

SAUL RESORTS TO A WITCH

[BIBLE TEXT](#) : I Samuel 28:3-25

LESSON 216 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (II Timothy 3:13)..

[BIBLE TEXT in King James Version](#)

1 Samuel 28:3-25

³ Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land.

⁴ And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa.

⁵ And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled.

⁶ And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

⁷ Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, *there is* a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor.

⁸ And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me *him* up, whom I shall name unto thee.

⁹ And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?

¹⁰ And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, *As the LORD liveth*, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.

[BIBLE REFERENCES:](#)

[NOTES:](#)

Israel in Trouble

The Philistines were constantly alert for an opportunity to fight against Israel. Now again their great army was massing for an attack. Saul was still the head of Israel's armies, and he took the responsibility of fighting against the Philistines, although David and his men had also won some battles against this enemy of the Israelites.

When Saul saw the great host of the Philistines, he was afraid. It seemed there were entirely too many enemy soldiers for him to fight. Godly leaders in Israel had always prayed for God's help in such an hour when they felt helpless, and God had given them the victory. They had overcome the enemy by the power of God.

Prayers Not Heard

Saul knew that victories had been won through God's help; and now when he felt there was no other help, he too was willing to call upon God for assistance. But now God did not answer — not by dreams, nor by the Urim and Thummim of the priests, nor by the prophets.

There had been a time when God had answered Saul's prayers. That was when Saul was walking in the will of God. God had given him a new heart so that he could understand the will of God, and for a while he had enjoyed the fellowship that comes through obedience to the Lord. But Saul had backslidden and had so many times deliberately disobeyed that God had turned from him and would not answer his prayers any more.

Think what a terrible condition that would be — no one to hear your prayers! Can you imagine how you would feel if nobody could help you, and even God would not listen to you when you pray? Remember, God has said, "My spirit shall not always strive with man" (Genesis 6:3). If a person continues to fight against God and refuses to listen when He speaks, the time may come when God, too, will refuse to listen. Some people try everything else first to find help; and when they do not receive aid, they turn to the Lord. God is merciful and often is still listening and waiting for their prayers, but one should fear lest he wait too long to call upon the Lord.

Another Way

Saul was impatient when he realized that God would not listen to his prayers. The Prophet Samuel, who had been as a father to him and had told him the will of God, had died; so there was no one for Saul to turn to.

In the days when Saul had the fear of the Lord in his heart he had done one great work. He had cleared the land of Israel of fortunetellers and wizards, or witches. God had commanded that such people should not be allowed to live in Israel (**Exodus 22:18** ¹⁸ *Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.*). They were devil worshipers, and would be likely to corrupt God's people. Most of them had disappeared, and no one remained who advertised his devilish business.

¹¹ Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel.

¹² And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou *art* Saul.

¹³ And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth.

¹⁴ And he said unto her, What form *is* he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he *is* covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it *was* Samuel, and he stooped with *his* face to the ground, and bowed himself.

¹⁵ And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.

¹⁶ Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?

¹⁷ And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, *even* to David:

¹⁸ Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day.

¹⁹ Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow *shalt* thou and thy sons *be* with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.

Saul, in his distress, tried to find a fortuneteller of whom to ask advice. He called his servants and asked if they knew of any. One of them knew about the witch of Endor, and Saul decided to visit her.

Saul and the Witch

In the darkness of night, disguised, Saul and his servants stole out to find that evil woman who worked for the devil. Saul was a sinner and he knew that he was breaking the commandment of God in what he was doing, but he was ashamed for anyone else to know it. He thought he might be able to cover his sins so no one would know. He certainly never thought that the story of his visit to the witch of Endor would be written in the Bible for millions of people to read during many hundreds of years to come. Everybody who reads the Bible now knows that King Saul forsook the God of Israel and turned to Satan for help.

When Saul came to the witch's house he asked her to bring Samuel to him. No sooner had he spoken than Samuel was seen. The woman had no power over the departed spirits. Nothing she could have done would have brought Samuel or anyone else back to earth. Many magicians and spiritualists have tried to commune with the dead since the days of the witch of Endor, and no one has succeeded. In this case, Samuel appeared so quickly the woman did not even have a chance to try to do anything.

The woman screamed when *she* saw Samuel. She was as surprised as anyone to see the spirit of the departed Prophet. It was God who had permitted Samuel to come up to pass judgment upon Saul once more. When the woman described what she saw, Saul told her it was indeed Samuel. Then Samuel spoke, "Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?" Saul answered: "I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do."

God's Word Unchanged

God's true prophets will not change the Word of God. Saul might have known that if God had rejected him, there would be nothing Samuel could do. Samuel would fulfill the Word of God.

During Samuel's life he had been faithful to Saul. He had told him the good things that would come to him in obedience to God; and he had also warned him of what disobedience would cost him. Saul had continued to disobey, and Samuel finally had to tell him that the kingdom was taken from him and given to another who was worthy of it.

The Word of God had not changed. Samuel now repeated the same condemnation: "The LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine land, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David: because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD." Samuel had more to add to the judgment: "Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me."

Tomorrow Saul must die! What shocking news! That was not what Saul had wanted to hear. The next day he and his sons would be with Samuel in the region of the dead, but Saul would not be comforted in "Abraham's bosom," as were those who died saved. As we learn from the story of Lazarus and the rich man, there was a gulf fixed between the place where Lazarus was enjoying comfort, and where the rich man was

²⁰ Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel: and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night.

²¹ And the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was sore troubled, and said unto him, Behold, thine handmaid hath obeyed thy voice, and I have put my life in my hand, and have hearkened unto thy words which thou spakest unto me.

²² Now therefore, I pray thee, hearken thou also unto the voice of thine handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread before thee; and eat, that thou mayest have strength, when thou goest on thy way.

²³ But he refused, and said, I will not eat. But his servants, together with the woman, compelled him; and he hearkened unto their voice. So he arose from the earth, and sat upon the bed.

²⁴ And the woman had a fat calf in the house; and she hasted, and killed it, and took flour, and kneaded *it*, and did bake unleavened bread thereof:

²⁵ And she brought *it* before Saul, and before his servants; and they did eat. Then they rose up, and went away that night.

suffering the torments of the condemned. Jonathan, who was faithful to God, would go to be with Samuel in the realms of the blessed.

Hopeless

Saul may have thought that he would be spared a little longer for Israel's sake. But the day of reckoning had come for Saul, and there was no mercy.

The news completely unnerved Saul. He had already been so distressed that he had not eaten for a whole day and night, and in his weakness he now collapsed. The woman was frightened when she saw how upset Saul was, and thought he might blame her for his trouble, and try to put her to death. She reminded him that he had promised that no matter what happened, she would not be hurt.

Saul did not harm the witch. With the help of his servants, she was able to persuade him to eat, and soon he felt strong enough to be on his way. But he was without hope. Tomorrow he must die, and the kingdom of Israel would be taken from his family. That is how completely lost a man can become who once was saved and walked with the Lord, but has departed from Him.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What was the trouble in Israel?
- 2 How had victory been won for the Israelites in former times?
- 3 Why did God not hear the prayers of Saul?
- 4 If a man continues to turn his back upon God, what can he expect from God?
- 5 What did the witch do when she saw Samuel?
- 6 Who has power over the spirits of the dead?
- 7 What did Samuel tell Saul?
- 8 How did Saul feel when he left the witch's house?
- 9 Quote Genesis 6:3.

