

YOUTH GIRLS/GUYS NIGHT & MEN'S BREAKFAST

INTRODUCE

Well, if you have your Bibles, and I hope you do,

- please grab them and turn to 1 Samuel chapter 28.
- You can open a phone or a tablet to 1 Samuel 28,
- or you can use one of the hard-backed black bibles
 - under every single chair.
 - You'll find 1 Samuel 28 on page **250**.

INTRODUCTION

I've told you before that my daughter Harper, when she was much younger, was afraid of certain parts of her favorite Disney movies.

So, in Beauty and the Beast.

- When we got to the scene where Belle is
- getting attacked by wolves, she'd get scared.
 - She'd cover her eyes and cry and hide.
- And so, we'd just skip over those parts.
- Cause she only liked the fun scenes.
 - The singing dishes...
 - and the girl in the beautiful dress...
 - and the "dancing dog"...
 - which is what she called the beast!
- But we skipped the scary parts.

And in The Little Mermaid,

- Harper was terrified of Ursula, the Sea witch.
- You know, the half-octopus half-creepy-woman
- who turned mer-people into those crusty garden slug things.
 - Actually...that is pretty terrifying come to think of it.
 - I'm probs a bad parent for letting her watch that!
- But we'd just skip that part.

And then, I've told you, her favorite movie for years was Frozen.

- But...that darn Snow Monster scene.
- You know, the Snow Monster that Elsa created
 - to attack and nearly kill her sister...
 - which again...man, Disney is sketchy, yo.
- But she didn't like that scene.

So we'd skip the parts that scared her.

- And as she's hiding her eyes
- or crying
- or waking up at 2:30 in the morning with bad dreams.

I'd hug her tight and I'd say things like,

- *"It's ok.*
- *There aren't any wolves.*
- *There aren't any witches.*
- *Monsters aren't real.*
- *Don't be scared!"*

I'm calling today's sermon **SLIDE DON'T BE SCARED**

CONTEXT/RECAP

Today's passage in 1 Samuel is...listen...scary.

- But maybe not in the ways you might think.
 - DON'T BE SCARED...
 - but there are some things to be afraid of.

See, we're coming to the end of the book of 1 Samuel.

- It's a book about the beginning of King David's life...
- and we have been systematically working our way through it.

But before David will become king, Saul is the king.

- And he'd been the people's choice for king:
 - man, he was tall and good-looking...
 - and a great warrior-leader.
 - He was an obvious choice.

But, he refused to trust God and do things his way, so God rejected him.

- God then had Samuel, Israel's premier prophet,
- anoint David as the next king.

And Saul became super jealous of David,

- and tried to murder him for years and years.
- But Saul's life began to unravel.

TRANSITION

And today, the bottom falls out for Saul.

- DON'T BE SCARED...
 - but there are some very real and terrifying things
 - for us in this text.

So, let's start in chapter 28, verse 1.

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1 SAMUEL 28:1-2

[1] In those days the Philistines gathered their forces for war, to fight against Israel. And Achish said to David, "Understand that you and your men are to go out with me in the army." [2] David said to Achish, "Very well, you shall know what your servant can do." And Achish said to David, "Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life."

EXPLAIN

So, remember last week,

- when David realizes that Saul will eventually kill him,
 - he decides to flee to the one place
 - where Saul cannot and will not go.
- He runs to Israel's archenemies, the Philistines.

And so for 16 months, David has been fighting alongside the Philistines,

- not against Israel,
- but against other surrounding enemies.

But now Achish, the king of the Philistines, says:

"We're going to fight against your people."

- And David is pretty cryptic in his response:
- you shall know what your servant can do.

But suddenly, the scene shifts. Look at verse 3:

1 SAMUEL 28:3

[3] Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. And Saul had put the mediums and the necromancers out of the land.

EXPLAIN

Now, this verse sets up the whole chapter.

- The Prophet Samuel is dead.
- He died back in chapter 25.

So, this is just a reminder.

- But it says that **Saul put out of the land**
 - **the mediums**
 - **and the necromancers.**

So, that's weird.

And, as I was studying this section of scripture this week, I thought,

- man, if you're a guest with us today,
 - especially if you are new to Christianity...
 - or maybe not a follower of Jesus,
- this could sound weird!
 - Mediums?
 - Necromancers?

This sounds more like Dungeons and Dragons than the Bible and church!

Do y'all really believe this stuff?

And the answer is yes, Christians do believe in dark and demonic forces.

- But we also believe that a man
 - who was confirmed dead by crucifixion,
- was resurrected back to life...

So yeah...we believe in some weird stuff.

But the Old Testament law forbade...

- mediums,
- and wizards,
- and necromancers,
 - those who consult the spirits of the dead.

It called them abominations.

