

1st Samuel Ch 28

Vs1-2

Now if you weren't here last week you might read this and kinda scratch your head and think, "What's going on here? Is David fighting with the Philistines, the sworn enemies of Israel *against* Israel?" It sure looks that way doesn't it? If you recall ch 27 finds David at a spiritually low time in his life, he's tired of Saul's pursuit of his life and so he says in his heart, "Saul's not going to stop until I'm dead, there isn't anything better for me than that I should escape to the Philistines so that Saul will cease pursuing me." And we took the time to examine the effects that can result from the resolve of a persons heart, how it can make us or break us in any given circumstance depending on how we settle things there in the deep recess of our heart. Because David had every reason to believe that God was going to see him through his hour of despair, he'd been there before, God had never left him, never forsaken him, had seen him through every difficult and seemingly dead end situation of his life and on top of that all had promised him that he would be the next king of Israel. But in a moment of weakness David pitched all that out the window, forsook Israel where he was supposed to be, and fled to the land of the Philistines just to give himself some peace of mind. No doubt he felt somewhat responsible for the messed up lifestyle that he'd been subjecting these 600men who were with him to (along with their families). And so through what seemed to be some simple common reasoning that would result in the over all good of the matter, David's decision impacted not only himself and his family, but all these other people whom he had committed to and was overseeing. And In the matter of moments he made a decision that would impact the rest of his life, again be careful to guard the resolve of your heart on any given matter and be sure it finds solid support in the Word of God.

If you can't support your resolve through a solid biblical backing, then you better rethink, and reexamine your resolve. David led all these people into compromise, and he went to the king of Gath and in essence swore allegiance to him, Gath gave him Ziklag (a city for him and his people to settle in). And so David began to maraud, and raid these Canaanite/Philistine villages And he would kill everyone in the city and take all their goods, and he thought that by killing everyone he was covering his tracks so that no one could take word back to the king to tell him what he was doing. But you can be sure your sin will find you out, and David may get away with it for a year or 10 or whatever, but eventually his sin will catch up to him as will yours and as will mine.

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." Gal 6:7 You see David was taking out all these enemies of Israel, but he was telling the king that he was raiding various parts *of* Israel, and since no one could report otherwise (because they were all dead) the king believed him. But God knew what was going on. 2 points to make here regarding this, #1 just because someone is active in what seems to be a good cause doesn't necessarily indicate they're being spiritual or endorsed of God, but to the contrary it can be an attempt to cover one's own carnality.

Someone gets upset, leaves the church, refuses to engage in worship with the people of God, but just goes out into the world, but they say, “I can make up for not going to church. You don’t have to go to church to be saved.” And so they get involved in Life choices, or Souls harbor, crosslines and all the rest, they become incredibly active in commendable service.

But not because God’s leading them to, God didn’t tell David to attack these villages, but he was being active against the enemies of Israel to try and appease his own conscience in forsaking Israel in the 1st place.

So though serving in the community is a great thing, it can also be a vent to cover a guilty conscience of someone in compromise. These things should be the overflow of what God is doing in your life, and leading you in, not taking the place of those things. #2 Just because someone is successful in what they’re doing doesn’t mean that God’s behind it. David was very successful in his endeavors, but God was not leading him in one of them, again it has to have as it’s foundation the support of God’s Word, and David had stepped from that covering the moment he left Israel, and so none of the ends would justify his means, he was in compromise.

And the enemy will package things up for you and for me like they’re nice and neat little gifts free for the taking. He gets you out of God’s will, gives you what you’re looking for in the short term payoff, then a year or so down the road, the bill comes in the mail, “David, it’s time for you to take out your own.” Now David’s lies have boxed him in, the Philistines are preparing to overthrow Israel and since the king believes David’s burned his bridges at both ends, he tells David, “We’re going to war with Israel, and you and your men are coming with me.” And here in verse 2 David says, “You line em up, and I’ll knock em down.” “Surely you know what your servant can do.” In other words, you know that my mouth don’t write checks that my backside can’t cash, you’ve heard all about my military might, and now I’m going to prove it to you. And right then the king appoints David to be his head personal bodyguard for life.

Now we would like to believe that David had some type of plan B, that he had it in his heart that when the battle began he was going to storm through the Philistine army and break the ranks and liberate Israel. And that may be the case, but the text gives absolutely no indication of that whatsoever, and if that’s the case we have to believe that David was prepared to kill his own countrymen to cover his lies to the king. And if so we’ll find that it wouldn’t be the 1st time that he would be willing to kill someone who was loyal to him to cover his own tracks.

