

## ~ Saul's Wicked Witchcraft ~

**Text:** I Samuel 28

**Theme:** Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and in Saul's case, it led to the sin of witchcraft.

**Intro:**

1. As we draw quickly toward the end of Saul's life, we discover that his rebellion against God had fruited in some pretty disgusting behaviour.
  - a. Since becoming king, Saul had been on a downward trajectory which would soon bring him to his death.
  - b. Saul's life as king, which had begun so well, had been derailed by Saul's own rebellion against God.
2. In chapter 28 we will see the final major act of Saul, prior to his death, as recorded for us in scripture. For this study I have noted three divisions in the chapter:
  - I. Saul's Plight Preceding Witchcraft (Vs 1-8)
  - II. Saul's Practice of Seeking Witchcraft (Vs 9-15)
  - III. Saul's Predicament Following Witchcraft (Vs 16-25)

**Main:**

### I. Saul's Plight Preceding Witchcraft (Vs 1-8)

Since we are focusing on king Saul, our study will pick up from verse 3 in the text.

- A. The Predicament for Saul's Plight (Vs 3-6)
  1. The predicament which preceded Saul's seeking out the witch of Endor was an attack by the Philistines.
    - a. The Philistines gathered themselves together and came and pitched in Shunem and Israel pitched in Gilboa.
      - i. Shunem is in the territorial borders of the tribe of Issachar. It is roughly 6km north of Jezreel and 15km north-west of Mt Gilboa.
      - ii. The Philistines were a constant threat to the nation of Israel during the time of the judges and all throughout the reign of King Saul. The Philistines had ambitions to dominate the region, and Israel was their direct neighbour, making Israel the immediate target for a Philistine invasion.
    - b. Verse 5 tells us that, *"When Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled."*

- i. Clearly, the Philistine army was of such great size and number that Saul immediately felt there was no chance of defeating them.
  - ii. Upon seeing the Philistine army Saul's courage left him and he began to wonder what he should do.
2. The problem which preceded Saul's seeking out the witch of Endor was a lack of counsel.
  - a. Saul had never really been on good terms with Samuel, but now Samuel was dead, and he felt the loss of Samuel quite keenly.
    - i. Normally, Saul would have gone to Samuel and Samuel would have enquired of the Lord for him and brought him word as to how they ought to proceed. This time, however, Samuel was not around for Saul to seek counsel from him.
    - ii. "Samuel was the great prophet of Israel. But he was dead and not available for counsel. This woeful situation resulted in Saul going to the witch to see if the witch could establish some contact with the dead Samuel so Saul could get some words of counsel from Samuel."<sup>1</sup>
  - b. The great prophet Samuel was rejected in his life but mourned in his death.
    - i. When Samuel was alive, Israel rejected him and demanded that Samuel would make a king for them. Now that Samuel is dead, we find all Israel mourning his loss (Vs 3).
    - ii. Even the lost will gather at a funeral to say good things about the deceased but how you treated them while they were alive shows how much you really valued them.
      - Israel didn't value Samuel's counsel when he was alive and now, they were going to have to get along without it now that Samuel was dead.
  - c. Furthermore, God had stopped speaking to Saul
    - i. Because Saul had continually rebelled against God, God had stopped speaking to Saul and had left him to his own devices.
      - Zechariah 7:13 *"Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts:"*
    - ii. On the one hand you would say that Saul's response to the situation was right. He went to God and sought counsel from him, but it was fruitless because the rest of

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<sup>1</sup> John G Butler, 2008; LBC Publications; Saul – The Rejected King, Pg 447

his life was lived in rebellion against God. Because Saul would not listen to God in other areas of his life, when he wanted God's counsel in this area, God would not give it to him.

- Saul had finally exhausted God's patience and God was about to let Saul's rebellion be the thing that cost him his own life.
- d. The Christian who only seeks God when the circumstances are too hard for them to handle on their own will soon find that, the help they receive from God is proportionate to the devotion they have given to God.
- i. I know a particular person who has spent almost her whole life living for herself and in rebellion against God's Word but when difficult times come she says, "Oh, but I still have my faith." People like that treat God like some sort of life insurance that they call in when things go downhill but they begrudge making payments to when things are going well.
  - ii. A relationship with God is not a "get out of jail free" card that you just keep in your back pocket for a rainy day.
- B. The Particulars of Saul's Plight (Vs 7-8)
1. Saul resorted to seeking out a woman with a demonic spirit.
    - a. Saul had previously outlawed the practice of witchcraft in Israel.
      - i. Since Israel was God's chosen nation and they were supposed to be under the care and guidance of God, there was a necessity that unclean spirits should be removed from the land.
      - ii. The Spirit of the Holy One will not co-inhabit his people with an unclean spirit. The works of darkness needed to be thrown off, and Israel needed to seek God with their whole heart.
        - **Romans 13:12** *"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."*
    - b. If Saul had been in a right relationship with God there would have been no need for this.
      - i. As a people become more and more rebellious against God it should not surprise us that they become more enchanted with witchcraft and devilry.
  2. Saul was told of a woman who had a familiar spirit, at Endor.
    - a. We must be careful in the interpretation of the events about to take place here.

