

Saul's Doom Sealed

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[0 : 00] Well, let's take our Bibles tonight and open them to 1 Samuel.

! Our text for tonight starts actually in verse 3 of chapter 28.! Chapter 28, verse 3. We covered verses 1 and 2 last time because those two verses really belong in chapter 27.

And we start something brand new here, in a sense, starting with verse 3. So I want to go ahead and read through to the end of the chapter. So starting with verse 3 of 1 Samuel chapter 28.

Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had lamented for him and buried him in Ramah, in his own city. And Saul had put the mediums out and the spiritists out of the land. Then the Philistines gathered together and came and encamped at Shunem.

[1 : 13] So Saul gathered all Israel together, and they encamped at Gilboa. When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly.

And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets. Verse 3. Then Saul said to his servants, Find me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her.

And his servants said to him, In fact, there is a woman who is a medium at Endor. So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night.

And he said, Please conduct a seance for me, and bring up for me the one I shall name to you. Then the woman said to him, Look, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the spiritists from the land.

Why then do you lay a snare for my life to cause me to die? And Saul swore to her by the Lord, saying, As the Lord lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing.

[2 : 30] Then the woman said, Whom shall I bring up for you? And he said, Bring up Samuel for me. When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice.

And the woman spoke to Saul, saying, Why have you deceived me? For you are Saul. And the king said to her, Do not be afraid. What did you see? And the woman said to Saul, I saw a spirit descending out of the earth.

So he said to her, What is his form? And she said, An old man is coming up, and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel.

And he stooped with his face to the ground and bowed down. Now Samuel said to Saul, Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up? And Saul answered, I am deeply distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and God has departed from me, and does not answer me anymore, neither by prophets nor by dreams.

Therefore I have called you, that you may reveal to me what I should do. Then Samuel said, So why do you ask me, seeing the Lord has departed from you, and has become your enemy?

[3 : 44] And the Lord has done for himself, 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, nor execute his fierce wrath upon Amalek.

Therefore the Lord has done this thing to you this day. Moreover, the Lord will also deliver Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me.

The Lord will also deliver the army of Israel into the hand of the Philistines. Immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, and was dreadfully afraid because of the words of Samuel.

And there was no strength in him, for he had eaten no food all day or all night. The woman came to Saul, and saw that he was severely troubled, and said to him, Look, your maidservant has obeyed your voice, and I have put my life in my hands, and heeded the words which you spoke to me.

Now therefore please heed also the voice of your maidservant, and let me set a piece of bread before you, and eat that you may have strength when you go on your way.

[4 : 56] But he refused, and said, I will not eat. So his servants together with the woman urged him, and he heeded their voice. Then he arose from the ground, and sat on his bed.

Now the woman had a fatted calf in the house, and she hastened to kill it, and she took flour, and kneaded it, and baked unleavened bread from it. So she brought it before Saul, and his servants, and they ate, and they arose, and went away that night.

Okay? I think it's safe to say it's one of the rather interesting stories in 1 Samuel. I don't know if you have read it yourself before.

I've never wondered about this whole thing about mediums, and, you know, Samuel appearing in a sense, and so forth. I don't know what you think about all that.

Interesting story, and very important for us to understand what God would teach us through it. Now, you may have noticed that David is not in this story.

[6 : 03] Now, he's mentioned. His name is mentioned really just one time toward the end of the passage. Verse 17, I think it is. Yet only then, as David mentioned, just in connection with something Samuel had already said to Saul when Samuel was still alive back in chapter 15.

We studied that passage about the Lord ripping, tearing the kingdom away from Saul, and the whole story about Amalek and what Saul did in disobedience to the Lord.

So David is mentioned there by name, but really in this entire incident, this event in the life of Saul, David is not there. So chapter 28 is a David-less chapter.

I mentioned last week that chapter 27 was a godless chapter. Well, this one is a David-less chapter. It's all about Saul. Saul and God are the principal characters here, even though Samuel, as we'll talk about this a little bit later, even though Samuel is kind of in the picture here.

