Lesson 74 – The Death of Saul

Based on 1 Samuel 28, 31.

1) Where does our lesson begin today?
   1 Samuel 28:4 And the _____ gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa.
2) Where was David at this time?
   1 Samuel 28:1-2 And it came to pass in those days, that the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel. And Achish said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to _____, thou and thy men. And David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can _____. And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever.

On the northern edge of the plain of Jezreel; while Saul and his forces encamped but a few miles distant, at the foot of Mount Gilboa, on the southern border of the plain. It was on this plain that Gideon, with three hundred men, had put to flight the hosts of Midian. But the spirit that inspired Israel's deliverer was widely different from that which now stirred the heart of the king. Gideon went forth strong in faith in the mighty God of Jacob; but Saul felt himself to be alone and defenseless, because God had forsaken him.

3) What state of mind was Saul in at this time?
   1 Samuel 28:5 And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly _____.

Saul had learned that David and his force were with the Philistines, and he expected that the son of Jesse would take this opportunity to revenge the wrongs he had suffered. The king was in sore distress. It was his own unreasoning passion, spurring him on to destroy the chosen of God, that had involved the nation in so great peril. While he had been engrossed in pursuing David he had neglected the defense of his kingdom. The Philistines, taking advantage of its unguarded condition, had penetrated into the very heart of the country. Thus, while Satan had been urging Saul to employ every energy in hunting David, that he might destroy him, the same malignant spirit had inspired the Philistines to seize their opportunity to work Saul's ruin and overthrow the people of God.

4) What was God's reply to Saul's inquiries?
   1 Samuel 28:6 And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him _____, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

The king had by his own act forfeited the benefits of all the methods of inquiring of God. He had rejected the counsel of Samuel the prophet; he had exiled David, the chosen of God; he had slain the priests of the Lord. Could he expect to be answered by God when he had cut off the channels of communication that Heaven had ordained? He had sinned away the Spirit of grace, and could he be answered by dreams and revelations from the Lord? Saul did not turn to God with humility and repentance.

5) Out of desperation, what did he do?
   1 Samuel 28:7-8 Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar _____, 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. And Saul _____ 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.

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Saul had a full knowledge of the character of necromancy. It had been expressly forbidden by the Lord, and the sentence of death was pronounced against all who practiced its unholy arts. During the life of Samuel, Saul had commanded that all wizards and those that had familiar spirits should be put to death; but now, in the rashness of desperation, he had recourse to that oracle which he had condemned as an abomination.

Oh, pitiable sight! the king of Israel led captive by Satan at his will! What path so dark for human feet to tread as that chosen by one who has persisted in having his own way, resisting the holy influences of the Spirit of God! What bondage so terrible as that of him who is given over to the control of the worst of tyrants—himself!

Trust in God and obedience to His will were the only conditions upon which Saul could be king of Israel. Had he complied with these conditions throughout his reign, his kingdom would have been secure.

6) How did their encounter go?
1 Samuel 28:9-10 And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath _____ _____ 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 _____? And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.

Disguised as he was, Saul's lofty stature and kingly port declared that he was no common soldier. The woman suspected that her visitor was Saul, and his rich gifts strengthened her suspicions.

7) What happened?
1 Samuel 28:11-12 Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up _____. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou _____ me? for thou art Saul.
1 Samuel 28:13-14 And the king said unto her, Be not _____: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. 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 _____ that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself.

It was not God's holy prophet that came forth at the spell of a sorcerer's incantation. Samuel was not present in that haunt of evil spirits. That supernatural appearance was produced solely by the power of Satan. He could as easily assume the form of Samuel as he could assume that of an angel of light, when he tempted Christ in the wilderness.

8) What was the message from the PRETENDED prophet?
1 Samuel 28:15 And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore _____; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is _____ 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.