- And the very need for these prohibitions...
- indicates that there was a problem of necromancy...
- and of religious practices related to the dead.
 - It was actually widespread in ancient Canaan.

So, necromancy is the practice of invoking the dead,

- and it is associated with mediums
- who attempt to communicate with spirits...
 - in a seance or something like that.

TRANSITION

So, this verse is saying that Saul,

- had prohibited these practices.

God had said these things were not to be tolerated in Israel...

so Saul had banished them all to Hogwarts or whatever.

1 SAMUEL 28:4-5

[4] The Philistines assembled and came and encamped at Shunem. And Saul gathered all Israel, and they encamped at Gilboa. [5] When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly.

So, the Philistines are marching on the Israelites. This is what Achish said back in verses 1-2.

And when Saul sees them, he freaks out...verse 6:

1 SAMUEL 28:6

[6] And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets.

EXPLAIN

Now, these are the three prescribed methods that were normally used in Israel when seeking divine guidance.

- God often spoke to his people through dreams:
 - think Joseph and his coat in Genesis.
- Second, the priests would use the Urim and Thummim
 - as the method to discern God's will.
 - And nobody knows exactly how these things worked.
 - I mentioned a few weeks ago that some think of it as more of a binary way to discern God's direction.
 - Others think it was like an Old Testament Magic Eight Ball with a yes, no, and an "ask again later" option.
- And third, God would send Prophets, like Samuel, to speak God's words to God's people.

But these were the three ways God spoke to his people in these times.

So, Saul inquired...but the Lord did not answer. Verse 7

1 SAMUEL 28:7

[7] Then Saul said to his servants, "Seek out for me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her." And his servants said to him, "Behold, there is a medium at En-dor."

And Saul said, "Endor, isn't that where the Ewoks live...in Star Wars."

And his servants said, "Yes it is."

Verse 8:

1 SAMUEL 28:8-10

[8] So Saul disguised himself [as a Jedi Knight...trust me, it's in the Hebrew] and put on other garments and went, he and two men with him. And they came to the woman by night. And he said, "Divine for me by a spirit and bring up for me whomever I shall name to you." [9] The woman said to him, "Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the necromancers from the land. Why then are you laying a trap for my life to bring about my death?" [10] But Saul swore to her by the LORD, "As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing."

So, the irony is thick here.

- Saul, the one who banished these abominations...
- Goes to one in disguise...
- And then swears, by the LORD
- That it's ok for her to call up someone from the dead!
 - The very thing the LORD called...an abomination!

Verse 11:

1 SAMUEL 28:11-14

[11] Then the woman said, “Whom shall I bring up for you?” He said, “Bring up Samuel for me.”

Now, honestly, I’m not sure WHAT Saul was thinking here.

- If I were summing someone up through a demonic ritual...
 - in direct violation of God’s word...
- I’m not sure God’s Prophet, Samuel, would be my first choice.

[12] When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. And the woman said to Saul, “Why have you deceived me? You are Saul.” [13] The king said to her, “Do not be afraid. What do you see?” And the woman said to Saul, “I see a god coming up out of the earth.” [14] He said to her, “What is his appearance?” And she said, “An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe.” And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and paid homage.

EXPLAIN

Now, all sorts of questions come up at this point.

- Is the Bible really telling us...
- that this woman was able to conjure or connect with...
- the spirit of the dead prophet, Samuel?

Yes it is.

- Whatever you make of this,
 - the Bible is, at the very least,
- showing us that God permitted the spirit of Samuel
- to communicate to Saul through this medium.

And this raises all sorts of questions...

- about how this was done,
- and what methods this woman used,
- and so on.

And I just want to make a clear statement right here.

- The scriptures are teaching us that these dark arts are real,
- and that they are dangerous.

We'll talk more about that in a minute, but let's keep going.

Verse 15:

1 SAMUEL 28:15

[15] Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" Saul answered, "I am in great distress, for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dreams. Therefore I have summoned you to tell me what I shall do."

So, Saul sums up his predicament to Samuel.

- *"God isn't answering me.*
- *So, I summoned you to tell me what to do."*

Verse 16:

1 SAMUEL 28:16-19

[16] And Samuel said, "Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has turned from you and become your enemy? [17] The LORD has done to you as he spoke by me, for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David. [18] Because you did not obey the

voice of the LORD and did not carry out his fierce wrath against Amalek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you this day. [19] Moreover, the LORD will give Israel also with you into the hand of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me. The LORD will give the army of Israel also into the hand of the Philistines.”

EXPLAIN

You may remember this story from 1 Samuel 15:

- God had told Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites,
 - and to keep none of the spoils for himself.
- But Saul kept a bunch of the spoils,
 - and attempted a compromise
 - by saying he'd sacrifice some of those things to God.

