



“Spirits of Blindness” 1 Samuel 28
by **Pastor Tim Dodson**
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It had been coming for a long time. Saul had ...*for several chapters in our time and several years in his*, been “unraveling.” This was more than just a 'bad day.' This was more than a mistake or a 'mis-step'. This was the

culmination...the fruition, of what began way back when pride became the controller of Saul's life. When self became primary and God became secondary in his decisions and his priorities. Some paths through this life have not changed throughout the ages, even in the passing of a couple of thousand years. Some decisions...some behaviors and priorities, lead today to the same place they led then...to the same place they have always led: *self destruction*. What we have been witnessing...*albeit ever so slowly*, is the inevitable unraveling of an individual who has turned away from not the acknowledgment of God or even who and what that God is, but the rejection of God's sovereignty over his or her living.

As is generally the case, it all started out fairly benign for Saul. But over time, one step led to another, and like dominos, Saul's life was on a perpetual and inevitable slide. Opportunities to turn around...to repent and return to God's graces were squandered, and now we find him in a place that he never would have imagined at the beginning of his journey. In a place that he is blind to see, even as he stands in the midst of it. Because being void of the Holy Spirit, the “eyes of soul” are closed, and Saul is unrecognizable as the man who God called...the man who used to stand 'head and shoulders' above every man in Israel.

Whitney Houston, Amy Winehouse, Robin Williams, John Bulushi, Michael Jackson, Chris Farley, Margeaux Hemingway, Kurt Cobain, River Phoenix, Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin. All of them were 'kings' in their own right, and died of suicide or overdose. Others who are still alive, whose self destructive behaviors have or are removing them from their thrones...Tiger Woods, Charlie Sheen, Mel Gibson, etc. Of course we might say that these...*as far as we know*, have never professed a faith in Christ. So what about believers? Jim Baker, Robert Tilton, Peter Popoff, Jimmy Swaggert, Tullian Tchividjian, as well as Lonnie Frisbee and Bob Coy from the Calvary movement. The list of such individuals would fill volumes...especially if we moved out of pop culture and into the realm of finance, business, or other lives.

Even around me in my small life, I have seen many individuals who were so very blessed in marriage, in family and in ministry opportunities, and their pride so blinded them that Satan arose and took from them what they were given through only the blessing and grace of God. People who had to have what God did not have for them, and in the fight they lost even what they *did* have and are living now in ministerial obscurity. Like Saul it seems, who was unaware that the Spirit's guidance had long since departed, the Spirit adhering to His promise to “share His glory with no man.”

Saul was that man. And through it all, God was gracious, and gave him numerous opportunities to repent and return to the Spirit's leading. However, Saul, *while having lucid moments of regret*, failed to truly repent and fall back under the guidance of the Spirit of God. And in the end, Saul's life would end in regret and shame, all do to greatest of sins: *Pride*.

Samuel, Saul's last pipeline to God, ...a God who would no longer answer Saul, was now dead. Apparently, in a desperate attempt no doubt to please Samuel, Saul ended all mediums and practices of the occult in Israel. The decree was that any person in Israel who was either involved in the occult, or even tapped into its practices were to be killed. Old Testament writings are clear on this issue. God did not want any of it in Israel, and rendered judgment and condemnation upon anyone who practiced such. These things were detestable to Jehovah. And so Saul obeyed God in this, but quite likely out of a wrong motivation. For he no doubt executed such in order to try to gain favor with Samuel. He does indeed rid the land fairly well of these elements, but now with Samuel having died, he is left without any line of communication to God .

Now, once again, the enemies have gathered ...as they inevitably do, and the text says Saul "*was afraid and his heart trembled greatly*." Perhaps he had heard that David and his boys were over there, or maybe it was just the spiritual quiet that endured in the midst of the crisis. But for sure, all 'communiqué' with the Lord had been lost. When Saul sought out the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams, or by prophets, or the usual channels of communication. *Saul was alone*.

It is in these moments, that our life is forever changed. Seldom do we look ahead...especially in such times of separation from God, to extrapolate just where our feet are taking us. When we are desperate for an answer...desperate for satisfaction, we are drifting and wanton in our behavior, and suddenly we find ourselves doing what we know in our hearts to be wrong, but we have excused our actions by claiming special circumstances. We find ourselves doing the very thing we condemned others for, and maybe that which we ourselves taught against and enforced when in play. We have "special permission" for a crisis situation. We'll 'clean it all up later' once we regain control of the playing field.

And invariably we then attempt to operate in 'stealth mode' so we might hide our guilty actions from those around us...those who are sure to judge our actions as outside of God. But we're not listening, and are quick to reject all familiar counsel as bias and unfeeling...they're all crazy and we're the only one who understands the truth and the facts. Necessity mandates this action, even if such is not of God. The "end will justify the means." All righteous legacy is lost. Our noble and honorable history erased in a moment of isolated panic.

