

Refine Women's Ministry  
**David Lesson 9: Saul Seeks a Medium - 1 Samuel 27-28**  
April 11, 2018 by Kim Peelen

*As for the person who turns to mediums, and to spiritists, to play the harlot after them, I will also set My face against that person and will cut him off from among his people. Leviticus 20:6*

*And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance – all of which took about four hundred and fifty years. And after these things he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. And then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. Acts 13:19-21*

In our last lesson, David refuses to lay a hand on the LORD's anointed, Saul, but uses Saul's vulnerable situation to declare his innocence and his desire to worship the LORD in the land of Israel. Saul confesses, *"I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will not harm you again because my life was precious in your sight this day. Behold, I have played the fool and have committed a serious error. . . Blessed are you, my son David; you will both accomplish much and surely prevail"* 1 Samuel 26:21,25. However, as chapter 27 begins, David doubts Saul's words.

**David Escapes from Saul into Philistia: 1 Samuel 27: 1- 3**

*Then David said to himself, "Now I will perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than to escape into the land of the Philistines. Saul then will despair of searching for me anymore in all the territory of Israel, and I will escape from his hand." So David arose and crossed over, and he and the six hundred men who were with him, to Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath. And David lived with Achish at Gath, he and his men, each with his household, even David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's widow.*

Though Saul pledges to not harm David, his previous empty promises prompt David to move to the Philistine town of Goliath. David's words reveal his vulnerable state (and his humanity), once again forgetting to put God and His sovereign plan for his life first and assuming he has only one option to escape Saul's relentless pursuit to kill him. Note he does not inquire of the LORD before he moves his family and small army to enemy territory. Achish is the same king before whom David feigned insanity to escape execution (! Samuel 21:14; Psalm 34).

**David Headquarters in Ziklag: 1 Samuel 27: 4-7**

*Now it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath, so he no longer searched for him. Then David said to Achish, "If now I have found favor in your sight, let them give me a place in one of the cities in the country, that I may live there; for why should your servant live in the royal city with you?" So Achish gave him Ziklag that day; therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day. The number of days that David lived in the country of the Philistines was a year and four months.*

David's plan to escape from Saul succeeds, and he aligns himself and his men with their former enemies the Philistines. The king of Gath grants his request for a separate headquarters, so David settles 13 miles northwest of Beersheba in Ziklag, an Israelite city currently controlled by Philistines. This location separates David from the king and the pagan

influences of Gath, as well as allows him to deceive the king about his specific raids. David's mighty men *were equipped with bows, using both the right hand and the left to sling stones and to shoot arrows from the bow; they were Saul's kinsmen from Benjamin* 1 Chronicles 12:2.

### **David Raids the Enemies of Israel in the name of Achish: 1 Samuel 27:8-12**

*Now David and his men went up and raided the **Geshurites** and the **Girzites** and the **Amalekites**; for they were the inhabitants of the land from ancient times, as you come to Shur even as far as the land of Egypt. David attacked the land and did not leave a man or a woman alive, and he took away the sheep, the cattle, the donkeys, the camels, and the clothing. Then he returned and came to Achish. Now Achish said, "Where have you made a raid today?" And David said, "**Against the Negev of Judah** and against the **Negev of the Jerahmeelites** [from Judah and Tamar] and against the **Negev of the Kenites**" [father-in-law of Moses]. . . So Achish believed David, saying, "He has surely made himself odious among his people Israel; therefore he will become my servant forever."*

To understand this passage, the reader must understand the political situation of the people groups listed in area near Beersheba– who is friend or foe – there are many enemies and factions involved. Those David ACTUALLY raids and kills are enemies of Israel: Geshurites (Jer. 13:2, 13) and Amalekites (Ex. 17:8; Deu 25:17-8; 1 Sam 15; No.14: 43-5), but Girzites are not mentioned elsewhere. However, David DESCRIBES his raids in general geographical terms to be purposefully vague - using **Negev or Negeb** meaning 'south country' that refers to the sparsely populated desert area in southern Judah. Although Achish assumes residents of Judah are increasingly hostile towards David, they appreciate him because he is raiding their unfriendly neighbors. The future king of Israel is wisely using his time in enemy territory to build loyal subjects. Refer to map: *Israel in the Days of Samuel, Saul, and David*.

