

# 1 Samuel 28

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     1 Samuel 28 In those days the Philistines gathered their forces for war to fight against Israel, and Achish said to David, Understand that you and your men are to go out with me in the army.

David said to Achish, Very well, you shall know what your servant can do. And Achish said to David, Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life. Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city.

And Saul had put out the mediums and all the necromancers from the land. The Philistines assembled and came and encamped at Shinnun, and Saul gathered all Israel, 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 prophets.

And 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. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a medium in Endor.

[ 1 : 0 6 ]     So Saul disguised himself and put on other garments and went, he and two men with him. And they came to the woman by night, and he said, Divine for me by a spirit, and bring up for me whomever I shall name to you.

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?

But Saul swore to her by the Lord, As the Lord lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing. Then the woman said, Whom shall I bring up for you?

He said, Bring up Samuel for me. When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. And the woman said to Saul, Why have you deceived me?

You are Saul. The king said to her, Do not be afraid. What do you see? And the woman said to Saul, I see a God coming up out of the earth. He said to her, What is his appearance?

[ 2 : 0 8 ]     And she said, An old man is coming up, and he is wearing a robe. And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and paid homage. Then Samuel said to Saul, Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?

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. And Samuel said, Why then do you ask me? Since the Lord has turned from you and become your 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. 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.

[ 3 : 19 ] The Lord will give the army of Israel also into the hands of the Philistines. 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. 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 into 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.

He refused and said, I will not eat. 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.

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.

[ 4 : 24 ] Then they rose and went away that night. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. That has got to be one of the most potent chapters in all the Bible.

The content. You couldn't dream it up. It's more astounding when you consider the conviction of the literature that we're reading.

It's Hebrew prose. It's narrative. It's anticipated to be read as the recording of actual events.

And so in that reading, we see the very true last night of Saul.

King Saul. King Saul. King Saul. King Saul. Wrapped in all the darkness that the writer can muster.

[ 6 : 00 ] Three factors at the outset signify that the end of the line has come for Saul. Take a look.

David. David is against him. Here's David, verse 2, who is now in league with a ruler, Achish, a Philistine, saying, very well, you shall know what your servant can do when invited to participate in the war against Israel.

Now we've been watching David over the last few chapters. Not lifting a hand against Saul, willing to take somebody else out. Refraining from lifting a hand against Saul, and now ready again to join the enemy and take his life.

David is against him. One of the factors indicating that the end of the line has come for Saul. Secondly, Samuel himself has died and can no longer assist Saul.

Paul, by the way, comes some thousand and some years later, having previously gone by the name of Saul. This is the first Saul who was anointed king, first king of Israel.

[ 7 : 26 ] That's for me as much as it is for you, evidently. Verse 3, now Samuel had died. So the writer immediately is placing the entire narrative of the last night of Saul's life under the rubric that David is against him, and Saul, Samuel, can no longer assist him.

Finally, God himself does not answer him. Take a look at verse 6. And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets.

Three leading indicators put forward simply in the prose of the narrator to let you know that for Saul, the end of the line has come.

David stands against him. Samuel cannot assist him. The Lord God, the living God, no longer answers him. What a tragic figure.

I mean, imagine yourself in those shoes without a hope in the world.

[ 8 : 48 ] It doesn't surprise us then when you look at verses 7 to 10 to see Saul's state of mind and heart. Then Saul said to his servants, Seek out from me a woman who's a medium.

That's the action, which as we will see in a moment, is an abomination before the Lord. And in verse 5, prior to that, when he saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, the text says, and his heart trembled greatly.

That is the state of his mind, his heart, and his will. He's afraid, and he takes action that is an abomination before the Lord. Now, this idea of Saul being afraid is repetitive throughout the book.

I don't know if you remember long before he was even an anointed king, he was off hiding amidst the baggage, in a sense, not wanting the profile of an announcement.

Or in chapter 15, when he didn't do all that Samuel had required of him in wiping out even the sheep and the oxen, he actually says in verse 24 of chapter 15, he gives a reason for his disobedience, and he says, I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your word, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.

[ 10 : 25 ] The character downfall in Saul's life was a fear of people. Not a fear in the sense that you and I might have it caught on the wrong street in the middle of the night in Chicago, but a fear in the sense of he couldn't live with himself if they weren't happy with him.

A people pleaser. He's afraid. In the text, as you'll see over at verse 20, the idea of fear will be enlarged.

He will be filled with fear. And the median in verse 21 will actually say to him, is indicated, she saw that he was terrified.

Saul was ruled by fear. But it wasn't a fear of God and obeying the words of the prophet. His greatest fear was what will other people say? What will other people do?

