 “I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. 16 “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. 18 “As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 “For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. (NASB95)

Verse 21 says, “Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.” Despite our wishes, life goes on. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease (Gen. 8:22). The cycles of nature continue: the sun rises and sets; the wind blows from the south and then from the north; yesterday was clear, today is cloudy, tomorrow brings a chance of rain. A generation comes, a generation goes, but the earth remains (Eccl. 1:3-4). We have paused to remember the life of a good and great man, but life goes on. As the body returns to the dust, the spirit returns to God who gave it. Albert has gone to his eternal home, in a little while, mourners will travel the streets, as we journey from here to the graveside, but life will go on (Eccl. 12:1-7).

Genesis 8:22 ... 22 “While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and winter, And day and night Shall not cease.” (NASB95)

Ecclesiastes 1:3-4 ... 3 What advantage does man have in all his work Which he does under the sun? 4 A generation goes and a generation comes, But the earth remains forever. (NASB95)

Ecclesiastes 12:1-7 ... 1 Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, “I have no delight in them”; 2 before the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are darkened, and clouds return after the rain; 3 in the day that the watchmen of the house tremble, and mighty men stoop, the grinding ones stand idle because they are few, and those who look through windows grow dim; 4 and the doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low, and one will arise at the sound of the bird, and all the daughters of song will sing softly. 5 Furthermore, men are afraid of a high place and of terrors on the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags himself along, and the caperberry is ineffective. For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street. 6 Remember Him before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed; 7 then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it. (NASB95)

Verse 22 says, “From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.” Jonathan and Saul were dauntless in battle, defeating their enemies and delivering Israel from the hands of those who plundered them (1 Sam. 14:6-15, 47-48). In like manner, Albert Jennings was a man of courage and conviction. He faithfully served in the United States military, rising to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He manifested fidelity as a soldier of Christ, first as a preacher of truth, and then as an elder of the church in Alvin. In all respects, he exemplified those noble characteristics of a soldier (Ephesians 6:10-20).

1 Samuel 14:6-15 ... 6 Then Jonathan said to the young man who was carrying his armor, "Come and let us cross over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; perhaps the Lord will work for us, for the Lord is not restrained to save by many or by few." 7 His armor bearer said to him, "Do all that is in your heart; turn yourself, and here I am with you according to your desire." 8 Then Jonathan said, "Behold, we will cross over to the men and reveal ourselves to them. 9 "If they say to us, 'Wait until we come to you'; then we will stand in our place and not go up to them. 10 "But if they say, 'Come up to us,' then we will go up, for the Lord has given them into our hands; and this shall be the sign to us." 11 When both of them revealed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines, the Philistines said, "Behold, Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden themselves." 12 So the men of the garrison hailed Jonathan and his armor bearer and said, "Come up to us and we will tell you something." And Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "Come up after me, for the Lord has given them into the hands of Israel." 13 Then Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet, with his armor bearer behind him; and they fell before Jonathan, and his armor bearer put some to death after him. 14 That first slaughter which Jonathan and his armor bearer made was about twenty men within about half a furrow in an acre of land. 15 And there was a trembling in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. Even the garrison and the raiders trembled, and the earth quaked so that it became a great trembling. (NASB95)

1 Samuel 14:47-48 ... 47 Now when Saul had taken the kingdom over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, the sons of Ammon, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines; and wherever he turned, he inflicted punishment. 48 He acted valiantly and defeated the Amalekites, and delivered Israel from the hands of those who plundered them. (NASB95)

Ephesians 6:10-20 ... 10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, 19 and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. (NASB95)

Verse 23 says, "Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions." As Israel's king and his son were lovely and pleasant in their lives, so also our beloved brother Jennings. He fought many battles, but conflict did not make him bitter. He maintained a

balanced, optimistic and hopeful outlook. Even when suffering from infirmity and pain, he did not complain. Albert counted his last years as his best years. He was ever thankful, of divine provision and spiritual blessings, of all expressions of affection and friendship, both small and great. In his dealings with family, friends and those with whom he shared spiritual fellowship, Albert manifested a cheerful and contented disposition (Eccl. 2:24; 3:12-13; 5:18-20).

Ecclesiastes 2:24 ... 24 There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God. (NASB95)

Ecclesiastes 3:12-13 ... 12 I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime; 13 moreover, that every man who eats and drinks sees good in all his labor—it is the gift of God. (NASB95)

Ecclesiastes 5:18-20 ... 18 Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward. 19 Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God. 20 For he will not often consider the years of his life, because God keeps him occupied with the gladness of his heart. (NASB95)

Verse 24 says, “Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.” As the king of Israel brought peace and prosperity, in like manner, many have benefited from the generosity of brother Jennings, who willingly shared his bounty with others. Recognizing life's brevity and his own mortality, Albert would often look around the Cattleman Western Store and be reminded of the parable of the productive landowner (Luke 12:15-21). Honest and industrious, he was a successful businessman, whose lifestyle remained simple and modest. Knowing that it is more blessed to give than to receive, Albert was self-effacingly generous with others (Acts 20:33-35). Fulfilling the apostolic admonition, he labored with his hands, doing what was good, so that he might share with those in need (Eph. 4:28).