### **Achish Trusts David: 1 Samuel 28: 1, 2**

*Now it came about in those days that the Philistines gathered their armed camps for war, to fight against Israel. And Achish said to David, "Know assuredly that you will go out with me in the camp, you and your men." David said to Achish, "Very well, you shall know what your servant can do." So Achish said to David, "Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life."*

As another skirmish between Israel and Philistia develops, the king of Gath invites David and his army to join their side, with David acting as his personal, permanent guard or 'keeper of my head'. David's answer is ambiguous – does he agree to fight against his countrymen? The narrative abruptly switches from Achish to Saul, but 1 Samuel 29 will pick it up again.

### **Saul Pursues Sin: 1 Samuel 28: 3-7**

*Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. And Saul had removed from the land those who were mediums and spiritists. So the Philistines gathered together and came and camped in Shunem; and Saul gathered all Israel together and they camped in Gilboa. When Saul saw the camp of the Philistines, he was afraid and his heart trembled greatly.*

Scripture reminds us that Samuel is dead, buried in Ramah. Also, the impending battle forms southwest of the Sea of Galilee, with Philistines in Shunem along the plain of Jezreel and Israelites camped in mountain range of Gilboa. Once again Saul's fear overwhelms him when he sees the powerful enemy. Where will he turn for help in time of desperate need?

### God's View of Mediums

*"Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God. . . Now a man or a woman who is a medium or a spiritist shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones, their bloodguiltiness is upon them"* Leviticus 19:31; 20:27.

John MacArthur defines **mediums** as *humans who act as "go-betweens" to supposedly contact/communicate with the spirits of the dead, who are actually impersonated by demons* [familiar spirits in KJV]. God's Law forbids His people to seek or to be involved in witchcraft, and Saul properly removes the practitioners of the dark arts from Israel.

### Deuteronomy 18: 9-14, 18-22 explains why God forbids mediums:

*"When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.*

*For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD; and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you. You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. For those nations, which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you to do so.*

*The LORD said to me [Moses], 'I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.'*

Throughout His Word, God commands His people to be blameless and to trust Him for every aspect of life and godliness. In contrast, seeking a medium **defiles** the person because it replaces God with demons for one's power and information. God puts it in the same category of sin as burning your child to Molech. A child who serves the God of All Time and Truth has no business entertaining demons in order to get information! It is harlotry at its heart: no different from an unfaithful spouse who claims to love his marriage partner but pays to have intimate relations with another, his actions reveal where his devotion lies and it is NOT with the spouse. Up to this point, Saul does not submit his decisions to the LORD and repeatedly ignores God's warnings through the prophet Samuel to confess, repent, and obey. He is vulnerable to his own arrogance. How does the sin of seeking a medium impact today's Christian? Ask, 'Where do I turn first when I am in desperate need? Where do I look for direction and hope about life and death? Do I believe that an 'expert' or God has the answers?'

### **Saul Inquires of a Medium: 1 Samuel 28: 6-10**

*When Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets. Then Saul said to his servants, "Seek 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 woman who is a medium at En-dor. Then Saul disguised himself by putting on other clothes, and went, he and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night; and he said, "Conjure up for me, please, and bring up for me whom I shall name to you." But the woman said to him, "Behold, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off those who are mediums and spiritists from the land. Why are you then laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?" Saul vowed to her by the LORD, saying, "As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing."*

Uncharacteristically, Saul inquires of the LORD as he faces the forces of the Philistine army, but sadly, the LORD does not answer (similar to 1 Sam. 15:36) nor reveal His word and will by the three basic ways. By this time, David possesses the priestly lots Urim and Thummin (1 Sam. 23:6). Rather than responding with confession and repentance, Saul seeks help apart from the LORD. Saul's servants readily know of a medium in En-dor three and a half miles northwest of Shuman, requiring travel behind enemy lines. He is trembling with fear, yet risks going around the enemy to consult the forbidden spiritist! Saul contradicts himself both when he pursues a medium after he has banned them from the land and as he vows by the LORD's name for credibility before the medium. Even more outrageous, he swears no punishment will come to her when the Law required her to be stoned to death!

