

## Saul 6 - Saul's Third Failure - Delivered to Satan for the Destruction of the Flesh

Earlier in the series about Saul's carnal reign, we had examined his first two acts of disobedience. They were sins that were serious and judged by God. However, they were *still* accompanied by opportunity for humility and correction. Today we are going to look at how the final failure of Saul characterized the carnality of his reign. His reign was representative of the rebellion and resistance of mankind without Christ. If man resists repentance, it leads to a downward spiral of destruction. In the reign of Saul, it is important to remember that his collapse did not occur all at once. Saul's downfall unfolded in stages, each one building upon the last.

Saul's first failure came when he would not wait on the Lord. Under pressure, he took matters into his own hands, stepping outside the boundaries God had set. He had not waited on the Lord and offered sacrifice by himself. The consequence of that disobedience was severe but *measured*: Samuel declared that Saul's kingdom would not continue through his descendants. Saul remained king, but his *dynasty* was ended.

His second failure was deeper and more revealing. When he was commanded to utterly destroy Amalek, Saul obeyed *selectively*. He spared what pleased him and justified himself with religious language. Then, he hardened his heart when he was confronted. This time the judgment was more serious. Samuel declared that now Saul *himself* was rejected from being king. The throne remained under him, but God's favor had departed.

Between those failures and the failure we are going to look at today, Saul continued to rule outwardly. He fought battles, made decisions, and he appeared to function as king. But inwardly, something vital had already been lost. He had resisted God's correction and God's voice had grown *silent*. Saul's repentance had been superficial. What began as

impatience matured into a defeated rebellion.

Now, in 1 Samuel 28, we arrive at Saul's third failure. It is no longer a moment of impulsiveness as in his first failure, or partial obedience as in his second failure. This time, Saul's disobedience was aggravated. He did not merely step ahead of God or alter God's command. He sought guidance from a forbidden source after years of rejecting the Lord's word. Having treated God's instruction lightly, Saul would now treat God's silence as justification to turn elsewhere.

This chapter shows us the tragic end of a man who treated God's word lightly and eventually encountered God's silence. What we will see is not just Saul consulting a witch, but a soul that had gone too far. He was left to experience the consequences of persistent resistance to God.

## 1. The Silence of God -

Because Saul's attempts at repentance had been superficial and fickle, he had arrived at the point where nobody thinks they will reach. In God's dealing with our rebellion, it is possible to get to the point where God leaves us to our own devices. We might be tempted to take pity or feel empathy for someone when that happens. What we have to realize is how foolish people are to steadfastly resist God. It is more appropriate to shake our heads in disgust. It might not seem like it at first, but you quickly realize that Saul has hit a brick wall.

1Sam 28:3-6 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.

Back in chapter 15, after Saul had been denounced as king, he would never see Samuel, his best counsel, again. Samuel's death, in vs. 3, is not a minor historical detail thrown into the story. It is *central* to understanding Saul's spiritual isolation in this chapter. It is like an *exclamation point* to the fact that Saul was so absolutely without the possibility of getting any counsel. Then vs. 3 also points out that Saul was denied any practical way to even go to those who had familiar spirits because he had put them away. This did not mean that he could have *legitimately* gone to them, but it emphasized how bereft he was of *any* counsel of any kind. To add to his misery, in vs. 5 we see how much this affected him as he realized the Philistines were about to attack and he was without any *usual* prospect of advice. Now you might say, according to vs. 6, that he *did* inquire of the Lord through Urim, dreams, and prophets, but not really. God had given the high priest what was called Urim and Thumim, sacred instruments God used to communicate His judgment and guidance through the high priest. They were used minimally to give at least "yes" or "no" answers but God did not reveal His will even then. Saul had hoped that something might at least come in a shaky dream to him. He did a little better going to the preachers. But any significance of these is undermined by the word *inquire*. It is a common word for asking, but it is a weaker word than how he *sought* out a woman who had a familiar spirit, or a psychic medium who channels a demon. The Hebrew word for *seek* used in vs. 7 means to *strive* to search. He casually inquired after the Urim, dreams, and prophets, but he *diligently* sought someone forbidden by God and he had previously condemned. This demonstrates how degraded and

hardened he had gotten. It shows that he was being way more than a hypocrite.

All of this underlies the significance of God's silence at this time. God's silence was a judicial silence. It was a judicial hardening of Saul's heart. It was a judgment against Saul. When someone has resisted God so much, he can get to the point where he is left to his own devices. We always turn to Proverbs 1 as a definition of this judgment.

Prov 1:22-31 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

23 Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

24 Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;

25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:

26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;

27 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.

28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:

29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:

30 They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.

31 Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.

Psa 81:11-12 But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me.

12 So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: *and* they walked

in their own counsels.

Saul's inquiry of the Lord was perfunctory and without any sense of submission. His desperation was applied instead to reaching out to the occult.

## 2. The Search for Darkness -

Saul's failure at this point was entirely of his own making. This is the inevitable end of the so-called "self-made man." To attempt to make something of oneself apart from God is not strength but folly. It always ends in spiritual collapse. Human wisdom may build reputations, careers, or kingdoms, but it cannot bring a man into the knowledge of God. God is not approached on our terms or understood by our ingenuity. The only way we can truly know Him is by His Spirit, and when a man insists on standing alone, he eventually finds himself truly alone. We can see the depths of his foolish pride as he strived to find the psychic medium. He took extra measures in his sin by *disguising* himself.

1Sam 28:7-14 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?

Saul was so bad off in his spiritual pride that even the woman who worked with demons knew better than him. Could Saul get even lower after this rebuke? Yes, he could. He encouraged her in her error.

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

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.