I tell ya, as much as David was a man after God's own heart, he had some seriously low times in his life as well, and I'm so glad that the bible records them because it gives us hope as well. David's humanities didn't derail God's plan for his life, David was a man who when he would realize he was in error would acknowledge it and repent. Now he was a man who would deceive himself just like the rest of us, but when he was exposed he didn't seek to justify himself, or somehow rationalize his way out of it, he assumed responsibility was willing to own up to any ramifications, repented and would move on.

But this is one of those low times in his life, but on the flipside of that, if this was a low time for David, Saul was in the negative. If David is in a backslide, Saul is in a freefall, he's jumped out of the plane, and his chute isn't opening, and he's just about to hit the ground.

At this point in ch 28 we sort of have this parenthetical scene that's sort of spliced in this drama that's unfolding in David's life. It's a "meanwhile" cut scene in this drama of David's life, as this is happening with David, this is what's happening with Saul. And 1st Samuel is an interesting book in how it opens and how it closes, and as we approach the end of the book we're able to see the contrast. In the words of Warren Wiersbe, "First Samuel opens with the birth of a gifted baby, Samuel, and closes with the death of a guilty man, King Saul. The early chapters cluster around the tabernacle where God spoke to young Samuel, and the closing chapters focus on a forsaken man to whom God refused to speak." Now beginning in vs 3 the stage is set for the drama that unfolds in the remaining vs of this ch.

Vs3

We learned of Samuel's death back in ch 25. But here it's repeated for perhaps a couple of reasons. #1 Israel was in trouble and Samuel wasn't there to bail them out, in the past he'd sort of been the backbone of Israel.

And #2 Samuel was Saul's spiritual connection, and in his earlier days when he would heed Samuel's counsel, he would tell him what to do and things would wind up well. Now as time past Saul got a little too big for his britches and would no longer heed Samuels word to him (which was in reality God's Word to him). But I guess in desperation Saul forgets all that and wants to talk to Samuel, but he can't, Samuel is dead. "And Saul had put the mediums and spiritists out of the land."

Now when you read that do you kinda think, "Something doesn't sound right there?" It's almost as if Samuel is being compared to a medium, or a channelor, Saul wants to see Samuel but he can't, so he'd settle for a medium but he's put them out of the land. Now that's a commendable thing that Saul did. God's Word commanded that, and it was probably at Samuel's prompting that Saul did that. God's Word had stated over and over, "*Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.*" Lev 19:31.

And again *“And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people.”* Lev 20:6
“There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one 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. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD.” Deut 18:10-12

So it's clear that we as the people of God are to have nothing to do with occultic practices or to associate with psychics or palm readers, necromancers, mediums and things of that nature. The NT puts it like this, *“Be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil.”* Rom 16:19. And Saul had so far done that, but Samuel is dead, the army of the enemy is approaching (and before we get too far ahead of ourselves lets read on).

Vs 4-6

Saul knew that he was in for the fight of his life because the armies of the Philistines had penetrated so far north that their intentions were obvious and they had situated themselves in an elevated terrain and Israel, (not many miles away there at Mt Gilboa) would be in a position to fight an uphill battle. And when Saul saw what was coming about his heart trembled greatly. Why, how could this happen? How did Saul find himself in such a place of utter helplessness completely unprepared for this battle being brought on by the enemy? How did he lose control of the land of Israel, and the situation militarily? Simple really, he was consumed pursuing an enemy that didn't exist. He was ate up with the situation regarding David, and all the while he was completely distracted pursuing David, the Philistines were making in roads regarding Israel, and now some months and years later, the enemy is getting ready to come in like a flood and Saul finds himself completely unprepared. Be careful to choose wisely your battles, because if we get too busy fighting the wrong enemy, we're all consumed with those scenarios, *“Well, that person doesn't like me”* or *“This person doesn't feel though they're being used”* or *“The other person is upset because we chose a red/purple base carpet instead of blue.”* And all these nitpicky scenarios that seek to occupy our time; if I'm all the time getting caught up in these little skirmishes in the Christian community that have nothing to do with the big picture. Then when the real battle confronts me like a flood, I'm going to be completely unprepared, and caught off guard because I've been all this time engaged in the wrong conflict and fighting the wrong battle. Saul's been out there pursuing his own brother, after his own countryman and the whole time the enemy has been plotting and networking, meanwhile Saul has been preoccupied and obsessed with the wrong thing, and this can happen to us so easily.