Where do I stand with you? That was the state of his mind and his heart, filled with fear, and he takes action.

[ 11 : 34 ] That is an abomination. He calls for a median. Now interestingly, this is right into the wheelhouse of sorcery, witchcraft, a calling forward of the dead.

You might think of it in terms of a seance, an entering into the spiritual world in a way that begins to look beyond the pale, through the forces of darkness, that God had put off limits to His own people in the land.

Take a look back. Turn, you could look at Leviticus 19, but I just want you to see it in Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy 18, long before this event, God had given His Word about these practices.

That is, seeking spiritual guidance via a connection with the underworld. Verse 9 of Deuteronomy 18, When you come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations.

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 is a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a wizard or a necromancer.

[ 13 : 14 ] 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. You shall be blameless before the Lord your God.

For these nations which you are about to dispossess listen to fortune tellers and to diviners but as for you the Lord your God has not allowed you to do this.

You were to hear God's Word interestingly in Deuteronomy 18 the very next word through the voice of a prophet that would be raised up from among you from among your own countrymen.

Now, you and I can walk out of that door and be before a fortune teller on 53rd Street within three minutes. So real is the connection of this ancient text to your world and mine.

And God's people weren't to do it. I think there was an indication that there are actually spiritual forces in play. There are real powers that you and I should not dwell with.

[ 14 : 22 ] We should instead fix all of our attention upon the revealed Word which He has given to us. So here He is making an act of abomination before God seeking wisdom and counsel to be led by a medium which would bring up a voice that had been off limits to Him.

Interestingly, this is something that you and I might say, well, I would never do that. I mean, I'll play the lottery once in a while but go to a fortune teller. No. Maybe you have gone to a fortune teller.

But most of us would think, no, I'm not going to mess in that spiritual domain. I'm not heading off to a seance. It's too real. It's too wild. It's too frightening.

And so we place Saul as this outlandish man who does the unthinkable. But take a look.

Turn back to 1 Samuel 15. Do you remember that brief poem that came in the midst of Samuel's rebuke of Saul when he disobeyed the Word of God?

[ 15 : 45 ] Verse 22. Samuel had said to him then, and that was the day that the Lord decided he would take his kingdom from him.

Samuel said, Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? In other words, do you think God who sits in the heavens wants you to go the extra mile in some way when you're not willing to actually obey what he has revealed to you?

Look how he goes on. Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to listen than the fat of rams.

Verse 23. Here it is. The most stunning verse. For rebellion is as the sin of divination and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he also has rejected you from being king. Think of it. We might not go to a medium, but the text is clear.

[ 16 : 57 ] Rebellion is as the sin of divination. if we're not listening to the word of God and ordering our life under it to the best of our ability, if you are actually living in rebellion to the word of God, knowingly, willingly, voluntarily, laying it aside, it is as if you have gone to the medium already.

we are Saul, and Saul is us. What is wrong with the world?

Dear sir, I am yours truly, G.K. Chesterton. We have a dilemma, but I want you to see the connection so that you and I don't read a text that deals with a man on the last night of his life in the presence of a medium and think that it is so far removed from what you and I do.

When we rebel from what we know to be true, it is as we have already gone. The end of the line for Saul, Saul's state of mind and his heart death.

And then verses 11 through 19, it happens. Samuel is called up from this death and Samuel will appear before him and pronounce the sentence of death upon him.

[ 18 : 47 ] God now, people in our day might read that and go, did it really happen or did he think it happened? I don't think God would forbid his people from visiting the medium if it was just an imaginary power that was at work within them.

So Samuel is disturbed in spirit form and he appears before Saul and he basically says, I can't assist you any longer.

I have one final word for you. And he pronounces a sentence of death upon him and upon his sons with the morning light. And so then we come at verse 20 to the end to Saul's final act.

I want you to see the nature of his final act. This is the king of a people, the leader, filled with fear, no strength in him, terrified, and living in obedience to the word of the medium.

Did you notice the language of the medium? Behold, verse 21, your servant has obeyed you. I have taken my life into my hand and have listened to what you have said to me.

[ 20 : 29 ] Now therefore you also obey your servant. She requires the obedience of the king and he willingly gives it.

What an irony, this idea that there was no strength in him or in verse 22 where she says, eat that you may have strength with you when you go on your way.

Do you remember the song that took place in 1 Samuel chapter 2 way back when there was a celebration at the birth of Samuel?

Do you remember how Hannah's prayer, her song ends? Verse 10 of chapter 2, the adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces.

Against them he will thunder in heaven. The Lord will judge the end of the earth. Here it is, he will give strength to his king and exalt the power of his anointed.