And then Saul reached yet another new low. It has been said that when someone reaches the bottom of the hole they have dug for themselves, somehow they find a trap door to go even lower. Saul tells her to not be afraid. This speaks of his commitment and determination to rebel against God.

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.

Saul was diligent in seeking forbidden counsel.

### 3. Severe Mercy -

Scripture does not invite us to analyze how the appearance occurred, but why Saul was there in the first place. Whether God allowed Samuel to appear or permitted a spirit to speak judgment, the outcome is the same: Saul gained no help, no hope, and no future. When a

man rejects God's word long enough, even supernatural encounters become instruments of judgment rather than sources of guidance.

1Sam 28:15-25 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.

After the Lord had taken the dynasty out of his hand, vs. 17, and his kingdom, vs. 18, now he would face his death at the hand of the Philistines.

The woman could see that he was now weak. Instead of repenting, he had gone too far. His "comfort" came from the witch's meal, not God's table. He ended up going to dinner at the witches house and feeding his flesh. He sought forbidden counsel, and his last supper was a funeral meal.

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.

...

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.

In Saul's third, and final, failure, God's judgment matures into finality.

In ch. 13, Saul wouldn't wait. He was impatient.

In ch. 15, Saul wouldn't obey. He was rebellious and stubborn.

In ch. 28, Saul wouldn't repent. He replaced God with occult guidance.

Saul's third failure was the logical end of a heart settled on sin. I have said numerous times, "You don't want to win an argument against God. In winning you lose." God will not strive with you forever. The day of reckoning will come. Saul's judgment was absolutely devastating, but it doesn't have to be that way. It is possible to be redeemed from the situation that Saul had. Paul refers to this in 1 Corinthians 5:

1Cor 5:5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

In addressing the Corinthians, Paul was not describing the loss of salvation or consigning someone to hell. He was describing a *severe mercy*. It is the removal of spiritual protection and fellowship so that the sinner is finally forced to face the real consequences of the path he has chosen. The aim is not destruction for its own sake, but repentance, "that the spirit may be saved

in the day of the Lord Jesus.” There comes a point when God no longer restrains the consequences of rebellion, not because He delights in judgment, but because mercy has been repeatedly refused.

Saul stands before us in 1 Samuel 28 as a vivid Old Testament picture of that principle. For years he resisted light. He ignored correction, rejected God’s word, and hardened himself against truth. Now he finds himself abandoned to the darkness he preferred. God is not cruel here. Saul is simply left with what he insisted on. With respect to unbelievers in Romans 1, this can result in reprobation, or being beyond reproof, when Paul says, it doesn't not mean reprobation, but it is still devastating. God honors the choices people make, even when they are wrong. Sometimes God’s judgment is not thunder from heaven, but silence followed by consequences that finally speak louder than words.

This is a serious warning to the lost. Saul’s story shows us what happens when a man refuses God’s voice long enough that he no longer recognizes it. There comes a point where religion is no longer sought for truth or submission, but only as a tool for relief. Proverbs warns of those who refused wisdom when it called and then cried out when calamity came only to find no answer. Hebrews cautions us not to harden our hearts, and Paul reminds us that now is the accepted time. Do not wait until you want deliverance more than you want God. By then, the heart may already be sealed.

There is also a warning here for the saved. A believer can flirt with the world, resist correction, and persist in known sin long enough that God’s discipline becomes severe. Scripture makes a distinction between stumbling and being restored, and persisting until God says, in effect, “Let him feel what he insists on.” This is not the loss of salvation, but it is the loss of peace, usefulness, and sometimes even physical life. God disciplines His children because He loves them, but discipline can be painful when it must finally

replace instruction.

We should also be honest about how this temptation appears today. Few will consult a witch at Endor, but many seek forbidden counsel in modern forms: horoscopes, astrology, mediums, tarot, crystals, or New Age spirituality dressed up as “guidance.” Others pursue more subtle versions, even within Christian circles using impressions or experiences while bypassing Scripture. The principle remains the same: when God’s Word is not enough, people begin searching for secrets.

Yet this passage does not end in despair. Saul sought a word only after years of rejecting the Word. Christ, however, is the Word made flesh. God is not stingy with guidance to the humble.

Jas 1:5-10 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

8 A double minded man *is* unstable in all his ways.

9 Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:

10 But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

God promises wisdom to those who ask in faith, direction to the meek, and a shepherd’s voice to His sheep. The difference is not whether God speaks: it is whether we are willing to submit when He does.

First, this is an invitation to those who are without Christ. Saul’s story is a warning that should not be ignored. God spoke to Saul again and again, but Saul treated God’s word lightly until he could no longer hear it. The tragedy of Saul is not that he sought help too late, but that

he refused God while God was near. Scripture tells us that now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation. If you know in your heart that you have resisted God, postponed repentance, or treated the Gospel as something you could deal with later, do not assume that opportunity will always remain. God is not far from those who humble themselves, but He does not strive forever with those who resist Him. If you have never been born again, today is the day to turn from sin, abandon self-rule, and come to Christ for salvation. He alone has borne the judgment so that you do not have to.

Second, this is an invitation to those who are already saved. Saul's life also warns believers that persistent resistance to God carries real consequences. A Christian will not lose salvation, but he can lose peace, joy, usefulness, and fellowship. God disciplines His children because He loves them, but discipline becomes severe when correction is repeatedly ignored. If the Spirit of God has been convicting you about something you already know is wrong, something you have justified, postponed, or resisted, do not harden your heart. God's purpose in discipline is restoration, not ruin.

1. The Silence of God - 1Sam 28:3-6, Prov 1:22-31, Psa 81:11-12
2. The Search for Darkness - 1Sam 28:7-14
3. Severe Mercy - 1Sam 28:15-25, 1Cor 5:5, Jas 1:5-10