Make sure the things you're occupied with are biblically warranted. Because the enemy loves is when we're biting and devouring one another because then we consume one another and by the time he makes his attack we've weakened ourselves as a front from the inside out and the results are detrimental.

And it's interesting that Saul is seeking the Lord now that his world is falling in on him. This whole time God has given him opportunity after opportunity to repent but as long as things were seemingly going his way, he didn't want any part of God's counsel for his life. But now that he's in trouble he's all about it, but God refuses to speak to him. He won't speak to him in a dream, by the Urim, or by a prophet, in other words no matter what Saul does, God's not responding. We read in Prov 1:28-32, "*Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the LORD, They would have none of my counsel And despised my every rebuke. Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, And be filled to the full with their own fancies. For the turning away of the simple will slay them, And the complacency of fools will destroy them.*" Now in this what we're reading here lies a very important principal, #1 we don't read anywhere that Saul has repented of his rebellion, #2 he's presently living in disobedience to God's word for his life. He's not obeying what God has already spoken to him, and so God's not going to speak to him now. Or to understand this another way, if we're not going to follow obey God's Word in the 1st place, then God's not obligated to instruct us in another place. Why would God waste His breath speaking to Saul when Saul has already proven a pattern of rebellion and disobedience? Even now he's living in disobedience, when Samuel told him that he was finished being king, he should've resigned right then, but he's sought to keep what wasn't his to keep, it was David's. But now that he's in trouble he's all about hearing from the Lord, isn't that interesting? But God's not playing that game, if we want God to speak to us; we need to obey what He says.

Vs7

So here's Saul in this fix, he's in for the fight of his life, God's not speaking to him, Samuel his sure connection is dead, he doesn't know what to do, he's freaking out and so he says, "Find me a woman who is a medium." It's interesting that he sights a woman, women being the more susceptible gender to deception and all, and we find that women are consistently more drawn into occultic arts. Not that there are no men, John Edwards and guys like him, but more than not you get the Deon Warwick with the psychic hotline, the Ms. Cleo with her "Call me now" tarot card readings and all. And that's where Saul is at, "Someone find me Ms. Cleo, get in touch with the psychic hotline, get me hooked up with Crossing over with John Edwards, I need direction." Now if his servants truly wanted to help him they should've said, "Saul you know what the Word says about that." We already sighted that that person would be cut off, and cursed and all the rest, but instead they enlighten him to the fact of one particular lady who slipped through the cracks as they were being put out of the land.

Vs8-9

So this woman is careful about her craft, and she's wanting to make sure this isn't some sting operation to catch her in the act so as to have her executed.

Vs 10

Now is this isn't a red flag as to how far down, and seriously confused Saul is I don't know what is. "I'm wanting God's direction, so I'll seek it from a medium, by a means expressly condemned by God. I'll encourage her to conduct a séance, so I can hear from the Lord whom I'm ignoring anyway, and I'll guarantee the protection of this satanic person by the name of the Lord."

"As the Lord lives!" You just want to say, "Saul if the Lord lives then why don't you repent and seek Him instead of calling up Ms. Cleo here or seeking a spot on "Crossing over" with John Edwards. And it's almost funny that the medium believes him when he swears by the Lord, what difference would that make to her, she doesn't believe in God anyway? But notice what happens.

Vs 11-20

Now I don't really see a way around camping out on this for just a second. I mean what in the world just happened? And believe me when I tell you there's all kinds of comments on this, Was this woman a ventriloquist just shamming Saul in his moment of weakness? Was this a demonic impersonation of Samuel? Or was this actually Samuel back from the dead for one last encounter with king Saul? And with out getting into all the various perspectives I'll just tell you that I believe that the best interpretation of scripture is generally the most obvious. And the text gives us no indication of a demonic entity deceiving Saul, or this lady somehow playing charades with Saul. But it says very plainly that Samuel surfaced, Samuel speaks for himself, what he speaks is the Word of the Lord, and so I believe that the Lord allowed this to happen and that what we have here is one last encounter of Samuel with Saul.

And another reason I believe that this is something that God has done is because the medium isn't in on this. She's no doubt familiar with the demonic, probably in many ways a fraud speaking things to people by means of the demonic about what only them and their long deceased sister Suzy could've known about. And sucking people in by such means and deceiving them, don't think that people who have these insights on other people's lives have it by anything godly, they're not exercising a word of knowledge, they're in some cases a total fraud, and in other cases simply reporting what demonic spirits whisper in their ears about their observations of that persons life. And this medium was familiar with the demonic, but regarding the things of God she wasn't familiar with that Spirit, the Holy Spirit, and so when something happened beyond her control it terrified her.

