

1 Samuel 28:3-25 — Seance In Endor

November 13, 2022

If you are new, my name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. It is great to have you. We are in the final weeks of our study in the book of 1 Samuel. After today, we have two more weeks in the book. After that, we begin our Christmas series called “Good News Of Great Joy.” Pastor Jordan, Pastor Kris, and I will teach about Jesus’ birth and why he came.

In January, we have a short series on what it looks like to be spiritually healthy. I will give you a hint. Spiritual health does not necessarily mean you can win a Bible trivia contest. Spiritual health is not just about what we know. It is also about how we live. I am looking forward to that series because it will help us develop a picture of what we should be striving for in our lives.

Background

Before we begin this morning’s study, let me remind you where we left off. Last week, in 1 Samuel 27, David was constantly pursued by King Saul, who wanted to take his life. After years of running, David reached the end of his rope. In desperation, he left Israel and joined the enemy, he crossed over to the Philistines. Hiding among the enemy gave him rest from King Saul, but this was not a restful time in his life. To survive with the Philistines, David played the role of a double agent. Publicly he pretended to be loyal to Achish, King of Gath, but behind the scenes, he was working for Israel’s best interests. This double agent behavior cost him his character. Everyday he lied to the Philistines about whom he was raiding and what he was doing. He claimed he was attacking Israelites

when he was attacking local tribes. To make sure nobody found out about his deception, he became a ruthless murderer who killed everyone he conquered.

The problem was that David's deceptions worked too well. Achish, the Philistine king, was so impressed by David, that he forcibly enlisted David to help him fight against the Israelites. This was the last thing David wanted to do. Up to this point, he had deceptively avoided fighting his own people. Now David was caught in a pickle. How would he escape? Was there a lie he could tell that would get him out of this one? The chapter ended on a cliffhanger. We will find out what happened next week.

Today, when we turn the page to 1 Samuel 28, we leave David in his pickle and turn to King Saul, who, just like David, also finds himself in a pickle. His problem was the Philistine attack which was right around the corner. Philistines attacking Israel was nothing new. This happened all the time.

There was hard fighting against the Philistines all the days of Saul... 1 Samuel 14:52 (ESV)

What made this particular Philistine attack so dangerous to Saul was that David, the man who had the greatest success fighting the Philistines with him, would now be fighting against him. The reason for this was all his own fault, Saul was the one who constantly pursued David and drove him out of the country. Saul turned David into an enemy and strengthened the Philistines. This was a real problem.

Saul was filled with fear. One of the dominant themes of this chapter is the fear that overwhelms Saul's life. It is constantly mentioned in this chapter. Since this chapter is all about Saul's overwhelming fear of the future, we are going to

develop our study of this chapter around that theme. We will ask, “What leads to a life filled with fear?” As we work our way through these verses, we will find three answers.

1. A life without God is filled with fear.

The text begins by setting the scene so we understand the desperate moment Saul faced.

Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city... 1 Samuel 28:3a (ESV)

Samuel’s death and burial occurred earlier. It was recorded in 1 Samuel 25:1. After Saul refused to obey God’s word and wipe out the Amalekites, Samuel pronounced God’s judgment on Saul. He let him know it was only a matter of time until God would take the kingdom away from him and give it to someone better. Since 1 Samuel 15, Samuel and Saul have had no contact. When Saul and Samuel were on good terms, Samuel was Saul’s source of guidance regarding wars and crisis points for the king. Saul is facing a crisis with the Philistines, but Samuel is dead. Saul has no place to turn.

We learn another surprising piece of information that will be important for us to understand as the chapter unfolds.

...And Saul had put the mediums and the necromancers out of the land. 1 Samuel 28:3b (ESV)

In Saul’s better days, he drove out of the land the mediums and necromancers. A medium is someone who tries to contact the spirit world. A necromancer is someone who tries to contact dead people. They are similar. The terms medium and necromancer almost always occur together in the Bible.

