

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 13



SAUL'S TRAGIC END

Scripture Texts: 1 Samuel 28:3-20; 1 Samuel 31:4-6

Can one be lost after once being saved? What might bring this about? To disobey God is to cut oneself off from His help.

The first of the missteps in Saul's life that led to his tragic end was his inability to obey. Saul refused to listen to the Word of the Lord as given through Samuel. Now Samuel was dead, and there was no prophet to take his place in Israel. The priests had been slain at Saul's command (**1 Samuel 22:17-19**). Saul was desperate. Even such a degraded character as

Saul felt the need of divine strength and guidance, but God would give no Word of help to one whose heart had been overcome by bitterness and murder. Then he sought help from another source. That which Heaven would not tell him, he would find out from hell. To what depths of moral degradation the King of Israel had come!

In this concluding lesson, we see the end of one who opposed God and made his own selfish desires the ruling power of his life. God gave him up to his own self-will, and his reward was self-destruction.

MEMORY VERSE: *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. —Psalm 66:18*

Unanswered Prayers

1 Samuel 28:3-6 The Philistines were coming against Israel. They encamped in Shunem and the army of Israel in Gilboa. King Saul was frightened. Fears arose inside his heart and from what he saw outside. Fear is in the sinner's heart. Saul had departed from the Lord and did not have that perfect love that casts out inner fear (**1 John 4:18**). **His heart was greatly trembled.** He prayed for help. The Lord would not answer. He gave no enlightening dream. He sent no prophet. Saul must have advice. If the Lord would not help, then he would seek help from Satan. The hour of Saul's visitation had passed (**Luke 19:44; 1 Peter 2:12; Isaiah 10:3**). Saul depended completely upon his own judgment.

The Wrong Solution

1 Samuel 28:7-14 In desperation Saul turned to a woman with a familiar spirit. He knew dealing with witches was wrong. The meeting of Saul with the witch of Endor is one of the saddest scenes in the whole history of Israel. He himself had cut off all dealings with familiar spirits from the land. He knew God said, **Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them (Leviticus 19:31)**. Read **Leviticus 20:6**. Because he knew it to be wrong and also against his own decree, he went disguised at night.

There are many questions connected with this incident which we cannot deal with now, but the lesson for all of us is very clear. Saul asked the woman to bring up Samuel from the dead. All she could do was to bring up a **familiar** figure and pretend it was Samuel. No doubt, she had learned something about Samuel's form and character. She gave scanty, vague, and uncertain description of the person she claimed to bring up, and from her description. Saul believed it to be Samuel. At first she said, **I saw gods ascending ... then, an old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle.**

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 13

Saul's Despair

1 Samuel 28:15-20 Samuel asked, **Why ...?** Some of the most sorrowful words spoken by Saul were when he said, **The Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more ...** If the Lord does not help, no lesser power can. This is the thought brought in **verse 16**. Then came the answer Saul sought. He was in real trouble! The next day Israel would be defeated. Saul and his sons would die – be with Samuel in the realm of the dead. Saul was overcome with fear. Despairing, he fell full length, completely overwhelmed. Fear for himself, grief for his sons, grief for Israel, sorrow at failure in the purpose of his kingship, and physical faintness combined against him. He had nothing to hold onto; all hope was gone. This is where Satan intends to take all mankind.

Forsaken by God and the prophets, Saul sought spiritual comfort from a religious quack. There are many people today who do not want to obey the Laws of God as revealed in Scripture who are taking refuge in all sorts of religious cults and fakes to satisfy their spiritual needs and longings. Not only is the number of cults in America increasing, but their growth in membership is increasing rapidly also. This is a serious situation that affects everyone who claims Jesus Christ as his Savior, and it reveals a deep-seated frustration in the hearts of many of our fellow men. Magic, wizards, spiritism, and so on, were prohibited by Gods command from Israel's religion (**Deuteronomy 18:9-13**), and they should find no place in the Christians life today.

Saul's Death

1 Samuel 31:4-6 The next day Samuel's words came true. Israel was defeated, and many were slain, including Jonathan, Abinadab, and Melchishua. His sons were slain and Saul wounded, took his own life by falling on his sword. Every result has a cause. The cause of this lay back when Saul took things into his own hands disobeyed the Lord and did not repent. When he turned to a devilish familiar spirit for counsel, he crossed the line of no return (**1 Chronicles 10:13-14**). His hour of visitation had passed at last. What a tragedy! A tragic end to a tragic life! Saul was once anointed of God, but through his own doing, he is now lost forever. The same can happen to any of us.

A Better Way

With Saul, it could have been different. Earlier Saul could have changed his course. But he did not, and there was no release for Saul from the evil that beset him, so he went to his ruinous end. For the Christian, however, there is another answer. Christ, by His death and Resurrection, broke the power of the forces of darkness and thereby gave to the soul of mankind power to break the binding power of sin and to begin a new godly and self-respecting life. Even the worst sinner can be made a new creature in Christ Jesus if he repents of his sins.

The greatest blessing is to hear the Word of God and keep it. This brings us to God and causes His favor to be upon us. This is open to everyone, rich and poor, small and great, educated and ignorant. The requirements for it are an open ear to hear His voice and a tender heart desiring to do His will.

JUST A THOUGHT

**When it is the hardest to pray,
we need to pray the hardest.**