

Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia



# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEACHER'S PACKET

3rd - 5th Grade

## Sunday Morning

Study 8

*Saul's Great Sin*

# Saul's Great Sin

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

**Objective** To teach the students about the folly of Saul and the importance of repentance.

## Key Verses

1 Samuel 28—Main Teaching Passage

1 John 5:14

Deuteronomy 18:9-12

**Memory Verse** - Romans 2:4

"Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?"

## Hook

Review last week's memory verse, Proverbs 15:1.

Read 1 John 5:14 to the class and ask the students to explain the verse. Ask them if there would ever be a time when God would not hear or answer someone's prayer. Of course God hears and knows everything, but why might He remain silent according to 1 John 5:14?

Tell students that in our story today, God would not answer Saul, and when He finally did, Saul did not like what God had to say.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

# BOOK

In Deuteronomy 18:9-12, God told His people that when they entered the Promised Land and claimed it for their own, they were to have nothing to do with anyone who practices witchcraft, sorcery, fortune-telling, and importantly for our study, anybody who attempts to speak with the dead. God said that it is an abomination to Him, and to cast those people out of the land.

With that in mind, in 1 Samuel 28 the story turns away from David and focuses in on Saul. Saul was faced once again with a huge army of Philistines invading his country. This time, however, he had no David to lead his troops in battle and no Samuel the prophet to speak to God on his behalf (for Samuel had died). Saul sought God, but God would not answer him. So Saul turned instead to a medium, someone who attempted to speak with dead, and asked her to bring up for him Samuel to somehow hear what God would have to say to him.

The spirit of Samuel was called forth, and the medium was shocked. Whether she was a trickster who deceived people for money, or whether she somehow dealt with demonic spirits, here she was confronted with the Holy Spirit. God allowed Samuel to speak to Saul one more time.

Samuel has only one thing to say however, “The Lord has from you and become your enemy.” The spirit of Samuel prophesied that Saul would die at the hands of the Philistines and the nation will be given to David.

# LOOK

The first thing that we should all notice in this passage is that God would not answer Saul. Saul tried a number of different ways to speak to God: he prayed, he consulted the Urim, he asked the prophets, he even waited for a dream. Why wouldn't God answer Saul? Saul had sinned, but we read numerous stories of the Bible where God spoke to someone in their sin (Abraham, Jacob, David, etc.) and yet would not speak to Saul. To answer this question, we need to ask whether Saul was ever repentant. Was he sorry for any of the things that he did to disobey God? From the Scriptures that we have, we can only conclude that no, at no point did Saul ever feel bad for breaking the Word of God.

When Saul rejected God's Word and defiantly never asked forgiveness, he made God an enemy of himself and turned further and further from God. You might ask why Saul was trying to hear from God if he had turned his heart from God, and the answer is that Saul didn't really

The interpretation/  
exegesis of the passage.  
What does this passage  
mean? How does this  
passage apply to my  
life?

# LOOK (Continued)

want to hear from God. He wanted to win a battle against the Philistines. He was treating God like a genie in a lamp, not like a just and holy King. Saul didn't want to make himself right before God, he wanted to end the giant problem that was causing him distress.

Saul had turned so far away from God that he was willing to do something that God had expressly forbidden. Saul went to a medium to try and speak with Samuel who had died. I personally believe that this medium was a fraud who deceived people out of their money, and I believe that the Bible supports that (Luke 16:19-31; Hebrews 9:27 among others). In this case, however, God was gracious to Saul, answering his question but not in the way that Saul wanted. God told Saul that He always does what He has promised to do, even if that promise is to judge sin righteously. In this case, God promised Saul that he would take the kingdom away from him and deliver it to David.

There are some important things for us to remember: God is always just and faithful to forgive, if we ask. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5). If we turn from God and refuse to acknowledge Him, it will lead us further from Him. Lastly, we can be close to God with our mouths (like Saul) but still be far away from Him in our hearts (Matthew 15:8).

# TOOK

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

As a class, memorize Romans 2:4.

Ask the class to discuss how Saul's refusal to repent and ask forgiveness led to greater and greater sins against God.