- i. Regarding this woman we note: “(She) had the spirit of Python or divination, conversed with the devil, and by his assistance pretended to bring up a dead person, and thereby foretell things to come.”<sup>2</sup>
- ii. In other words, this witch was not actually able to bring up the spirits of the dead, but rather, the demonic spirit that she worked with would impersonate those who had died and would give her limited information regarding the future of the deceased descendants.
- iii. We live in a day when people treat demonic practices as a game to be played at. For many of them, they don’t really believe that there is a spiritual realm that they need to be concerned about.
  - It has been well said that the most clever thing that Satan has ever done is to convince the world that he doesn’t exist.
- b. Saul disguised himself and went to see this demonically influenced woman.
  - i. The reason Saul disguised himself is quite obvious. If this woman knew it was Saul who had come to seek her help she would be far too afraid to help him because he had already had the other witches and wizards either killed or expelled from Israel.
  - ii. Saul went to her by night because evil is most at home in the dark of the night, when the light of day is not present to expose the wickedness that is really taking place.

Samuel was dead, David was missing, and God would not hear him. This led Saul to seek counsel through witchcraft.

## II. **Saul’s Practice of Seeking Witchcraft (Vs 9-15)**

### A. Saul Practiced Deceit in Seeking Witchcraft (Vs 9-10)

- 1. Saul had to deceive the woman into helping him by pretending to be someone he wasn’t.
  - a. Saul had dressed himself in plain clothes and now he allows the woman to believe that he is someone other than King Saul.
    - i. The practice of witchcraft is deceitful from the outset because the individual is led to believe that they can get what they want from the devil without losing anything.
    - ii. I know that it is something that has become a joke among the world musicians, but many of them have professed to

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<sup>2</sup> John Gill, Esword

having sold their soul to the devil in exchange for musical talents. What a terrible trade.

- **Mark 8:36** *“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”*
- I’m not saying Saul sold his soul to the devil here, but people who begin to play with witchcraft and such devilry have been fooled into thinking that they can control it and that they will never go too far, but the devil ends up getting hold of them and they lose much more than they ever intended.
- Don’t play the with Devil. You wouldn’t play with a lion and the Bible describes the Devil as a roaring lion, yet people try and play with witchcraft.

#### B. Saul Practiced Devilry in Seeking Witchcraft (Vs 11-15)

1. Saul demanded that the woman bring the spirit of Samuel up from the grave.
  - a. This is a sphere of influence which we are not supposed to be involved in.
    - i. No where in the Bible are we told to try and communicate with the dead or even to pray for our deceased relatives, as the Roman Catholics do. They are beyond our sphere of influence and their account with God is already either set or settled.
  - b. The woman was clearly surprised and afraid of what occurred
    - i. The fact that Samuel appeared surprised the woman, which is another indication that this was not the way things usually went. While she would have been used to a demon impersonating the deceased she certainly didn’t have the power to call the spirit of Samuel forth, and his appearing made her afraid.
2. Saul blurted out his problem to Samuel in hope of a solution.
  - a. Notice that it says Samuel ascended and came up out of the earth.
    - i. This points to the fact that, prior to the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ, the spirits of the departed saints of the Old Testament were not in heaven in the presence of God because atonement had not yet been made.
    - ii. Instead, we find that they were in a place known as Abraham’s bosom, which was also called Paradise. This was a place that was not far from Hades, which is the place of the damned, but Abraham’s bosom was not a place of torment but a place of peaceful waiting. You could think of it as Heavens waiting room for the Old

- Testament saints who were looking forward to the atonement made by Jesus Christ.
- b. Saul immediately explained the situation to Samuel and requested help in knowing what to do.
    - i. When all the godly men in Saul's life were no longer around, Saul came to the point where he realised that he was nothing on his own, but it was already too late.
    - ii. The Spirit anointed David was living with the Philistines, Samuel was dead and gone, and now Saul realises that the self-reliance that has plagued his monarchy would not be enough to get him through the situation and so he resorts to witchcraft as a final ditch effort.
    - iii. When Samuel rebuked Saul for his rebellion back **in I Samuel 15:23** he said, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." And now Saul's rebellion has led him to actually engaging in witchcraft, the very sin which his rebellion was likened to all those years back.