Why had Saul driven them out of the land? In the early days of his reign, he was eager to follow the Word of God. God promised that if Saul and the people followed His word, things would go well for them.

If you will fear the LORD and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well. 1 Samuel 12:14 (ESV)

The Word of God was explicit that the practice of sorcery, demonology, or any part of the occult was not to be part of God's people. God determined the future and held the future in his hands, not the spirits of dead people. The Old Testament law was very clear about this.

Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God. Leviticus 19:31 (ESV)

Don't turn to people who are trying to contact the spirit world. That is sinful.

"If a person turns to mediums and necromancers, whoring after them, I will set my face against that person and will cut him off from among his people. Leviticus 20:6 (ESV)

Do you want to get God working against you? Turn to witches and spiritualists instead of God. God doesn't like the one bit.

"A man or a woman who is a medium or a necromancer shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones; their blood shall be upon them." Leviticus 20:27 (ESV)

If a person claims to be a witch or to have the ability to contact the spirit world or to be a dream catcher or someone who can help you with the power of crystals, that was the death penalty in Israel. Obeying Leviticus cleaned up the neighborhood in a hurry.

Deuteronomy is more explicit.

There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD. And because of these abominations the LORD your God is driving them out before you. Deuteronomy 18:10–12 (ESV)

I want to point out the last verse. Apparently, these demonic practices were a regular part of the life of the people who formerly lived in the Promised Land. When God sent Israel into the Promised Land and instructed them to annihilate all the people who were living in the Promised Land, that was not God being mean. It was God bringing judgment on these cultures for their persistent practice of things like witchcraft, casting spells, contacting dead people, and child sacrifice. God was executing justice against these dark sins by the hands of his people.

In addition, God wanted these people and their demonic practices taken out of the land so they would not bleed into his people and be practiced by God's people.

I think it is worth pausing to reflect on a clear point of application that comes screaming out of the text.

- Demonic or occult activity should not be part of God's people.

This type of demonic activity is practiced today. If you went to Haiti, you would be familiar with Voodoo and witch doctors. If you went to England, you would run into druidic practices and casting spells. Even in Arnold's Park, we have palm readers and tarot cards. These demonic practices should not be part of God's people.

One of the popular things for young ladies today is Wicca. Wicca is witchcraft 101. It is how to cast spells on girls you don't like and how to cast love spells on the boys you do like. This is exceedingly popular with young ladies, but it is completely against God's will. In 2015, a Wicca witch opened the Iowa house with a 70-second satanic prayer. That is too close to home.¹

It is also worth thinking about how this should influence us when it comes to celebrating Halloween.

- Think carefully about the right way to celebrate Halloween in your family.

In our culture, it is fashionable to dress up as a witch and trick or treat. I would recommend caution as we observe that holiday. I was a youth pastor for 10 years. During that time I received an invitation from another youth group in the area that invited me to bring my youth group to their haunted church, complete with witches, goblins, and the black kettle with an eye of knute. I didn't bring my youth group. Instead, I wrote to the youth pastor letting them know that I appreciated their desire to have a fun event for their students and to reach his community, but I also challenged him to rethink what he was doing in light of the Bible's strict prohibition on these things. A haunted church didn't seem to be the kind of thing Jesus would like.

So how should we handle the holiday? Some Christians avoid the holiday altogether. They lock their children in the basement and don't let them out until Thanksgiving. That seems to be overkill on avoiding the culture. Others go the opposite way and completely embrace the culture. That would be our haunted

¹ <https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/politics/2015/04/09/iowa-wiccan-house-chamber/25512827/>

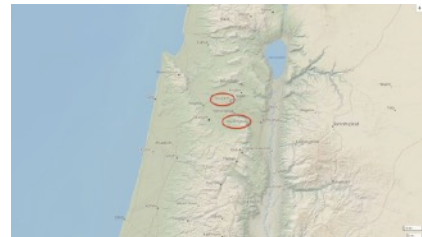
church people. They are Christians will skulls, goblins, and witches in their front lawns. I don't think the Scripture endorses that. At CrossWinds, we are all about reaching people with Jesus. While we are not about witches and goblins, we have no problem having a harvest party where we can avoid celebrating evil things but still get people together to love on them and tell them about Jesus.