**Pray:** Ask the Lord for the ability to admit when we are wrong and ask forgiveness from Him.

**Parent Question:** Why would God not answer Saul's prayer?

# FURTHER STUDY

## Commentary on 1 Samuel 25 by David Guzik

Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had lamented for him and buried him in Ramah, in his own city. And Saul had put the mediums and the spiritists out of the land. Then the Philistines gathered together, and came and encamped at Shunem. So Saul gathered all Israel together, and they encamped at Gilboa. When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly.

a. Samuel had died: Samuel's death was originally reported in 1 Samuel 25:1. Here, the fact is mentioned again to emphasize the spiritual vacuum left by Samuel's departure.

b. Saul had put the mediums and the spiritists out of the land: To his credit, Saul obeyed the commands in the Mosaic Law to cast out those who practiced occultic arts. God commanded that mediums and spiritists (those who either can or claim to contact the dead and spirit beings) should have no place among His people in passages such as Leviticus 19:31, 20:6, 27 and in Deuteronomy 18:9-14. Saul did this in his earlier days when he was still influenced by Samuel's leadership.

i. Things such as tarot cards, palm readers, horoscopes and Ouija Boards are modern attempts to practice forms of spiritism. They are dangerous links to the demonic, even if undertaken in a spirit of fun. Christians should have nothing to do with occultic arts or practices.

c. Then the Philistines gathered together, and came and encamped at Shunem: The geography of Shunem means that the Philistines made an aggressive attack against Saul and Israel.

i. "Shunem, in the Valley of Jezreel, was about twenty miles north of Aphek, the most northerly Philistine city. The fact that the Philistines had penetrated thus far gives an indication of their dominance over Saul's kingdom, and of their intention to press further east to the Jordan." (Baldwin)

d. When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly: Long before his downward spiral when Saul still walked in the Spirit, he was a man of great courage (as in 1 Samuel 11:6-11). Saul began to lose his courage when the Spirit withdrew from him (1 Samuel 16:14) and now after the death of Samuel his courage seems almost completely gone.

2. (6) God will not speak to Saul.

And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets.

a. When Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him: Saul was in a terrible place. The Philistines threatened, Saul's courage failed, and now God was silent when Saul sought Him. Saul hoped God would speak to him through dreams, but God was silent. He hoped God would speak to him through the Urim, but God was silent. He wanted to hear from God through the prophets, but God would not talk to Saul.

b. The Lord did not answer him: This silence demonstrates that God will not always answer everyone who seeks Him; not when a man is in a place of judgment as Saul is. King Saul has rejected and is currently rejecting God's previously revealed will. Since Saul didn't care to obey God in what he already knew, God will not give him more to know.

i. At the very least, Saul knew that God did not want him hunting David, hoping to kill him. Saul said as much in passages such as 1 Samuel 24:16-20 and 26:21. Yet Saul disregarded what he knew to be God's will in this matter. If we want God to guide us, we must follow what guidance we already have from Him.

ii. When we reject the word of the Lord we can still be comforted by the fact that He speaks to us. As we continue to reject His word He may stop speaking to us – and we will lose even that comfort.

B. Saul consults a spirit medium.

1. (7-8) Saul seeks out a medium.

Then Saul said to his servants, "Find me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her." And his servants said to him, "In fact, there is a woman who is a medium at En Dor." So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes, and he went, and two men with him; and they came to the woman by night. And he said, "Please conduct a seance for me, and bring up for me the one I shall name to you."

a. Find me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her: It wasn't easy to find a medium in the land of Israel because Saul had previously put them out of the land. So Saul asked his staff to find him one and they suggested a woman in the city of En Dor.

i. Traditionally, this woman is known as the Witch of Endor. It may be appropriate to call her a witch but it is more accurate to call her a medium or a necromancer – one who makes contact with the dead. The Hebrew word for medium is *owb*, and it has the idea of "mumbling" or speaking with a strange, hollow sound – as if one were "channeling," with a dead person speaking through them. The Hebrew word has in mind the sound the channel makes as they speak. The English word medium has in mind the concept of a channel – they stand in-between the world of the living and the dead, and communicate between the two worlds.

ii. "Endor was only a short distance away, on the north of the Hill of Moreh, and accessible despite the Philistine forces close by." (Baldwin) Endor was "located four miles northeast of Shunem and thus dangerously close to where the Philistines were encamped." (Youngblood)

b. Saul disguised himself . . . and he went: As Saul sought the medium he brought upon himself a curse. God said in Leviticus 20:6: And the person who turns after mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people.

c. Bring up the one I shall name for you: Saul will ask the medium to channel the deceased prophet Samuel. He did this because he wanted to know what God might say to him. Saul is like a man going to a palm reader to hear the will of God.

i. This shows the depth of Saul's fall from God, and how it affected his mind. He obviously isn't thinking clearly here. Once Saul rejected the truth, he was likely to fall for even the most foolish deception.