### III. Saul's Predicament Following Witchcraft (Vs 16-25)

#### A. Saul Was Rebuked by Samuel (Vs 16-18)

1. Samuel told Saul that God had become his enemy.
  - a. It is a sobering thought that the God of the universe, who made heaven and earth, and everything contained therein would become the enemy of a mortal man.
    - i. We often quote **Romans 8:31** which says, "*What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*" And this is encouraging for us, but what if God were to be against us? If God were our enemy, then our doom would be certain.
    - ii. Saul's rebellious character had made him a friend of the world but the enemy of God.
      - **James 4:4** "*Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*"
      - If you are a friend of the world then you have made yourself an enemy of God. Be very careful in your relationship with the world that the world doesn't become your friend.
  - b. Verse 18 tells us the reason why God would not speak to Saul.
    - i. Because Saul had not obeyed the voice of God, Saul stopped hearing the voice of God.

- ii. Some people wonder why they never seem to hear God's voice speaking to them through the scriptures. And, if you were to ask them, I'm sure they'd say they read their Bible and they want to hear from God.
    - Maybe the reason they aren't hearing from God is because they are refusing to do the things he has already asked them to do.
    - Maybe they are refusing to give up the sins he has already challenged them about giving up.
    - Could it be that your refusal to heed God's voice in one area of your life is the reason you aren't hearing his voice in other areas of your life?
- B. Saul Was Left Without Hope (Vs 19-25)
1. Samuel informed Saul that he and his sons would die at the hands of the Philistines on the following day.
    - a. Notice that Samuel told Saul that he would be with Samuel.
      - i. Samuel was in that place I described earlier as Abraham's bosom. It was the place where the Old Testament saints would go when they died, as they awaited the Messiah's sacrificial atonement.
      - ii. This verse gives us insight into the fact that Saul was still one of God's people, even though he lived as one of the worlds.
    - b. Saul pictures for us the Christian who is truly saved but has decided to go and live life for themselves rather than living for God.
      - i. They waste their life on worldly pursuits, and their life ends in a terrible state.
      - ii. They never lost their salvation, but they never did anything for God either. Their soul is saved but their life is lost.
        - **1 Corinthians 3:15** *"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."*
  2. The chapter closes out with a description of Saul as a fearful and weak man who is scared to face death and knows that there is nothing he can do to avoid it.
    - a. Saul, once again, pictures for us the Christian who has lived their entire life for self and suddenly realises, while on their death bed, that they aren't ready to die because they haven't done anything in this life for Christ.
      - i. Like the hymns says, *"Must I go, and empty handed, thus my dear Redeemer meet? Not one day of service give*

*him, lay no trophy at his feet? Must I go and empty handed? Must I meet my Saviour so? Not one soul with which to greet him, must I empty handed go?"*

(Hymn 418)

- ii. For the Christian, the prospect of death should hold no fear because we know the Saviour will carry us through the valley of the shadow of death and up into glory, but what a sad and fearful thing to enter heaven with nothing to offer the Saviour but a life lived for yourself.
- b. For the unsaved this morning, the prospect of death must be even more terrifying.
  - i. It must be a terrifying thing to be dying and have no idea of what comes next; to die alone without the hand of the Saviour to lead you through death's door and into heaven.
    - **Hebrews 10:30-31** *"For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*
  - ii. As you sit here today, if you have never trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour, I encourage you to do so today. You do not want to find yourself on death's door and know that you will enter eternity without the Saviour.
    - **Revelation 20:15** *"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."*
    - Put your faith in Jesus Christ before it is too late.

#### Conclusion:

1. Christian, faith in God isn't a life insurance policy that you call in when things go wrong. Faith in God is supposed to flourish in a relationship with God that goes and grows from day to day. If you aren't heeding the voice of God today, the time may come that you will call on him for help tomorrow and he will not hear you, because you have a rebellious heart toward him.
2. For anyone here who has not yet trusted Christ as their personal Saviour, please come and see me after the service and I would be happy to show you how you can accept Jesus Christ into your life and make him your personal Lord and Saviour today.