He is or he isn't. We'll have to make a decision about that. All right, so in this chapter, King Saul, I want you to know just by way of introduction, King Saul commits a terrible sin.

[7 : 21] It is one of those capital sins, deserving of death, deserving of judgment. It's a serious sin with God. And Saul will deceive, or rather receive, God's judgment for it.

In fact, within 24 hours, Saul will be dead. So we're getting real close to the end of Saul's life. And so it all begins, the story all begins, really, that is, as it relates, you know, to the current situation. It begins with God's silence, his silence. And so what I want to call, and here's number one in my outline, the disparaging silence of God.

Disparaging, we might even say discouraging, that is to Saul, anyway. And so the passage opens with these words, in verse 3, Now Samuel had died.

Now if that sounds familiar, it should, because way back there in chapter 25, we have pretty much the same thing. So here in verse 3, it says, Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had lamented for him.

[8 : 35] They mourned him, mourned his death, and buried him in Ramah, in his own city. That's what, the first thing we're told here, when we get into this part of the story.

And again, that's almost a carbon copy, or verbatim, of what was recorded in chapter 25, verse 1, which says, Then Samuel died, and the Israelites gathered together, and lamented for him.

They mourned for him, and buried him at his home in Ramah. So I don't think we're, to necessarily suppose, that all this time, since chapter 25, Israel's still been in this constant state of mourning.

It's just mentioned here, it's repeated here, and it's done so for a reason. It's repeated here, to identify, a spiritual condition.

A spiritual condition of Israel, but more specifically, the spiritual condition of her king, Saul. And it is a condition, that will become quite evident, really is already evident to us, because we've read the chapter.

[9 : 43] It will become quite evident. And we could call it this, there suddenly was, the existence of a spiritual vacuum, spiritual vacuum, here in Israel, a spiritual vacuum that was left, when Samuel died, the passing of Samuel.

And so, I don't think that we, can necessarily conclude, that there were no more prophets left. And I think there were very few. And in fact, Saul had killed, many of the, priests and prophets.

prophets. There weren't many prophets, but what we're to understand here, by this statement, this repeated statement, that Samuel is dead. Samuel is dead.

The idea is, there's no prophet in Israel. Which means, there was no voice of God, in Israel. There was now, no prophetic voice, in Israel any longer.

And while Samuel lived, while he was alive, even Saul, on occasion, would do the right thing. He would do what pleased the Lord, what was right in his sight.

[11 : 08] And that's really, the idea, or what we, what we're to understand, by this insertion, in verse 3, about Saul's action, to remove all the mediums, mediums, and spiritists, the necromancers, out of the land.

That's the idea behind that. We're not to, take this as, as something that Saul did, after Samuel died. We're to understand that, long before this time, in Saul's life, and in the life of Israel, Saul had taken that action.

And so why is that included here? Why do we have this, this mention here, about Saul banning the practice, of necromancy, in Israel, and banish those, who practiced that, out of the land?

Why do we have this mentioned here? And it is because, of what Saul is going to do, in the story, to show, you know, a stark contradiction, in Saul's life, that he took such action, at one point, while Samuel was alive.

And then, he commits, a breach, of the, his own law. Of course, it's not his law, it's God's laws, we shall see. Now, let me get back to, this being mentioned, that Saul did this.

[12 : 32] He, stopped this practice, and he, threw out, put out, all those who practice this, the, mediums, and witches, and so forth, whatever term you want to use.

Actual term, in the Hebrew, is necromancer. So, what do we conclude by that? Are we to conclude, that this information, is given us, because the author, wants to give credit to Saul, for this?

You know, kind of an attaboy, for Saul? Is that it? No, it's not. It is included here, to show us, what happens, when there is a spiritual, vacuum, in a nation.

That is, what happens, when there is no prophetic voice, or no word, from God. And what happens is, even God's leaders, begin to break, their own laws.