2. (9-10) Saul answers the suspicions of the medium.

Then the woman said to him, "Look, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the spiritists from the land. Why then do you lay a snare for my life, to cause me to die?" And Saul swore to her by the Lord, saying, "As the Lord lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing."

a. Why then do you lay a snare for my life, to cause me to die? The medium wondered if this was a government "sting" operation; but Saul assured her – swearing in the name of the Lord, no less – that she would not be punished.

b. Saul swore to her by the Lord: Saul's oath in the name of the Lord reminds us that spiritual jargon means nothing. As certainly as the Lord lives Saul was in complete disobedience and darkness. This is the last time Saul used the name of the Lord in the book of 1 Samuel and he used it to swear to a medium that she will not be punished.

3. (11-14) To the medium's surprise, Samuel appears.

Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" And he said, "Bring up Samuel for me." When the woman 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!" And the king said to her, "Do not be afraid. What did you see?" And the woman said to Saul, "I saw a spirit ascending out of the earth." So he said to her, "What is his form?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is covered with a mantle." And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground and bowed down.

a. Bring up Samuel for me: Why did Saul want to see Samuel? Considering the times Samuel strongly rebuked Saul (such as in 1 Samuel 15:22-29), we might think that Samuel was the last person Saul would want to see. Probably, Saul wanted to remember his "good old days" with Samuel, when the prophet was his guide and mentor (1 Samuel 9:25-26).

i. In the midst of his sin, depression and demonic influence, Saul forgot that Samuel was in fact his adversary when he slipped into sin (1 Samuel 13:13-14 and 15:22-29).

b. When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice: The medium was probably so shocked because she was a fraud, and most of her dealings with the spirit realm were mere tricks. Now Samuel really appeared from the world beyond and she was completely surprised to have a real encounter with the spirit realm.

i. In addition, we can say that this medium was familiar with the presence of demonic spirits but the presence of the Holy Spirit was probably unfamiliar to her. The holy presence of the Holy Spirit may have seemed terrifying to her. "The indications are that this was an extraordinary event for her, and a frightening one because she was not in control." (Baldwin)

c. Why have you deceived me? For you are Saul! The medium is also surprised because now she knew that she practiced her craft before the same king who drove out all the mediums and spiritists from Israel. She had reason to be afraid both of the real spiritual presence she saw and the king right beside her.

i. We are not told how the medium knew it was Samuel. It might have been something Samuel said when he first appeared. It might have been a word of supernatural knowledge, communicated to her either from God or from the world of the demonic.

d. And the woman said to Saul, "I saw a spirit ascending out of the earth." The Hebrew word translated by "spirit" in the New King James Version is actually the Hebrew word *elohim* – literally, "gods" but often applied to the One God in plural form. This indicates both the truth of the Trinity and God's greatness, which is indicated in Hebrew by the plural form. When the medium said she saw an *elohim*, she did not mean that she saw the One True God and she did not mean that Samuel was deified. Instead, speaking from her own pagan context, she called this appearing of Samuel an *elohim* because that was what it seemed to be in her pagan vocabulary. It was only she who called Samuel an *elohim*.

i. "She useth the plural number, gods, either after the manner of the Hebrew language, which commonly useth that word of one person; or after the language and custom of the heathens." (Poole)

e. Saul perceived that it was Samuel: However Samuel appeared, he was visible to both the medium and Saul. This wasn't a "crystal ball" appearance that only the medium could pretend to see. Nor was it a "voice in the dark" as in a séance. This was a real appearance of Samuel.

f. It was Samuel: This strange incident is controversial, and several different approaches have been used to understand this passage. Here are four of the most commonly suggested possibilities.

i. Some believe that this was a hallucination of the medium. But this doesn't make sense because it doesn't explain why the medium was so frightened. It doesn't explain why Saul also saw Samuel and why Samuel spoke to Saul, not to the medium.

ii. Some believe that this was a deception by the medium. But this also isn't an adequate explanation, for the same reasons given to the previous suggestion.