[ 21 : 34 ] What an ironic strengthening for Saul. Enough food, the menu is known, it was a fattened calf, not grazing out on its own, but fed of the best, and bread.

This is his last supper. And he obeyed. It says he listened to their words. This is the final act of Saul.

Now, what are we to make of Saul and the text? Let me just highlight three things by way of consideration. One, those who make a start with God should be warned, for not all finish well.

Your start does not guarantee your end. Saul had a humility of sorts at the time of his selection.

And he knew the happy start of actually prophesying and being numbered among the prophets upon his anointing. he walked with God and gave praises to God according to the strength of the spirit that at that time was not democratized and given to all who had faith.

[ 23 : 22 ] God said, this is something for you and for me to remember. That your start with God does not guarantee that you will finish well with God.

So learn from the life of Saul. He had, as many of us do, a bias for action, but when his bias for action went forward and faster than the very word that had been revealed to him, he did what he wanted in life rather than what God had told him.

And if you and I think for a moment that we can start with God and yet go our own way in the assembly, there is the possibility of us ending very poorly.

This is real. It happens. So persevere in listening to God's word and in living under it to the best of your ability.

Number two, there can come a time when God's anointed actually rises up against you.

[ 24 : 43 ] Now think about this text and as Christians reading the text, we're right to ask, how am I to be reading this as a Christian? And one of the surface ways of reading a text like this is to take the character Saul and just show by way of contrast all the wonderful things of King Jesus.

So Saul doesn't listen to the word of God, Jesus does. And so we pit these things as if the anointed one is only in the text by way of contrast to Saul.

But listen, the anointed is in the text. David, he's here. And what role does the anointed play?

He's rising up against Saul. There can come a point in time when we live in continual rebellion against our understanding of the word that the Lord's anointed himself rises up against us.

Let me put it differently. There is a day of reckoning when we will all stand before God and give an account of our life.

[ 26 : 09 ] God, I would be remiss to not state that to you clearly and simply whether you are in junior high, high school, college, graduate school, married, single, old, young.

According to the scriptures, there is a day when we stand before the Lord's anointed. May on that day he not be rising up against us. let me put it to you this way.

There is a day when the people who taught you the word will be of no assistance to you. I will be dead. Your Sunday school teachers, if you grew up in church, will be dead.

the people that have labored in their lives to give to the best of their reckoning and understanding of the revelation of God, that you might enter into life with God, they will be gone, like Samuel in the text, incapable of assisting you.

on that day, may you be found safe under the shelter of his grace, which really leads us to the third point.

[ 27 : 42 ] There is an opportunity for all of us to yet participate in a very different end than Saul. And that end is known by this cataclysmic event later in history that commences with a very different meal, a different last supper, where Jesus takes bread and wine and claims before his disciples that the way we relate to God is shifting on that night for in the next day he will die.

And that where we once tried to manage our way with God according to law, in old covenant, he says, no more.

this bread is my body and this blood is the new covenant in me and you are to remember me. In other words, you relate to God differently today because of the activity of Jesus Christ whose death provides atonement not only for sin but your inability to obey from the very beginning.

That's grace. grace. That's mercy. That's a meal with a different end.

So that according to the Christian teaching, when Jesus dies, he's not dying for sins committed by himself but rather he is a substitution for all of us who are like Saul and need mercy.

[ 29 : 42 ] grace. And so you have a week before you walk through those doors and the Lord's table is set before you.

You have a week before the celebration of that supper and you are to embrace that beginning now in this service and for the rest of your life by faith that Jesus changes the way you relate to God so that when you come and you participate of his meal, you are eating a meal that nourishes you, strengthens you, brings you in a sense into the fold of abiding life in Christ.

You want a different end than Saul? Jesus can triumph for you.

Indeed, the apostles began to teach that Jesus was the new judge. He was God's appointed ruler to whom we are all to submit and all those who submit to Jesus and his rule and live under his word are granted life.

You don't have to be Saul! Saul! What a wonderful thing to know. What a wonderful thing to know. How are you going to end?

[ 31 : 22 ] How am I going to end? we need to square each other up here week by week. I want to grab onto your shoulders today. I don't want to put my arm around you.

I want to grab onto your shoulders, look you in the eye, and say to you and to me, just because we started with God does not mean we end well in this life.

So let's persevere. remember there's a final day of judgment where we all stand before the anointed let me fall on the ground and then ask for mercy let me embrace Christ participate in his meal and have life if that's happening for you today first time in your life then you come and talk to me because there's a better way to end than the way we read about today our heavenly father strengthen us to hear these ancient texts in ways that would transform our own life change lives we pray in Christ's name, amen