Finding himself alone, afraid, and without counsel, Saul goes to a mystic, a medium of the occult, to hopefully find an answer to what he should do. "*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*." Again, Saul attempted to act "incognito" by trying to disguise himself...by trying to hide his actions from others. But God says our "...sins will find us out" in Numbers 32:23 and in Luke 12:2, "...there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known."

I remember a guy years ago that was amongst us here, that thought he would slip into a strip club that was a couple of counties away. After all, who could catch him there, right? But this guy was active in our jail ministry and in the midst of this scene a guy walked up to him and says "hey man...I know you...you used to come in to do church in the Dunn County jail when I was in there." Needless to say, there was a moment of 'living death' in his embarrassment.

Years ago when I was in college, I also nearly got nailed myself. I was attending a very restrictive religious school and a buddy of mine came down to Oklahoma to visit and brought his girlfriend and we went 50 miles away to Tulsa to pick up my old girlfriend at the airport. And we were walking through a HUGE parking lot...thousands of cars, and had cigarettes in our hands and suddenly it dawned on me that coming right at me between the same row of cars I was walking through, was the president of my college. I just knew I was a dead man! I tucked the cigarette up behind my palm, held it down and walked past him quickly with a quick "hello president Snook!" and I kept walking! I dodged that bullet but I never forgot the odds of that, nor what I heard in the form of a little giggle from my Lord!

Its funny how we think we can hide from a God who sees all, isn't it? Such only confirms just how blind we can become when we are 'on the run.' Saul was on the run. Scared and alone, but by his own doing, and the reckoning day had come.

The medium naturally and rightfully fears the consequences of her actions. And Saul...apparently now the proxy of God Himself, attempts to grant her what is not his to give. A "special dispensation" for her unholy activity. Saul tells her "*there shall no punishment come upon you for this thing.*" Well gee, thanks Saul! Who needs God when we have you! Such only manifests that he felt he could act without consequence and reprisal. He was "special" after all! He was "king." Surely we see that the greater the earthly status, the more apt we are to think we are so elite and outside of the rules that the rest of those around us have to follow. If that be true, then those of us who lead stand in the greatest danger, and if we forget that, it is likely that it is only a matter of time before we fall. We have seen even presidents act under such thinking in the past few years! Certainly I have seen those within the ministerial community fall to this personal sin more often than any other people group within the church. Thus it is not hard to fathom where the old adage was born..."*The bigger they are, the harder the fall.*"

The question is often asked when this passage is read: "Was that *really* Samuel?" I do not have the answer to that other than saying that the BIBLE says "*Samuel said...*", so I am led to believe it was. I do not pretend to understand the nuances of existence on the other side of death, other than what I read in scripture. I know that the mystic practices of divination and the occult is not fun and games and are not to be messed with by anyone, especially those who claim to belong to God! Those things in fact have a reality to them, and there are powers there that we are miniscule in comparison to.

Even in this, God again confirmed his judgment against Saul, with Samuel saying "...*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.*" (Verses 16-18) And the incredible aspect of this event, is that Saul was so lost, that even this did not ultimately deter him. Was he afraid? Yes. Did he temporarily regret and buckle under his remorse? Yes. But fear and regret is not the same thing as repentance! Saul did not "turn away" from his path, for he was indeed blinded by his pride.

How are we to receive this story before us? Is it just a ghost story for which we find no application in our personal lives? Perhaps. If we look at only this chapter without the context of those that preceded it, we are apt to quickly forget these words as merely some Old Testament scary story. But we know what led up to this, don't we? We have the context and we know the back story! And when we see our Christianity or even our lives in general, as a series of small disjointed events, we are apt to miss the bigger picture of what God is doing or *trying* to do in our lives.

When we see our lives as a journey...a classroom, where we make decisions and build therefore upon those decisions, we see that every aspect of our lives determines in some way, the next aspect. The decisions we make...the sins we commit, the lessons we learn from or do not, all of it casts a long shadow on tomorrow and the rest of our lives. God is so gracious. He is forgiving and restorative. But what stands between such and a life void of purpose and direction, is our pride. It all started way back in the garden when the first prideful decision was made and mankind has been plagued by self ever since. And it seems clear that the harder we fight for control, the more control slips away until we can be so very lost and desperate. What will it take to break you? How far will you go before you look back and see the road behind you and the fact that God is still there even if He has gone quiet?

No man or woman is ever safe from one's self. We are saved for more than want of salvation...we *need* salvation. Not just from sin, but from ourselves. Because no one has ever hurt you more than you have hurt yourself. It's been said that one must fight his way to hell, and I believe it. There is an eternal battle in all of us for the supreme position of our lives. And either HE is God, or we are. And sooner or later, we all find out, that we ourselves make a really rotten god...