And that's what the, condition of Israel was, after Samuel died. And so the, the author, rather than just, giving us a repetition, of some information, you know, about Samuel's death, and rather than just, giving us, you know, this little tidbit, about some action, Saul had taken.

[13 : 44] These things, are included here, very deliberately. And, these things are included here, to reinforce, the reality, that we're going to discover, in the chapter, and that is, this spiritual vacuum.

The, the absence of any, prophetic voice, in the nation. That was Saul's condition. And so what happens, when, when the inevitable happens?

Okay, what, what suddenly happens, when trouble comes, and it's going to come? What happens, when there is, this spiritual vacuum, and trouble comes?

Well, we, we can see what happens. Fear, it's the first thing, that is mentioned there. Fear, loss of courage, that's the second thing, that is mentioned here.

We'll go, back to these verses, here in just a minute. And, silence, from God. Silence, from God. Verse 4 says, then, so we have this information, Samuel is dead.

[14 : 51] Saul had, while Samuel was alive, and that's the implication, put out the mediums, and so forth. then, after the spiritual vacuum, then, the Philistines gathered together.

So, Samuel is dead, there's no prophetic voice, all Israel, could, could count on, was there wicked king, their king, Saul, then, the Philistines happened, the inevitable happens.

And so, what did Saul do? I mean, since there's nothing spiritual, going on in his life, he's completely, completely bankrupt, spiritually, and so is the entire nation, so what does Saul do?

Verse 5, when Saul saw the army, of the Philistines, what did he do? He was afraid. That's what happens, when there's nothing, spiritual going on.

When the inevitable happens, trouble comes, the enemy attacks, or whatever it may be, we're afraid. And it says, his heart trembled greatly, which is another way of saying, he suddenly had no courage.

[16 : 05] That naturally follows. Fear, loss of courage, and then, when Samuel inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him.

This is, this is, these are dire straits, for Saul, and for Israel. God would not answer him, and so Saul tried dreams, and God was silent.

He tried the Urim, God was silent. He even tried the prophets, a few prophets were left, but God was silent.

And the question is, why? Well, the larger answer to that question is, because Saul was under God's judgment. He's been under it for some time.

That judgment has just not yet ripened. But Saul is under judgment. And so, God then refreshes Saul's memory, about, about that, and he's going to do that a little bit later in the chapter, through this spirit, the spirit of Samuel.

[17:17] He's going to remind Saul about that judgment. All right, so that's why God's not answering. That's the larger picture. But more immediately, the answer to God's silence, was Saul's persistent pursuit, and sin against David, to snuff out David's life.

Now, this really ought to be a lesson to us. Do you remember the prayer promise, found in Psalm 66, in verse 18, where the Bible says, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.

Now, you heard me right. I said it was a prayer promise. It's a promise from God, that he will not hear. When we regard, we cherish sin in our hearts.

Now, you know, I think long before any of this happened, Saul, from the very beginning, in this, you know, his sin against God, in dealing with Amalek, as he had been instructed, commanded by God to do.

He could have repented at that. And at several junctures along the way, he could have repented. And he seemed to repent a few times, when, you know, in his encounters with David, but it wasn't true repentance.

[18:37] He could have repented. He could at this moment. You know, here are the Philistines. And by the way, Gilboa was kind of up on a high plane, and he could look down.

And I think when he got up there, to survey the situation, he had had the reports, that the Philistines were coming, had, had amassed an army against them. In fact, they had already made, at this point, they've made some major inroads, into Israel, geographically.

And so, he got up there, on top of that hill, Gilboa, and he looked down, and he was utterly amazed, at the massive army, that had come against him. And he was afraid. So, he asked God, what am I going to do?

And God was silent. I think, really, before he asked, what am I going to do? He should have said, God, forgive me. Forgive me. So, disparaging silence, of God.

Second, notice, the desperate sin, of Saul. And I say, desperate sin. Saul was desperate here.

[19:42] Desperate. Fear, had set in, followed by, the loss of courage, followed by, God's judgmental silence, followed by desperation.

