

Introduction: One commentary said this passage raises the question: where do we turn in times of crisis? I agree, but I think a better line of questioning ourselves is: How are we living our everyday lives? What are we doing to get through whatever is occupying our hearts and minds during our day-to-day activities, whatever they may be? Do we watch TV? Do we listen to talk shows or news? Do we read books? Do we search the internet or turn to social media? Do we seek out family and friends? *** What about God? Do we keep ourselves open to Him moment-by-moment? When the Holy Spirit puts something in our hearts and minds, do we listen and obey right away? Do we put God off for a time? Or, do we outright ignore God to the point of disobedience? *** In today's passage about Saul's encounter with Samuel's spirit brought up from the grave by a medium he sought in desperation, we learn Saul's destruction is imminent. This is because he ignored God from his youth. Then he only partially obeyed God after he was anointed king of Israel by Samuel. Finally he disobeyed God with the king of Amalek (1 Samuel 15), as Samuel told Saul as a result of his last disobedience of God's instruction given through Moses when he consulted a medium (Leviticus 20:17). Saul will be dead in less than twenty-four hours. *** In contrast, David's psalm, after alluding to Saul's destruction for trusting in himself rather than God, praises the Covenant God of amazing love because those who are always trusting IN Him will flourish together. *** Let us now carefully consider together our texts so we will be quick to turn to God in faithful obedience.

I. Samuel's spirit tells Saul that Yahweh has departed from him, David will replace him as king, and he and his sons will die.
(1 Samuel 28:13-20)

- A. Samuel's summoned spirit tells a greatly distressed Saul that Yahweh has departed from him, and his prophetic word that David will be king is happening. (Verses 13-17)
1. The king said to her: You will not fear, but what have you seen? Then the woman said: I saw a 'god' coming up from the earth. (Verse 13)
'god': The medium uses the word for a powerful spirit, not necessarily the covenant God of Israel. But she is convinced what she sees is not a flesh and blood still alive man!
 2. He said to her: What (is) his form? Then she said: Old man coming up, he being covered in a robe; then Saul knew that he (is) Samuel; then he bowed his face on the ground and prostrated himself. (Verse 14)
Saul knows: The medium's word for the garment is what those in authority, including priests, wore. Samuel's mother made a robe for him each year as he grew up before Eli, the high priest (1 Samuel 2:14). It is the same robe Saul ripped after Samuel gave him God's irrevocable word that his kingship was forever taken away from him (1 Samuel 15:27).
 3. Then Samuel said to Saul: Why have you disturbed me to bring me up? Saul said: (There is) great distress to me: Philistines warring against me and God has turned away from me and not answered me any more: alike by prophets, also by dreams; then I called you to make me know what I will do. (Verse 15)
Saul's answer: In response to Samuel's question, Saul indicates he is greatly distressed. He speaks what the Spirit inspired author previously wrote (verses 5-7). Saul is in such despair, he felt a great need to have God's prophet guide him, since God is repulsed by Saul.
 4. Samuel said to Saul: To what (end) do you ask me? Yahweh has turned away from you and He became your enemy; Yahweh has Himself done as He spoke by me: Yahweh has torn the kingdom from your hand, and He has given it to your neighbor, David. (Verses 16-17)
Why: In short, Samuel emphatically says: You were wrong to summon me because Yahweh strongly spoke through me with final certainty: you are forever stripped of kingship and David will be king.

Application: The March-April *Christianity Today* has an article warning about AI apps that, after collecting data from a grieving survivor, will answer questions in the words of the departed loved one. The author specifically cites this chapter to say Christians should not use these AI 'conversations'. A church going young woman who wanted to talk to her dead fiancé used one of the apps. She finally realized God wanted her thank Him for her good memories of him, while getting on with her life now. I mention this so if we discover a family member or friend is using AI to 'contact' a dead loved one, with love and compassion we may warn him or her of what God's Word says about these high tech 'mediums'.

B. Furthermore, because of Saul's rebellious disobedience with the king of Amalek, he and his sons will die. (Verses 18-20)

1. When you did not listen to the voice of Yahweh and did not do His hot anger to Amalek; therefore, this thing Yahweh has done to you this day. (Verse 18)
Disobedience: Samuel says because Saul did not hear Yahweh in total obedience concerning Amalek, Yahweh has now brought Saul's day of reckoning. Saul is despairing over the large Philistine army because it is God's instrument of wrath that will destroy Saul.

Turning from God in disobedience leads to despair and destruction

2. Then Yahweh will also give Israel with you to the hand (power) of the Philistines tomorrow; you and your sons (will be) with me, the army of Israel Yahweh will also give to the hand (power) of the Philistines. (Verse 19)
All will die: So, in addition to Saul, his sons and Israel's army will join Samuel in death. Does this leave the door open for last minute repentance? But from an earthly perspective Saul's disobedience leads to the destruction of all under his (rebellious) leadership!

