

Saul's Last Days: The Cost of Disobedience

1 Samuel 28:1-25

¹ 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." ² 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."

³ Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. And Saul had put the mediums and the necromancers out of the land. ⁴ The Philistines assembled and came and encamped at Shunem. And Saul gathered all Israel, and they encamped at Gilboa. ⁵ When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. ⁶ And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets. ⁷ 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." And his servants said to him, "Behold, there is a medium at En-dor."

⁸ 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." ⁹ 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?" ¹⁰ But Saul swore to her by the Lord, "As the Lord lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing." ¹¹ Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" He said, "Bring up Samuel for me." ¹² 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." ¹³ 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." ¹⁴ He said to her, "What is his appearance?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe." And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and paid homage.

¹⁵ 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." ¹⁶ And Samuel said, "Why then do you ask me, since the Lord has turned from you and become your enemy?" ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ 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."

²⁰ 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. ²¹ 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. ²² 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." ²³ 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. ²⁴ 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, ²⁵ and she put it before Saul and his servants, and they ate. Then they rose and went away that night.

The Ascendency of David and the Descent of Saul

1 Samuel 13:13-14

³ And Samuel said to Saul, “You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the Lord your God, with which he commanded you. For then the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. ¹⁴ But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.”

1 Samuel 15:24-26

²⁴ Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. ²⁵ Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me that I may bow before the Lord.” ²⁶ And Samuel said to Saul, “I will not return with you. For you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel.”

1 Samuel 15:30

Then he said, “I have sinned; yet honour me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may bow before the Lord your God.

1 Samuel 15:34-35

³⁴ Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul. ³⁵ And Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the Lord regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.

1. Saul was ready to admit his sin and failure but did not want to change his ways. In 1 Samuel 15:24-26 we see Saul admitting his fault to Samuel as to convince Samuel to honour him in the presence of the people. Saul would say what was needed to manage people without being sincere.
2. Even with David, twice Saul was quick to admit his foolishness, show regret for his ill intentions and seek reconciliation and yet he would still be determined to kill David. Saul wanted what he wanted, and was not willing to change his ways.
3. Saul used people, God, and circumstances for selfish purposes. He believed he was a king and was entitled to do whatever necessary to protect his interest. Saul could not see how much Samuel cared for him, he could not value the loyalty of David, and most of all he was not devoted to the Lord who sought him out and anointed him. He also alienated his devoted son, Jonathan and tried to force his daughter to betray her husband (David). All he wanted was power and glory. He wanted to be the king the people wanted and not the king God had chosen.
4. Saul held on to power. The power he pursued caused him to stray further away from the presence of God. He alienated himself from those who loved him and treated them badly. He used his power in ungodly and destructive ways. He firmly believed that he could hold on to power. Little did he know the very power he pursued has now wrecked his life. **Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.** Only God could prevent such power from consuming him. The story of Saul helps us

understand how different our king, Jesus is. He embraced the cross for the sake of others. He took a towel and a basin and washed the feet of others to show us His way of life. He did this for us because He loved us first.

Reflect: Why must we embrace the cross?

5. In contrast, David was anointed, and the presence of God was with him. The Lord allowed David to face much persecution from Saul. The Lord taught David to rely on Him and the Lord strengthened David when things got difficult. There were times David's faith wavered, but the Lord graciously held him on course. David was the fugitive, but the presence and power of God was with him. Saul with all his power could not stop God from having His anointed servant rule over Israel. Does this story line sound familiar to you?

Saul's Failure

1 Samuel 15:26

²⁶ And Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you. For you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel."

1 Samuel 16:14

¹⁴ Now the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him.

John 6:63-64

⁶³ The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. ⁶⁴ Yet there are some of you who do not believe.

1. Saul had rejected the word of God. Scriptures warn us against this sin. God's word gives life because His word is sustained by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. When we reject the word of God, we reject God.
2. Saul did not care much about losing the Spirit of God and being tormented by an evil spirit. He did not do anything to pursue the presence of God. He was far more concerned about losing power than losing the presence of God. In fact, he was far more concerned about women praising David over him.

1 Samuel 18:7-9

*⁷ As they danced, they sang:
"Saul has slain his thousands,
and David his tens of thousands."*

⁸ Saul was very angry; this refrain displeased him greatly. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?" ⁹ And from that time on Saul kept a close eye on David.

3. As Christians, how much do we value the word of God? Does 'obeying' God matter to us? Do we read to the word of God to know how to grow in obedience?

John 12:49-50

⁴⁹ For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. ⁵⁰ I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.

4. Is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit important to us? Do we pursue a Spirit-filled life?

Ephesians 4:30

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Galatians 5:16

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Galatians 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.

Saul Discovers What Really Matters in Life

God's Word

1 Samuel 28:3-7

³ Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in his own town of Ramah. Saul had expelled the mediums and spiritists from the land.