One of the good things about Halloween for Christians is that it is an annual reminder for us to tell our children the truth about the demonic world. It is a regular time for us to remind ourselves and our children about the victory Jesus has over the demonic powers through his death and resurrection.

Let's get back to the text.

The Philistines assembled and came and encamped at Shunem. And Saul gathered all Israel, and they encamped at Gilboa. 1 Samuel 28:4 (ESV)

Shunem was located on the northern side of the Jezreel Valley. This valley cut through Israel's heartland. The Philistine strategy was clear. Typically the Philistines attacked from the southwest. This time they attempted to conquer the country by dividing it in



half. This would cut

Saul off from Israelite reinforcements in the north.

Fighting in the valley also played to their advantage

since the Philistines had iron chariots, but the

Israelites didn't. In addition, this was a trade route. Conquering the valley would create a logistical nightmare for Saul and his forces. This explains the next verse.

When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. 1 Samuel 28:5 (ESV)

This is an understandable reaction. This was a completely different kind of attack than the Philistines tried in the past. With David on their side, things did not look good. Saul knew it.

It says Saul's heart trembled greatly. The only other time this term is used in 1 Samuel is to describe Eli's heart when he heard the ark of God was captured in 1 Samuel 4:13. Just as Eli trembled because he knew his dynasty was coming to a rapid end, I think Saul also knew his kingly dynasty was also coming to an end.

And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets. 1 Samuel 28:6 (ESV)

Saul was trying every known means of communication to get a word from God. God did not answer him by a dream. In the Old Testament, we occasionally read of God communicating with kings by dreams. In Genesis, God gave Pharaoh a dream, and Joseph interpreted it. No dreams for King Saul. God was silent.

God also didn't communicate by the Urim. If you were with us earlier in this series, you learned the Urim and Thummin were rocks in the breast piece of the high priest's garment. You rolled them like dice. The way they landed revealed God's will. You could ask God a question, and the priest could roll the Urim and Thummin to have God provide an answer.

The problem was that Saul murdered all the priests in Nob. The only priest who escaped was Abiathar. He grabbed the high priest's garment with these stones in it and took them to David. Saul really shot himself in the foot on this one. He could not contact God through the priests because he killed all of them.

God also wasn't communicating with Saul through prophets. The last major prophet to talk to Saul was Samuel, but he was dead.

For years Saul was content to live without God's voice, but now that he faced a crisis, he was desperate to hear from God and get direction from God, but God was silent.

The question that comes to mind is, "Why was God silent? Why did God not help him?" This seems in tension with what the Bible tells us about God's people calling to him in their time of need.

And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved... Joel 2:32 (ESV)

The apostle Paul quotes this in the New Testament to tell us how any of us can turn to Jesus and be saved by Jesus.

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13 (ESV)

In the Old Testament, we see the extremely wicked king Ahab and Manasseh both turning to God and calling out to him in their time of need, and God rescued them in miraculous ways. Why does this not happen to Saul?

I think the answer is that Saul went through the mechanics of turning to God, but his heart never truly repented and turned to God. Saul wanted to be saved from destruction on the battlefield, but he didn't want to change the orientation of his heart or the direction of his life.

This is called fake faith or inauthentic repentance. It is calling out to God for rescue but wanting to keep your sin and not have a change in life. While all analogies break down, it reminds me of a counseling situation I had a number of years ago.