### **The LORD Sends Samuel to Saul: 1 Samuel 28:11-14**

Saul requests the medium to bring up Samuel, and *when she saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice, and the woman spoke to Saul, saying, "Why have you deceived me? For you are Saul." **The king** said to her, "Do not be afraid; but what do you see?" and the woman said to Saul, "I see a divine being coming up out of the earth." He said to her, "What is his form?" and she said "An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped with a robe." And Saul knew that it was Samuel and he bowed with his face to the ground and did homage.*

This is a unique episode in all Scripture and many experts have puzzled over it. For our purpose, note that the medium is shocked when Samuel actually appears, rather than some spirit that impersonates him. Ironically, Saul (referred to by his title of king) tells the woman to not fear – advice he needs himself – and then bows down to this form of Samuel. Saul puts more trust in the medium's words than God's and worships the dead spirit of Samuel over the Living Lord. In spite of this, God miraculously allows Samuel's spirit to speak to Saul.

### **In your groups discuss Samuel's Words: 1 Samuel 28: 15 - 20**

*Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" And Saul answered, "I am greatly distressed; for the Philistines are waging war against me, and God has departed from me and no longer answers me, either through prophets or by dreams; therefore I have called you, that you may make known to me what I should do."*

1. What does Saul want from Samuel?

2. Is Saul's desire sinful? Why or why not – where should Saul have gone for advice?

3. When was the last time Saul saw Samuel – see 1 Samuel 15:35.

*Samuel said, "Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has departed from you and has become your adversary? The LORD has done accordingly as He spoke through me; for the LORD has **torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, to David.** As you did not obey the LORD and did not execute His fierce wrath on Amalek, so the LORD has done this thing to you this day."*

4. What is Samuel's response to Saul?

5. When has Saul heard this judgment before? Why has the LORD departed Saul? How could Saul have prevented the LORD's departure from him?

*"Moreover the LORD will also give over Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines, therefore tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. Indeed the LORD will give over the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines!"  
Then Saul immediately fell full length upon the ground and was very afraid because of the words of Samuel; also there was no strength in him, for he had eaten no food all day and all night.*

6. What is Samuel's new information for Saul? Where will Saul be tomorrow?

7. How does Saul respond?

8. What could Saul have done differently so his end was not this?

### **Summary:**

These verses in 1 Samuel 28 are fascinating, giving a glimpse into life after death. Samuel is recognizable to the medium and to Saul, and the LORD allows the dead Samuel to speak to Saul to remind him of previous conversation as well as a prophetic declaration of his impending death the next day. It is not surprising that Saul fell on the ground in terror after hearing his fate. The end of the chapter describes in detail how the medium and Saul's servants minister to the overwrought king, finally getting him to eat enough to gain strength so as to rejoin the Israelite army for the battle the next morning.

How tragic that Saul failed to see his severe trials as God's lessons to turn him from his prideful reliance upon himself to confession of his sin and submission to the LORD. What a different outcome his life would have! Though our study focus is on David, it is Saul who seems more like a 'typical' follower of Jesus with his frequent fears and jealousy towards others. How precious God's Word is to align two men's stories of faith and failure to instruct us about our amazing God and ourselves. To close this remarkable chapter, Psalm 34 reveals the proper place to turn when one is frightened and needs direction.

### **Selections from Psalm 139**

*O LORD, Thou hast searched me and known me.  
Thou dost know when I sit down and when I rise up; Thou dost understand my thought from afar.  
Thou dost scrutinize my path and my lying down,  
and art intimately acquainted with all my ways.  
Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, Thou dost know it all.  
Thou hast enclosed me behind and before, and laid Thy hand upon me.  
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain to it.  
Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence?*

*Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts;  
And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.*

### **Homework for Lesson 10**

1. What aspects of seeking a medium are in your life – areas that you place confidence in over God and His Word? Ask God to reveal to you how to change.

2. For more study on life after death, read Jesus's words in Luke 16:19 – 31 and compare with 1 Samuel 28: 6-25. [Jesus has not become the firstborn from the dead yet; after He does, the righteous immediately are in the presence of the LORD 2 Cor. 5:8]

2. Read all of Psalm 139. Compare and contrast David's heart to Saul's heart when facing trials and suffering. Can you imagine yourself penning these words – why or why not? Ask God to help you align with this attitude of trust in God.

3. Read 1 Samuel 29 and 30 for next time. We have two lessons left, so try to read all of 1 Samuel before our last meeting on April 25.

4. Continue to read 5 psalms per day to read through them in 30 days.