Luke 12:15-21 ... 15 Then He said to them, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.” 16 And He told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man was very productive. 17 “And he began reasoning to himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’ 18 “Then he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 ‘And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.” ’ 20 “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’ 21 “So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” (NASB95)

Acts 20:33-35 ... 33 “I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. 34 “You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were

with me. 35 “In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ” (NASB95)

Ephesians 4:28 ... 28 He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. (NASB95)

Verse 25 says, “How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places.” Indeed, even today, as another mighty man has fallen, we are reminded of our own mortality. Like the grass and flower of the field, we soon perish (Ps. 103:15-18). Therefore, let us learn not to trust in our own might, wisdom or wealth, but rather in understanding and obeying the will of God (Jer. 9:23-24). Because Albert waited upon the Lord, he gained new strength, mounting up with the wings of eagles (Isa. 40:30-31). Running the race with patience, he completed his course, because he fixed his eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith (Heb. 12:1-2).

Psalm 103:15-18 ... 15 As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. 16 When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, And its place acknowledges it no longer. 17 But the lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children’s children, 18 To those who keep His covenant And remember His precepts to do them. (NASB95)

Jeremiah 9:23-24 ... 23 Thus says the Lord, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; 24 but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the Lord. (NASB95)

Isaiah 40:30-31 ... 30 Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, 31 Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary. (NASB95)

Hebrews 12:1-2 ... 1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (NASB95)

Verse 26 says, “I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.” The Psalmist here speaks of a close and abiding friendship (1 Sam. 18:1-5; 20:16-17). David and Jonathan’s relationship was one of iron sharpening iron (Prov. 27:17). Through bonds born of battle, soldiers become a band of brothers. So also with those who courageously confront spiritual dangers. Albert was a faithful soldier of the cross, ever-watchful and vigilant, beloved to those

who stood with him, and who fought beside him (Acts 20:28-32). He was a friend who loved at all times (Prov. 17:17), one who was closer than a brother (Prov. 18:24).

1 Samuel 18:1-5 ... 1 Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself. 2 Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father's house. 3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. 4 Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt. 5 So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and prospered; and Saul set him over the men of war. And it was pleasing in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants. (NASB95)

1 Samuel 20:16-17 ... 16 So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the Lord require it at the hands of David's enemies." 17 Jonathan made David vow again because of his love for him, because he loved him as he loved his own life. (NASB95)

Proverbs 27:17 ... 17 Iron sharpens iron, So one man sharpens another. (NASB95)

Acts 20:28-32 ... 28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. 32 "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. (NASB95)

Proverbs 17:17 ... 17 A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity. (NASB95)

Proverbs 18:24 ... 24 A man of too many friends comes to ruin, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. (NASB95)

Verse 27 concludes by saying, "How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!" A soldier of the cross has fallen, but the sword of truth must be taken up by others who will stand in his place, and having done all, to stand. In the days of Ezekiel, the Lord said, "I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but (in that age of apostasy) I found no one" (Ezek. 22:30-31; cf. also 13:4-5). Albert Jennings stood in the gap, and taught others to do the same. Will you hear and heed that call?

Ezekiel 22:30-31 ... 30 "I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one. 31 "Thus I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; their way I have brought upon their heads," declares the Lord God. (NASB95)

Ezekiel 13:4-5 ... 4 "O Israel, your prophets have been like foxes among ruins. 5 "You have not gone up into the breaches, nor did you build the wall around the house of Israel to stand in the battle on the day of the Lord. (NASB95)

Conclusion

Jesus Christ calls sinful mankind to faithful discipleship. If you are not yet a Christian, Albert would exhort you to believe, to repent, to confess, and to be baptized for the remission of sins. Romans 10:17 says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Jesus himself said, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24). The Bible affirms that we must "bear fruit in keeping with repentance" (Matt. 3:8). As Ananias commanded Saul of Tarsus, so also are we exhorted: "Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name" (Acts 22:16). Those who obey the gospel are added to the church (Acts 2:47). If we are faithful unto death, God will give us a crown of life (Rev. 2:10). As Christians, we must stand for what is right, and oppose what is wrong. Let us live so that Paul's parting proclamation can also be ours: "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:6-8).