The man called me in a panic. His long-term girlfriend was threatening to leave him. He was desperate for help. He asked what I could do to help him save his relationship. I met with him and his girlfriend. What I learned is he had a drinking problem. At night, he would drink, then he began abusing her. In the morning, he had no recollection of what he had done, but she was scarred and afraid. I told him he had to make a choice. Either leave the bottle or he would lose his long-term girlfriend. You can guess what he chose, the bottle. She left. All the tears when he came to my office were because he wanted to be saved from losing his girlfriend. At the end of the day, he didn't have a change of heart and there was no change in the direction of his life. I think this is similar to Saul. He wants to be saved on the battlefield, but there is no desire to change the direction of his life. He has a hard heart.

This is a great reminder for us to pray that when we find ourselves in sin, we would not just want to be saved from the consequences of our sin but to have God give us true repentance and change our heart's love for sin.

Dabbling in the demonic leads to fear.

While Saul was not desperate enough for his heart to change, he was desperate enough to try something dark.

Then Saul said to his servants, "Seek out for me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her."... 1 Samuel 28:7a (ESV)

The very commandment Saul diligently enforced earlier in his life became the commandment he was willing to violate at the end of his life.

And when they say to you, "Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter," should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? Isaiah 8:19 (ESV)

The Bible is clear that if God's people need direction in their life they are to turn to God, not the spirits of the dead.

Surprisingly, Saul's servants seem too eager and too willing to help.

...And his servants said to him, "Behold, there is a medium at En-dor." 1 Samuel 28:7b (ESV)

What crossed my mind was, "Why was there still a witch in Saul's kingdom? I thought Saul drove them out years before. Why did Saul's servants immediately know about this woman and where she could be found?" I am reading between the lines a bit, but it seems Saul's servants know about this witch because they are familiar with this witch. Maybe they have used her services in the past. My guess is they have told Saul about her and recommended her to Saul. That is why, now that Saul was facing a time of desperation, he turned to a witch. The idea of turning to a witch for guidance did not come out of thin air. Somebody around Saul had suggested it to him, so in a time of desperation, he considered trying what his friends told him about. This brings us to another important point of application.

- Be careful about associating with people dabbling in the occult.

Be very careful whom you hang around with and the kind of things they do, especially if they are involved in the occult, because they can usher you into the occult. In my day, Ouija Boards were popular. They are channeling devices designed to connect people with the spirit world. You ask the board questions, and the pieces move around to reveal answers. I can still remember the day in my junior high school English class when my eccentric English teacher went on a tangent and began telling us about using a Ouija board the night before at a

party. He couldn't figure out how the board knew so much about him and how the pieces moved. I knew the answer because we talked about it in youth group.

The reason he was introduced to an Ouija Board is that someone brought it out at a party, and he was ushered into using it. When my children were growing up, we warned them about things like Ouija Boards and told them that if they were ever brought out at a party, they could call us any time of day or night, and we would bring them home. When my daughter Deanna was at a sleepover with her friends, someone brought an Ouija Board. Thankfully she refused to play it and told them if they played it, she would leave. That was the right response.

Let's get back to the text.

There was a problem with the servant's

advice. The

medium was

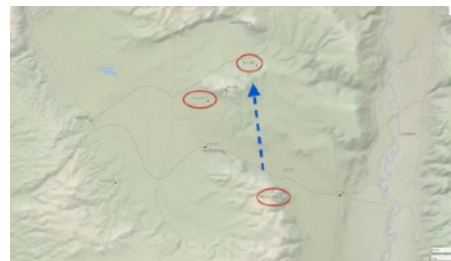
located in En-dor.

That was north of Shunem where the Philistines

were camped. It would be a risky trip to get there,

but Saul was desperate. He was willing to take the

risk.



So Saul disguised himself and put on other garments and went, he and two men with him... 1 Samuel 28:8a (ESV)

If you watched the sermon preview video on Facebook or the church app, you know I told you we would see Saul playing dress up and visiting a witch.

...And they came to the woman by night.... 1 Samuel 28:8b (ESV)

In one sense, this is a simple statement of fact. Of course, they came by night, probably to avoid detection. There is also a metaphorical message in that the darkness of the night corresponds to the darkness of the deed that God's chosen king is undertaking.

