

Men's Sunday Night
A Study in the Life of David
A Man after God's Heart
Lesson 4 - 1 Samuel 26-31

We come now to the tragic end of Saul's life. *The man who "stood higher than any of the people"* now falls to the earth in a witch's house and then falls dead on the battlefield. Perhaps the best way to study these sad events is to notice the obvious contrasts between David and Saul.

Why David returned to the wilderness of Ziph when he had experienced trouble there before is difficult to understand. Perhaps it's just an illustration that he, like all men of clay, made mistakes. David's message to Saul was actually a plea for him to return to the Lord. We play the fool when we run ahead of the Lord when we fail to obey completely, when we turn our back on our godly friends, when we seek guidance from the devil, and when we refuse to repent even when we know we are wrong. *"Be sure your sins will find you out!"*

Chapters 27, 29, 30 deal with David's victories as he sought the mind of the Lord, while chapter 28 pictures Saul's terrible defeat as he sought aid in a witch's house. Of course, David was not always walking in the will of the Lord, for it seems that his faith failed him when he went back to Gath to live under the protection of the enemy. He had gotten into trouble there before, but now he was the leader of a strong band of 600 men and his reception was much better. When we lean on the wisdom of the flesh, we always end up in trouble. The contrast between chapters 28 and 30 is striking: Saul had departed from the Lord and therefore had no divine guidance, while David looked to the Lord for courage and direction. *"Seek the Lord while He may be found"* was a warning Saul did not heed.

It is quite another picture when we look at Saul's midnight visit to the witch's house. Samuel was dead, but even when he was alive; his ministry was not really appreciated by Saul. How sad when people discover their real friends too late. Saul's only recourse was to visit a witch, and this was prohibited by the Law. It is alarming to what ends people will go when they have turned their back on the Lord. There have been endless debates over the matter of Samuel's appearance at the call of the witch. It seems likely that: First, Samuel's coming was of the Lord and not because of the witch's art. Second, the witch was surprised when Samuel appeared, and Third, Samuel came because he had a special message for the king from the Lord. The witch could not have impersonated Samuel since she did not know Saul was coming, nor, is it possible that Satan could have accomplished this feat, since God would not allow Satan to deliver such a heavy message, or would the Lord put His approval on a practice His Word condemned. The witch becomes a mere spectator once Samuel is on the scene. It is likely that Saul heard Samuel's words but did not see Samuel's form.

While David was sending gifts to his friends, Saul and his family were being stripped on the battlefield! *"To be carnally minded is death."* Gilboa had been the scene of some great victories in the days of Deborah and Gideon, but this day it would be the scene of a tragic defeat. God had abandoned Saul, and the only thing left for the rebellious king was death. How sad that his innocent son, Jonathan, had to suffer because of the father's sins.

Read 1 Samuel 26:1-25 and answer the following questions:

1. How did David manage to avoid falling into the trap Saul set for him?
2. Where did David and Abishai find Saul? What did Abishai assume when he realized that Saul was sleeping and vulnerable? Why did David prevent Abishai from killing Saul? (26:6-9)
3. When David penetrated Saul's camp at night, what was his mission?

Read 1 Samuel 27:1-12 and answer the following questions:

4. Where did David and his men settle when they left Israel? What request did David make of Achish, king of Gath? (27:2-5)
5. What was David's reason for killing all the people wherever he raided? (27:11)
6. What was Achish's primary reason for trusting David? (27:12)

Read 1 Samuel 28:1-25 and answer the following questions:

7. What was the status of mediums and those that consulted the spirits of the dead in Israel during the days of Samuel and Saul? Where did Saul turn for guidance when he got no word from God? (28:3-8)

8. What was Samuel's reply to Saul about his future in the battle to come? (28:16-19)

9. What did Saul reveal about himself when he chose to consult a medium?

Read 1 Samuel 29:1-11 and answer the following questions:

10. Where did David and his men find themselves as the Philistines lined up against Israel? (29:2)

11. What was the fear of the other commanders about David's presence at the front? What was Achish's final decision about David's involvement in the battle? (29:4-10)

12. Why didn't David's presence among their troops make sense to the Philistine generals?

Read 1 Samuel 30:1-31 and answer the following questions:

13. What was the reaction of David and his troops to the destruction of their city?
What was the attitude of the troops toward David when they returned to find their families gone?
(30:4-6)

14. What did some of David's men want to do about the 200 troops who had not gone into battle?
What was David's perspective on the sharing of the spoils of war? (30:22-25)

15. To what extent was God's word to David fulfilled in the course of this story?

Read 1 Samuel 31:1-13 and answer the following questions:

16. What happened to Saul and his sons in the fierce battle with the Philistines? (31:2-3)

17. Why did Saul ask his armorbearer to finish him off with his sword? What did Saul do when his armorbearer refused to kill him?

18. What did the valiant men of Jabesh Gilead do in response to the Philistines' treatment of their leaders' bodies? (31:11-13)

**The Seduction of Spirits
1 Samuel 28:7**

By consulting a medium Saul not only made a poor choice, but got bad advice. His use of witchcraft was a violation of the law and ultimately led to his death. Scripture is clear that God's people are to have nothing to do with mediums, oracles, soothsayers, or other elements of witchcraft. God has spoken clearly against seeking spirituality and guidance apart from Him. We need not resort to witchcraft or other occult practices, as He has given us His Word to guide us and His Spirit to help us. He also gives us the counsel of wise friends in the faith.

For us today, God does not resort to magic and other occult practices to make His will known or to exercise His power. His people have no reason to resort to any sort of magic, witchcraft, astrology, horoscopes, Ouija boards, tarot cards, mediums, seances, fortune cards, spiritual advisors, crystals, potions, drugs, or any element of the occult. If we want to engage in true spirituality we can find it clearly presented through the Scriptures and ultimately in the person of Jesus, who is God among us "*God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*" We should be aware of spiritual evil but not seduced by it.