

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

FEBRUARY 10TH-11TH, 2024 // 1 SAMUEL

## DESPERATE (1 SAMUEL 28:3-14) DESPERATE TIMES FOR SAUL

Samuel is dead, the Philistines have united as one to war against Israel, and God won't respond to Saul's inquiries of Him. This doesn't drive Saul to repent, but to greater sin.

- Desperate times **reveal the condition of our hearts. We either run to Jesus or to the lies of this world.**

## WHAT WAS SAUL LOOKING FOR?

Saul was looking for a comforting word from God, but he wasn't willing to humble himself and repent. For Saul's hardened heart, **Satanic lies were as good as God's truth.**

- The farther we get from God, the less we can distinguish lies from truth. **We seek any word that affirms our sin.**

## ANY GOD WILL DO...

Saul seeks out a medium, one who consults the dead, even though the Law forbade occultic practices (Leviticus 19:31; 20:6). At one time, he had removed them from the land. **But Saul's action revealed his heart. In that moment, any god would be sufficient.**

- **We always worship, but is it God?**

## A BRIEF WORD ABOUT THE OCCULT

The Bible clearly teaches that there is an unseen spirit world that occasionally appears in the Bible. There is God, there are angels, there is Satan, and there are demonic beings. Jesus disarmed the demonic forces (Colossians 2:15) so that in Him we can be free from their accusations and oppressions.

- At death, humans created in the image of God are either united with Jesus forever or separated from Him forever. Human spirits don't roam the world after death. **Thus, any seeking after the occultic world is consulting with demonic beings who oppose all God is for us in Jesus.**

## THE MEDIUM AT EN-DOR

Saul goes through enemy territory to En-dor to get a comforting word. He disguises himself (lies) and even offers her protection for breaking the very law he was to enforce. Saul asks her to bring up Samuel. To her shock, Samuel actually appears!

- **God is in charge, not Saul or the medium.**

## IS THIS REALLY SAMUEL?

Some say this was a demonic spirit appearing as Samuel. Others say it is actually Samuel. I believe it really is Samuel because the medium clearly does not recognize Samuel as the normal kind of spirit she brings forth, and the writer says Saul "knew that it was Samuel."

## A "ONE-OFF" FROM GOD

God does the unexpected to show that He is the one true Lord worthy to be worshiped alone. This seems to be that kind of act.

- Our theologies aren't built on the "one-offs," but we also realize that while God will not go against His character, **He often goes against our expectations.**

## SOWING AND REAPING (1 SAMUEL 28:15-25)

### THE SELF-CENTEREDNESS OF SIN

Saul has turned his eyes off of God and onto himself. It's all about what he wants, what he desires, what he's lacking, what he needs. If God won't give him what he thinks he needs, Saul will turn to whoever or whatever will.

- **Sin is the ultimate act of defiance against the one true God. It's idolatry.**

### GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS LOVE FOR SAUL

Samuel's appearance could be either a blessing or a confirmation. It could be a blessing that exposes Saul's sinful heart so that he would repent. Or it could be confirmation that Saul's heart is too far gone. The choice is Saul's.

- **God lovingly exposes our sin.**

### WILL WE DRAW NEAR?

Saul says God has turned away from him. The reason is because Saul has turned away from God. Saul has proven over and over that his heart is far from God. He is reaping what he has sown.

- **It's easy to blame God for our sinful decisions instead of admitting it's us.**

### WE REAP WHAT WE HAVE SOWN

God didn't call Saul to obedience because He's an angry God but because He loves Saul and created Saul to know Him, live for Him, and know the joy of the Lord. But Saul chose his way and not God's and is reaping what he has sown.

- **Free will without God is bondage.**

### MOMENTARY RELIEF

Samuel tells Saul that he and his sons will die the next day. Saul is overcome by grief and hunger. The medium offers a meal, a temporary relief from all the bad news.

- **Without God, all momentary pleasures are distractions, not comforts. Only God can give us true relief through Jesus.**

## PROTECTION (1 SAMUEL 29) SO, WHAT ABOUT DAVID?

Ch. 29 returns to David's sinful decision to associate with the Philistines. David was no less sinful than Saul, but David's heart hadn't been hardened to the point of unrepentance. Yes, David had sinned. **But David was always willing to repent when confronted with his sin.**

### APHEK PROMINENT IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY

In 1 Samuel 4, the ark was captured by the Philistines in Aphek, prompting Israel to demand a king, leading to Samuel's anointing. Now we see Aphek is important in God's protection of the future king.

- **God's mercy extends even into our darkest days.**

### LIVING A DOUBLE LIFE ALWAYS LEADS TO FAILURE

David tried to please the Philistines while pleasing God. As James warns (James 1:8), being double-minded means David was unstable in all his ways. Friendship with the Philistines would ultimately mean becoming an enemy of His people Israel. This is something God would not allow.

### GOD DELIVERS

To keep David from causing harm to his own people, God makes David and his men displeasing to the Philistines. God graciously delivers David from his own sinful decisions so that His plans to bring our Savior through David will be preserved.

- **God never loses us or His plans for us.**

### WHAT DOES OUR DESPERATION REVEAL?

- We are the wealthiest, most prosperous nation in human history, but we are **more divided, more medicated, more depressed, more distracted, and more deceived** than at any time we've existed.
- We would rather celebrate our free will and remain in bondage than repent.

### LIMITING GOD

- Some of us wrongly believe God will never forgive us, or others, because of what we have done.
- We only listen to the noise that confirms our feelings instead of the truth that challenges and confronts those emotions.
- **We need the Word and worship to change.**

### "JESUS IS LORD" STARTS WITH ME.

- Too many of us want God to change everyone and everything around us without allowing Him to change us.
- Submitting to Jesus is an admission that there is something wrong with me.
- While painful, **conviction of sin leading to repentance is a grace gift from God.**

### GRACE AND MERCY APPLIED

- The cross reveals the true condition of our world and ourselves...**we need saving.**
- If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins (1 John 1:9).
- **Instead of running from God, we run to Him, knowing He won't cast us away.**

### AN INVENTORY

- Do we worship ourselves or God?
- Do we hide our sins or confess our sins?
- Do we allow ourselves to be distracted by the junk of the world, or do we pursue Jesus?
- Do we trust God's Word in times of desperation, knowing in Him is life?