And by the way, what should have Saul done? He should have confessed his sin. He should have repented. But what did Saul do instead? I mean, listen, folks, when, you can't get any answer to your prayers.

And when God is silent in your life, then you need to look inside, see what the problem is, is what Saul should have done. But what did he do instead?

Well, Saul seeks out a medium. He needs a word from God. And by the way, in his seeking for a medium, he is still, in a sense, seeking a word from God, in a twisted sort of way.

So he seeks out a medium, a witch. Witch, by the way, witch, witch, witch was strictly prohibited by the law of Moses.

[20:50] And I can name, I can quote several places. Leviticus chapter 19, verse 31. Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits. Do not seek after them, to be defiled by them.

I am the Lord your God. In Leviticus chapter 20, verse 6, the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits to prostitute himself with them.

I'm talking about immorality here. To prostitute, that means to commit adultery, spiritual adultery, turning from God and turning to mediums. He says, I will set my face against that person and cut him off from his people.

Deuteronomy chapter 18, verse 10. There shall not be found among you anyone who practices witchcraft or a soothsayer or one who interprets omens or a sorcerer or one who conjures spells or a medium or a spiritist or one who calls up the dead.

This is exactly what Saul was doing. Never mind who it was he was calling up from the dead. That's not the issue. Though I'm sure Saul thought that was the issue and probably made it okay.

[22:01] Saul had reconstituted and enforced this very law. Apparently, I think we're to suppose that Israel become kind of lax when it came to this particular law and apparently throughout the land there were many of these mediums and witches and necromancers and so forth and so Saul

cleaned them out presumably and so now here he is looking for one.

What hypocrisy. I mean, I can imagine that Saul was the biggest and loudest voice against sorcery and witchcraft in the nation and here he is looking for one himself.

It's hypocrisy. Have you ever noticed that sometimes a person who speaks the longest and the loudest about a certain sin is the one that's usually caught doing it and that certainly fits with Saul here.

All right, so Saul goes out looking for a medium, someone who can contact someone dead, specifically in this case Samuel.

He's going out looking for someone presumably who's able to do this and I want you to notice how much trouble Saul was willing to endure just to do it, just to sin, to commit this sin.

[23 : 25] He went to great lengths so don't get the idea as is the case sometimes and usually we use it as an alibi that he just kind of accidentally went this way.

well, you know, it just kind of happened, you know, one thing led to another and boom, here I am, I've sinned. I couldn't help it. You know, it caught me by surprise.

No, it's very premeditated and deliberate and desperate and he went to great lengths in order to break this very important law, this capital sin.

You know, Proverbs 13, 15 says the way of the sinner is hard and it had to be hard to find one in the first place. I mean, you would think it had to be hard to find one.

It's already been this statement that Saul had them all put out of the country and yet apparently that was not true because, you know, if we read this correctly, they found one real quick.

[24 : 29] Well, there just had to be one right, you know, right over there at Endor. I don't know, I'm not sure how they knew that, but, I mean, you know, the way it's written, it seems like, you know, they didn't even have to go without searching, they already knew where one was.

But still, he went to great lengths to do this and then when they did find one, when they found this one, Saul had to go to a lot of trouble just to go meet with her and maybe he had to go to this trouble because he needed to hide the fact.

You know, he found her in the city of Endor and geographically that, in relation to where the armies of the Philistines had amassed, that would have meant that Saul would have to skirt around the very camp of the Philistines so it would be a very dangerous endeavor.

You see how determined he is. He's going to risk all to go visit with a medium which was strictly forbidden by God. And so he, you know, he disguises himself, takes off his kingly robe and jewelry and everything that identifies him as the king, King Saul, puts on clothes, other clothes, and he went, and the Bible says in verse 8, and two men went with him, bodyguards, and they came to the woman by night.

I mean, all those are, those, this description and these words and the timing, all point to one thing. Saul, I mean, at the very least, could not afford for anyone to recognize him.

[26 : 16] Certainly not in terms of the enemy, and it would be very dangerous for them to recognize him. I think the bigger picture here, the bigger story is that he was in danger of being recognized by his own people.