But God said,

- *“I'd rather have your obedience than your sacrifice”*
- and he rejected Saul as King.

Now, Saul was sad about that, but he never repented of his defiance... and that's why he's not hearing from God.

EXPLAIN

So, in verses 20-25 Saul is understandably upset by this news...

- he is going to die the next day!
 - But he sneaks back out of this woman's presence...
 - into the darkness of night.
- And it will, actually, be his last night.

Now, for our purposes today, let me summarize chapter 29.

Chapter 29 flashes back to David with the Philistines.

And at the start of 28,

- Achish had promoted David,
- but the other rulers of the Philistines,
 - who are about to march against Israel,
- don't want David and his men to come with them
- because they're afraid David will turn and fight for his people.

So, they tell him to turn back to Ziklag,

- while the Philistines will march on Israel,
- to the aforementioned battle...
- which Saul is about to walk into.

TRANSITION

So, what I want to do with the remainder of our time together,

- is to work out some application,
 - specifically, Saul's encounter with this medium,
- and I think they will be helpful to us.

So, there are three things in this text that are important to note.

The first one is back in 28 verse 7.

EXPLAIN

Now, in verse 3

- we were told that Saul had **put out**
- **all of the mediums and necromancers.**

But now in verse 7,

- when the need arises,
- they know exactly where to find one.
 - En-dor.

Now this is a bit speculative,

- but it seems awfully convenient
- to have this medium so close at hand.

And I just wonder...

- if Saul really wanted to look holy and obedient to God
- when he put them out of the land.
 - like perception management...
- But if his true intention is to keep them close enough
- for a contingency plan.

POINT 1

And it's my first point of application.

There's a difference between **SLIDE TRUSTING & HEDGING**

- There's a difference between TRUSTING God fully...
- and HEDGING your bets.

Sure, Saul tried to inquire of the Lord by dreams and Urim and prophets.

- He tries the prescribed and Godly methods.
- But he has hedged his bets.

He wanted, at some level, to do it God's way...

but he wanted to keep a little bit of control...just in case.

APPLICATION

And oh, how this is a problem for us, church!

- When things start to get janky in our lives...
- so very often, we try to do things God's way.

- We try church.
- Or we try to pray.
- Or we try to read the Bible.
- We try to TRUST God.

But if those don't work fast enough OR in the way we expect...
our next impulse can be to take matters into our own hands.

And listen, it may be in some dangerous things like in this text.

- And this actually happens way more than we realize.
 - When we cut ourselves from the presence of God,
 - we look to other things to fill the role of the divine.

This is why studies show that as participation in religion has gone down...

- superstitious practices...things like:
 - use of tarot cards,
 - crystals,
 - amulets,
 - palm reading,
 - energy balancing,
 - and chakra work...
- have all gone up.

Actually, the more irreligious a person describes themselves...
the more likely they are to be into these superstitious spiritual practices.

- But Jesus calls his followers to be all-in with him!
- He demands total fidelity from his followers!

So, are you TRUSTING God, or are you HEDGING your bets?

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POINT 2

Now, I want us to take a moment to note something important.

- Saul first inquired of the Lord...

But just note:

- it's only when he needs something.

He's not genuinely seeking God...

- he's using God to get him out of a jam.

And it's my second point.

There's a difference between **SLIDE SEEKING & USING**

- There's a difference between **SEEKING** God
- and **USING** God for our own means.

And we know Saul isn't genuinely seeking God, because...

in 1 Chronicles 12, a parallel book to 1 Samuel, it says this about Saul:

SLIDE 1 CHRONICLES 10:13b–14a

So Saul...broke faith with the LORD in that he did not keep the command of the LORD, and also consulted a medium, seeking guidance. [14] He did not seek guidance from the LORD.

You say, *"But he did seek guidance, the Urim and the Thummim..."*

- But he wasn't SEEKING God in those situations, was he?
 - No, he was looking for a way out.
 - He wanted to USE God.

I'll quote Christian Psychologist Larry Crabb:

SLIDE *"Our problem is that we don't want to find God to know him; we want to find him in order to use him to make our lives work."*

But listen to me...God will not be USED.

There's a difference between **SLIDE** SEEKING & USING

ILLUSTRATION: UNFAITHFUL WIFE

Now, God will always welcome and respond to the SEEKER.

- He'll always be the good father,
- welcoming the wayward prodigal
- to come home in repentance
 - God will ALWAYS receive someone like that!

But imagine a wife who is serially unfaithful...

- cheating on her husband again, and again, and again...
- Yet, she has the audacity to ask her husband to support her
 - pleading for his security and provision...
- just until she finds someone else to take her on.

That's a totally different scenario.

TRANSITION

Saul doesn't want God!