...And he said, "Divine for me by a spirit and bring up for me whomever I shall name to you." 1 Samuel 28:8c (ESV)

Earlier, we learned that Samuel the prophet was dead. This should give us a clue about the person Saul will ask the medium to conjure up.

The woman said to him, "Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the necromancers from the land. Why then are you laying a trap for my life to bring about my death?" 1 Samuel 28:9 (ESV)

We should take this woman's words at face value. To her, this looked like a setup. A bunch of military men show up at her house that night and ask her to call up a dead person. That looks like a trap set by Saul's anti-witchcraft police. The last person she would have expected to be sitting across the table from her would be Saul, the very man who worked tirelessly in his early years to rid the land of people like herself.

But Saul swore to her by the LORD, "As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing." 1 Samuel 28:10 (ESV)

This is interesting. Saul swore to the witch in God's name that she would not be punished for demonic activity. The very thing he is asking her to do is clearly forbidden by God. How could he claim to give her protection in the name of God? This is completely illogical.

Isn't that the way it works? There is a principle here.

- The farther people wander away from God, the more illogical will become their thinking about God.

Then the woman said, “Whom shall I bring up for you?”... 1 Samuel 28:11a (ESV)

If we had any doubt about who Saul would ask for, that doubt is now removed.

...He said, “Bring up Samuel for me.” 1 Samuel 28:11b (ESV)

The last person this woman expected someone to ask for in one of her seances would be Samuel, the great prophet of God. What a weird twist.

The story doesn't give us the precise details of what the woman did to conjure up the dead in her seance. We don't need to know those details. It simply tells us that Samuel appeared. When he did, the woman completely freaked out.

When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice... 1 Samuel 28:12a (ESV)

The question is always asked, “Did this woman have the power to bring Samuel back from the dead?” The text doesn't say that she did. It simply tells us that Samuel appeared. When Samuel appeared, she was the most surprised one in the room. Since she was not expecting this, it doesn't seem that she had the power to do this. What seems far more likely is God sent Samuel from the dead to see Saul that evening, which was a complete surprise to the witch.

Another question some people ask about this passage is, “Was this really Samuel?” It is interesting to look at church history on this one. Some theologians in the early church and some theologians at the time of the reformation denied this was Samuel. Tertullian writing in 220 AD, plus Martin Luther and John Calvin writing during the reformation, claimed this was a demonic manifestation. Usually, I agree with early church commentators and reformation commentators. This

time, I don't. The text tells us this was Samuel. The text does not insinuate this was a demonic impersonation.

We must remember that God could bring people back from the dead, before the resurrection. At Jesus' transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appear back from the dead to talk with Jesus.

And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Matthew 17:3 (ESV)

A practical application of this is some of us wonder if there is life after death. Here we see evidence that Samuel, Moses, and Elijah were clearly alive after death because they temporarily came back from the dead. This means everyone is alive after death. Death is not the end.

At this point, Saul had a wardrobe malfunction. Maybe his fake mustache fell off. The woman recognized King Saul in his disguise.

...And the woman said to Saul, "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul." 1 Samuel 28:12b (ESV)

What an incredibly awkward moment. The witch was in the presence of King Saul, who typically enforced a decree for people like her, yet he was now asking for her services. Appearing before her was Samuel the prophet, the great prophet of God. She never expected that to happen. This was a seance like no other.

The king said to her, "Do not be afraid. What do you see?"... 1 Samuel 28:13a (ESV)

Saul says, "Don't worry about my identity, just tell me what you see."

...And the woman said to Saul, "I see a god coming up out of the earth." 1 Samuel 28:13b (ESV)

That wasn't much help, so Saul tried again.

He said to her, "What is his appearance?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe."... 1 Samuel 28:14a (ESV)

You may remember that Saul as a prophet was known for his robe. The last time Saul and Samuel were together, Saul tore off the corner of Samuel's robe.