iii. Some believe that this was a demonic impersonation of Samuel. It is possible that the medium, with her occultic powers, summoned a demonic spirit that deceived both her and Saul. But this suggestion is also inadequate, because it does not speak to the issue of motive. After all, what advantage does Satan gain by "Samuel's" words to Saul?

iv. Some believe that this was a genuine (but strange) appearance of Samuel. This is the best explanation because it is supported by the reaction of the medium, who got more than she bargained for. It is also supported by the truth of what Samuel said (and the text says that Samuel said it). Some may say that it is impossible for Samuel to reappear in some way, coming from the world beyond back to this world. But Moses and Elijah also came from the world beyond back to this world when they appeared with Jesus at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:3).

v. Clarke makes an additional valuable point: "I believe that the woman of En-dor had no power over Samuel; and that no incantation can avail over any departed saint of God, nor indeed over any human disembodied spirit." Samuel really came, but not because the medium called for him. Samuel appeared because God had a special purpose for it.

g. It was Samuel: God allowed this strange appearance of Samuel because it accomplished two things. It reconfirmed the coming judgment upon King Saul in a dramatic way, and it taught the medium a powerful lesson about the danger of her occultic craft.

i. "I believe Samuel did actually appear to Saul; and that he was sent by the especial mercy of God to warn this infatuated king of his approaching death, that he might have an opportunity to make his peace with his Maker." (Clarke)

ii. When we close our ears to God He will find unusual – and perhaps uncomfortable – ways to speak to us. "That he did appear to Saul, there can be no question, but he did not come in response to her call. He was sent of God, for the express purpose of rebuking Saul for his unholy traffic with these evil things, and to pronounce his doom." (Morgan)

C. Samuel speaks to Saul.

1. (15-18) Samuel tells King Saul why the Lord will not speak to him.

Now Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" And Saul answered, "I am deeply distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God has departed from me and does not answer me anymore, neither by prophets nor by dreams. Therefore I have called you, that you may reveal to me what I should do." Then Samuel said: "Why then do you ask me, seeing the Lord has departed from you and has become your enemy? And the Lord has done for Himself as He spoke by me. For the Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David. Because you did not obey the voice of the Lord nor execute His fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore the Lord has done this thing to you this day.

a. Why have you disturbed me? Samuel's words would be in the mouth of anyone who left the place of comfort and blessing in the world beyond to come back to the earth. Samuel would rather be back where he was.

i. This is an indication to us of the reality of the world beyond. Though he passed from this world, Samuel was in a real place, living a real existence.

ii. Properly speaking, Samuel was not in heaven. Jesus explained in the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) that before the finished work of Jesus on the cross, the believing dead went to a place of comfort and blessing known as Abraham's bosom. When Jesus finished his work on the cross, sin's penalty was paid for these believing dead and they were then ushered into heaven.

b. I am deeply distressed: Saul explained his problem to Samuel. First, the Philistines make war against me. But far worse than that is the fact that Saul knows that God has departed from me and does not answer me any more. Saul then revealed why he called for Samuel: that you may reveal to me what I should do.

i. God has departed from me: "God never departs from a man until the man has departed from Him. Then, in the interests of righteousness, God is against that man." (Morgan)

ii. What I should do: "Saul is asking for guidance when his course of action is obvious: he has to fight the Philistines. What he really wants is reassurance that all will be well and that he will win the battle." (Baldwin)

c. Why do you ask me, seeing the Lord has departed from you and has become your enemy? Samuel was on the Lord's side, so if the Lord wouldn't tell Saul what he wanted, he didn't have any reason to believe that Samuel would tell him. Perhaps Saul kept seeking, hoping that the news would get better, but it never did.

d. As He spoke by me . . . the voice of the Lord: Essentially, Samuel confirmed what God already said to Saul. The message of the Lord to Saul is disturbingly consistent, no matter which strange way God chooses to bring the message.

i. The test for any “spirit encounter” or “angelic revelation” is its faithfulness to the Biblical message. It doesn’t matter what kind of impressive encounter one has with a spiritual being; even if an angel from heaven (or Samuel himself!) preach any other gospel to you . . . let him be accursed (Galatians 1:8).