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3. Then immediately Saul fell along the earth; he was greatly afraid from Samuel's words; he also had no strength in him because he had not eaten bread all day and all night. (*Verse 20*)

Paralyzing fear: Saul's overwhelming fear of what God is doing to him made him fall to the ground, paralyzed in fear. He was so overwhelmed he could not eat and became weak.

Application: Unlike Saul, who did not act on his second opportunity to repent and come back to God with the Amalekites, we must always quickly turn in repentance, from our rebellious ways to God, whenever the Holy Spirit convicts us through the Word He inspired. As true disciples of Jesus, who are IN Him, we must always obey Him to show our faith and love to Jesus and His faithfulness (John 15:7-15).

II. The medium comforts the rejected rebel king with a last meal; David warns that those turning from God will be destroyed, but those trusting in God will flourish. (1 Samuel 28:21-25; Psalm 52:6-9)

- A. A pagan medium seeks to comfort the man who rebelled against his Covenant God, and convinces Saul to eat his last meal. (*1 Samuel 28: 21-25*)

1. The woman came to Saul when she saw that he was troubled and said: Behold! Your handmaid listened to your voice, and I put my life in my hand, then I listened to your words you said to me; now, you also must listen to the voice of your handmaid: I have also set before you a piece of bread; you must eat and you will have strength when you go on your way. (*Verses 21-22*)

Comfort: Ironically, a pagan medium, graciously called a woman, seeks to comfort the one still graciously called king, (verse 13) who had so persistently rebelled against the covenant God.

2. Then he refused and said: I will not eat; then they urged him, his servants and also the woman; and he listened to their words, and he rose from the earth and sat on the bed. (*Verse 23*)

Stubborn: After initial stubbornness, Saul relents and receives the handmaid's gracious offer of food.

3. The woman (had) a fat calf in the house, she hastened to kill it; then she took flour, kneaded it and baked unleavened bread (matzah); then she brought it before Saul and his servants; then they ate and rose and went away that night. (*Verses 24-25*)

Last meal: The woman killed a bull-calf. When Aaron was anointed as high priest over Israel, he offered a bull-calf as a sin offering (Leviticus 8:5-13; 9:1-2). Could this meal suggest Saul received forgiveness before his punishment?

Spoiler: It will take three chapters of Scripture, but in less than twenty-four hours Saul will be punished for his disobedience as his body was destroyed by the Philistines. A forgiven person often suffers consequence for his-her sin.

We will see this with David next year.

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- B. In a teaching psalm, David warns that those who turn from God to self-trust will be destroyed, but those trusting in the God of love will flourish together. (*Psalm 52:6-9*)

1. The righteous will see and fear / and they will laugh at him // Behold! The man who will not make God his strong place (of refuge) / he trusted in his abundant riches / and was strengthened to destruction. (*Verses 6-7*)

False trust: David wrote this psalm about Saul. He says the righteous will scornfully laugh (using the word Sarah used to name Isaac) at those who trust in themselves and not God. Saul's strength worked against him when he turned from God to be destroyed by the Philistines.

Turning from God in disobedience leads to despair and destruction

2. And I (am) as a green olive tree in the house of God / I have trusted in the steadfast love of God (for) eternity and forever. (*Verse 8*)

Trust God: David declares that his trust in the great and strong life-giving, life-changing LOVE of God has caused his life to flourish in God's 'house' which is now the 'holy temple' of people from every nation believing IN Jesus where God dwells in His Spirit (Ephesians 2:13-23).

Those who trust in God for His strength will flourish

3. I will thank You (for) eternity because You have done (it) / and I will wait-hope for Your Name, because it is good, in the presence of Your saints. (*Verse 9*)

Hope in God's family: David thanks God for giving him hope-to-wait in His Name for doing for David what was needed, as Isaiah later wrote, to have his strength renewed to soar on eagle's wings (Isaiah 40:31)

Presence of saints: This especially applies to all who have been redeemed IN Jesus to be transformed into His image (Romans 8:28-30) and to be made holy by faith in trials (1 Peter 1, the whole chapter)!

Application: We must be joined together in the fellowship of a local church where we encourage and exhort one another daily. This is what the church did in the months after Pentecost (Acts 2:42-47).

Conclusion: Samuel's medium summoned spirit tells Saul that Yahweh has departed from him, David will replace him as king, and he and his sons will die by the Philistine hosts. The medium comforts the rejected rebel king with a last meal.

In a teaching psalm David warns that people turning from God will be destroyed, but those trusting in God and His amazing love will flourish together. So, beware because ...

turning from God in disobedience leads to despair and destruction