

The Books of 1 and 2 Samuel

Lesson 15: David Among the Philistines; Saul and the Medium -- 1 Samuel 27:1–28:25

These two chapters set two discouraged men side by side, and the contrast is heartbreaking. David, weary of running, says in his heart, “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul,” and makes a self-reliant decision to go live among the Philistines, the very enemies of God’s people. Saul, terrified before a Philistine army and abandoned by God’s silence, sneaks off in disguise to consult a witch in the dark. Two men at the end of their rope, each reaching, but reaching in very different directions and from very different hearts.

David’s story here is sobering but not tragic. Tired and afraid, he stops asking God and starts managing his own survival. He lands in enemy territory, lives a double life, and slides into deception. It is a season of compromise. Yet even here God preserves him, and the larger story keeps moving toward the throne. David’s discouragement leads to a detour, but not to ruin. There is mercy in that for every weary believer.

Saul’s story is genuine tragedy. He stands before the Philistine host and trembles. He inquires of the Lord, but “the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.” The heavens are silent for a man who has spent a lifetime refusing to listen. And so, in desperation, the same Saul who had once driven the mediums out of the land now disguises himself and goes to one at Endor, seeking in the darkness the guidance he would not seek in the light.

We must handle this night at Endor with care and reverence. Scripture is not handing us a textbook on the dead or the occult; it is showing us the end of a life that repeatedly refused God’s word. The lesson is not to satisfy our curiosity about mediums, but to feel the seriousness of seeking guidance from forbidden sources, and to learn the bitter cost of a heart that, again and again, would not listen to the Lord while He was still speaking.

Group Discussion: When weariness and discouragement have tempted you to take matters into your own hands rather than wait on God, what did that season teach you about your own heart?

Personal Reflection: Where are you most tempted, when God seems silent or slow, to seek answers or comfort from sources you know you should not, and what would it take to turn back to the Lord and His word?

Read 1 Samuel 27:1–28:25

Study Questions

1. What does David's reasoning, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul" (27:1), reveal about how discouragement can quietly crowd out faith even in a godly person?
2. When fear and weariness whisper that God will not come through, where do you tend to turn for your own survival, and how can you bring that fear honestly back to God?
3. How does David's season among the Philistines, the double life and deception (27:8-12), show that even God's servants can drift into compromise when they stop inquiring of the Lord?
4. Where has a season of spiritual tiredness led you into small compromises, and what would it look like to come back into the light with God?
5. Why did "the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets" when Saul finally inquired (28:6), and what does this teach about the consequences of a lifetime of refusing God's word?
6. Are there areas where you have grown deaf to God's word through repeated neglect, and how can you begin to listen and obey again while He is still speaking?

7. What is the significance of Saul, who had himself put away the mediums (28:3, 9), now turning to one in desperation, and what does that hypocrisy reveal about a heart cut off from God?
8. Where might you be tempted to violate in private a conviction you would defend in public, and how does Saul's collapse warn you?
9. Why does God forbid seeking guidance from mediums and the dead (Deuteronomy 18:10–12; Isaiah 8:19–20), and what does Saul's tragic end teach about the deadly danger of turning to forbidden darkness when we have repeatedly refused the light of God's word?
10. Name one specific way Jesus, the light who calls us out of darkness and speaks God's final word to us, is forming in you a heart that listens to and trusts Him through this passage.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Deuteronomy 18:9–14, on God's firm prohibition of mediums and consulting the dead; Isaiah 8:19–20, on seeking the living God rather than the dead, and testing all by His word; Hebrews 1:1–2, on God speaking finally and fully in His Son; Galatians 6:7–9, on reaping what we sow and not growing weary in well doing; Proverbs 3:5–6, on trusting the Lord with all our heart rather than leaning on our own understanding.

More studies available on ChurchOfChristBibleStudies.com