⁴ The Philistines assembled and came and set up camp at Shunem, while Saul gathered all Israel and set up camp at Gilboa. ⁵ When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid; terror filled his heart. ⁶ He inquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him by dreams or Urim or prophets. ⁷ Saul then said to his attendants, "Find me a woman who is a medium, so I may go and inquire of her."

1. This section begins by telling us that Samuel was dead. The one person who tried his very best to help Saul know God's word was no longer there.
2. Saul saw the Philistine army and was afraid. Now, he needed God to help him. He sought God and God did not answer him.
3. There was no word from God. In his desperation, God was silent.

1 Samuel 28:11-14

¹¹ Then the woman asked, "Whom shall I bring up for you?"
"Bring up Samuel," he said.

¹² When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out at the top of her voice and said to Saul, "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!"

¹³ The king said to her, "Don't be afraid. What do you see?"

The woman said, "I see a ghostly figure coming up out of the earth."

¹⁴ "What does he look like?" he asked.

"An old man wearing a robe is coming up," she said.

Then Saul knew it was Samuel, and he bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground.

1. Saul was so desperate that he sought a medium to summon the spirit of Samuel.
2. The medium cried out when she saw Samuel. This is an indication that she was not in control of the situation. She realized that there are greater forces at work than her.
3. This story does raise questions about summoning spirits and talking to the dead. The word of God clearly prohibits such practices, and the dead cannot return. What we have here is an exception which God has allowed for His purpose.
4. The NIV tells us that the woman saw "a ghostly figure". The Hebrew word used is 'Elohim' which means gods or spirits, a majestic or powerful figure. The woman did

not see a ghost as how we understand the word. She saw something she did not usually see and fully comprehend and that surprised her.

God's Presence

1 Samuel 28:15

¹⁵ *Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?"*

"I am in great distress," Saul said. "The Philistines are fighting against me, and God has departed from me. He no longer answers me, either by prophets or by dreams. So I have called on you to tell me what to do."

1. Saul complains to Samuel, that he is in great distress and the Lord has departed from him and no longer answers him. Having no one to turn to, he now summons Samuel from the dead, hoping that Samuel would seek God on his behalf. Saul was desperate.
2. It is at this point the gravity of not having the presence of God starts to sink in. Saul is lost without God.

1 Samuel 28:16-20

¹⁶ *Samuel said, "Why do you consult me, now that the Lord has departed from you and become your enemy?"* ¹⁷ *The Lord has done what he predicted through me. The Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hands and given it to one of your neighbors—to David.* ¹⁸ *Because you did not obey the Lord or carry out his fierce wrath against the Amalekites, the Lord has done this to you today.* ¹⁹ *The Lord will deliver both Israel and you into the hands of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The Lord will also give the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines."*

²⁰ *Immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, filled with fear because of Samuel's words. His strength was gone, for he had eaten nothing all that day and all that night.*

3. *"The Lord has departed from you and have become your enemy."* The words of Samuel mark the fateful end of Saul. He is the enemy of the Lord and the Lord will deliver him into the hands of the Philistines. Saul was struck with fear and fell face down. His strength has left him and now he has to embrace God's judgment.
4. The chapter gives us a clear and sobering warning. If we take the word of God lightly, the word of God will be taken away from us. If we refuse to obey God, then we will be treated as one who has rebelled against God. At the end, God will judge all things. Obedience to God's word, is obedience to God. Jesus showed us that whatever He did was in obedience to His Father who loved Him. Obedience is the way we express our faith in God's word. In obedience, we acknowledge with reverence and awe that God is the source of life, wisdom, goodness, and love. If we obey God because we are afraid that bad things will happen to us, then our spiritual life is pretty messed up. Obedience that is motivated by self-interest or self-preservation is godless, self-centredness, and at times superstitious. It is impossible to obey God when one is unwilling to deny oneself and take up one's cross. True obedience can only come from a heart that loves, worships, and seeks to honour God.

Reflect:

John 6:67-69

⁶⁷ "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.

⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."

John 12:48-50

⁴⁸ There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day. ⁴⁹ For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. ⁵⁰ I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."

Prayer Items

1. We will learn to trust and obey God
2. We will grow in 'the fear of the Lord' and in 'reverence'
3. We will seek to be filled with the Spirit
4. We will seek His word while it can be found

Isaiah 55:6-11

⁶ Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near.

⁷ Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts.

Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

⁸ "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord.

⁹ "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

¹⁰ As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater;

¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Church

1. Restarting physical services
2. Salvation of souls
3. Be an effective witness where God has placed us
4. Be a house of prayer
5. Unity

Malaysia

1. Covid-19 : Healing and recovery (physical, mental and economically)
2. Wisdom as the government rolls out the vaccination plans
3. Grace and protection for school children as they return to classes
4. School teachers
5. Racial reconciliation
6. Justice and Mercy
 - The poor, oppressed, foreigner, widows and orphans
 - Pray against the works of greed and corruption
7. Unity in the churches of Malaysia
8. The church will be God's instruments for unity, integrity and racial harmony