e. Because you did not . . . execute His fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore the Lord has done this thing to you this day: Samuel called Saul’s mind back to what happened in 1 Samuel 15. In that chapter, Samuel told Saul “The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you . . . For He is not a man, that He should relent” (1 Samuel 15:28-29). Apparently, in the fifteen or so years since the events of 1 Samuel 15, Saul thought that perhaps the Lord would change His mind. Samuel told Saul that the Lord had not changed His mind at all.

i. Samuel makes this point exactly when he quotes from the 1 Samuel 15:28-29 passage with these words: For the Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David. God’s word to Saul didn’t change from the time He first said it until the time it would be fulfilled. Perhaps Saul thought that time would change God’s mind; but time never changes God’s mind. Our repentance and genuine brokenness may change God’s mind, but never time.

ii. When the medium saw Samuel, she said he was covered with a mantle. The mantle was probably Samuel’s robe, which would have identified him as both a prophet and a priest. In 1 Samuel 15:27, when Samuel announced that God would take the kingdom away from Saul, Saul grabbed Samuel’s robe in desperation. The Hebrew word used for robe in 1 Samuel 15:27 (meheel) is the same word used for mantle in 1 Samuel 28:14. It is likely that when Samuel appeared before the medium and Saul, he wore this same torn robe to remind Saul that the Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David.

2. (19) Samuel tells Saul about his fate.

“Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines. And tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The Lord will also deliver the army of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.”

a. Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me: Saul learned from Samuel that he would die the next day. In 1 Samuel 28:15, Saul asked to know what I should do. Samuel never told him what to do because it was too late to do anything. All Samuel told him was what would happen, and God’s judgment was already in motion.

i. Before this time, Saul had plenty of time to repent but now time has run out. We can never assume that we will have as much time as we want to repent. The desire and opportunity to repent are gifts from God. If we have the desire and the opportunity today we must seize upon it, because they may not be there tomorrow.

ii. You and your sons will be with me does not mean that Saul was going to heaven and be with the believing dead. In the story Jesus told in Luke 16:19-31, the blessed dead and the cursed dead were both in the same general area. The believing dead were in the place of comfort known as Abraham’s bosom but the cursed were in a place of torment. Saul would be in the same general area as Samuel, but not the same specific place.

b. The Lord will deliver Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines . . . you and your sons: When judgment fell upon Saul it would also trouble the people around him. His sons and all Israel would also suffer.

i. “Can any person read this, properly considering the situation of this unfortunate monarch, the triumph of the enemies of God, and the speedy ruin in which the godlike Jonathan is about to be involved, without feeling the keenest anguish of heart?” (Clarke)

D. Saul’s reaction and departure.

1. (20) Saul reacts with fear and a loss of all strength.

Then immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, and was dreadfully afraid because of the words of Samuel. And there was no strength in him, for he had eaten no food all day or all night.

a. Because of the words of Samuel: It wasn't just that Samuel told Saul that he would die or fall in battle before the Philistines. Far worse to Saul was the knowledge that the Lord was his adversary. Not only were the Philistines set against him, so was the Lord God. Knowing this was more than Saul could bear.

2. (21-25) The medium comforts Saul.

And the woman came to Saul and saw that he was severely troubled, and said to him, "Look, your maidservant has obeyed your voice, and I have put my life in my hands and heeded the words which you spoke to me. Now therefore, please, heed also the voice of your maidservant, and let me set a piece of bread before you; and eat, that you may have strength when you go on your way." But he refused and said, "I will not eat." So his servants, together with the woman, urged him; and he heeded their voice. Then he arose from the ground and sat on the bed. Now the woman had a fattened calf in the house, and she hastened to kill it. And she took flour and kneaded it, and baked unleavened bread from it. So she brought it before Saul and his servants, and they ate. Then they rose and went away that night.

a. The woman came to Saul and saw that he was severely troubled: It's a sad note when a practitioner of the occult comforts the King of Israel. But they were two of the same kind; each lived in rebellion to God, and each was under judgment from the Lord.

b. And they ate: The dinner Saul ate that night was like the last meal of a man on death row, waiting execution in the morning.

c. Then he rose and went away that night: Saul left this strange encounter resigned to his fate. "The additional information, that within twenty-four hours he and his sons would be dead, was no help at all to his morale. Indeed he would have been better without it. He did himself no good by doing what he had decreed to be unlawful. God's word stood and could not be altered. He should have believed it instead of thinking that by further consultation he could reverse its judgment. The Lord did not answer him, because there was no more to be said." (Baldwin)