...And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and paid homage. 1 Samuel 28:14b (ESV)

We should note that this is the first time we see Saul bowing before another human being. The great king was finally brought to his knees.

Sin leads to fear.

The details are scant, but it seems the woman left Saul at this point. What follows appears to have taken place between Samuel and Saul. Samuel was the first to speak.

Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?"... 1 Samuel 28:15a (ESV)

Saul may be excited about the seance, but Samuel doesn't appear to be excited about his invitation to the party. I don't think things will go well at this little reunion.

...Saul answered, "I am in great distress, for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dreams. Therefore I have summoned you to tell me what I shall do." 1 Samuel 28:15b (ESV)

Out of the desperation from the Philistine threat and the Lord's silence, Saul took the extraordinary step of trying to conjure up Samuel to tell him what to do. Interestingly, Saul seems to be completely oblivious to the reason why God is silent. He seems to have completely forgotten about his disobedience being the

source of his present crisis. Instead of blaming himself for his problems, he blames God for his problems.

And Samuel said, “Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has turned from you and become your enemy? 1 Samuel 28:16 (ESV)

That is scary. Nobody wants God to become their enemy.

The LORD has done to you as he spoke by me, for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David. Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD and did not carry out his fierce wrath against Amalek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you this day. 1 Samuel 28:17–18 (ESV)

This is exactly what Samuel told him back in 1 Samuel 15 when Saul rebelled against God and didn't kill the king of the Amalekites and their animals. God was silent because Saul disobeyed God's word.

Moreover, the LORD will give Israel also with you into the hand of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me. The LORD will give the army of Israel also into the hand of the Philistines. 1 Samuel 28:19 (ESV)

There is a degree of poetic justice in this. Saul had tried to kill David by the hand of the Philistines, now, Saul and many of his sons would die by the Philistines. The inclusion of Saul's sons indicates this will be the end of Saul's dynasty. This is similar to what happened to Eli and his sons in 1 Samuel 2:34.

One thought that came to mind when I read this was, “When I sin, other people suffer.” For Saul's sin, his sons would be killed, and even his godly son Jonathan would die for his sin. For Saul's sin, many in Israel would also be killed as God allowed the Philistines to conquer their land. We live in an individualist culture where we do not like other people's decisions influencing our lives, but that is not how it works.

This is called federal headship. When a leader over people makes a decision, those under the leader are either blessed by their decision or suffer for the leader's decision. This is the way government works. This is why elections matter. The decisions our leaders make impact us either positively or negatively. This is why church leadership matters. Good leaders are a blessing to the people. Bad leaders bring suffering to the people. Saul's sins will not just lead to the end of his life, but suffering in the lives of many others, including even godly people like his son Jonathan.

Another thought that came to mind is that, at this point, Saul's opportunity for repentance ran out. While this end of his life was foretold in 1 Samuel 15, it is still worth pointing out that Saul's opportunity for repentance is now gone. His path is fixed. The way this applies to us is that God gives us windows of opportunity to repent of our sins and turn to Jesus to be made right with God. Those windows of opportunity will not always be open. That may be you this morning. If God is on your heart this morning, reminding you that you must repent and turn to him, do it right here, right now. Do it today. Do not harden your heart and leave this room. Right now, God may be giving you a window to see your sin, and he is calling you to turn to him and trust in him. When we leave, the fog of life can cloud those things out of sight. Don't arrive at the end of your life having missed opportunities, so in your final days, those windows of opportunity are gone. The Bible says this about windows for repentance.

“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Isaiah 55:6–7 (ESV)

Let's get back to the text.

Then Saul fell at once full length on the ground, filled with fear because of the words of Samuel. And there was no strength in him, for he had eaten nothing all day and all night. 1 Samuel 28:20 (ESV)

Saul had been on his knees, bowing to his face. When he heard he and his sons would die the next day, he collapsed flat on the ground.