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When Samuel was living, Saul had despised his counsel and had resented his reproofs. But now, in the hour of his distress and calamity, he felt that the prophet's guidance was his only hope, and in order to communicate with Heaven's ambassador he vainly had recourse to the messenger of hell! Saul had placed himself fully in the power of Satan; and now he whose only delight is in causing misery and destruction, made the most of his advantage, to work the ruin of the unhappy king.

9) How did Satan continue?
1 Samuel 28:16-17 Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine _____? And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath _____ the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David:
1 Samuel 28:18-19 Because thou _____ not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day. 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 _____: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.

All through his course of rebellion Saul had been flattered and deceived by Satan. It is the tempter's work to belittle sin, to make the path of transgression easy and inviting, to blind the mind to the warnings and threatenings of the Lord. Satan, by his bewitching power, had led Saul to justify himself in defiance of Samuel's reproofs and warning. But now, in his extremity, he turned upon him, presenting the enormity of his sin and the hopelessness of pardon, that he might goad him to desperation. Nothing could have been better chosen to destroy his courage and confuse his judgment, or to drive him to despair and self-destruction.

10) What effect did this have on Saul?
1 Samuel 28:20 Then Saul _____ 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.

The sorceress was filled with alarm. The king of Israel lay before her like one dead. Should he perish in her retreat, what would be the consequences to herself?

11) What did she do for her own preservation?
1 Samuel 28:21-22 And the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was sore troubled, and said unto him, Behold, thine handmaid hath _____ thy voice, and I have put my life in my hand, and have hearkened unto thy words which thou spakest unto me. Now therefore, I pray thee, hearken thou also unto the voice of thine handmaid, and let me set a morsel of _____ before thee; and eat, that thou mayest have strength, when thou goest on thy way.
1 Samuel 28:23-25 But he refused, and said, I will not eat. But his servants, together with the woman, _____ him; and he hearkened unto their voice. So he arose from the earth, and sat upon the bed. 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: And she brought it before Saul, and before his servants; and they did _____. Then they rose up, and went away that night.

Before the break of day, he returned with his attendants to the camp of Israel to make ready for the conflict. By consulting that spirit of darkness Saul had destroyed himself. Oppressed by the horror of despair, it would be impossible for him to inspire his army with courage. Separated from the Source of strength, he could not lead the minds of Israel to look to God as their helper. Thus, the prediction of evil would work its own accomplishment.

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12) How did the battle go?

1 Samuel 31:1-3 Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel _____ from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines _____ Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons. And the battle went sore against Saul, and the _____ hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers.

Though the fearful scene in the cave of Endor had driven all hope from his heart, Saul fought with desperate valor for his throne and his kingdom. But it was in vain.

13) What was the last command of Israel's first king?

1 Samuel 31:4 Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and _____ me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.

Thus, the first king of Israel perished, with the guilt of self-murder upon his soul. His life had been a failure, and he went down in dishonor and despair, because he had set up his own perverse will against the will of God.

14) What happened next?

1 Samuel 31:7 And when the men of Israel that were on the other side of the valley, and they that were on the other side Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities, and fled; and the _____ came and dwelt in them.

1 Samuel 31:8-10 And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found _____ and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa. And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to _____ it in the house of their idols, and among the people. And they put his armour in the house of _____: and they fastened his body to the wall of Bethshan.

The dead bodies of Saul and his sons were dragged to Beth-shan, a city not far from Gilboa, and near the river Jordan. Here they were hung up in chains, to be devoured by birds of prey.

15) What did the men of Jabesh-Gilead do?

1 Samuel 31:11-13 And when the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul; All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the _____ of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Bethshan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there. And they took their bones, and _____ them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

The brave men of Jabesh-Gilead, remembering Saul's deliverance of their city in his earlier and happier years, now manifested their gratitude by rescuing the bodies of the king and princes, and giving them honorable burial.

Israel was in a mess, What would God do next to help His people?

Can you see that Trust and Obedience are important? **Would you like be safe in the arms of Christ?**

When is it time to humble yourself before the LORD?

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