He had to hide it. And usually sin is committed in the dark. Most sin is committed when nobody's looking. Until I think that is, until a society loses all touch with morality and righteousness, which, you know, I think we might be able to characterize our own society that way.

Let me quote Adrian Rogers again. He said, what used to slink down the alleys now struts down Main Street. And that's true, isn't it?

But Saul wasn't quite there yet, and he had every reason to conceal his sin. Couldn't conceal it from God. God. But you see, here's the idea.

He went to great lengths to commit this sin. It didn't just happen. He didn't accidentally stumble upon it. It was something that happened unawares, you know, just made a mistake, had a lapse of memory, or, you know, whatever.

[27 : 31] I mean, this was all premeditated and planned out, and to the nth degree, to go and visit with this medium. And Saul all the time knew full well that it was sin, didn't he?

Of course he did. Yet, as I kind of mentioned earlier, I think he probably justified it. Justified it because of the one he wanted to be brought back from the dead, or at least to be contacted, Samuel.

That's the one he wanted the medium to contact, Samuel. And so maybe we should not be too hard on Saul. I mean, after all, his motives are pure.

Right? He needed a word from God, and he can't seem to get it by all the normal mediums or methods. He needed a word from God, but Samuel, the prophet, was dead.

So what to do? Well, in Saul's twisted, sinful thinking, what would be wrong about trying to contact the prophet Samuel? So you see how, you know, even if we were in Saul's place, we might come up with that kind of line of reasoning, rationalism.

[28 : 49] I mean, you know, Samuel's a good guy. Desperate sin of Saul. Third, the disturbing spirit of Samuel.

And here's where we get into the interesting part of the story, as well as, I would add, the controversial part of the story, controversial among Bible scholars.

Verse 12 says that when the woman saw Samuel, all right, now get the picture here, Saul is now there, you know, and this woman is a medium, and he has requested Samuel, and so she's going to go through her little routine, whatever it is she does, and suddenly she sees Samuel.

And it says that when the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. Actually, it could be translated, she shrieked. She wasn't expecting that.

She was more surprised than Saul and the men that were with him. Now, the question is, was this really Samuel?

[30 : 06] Or perhaps, as some have said, maybe it was a demon posing as Samuel, looked like Samuel. I guess the problem with that, and for the longest time, I have kind of taken the position this was not really Samuel.

I mean, how could God be part of allowing a medium to do what she did? You know, it didn't seem contradictory to God's word. And so, for the longest time, I had a problem with accepting the fact that this was Samuel.

So, maybe it was a demon, demon in disguise. And yet, what the demon said was right on as if it was a word straight from God. Prophetic, even.

I don't think a demon would do that, or could do that. Or maybe it was her imagination. She just thought she saw Samuel. Or maybe she was simply lying.

I think probably she was accustomed to doing that. You know? But the simple, straightforward reading of the passage, if you just take it at face value, just strictly what it says, it seems to indicate that this was indeed the spirit of Samuel.

[31 : 24] This was actually Samuel. Now, that's not then to say that this woman was able to conjure him up, that she had some power to do that.

She was a surprise, more surprise than anybody. I mean, it wasn't really supposed to happen. I really think that's what we ought to get from this, when she shrieked.

I didn't think it would happen. It's never happened before. You know, she earned her living as a medium, I think, through trickery, as they all do.

They have no power to bring the dead back. They don't have any power to do that. Nobody has that power. Certainly not the dead back from heaven. Think anybody could have that power?

She didn't have that power. You know, she used trickery. It's kind of like those who look into the crystal ball and they say, this is what I see.

[32 : 31] Now, you can't see it, but I can see it. You just trust me on this. They're frauds. They're fakes. Or, perhaps, unwittingly, maybe, in her career as a medium, the devil helped her.

It was demonic activity. I think we could say that. But in no sense are we to believe that this medium, this woman, was actually able, by her own power and whatever, able to actually call Samuel back from the dead for a moment, to appear before them.