And the woman came to Saul, and when she saw that he was terrified, she said to him, "Behold, your servant has obeyed you. I have taken my life in my hand and have listened to what you have said to me. Now therefore, you also obey your servant. Let me set a morsel of bread before you; and eat, that you may have strength when you go on your way." 1 Samuel 28:21–22 (ESV)

The witch offers to make him a little midnight snack because he was so exhausted from not eating.

He refused and said, "I will not eat." ... 1 Samuel 28:23a (ESV)

Saul was an easily influenced person. His resistance wouldn't last long.

...But his servants, together with the woman, urged him, and he listened to their words. So he arose from the earth and sat on the bed. 1 Samuel 28:23b (ESV)

Before an execution, a condemned man is given a final meal. This will be Saul's final meal. He will eat his final meal at the table of a witch. This shows us how far he has drifted from God.

He would not listen to God at the beginning of his reign to wipe out the Amalekites, but he was willing to listen to the voice of a witch at the end of his reign.

Now the woman had a fattened calf in the house, and she quickly killed it, and she took flour and kneaded it and baked unleavened bread of it, and she put it before Saul and his servants, and they ate.... 1 Samuel 28:24–25a (ESV)

The witch offered to give him a morsel of food. She didn't keep her word. She prepared a meal fit for a king. The trouble was that it would be eaten by the

man who was no longer fit to be king. At one time, Saul was among the prophets, now, he is among the witches.

...Then they rose and went away that night. 1 Samuel 28:25b (ESV)

Like the last chapter, we end on a cliffhanger. How will the last 24 hours of Saul's life unfold? Make sure you are here two weeks from now to find out.

While we talked about several applications from this chapter as we were studying through the text, let me point out some overarching applications that come from the entire chapter.

Applications

1. **Disobedience to God can cut off communication with God.** This is what happened to Saul. His disobedience to God's Word led to him no longer hearing God's voice. The same principle applies to us today. If, like Saul, we cherish sin in our hearts, the result can be a lack of communication with God

If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. Psalm 66:18 (ESV)

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. 1 Peter 3:7 (ESV)

If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination. Proverbs 28:9 (ESV)

2. **Little compromises often lead to bigger ones.** In 1 Samuel 15, when God told Saul to destroy the Amalekites, and Saul chose to spare the king and the animals, it seemed like a little compromise. Samuel knew it was a little compromise that would lead to a much bigger one in Saul's life. That is why Samuel said...

For rebellion is as the sin of divination,... Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king.” 1 Samuel 15:23 (ESV)

Saul’s intentional rebellion against God in little things at the beginning of his life led to intentional rebellion against God in big things. He stopped seeking guidance from God and sought guidance from a witch. The same principle can hold true for us too. If we tolerate rebellion against God in little things in our lives, it will lead to rebellion against God in much bigger things.

3. **When we turn to Jesus, we do not need to be afraid of our future!** One of the dominant themes in this chapter is Saul’s fear. Saul was afraid of the Philistines. He was afraid of what would happen to him. The theme is constantly mentioned in this chapter. Saul’s life without God led him to fear. Saul’s involvement in the demonic led him to fear. Saul’s life of sin led him to fear. The good news is we don’t need to face the future like Saul. People who fear the future are people caught in their sin and in life without God. Through Jesus, we are forgiven of our sin and we are brought near to God. My friends, as Christians, we have nothing to fear. God loves us. Jesus died for us. We are the most blessed being in the universe. This world is as bad as life will ever get. What do we have to fear?

In God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me? Psalm 56:11 (ESV)

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. 1 John 4:18 (ESV)

God loves us perfectly and completely. He forgives us perfectly and completely. We do not need to fear.

...for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. 2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV)

This is a verse I memorized years ago, and I have said it to myself thousands of times. Maybe today you are like Saul. Your life is filled with fear about the future. We do not need to be that way. That is not the spirit God gave us or the spirit God wants to be displayed in us.

This week, may we not be men and women dominated by fear because of distance from God and sin in our lives. May we be men and women of courage and joy because we are brought near to Jesus, completely forgiven by Jesus, and loved by Jesus.



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