- He's just in a bind and wants somebody...anybody...to stop it.
 - Even if that means using demonic practices!
- There has been no change of heart toward God!
- This is a *'let me use you to get out of trouble.'*

And this is a very important, and scary, point:

- it IS possible
- to come to God
- in an idolatrous way
- that he will NOT receive!

POINT 3

And that leads to the third application. Note what was said in verse 6:

[6] And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him

- Why?
- Why didn't God answer him?

Well, we have to remember Saul's past.

- Did Saul listen to the prophet Samuel when he was alive?
 - No!
 - That's, in part, why God has rejected him.
- Did Saul respect the priestly Urim and Thummim?
 - No!
 - He killed 85 priests at Nob
 - because he thought they were in league with David.

And then down to verse 18 once more.

Why doesn't the Lord answer Saul?

[18] Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD

And here's the third application.

There's a difference between **SLIDE REPENTING & RELIGION**

Saul is so caught up in trying to religiously manipulate this situation.

- First, by the prescribed means of God.
- But then he moves to dark religious practices,
 - even ones that God called abominations!

He does all kinds of RELIGIOUS things...but he never REPENTS.

APPLICATION

Gosh, very often I meet people in crisis, and they don't know what to do.

They're inquiring of the Lord. *"God, just tell me what to do!"*

- But I wonder if maybe, for some of you,
 - you can go back to a time in your life
- where you started saying ‘no’ to God about something...
 - and you’ve never repented of that.

And perhaps God won’t hear your prayers today...

because you are still in broken fellowship with him.

- You start praying about “this now,”
 - and he doesn’t want to talk about “this now,”
- he wants to talk about “that there.”
 - Unrepentant sin;
 - known rebellion,
 - cuts you off from fellowship with God.

Look at Samuel’s prophecy over Saul when he fails with Amalek...

SLIDE 1 SAMUEL 15:22–23

[22] And Samuel said,

“Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,
as in obeying the voice of the LORD?

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
and to listen than the fat of rams.

[23] For rebellion is as the sin of divination,
and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
he has also rejected you from being king.”

Rebellion is as the sin of divination!

Because you rejected God's word...he has also rejected you!

- Oh church, have you REPENTED?
- Or are you simply trying out RELIGION.

Because to obey is better than any religious practice.

- God rejects hollow religious practices.
- But he received repentant sinners.

Now, I want to be clear:

- what I DON'T mean is that you need to live in fear...
- that there is some sin in your past that you've forgotten about
- and God can never bless you until you remember it.

No, I'm talking about...

- some area of your life...
- that you KNOW is not surrendered to God...
- where you continue to live in rebellion.

God doesn't want to talk about your problems TODAY
until you deal with your rebellion IN WHOLE.

CONCLUSION

So, I know I told my daughter **SLIDE W/PADS DON'T BE SCARED**

- but there are some things this text sets up...
- that are pretty scary.

And yes,

- I do believe that there are legit dark forces...
- and stuff you don't want to get mixed up in.
 - That's some scary stuff!

But the more terrifying thing in this passage, to me...
is that we have a guy, who on the surface looked pretty religious.

I mean, Saul did a lot of great things:

- he led Israel to several great victories.
- He purged the land of witches and wizards...kinda...
- He donated pretty heavily to Temple worship
 - we see him giving some pretty big financial gifts.
- He seems to have been a pretty good family man.
 - There's no stories about infidelity...unlike David...
- He even prayed to God when he was in a jam...

If he were alive today,

- he'd be the kind of guy active in the church;
- successful in his career;
- he'd be a big giver;
- have gone on mission trips.

But he was lost!

And it makes me think of Jesus' words in Matthew chapter 7:

SLIDE MATTHEW 7:21–23

[21] "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. [22] On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' [23] And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

Yall, **SLIDE DON'T BE SCARED**...but that's terrifying!

So, I'm asking you to be honest...with you!

- Are you REPENTING...
 - of your rebellion against God?
- Are you SEEKING God...
 - not just trying to get what he can do for you?
- And are you TRUSTING God's will alone,
 - and not holding on to some contingency plan?

Just because you are super religious...

doesn't mean you've repented...

and made Jesus your Savior.

Are you sure you've done that?

You can surrender to him right now, and look to him, and he will save you.

But please don't follow in the footsteps of Saul...

You do not want to hear **I never knew you; depart from me**

That's scary.

Let's pray.

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

RESOURCES CONSULTED:

- Davis, Dale Ralph. Focus on the Bible. 1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart.
- David, Dale Ralph. *Trouble Turns Thicker*.
- Greear, J.D. *How Not To Die*.
- Heitzig, Skip. *1 Samuel 28-29*.
- Tsumura, David Toshio. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. The First Book of Samuel.