Now, that's not it. So, if that's not it, and this really was the spirit of Samuel, then who's responsible for it? God. I think it's reasonable to say that.

I mean, if you just read it as it's written, plainly written, and that's rule number one in Bible interpretation, what's the plain meaning? Then we have to say that this really was Samuel, the spirit of Samuel.

And so, if the woman can't do that, and no one has that power to do that, then only God could do that, and I think God did do that, caused Samuel to appear, and he did so for his own purpose.

[33 : 54] You say, would God do that? Well, he has done that. How about on the Mount of Transfiguration, where God allowed Moses and Elijah to appear there? I mean, they really were

there.

It wasn't just simply some figment of Peter's imagination. As he looked, there's Moses, there's Elijah. I've always wondered, how did he know? You know, he didn't have a picture, in his billfold, of the two guys, you know, but he did know, or name tags.

I just assume that, you know, what's written in the account is not all of it. He probably asked who this was. And so, he brought back, I think God brought back Samuel so that, and it seems pretty clear, this is a clear explanation, he brought Samuel back so that Samuel could pronounce his final judgment upon Saul.

in fact, really, Samuel doesn't say, why did you call me? You know full well. And then through the words of Samuel, God brought back to speak to Saul, he pronounced his final judgment upon Saul, and because of Saul being the king, it was a judgment upon Israel.

You see, the troubling thing here is not the appearance of Samuel. I mean, that would be troubling enough, it would be fearful. Suddenly, someone you know is dead suddenly appears.

[35 : 22] But the troubling thing is not the appearance of Samuel, the troubling thing is what he said, what he said. And so, you know, it's kind of ironic, verse 6 says that God did not answer Saul, Saul, but here in the latter part, he does answer Saul, he does speak to Saul.

He actually does get a word from Saul, though it's not the word he wanted to hear. And yet, a good part of it, Saul should have already known, should have remembered.

Because Samuel brings that up, he said, do you remember what I said back there, what God said through me, that God has ripped the kingdom from your hand, and given it to your neighbor David? Saul had already been told that.

Now, the rest of it, he didn't necessarily know. He said, you know, basically said, you're going to die. Now, the Philistines are going to attack, and then, by this time tomorrow, you're going to be with me.

I'm going to be where I am. Which has led some to speculate as to whether Saul was actually a saved person or not. kind of difficult to reconcile that, and yet, Samuel said, you'll be where I am.

[36 : 43] But basically, what he's saying is, you're going to die. Your judgment's going to fall upon you. So, the disparaging silence of God, the desperate sin of Saul, the disturbing spirit of Samuel, and then one more, the departing strength of Saul.

This is the death knell for him. verse 20 says, immediately Saul fell full length on the floor, flat out on the floor, and was dreadfully afraid because of the words of Samuel.

Now, compare that with toward the beginning of the chapter when Samuel is on Gilboa, and he's looking out upon the massive armies of the Philistines that have organized to attack him and his army, attack Israel, and it says he was afraid.

Compare that with this fear. It says he was dreadfully afraid because of the words of Samuel, and there was no strength in him, for he had eaten no food all day or all night, and he continued to fast, not fast for some answer from God, but fast because he's just totally destroyed.

All right, so he's dreadfully afraid, and what was it that Samuel told him that brought to him such a trauma?

[38 : 12] What was it? Well, basically, it was that the Lord was actually his enemy, his enemy. Not only were the Philistines his enemy against him, and that's enough, bad enough, but now so is the Lord.

God's So what's left? I mean, what's left after that? If the enemies of this earth are against you, you know, you're okay as long as the Lord's on your side or you're on his side, but when the Lord is against you, he's your adversary, and that's what Samuel said, then what's left?

What's left? right. And again, before the end of the next day, Saul will be dead. He will be dead.

Hebrews chapter 10 verse 31 says it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Why is that? Well, for obvious reasons, there is no escape. No escape. Saul's doom had been sealed, and he knew it.

He