And then finally, beyond the fact that the bible refers to this encounter as being with Samuel, and Samuel speaking for himself, and not saying anything inconsistent with God's Word previously spoken, I don't see how this particular encounter was beneficial to Satan in any way. The medium was terrified, God's Word was spoken, and Samuel didn't speak through the medium but directly to Saul, and he probably called out to him by name. That's how the medium knew in vs 12 that this man in disguise was Saul, so I have to conclude that this was in fact Samuel.

Now, what I don't know is why we seem to have an exception to the rule that once we die there's no coming back. And after the resurrection we don't see anything like this recorded for us again in scripture, but there's one other occasion that God made an exception to accomplish His purpose and that's when Moses and Elijah was seen talking to Jesus on the Mt of Transfiguration. And the fact that Samuel came up out of the ground is consistent with what the bible teaches about Ab's bosom that the faithful and righteous deceased were abiding in prior to the cross, *now* 2 Cor 5:8 tells us that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. But prior to the atoning work of the cross, there was no one who'd walked the topside of the earth in Heaven. So they were in waiting in Paradise that 2nd compartment in Sheol that Luke 19 refers to.

And I like what Samuel says to him in vs 15, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" He didn't want to be back here, he was being comforted, he was in paradise, now why have you brought be back here Saul? And Saul's all, "I need to know what to do because God won't speak to me."

And Samuel says, "If God won't speak to you, what makes you think that I will?" And Samuel never tells him what to do, he simply tells him what's about to transpire, he reminds Saul of his disobedience, and tells him that with in 24 hrs him and his sons will die. That they'll be with him, not necessarily in the some place as Samuel but in the same realm of those who've expired in this life. I don't believe we'll see Saul in Heaven and if I'm wrong I'll be glad to apologize, but when we read the words, "God has departed from me" and God's refusing to speak to him, I just don't see Saul making it. But what I want you to notice (and I know we're out of time) but what was it that Samuel brought to Saul's attention? That same matter that he spoke to him of years earlier that stripped the kingdom from Saul when he refused to obey God's voice. And Samuel's basic message here to Saul is, "Saul, God hasn't changed His mind." 15-20yrs have passed but time hasn't changed God's mind, and this is an important principal to grasp. Time doesn't atone for sin, now with people sometimes it does. Something happens, years and years go by, you see them again, and it's like water under the bridge, can't believe we let that separate us and all. But with God it's not that way, and you find all these people who are basically good people, not staunch sinners and all, "but boy when I was younger" but that was years ago. Time doesn't atone for sin; only the blood of Jesus Christ will do that. We can't say, "But God that was years ago" it doesn't matter, Saul still hasn't repented from this act of rebellion 15-20 years ago that was that final straw and God is still seeking to deal with him on it.

And Samuel tells him that he's got 24 hrs to live, now what would you do if you knew that you were with in 24hrs of the end of your life. You'd think you'd get right with God if there was anything that needed dealt with. But Saul doesn't do that, would to God that everyone had a 24hr notice before they died. But I think too many people live under the false assumption that when they get a little closer to the end, *then* they'll make things right.

#1 You're not guaranteed that you'll be given tomorrow, and #2 what makes people think that if they're not willing to surrender to Jesus Christ today, that they'll be willing to in the face of a terminal situation? That's why the bible says today is the day of salvation. Saul knew that he was going to die, and yet even still he was so cemented in his ways that he refused to humble himself before God and repent.

Vs21-25

Like the last supper of a man on death row. This is just a real sad scene here, he came to her at night, went out and it was night, this is just a real dark time in Saul's life. And we're reminded of the words concerning Judas at the Last Supper. "*Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night.*" John 13:30

Wiersbe concludes, "We can't help but feel sorry for Saul, and yet at the same time, we must admit that he brought his plight on himself. Had he obeyed the Lord he wouldn't have lost the kingdom, and had he stopped pursuing David and invested his time developing his army, he would have been better equipped to meet the Philistines at Jezreel. In spite of all the blessing God gave to Saul, and all the opportunities to grow spiritually, Saul was unprepared to lead, unprepared to fight, and unprepared to die."

May God help us to learn the lesson, to heed the Word of God, to appreciate the godly influence that God surrounds us with even if they're delivering faithful wounds, and to take the window of repentance God gives us while we have it knowing there's no guarantee of tomorrow.