

1 Samuel 27-31

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 May 2022

Preacher: Paul Levy

[0 : 00] I've got a Samuel, 27, 31. It's on page 249. Father in heaven, help us to learn the opposite,!

to what's all of it. Father, silence the word of God for yourself, and then to pay your eternal price. Give to us tonight as your people soft hearts and eager ears to hear your word in Jesus' name.

Amen. Can you imagine for a moment life without the word of God? Imagine that there was no Bible, that God spoke nothing to a word.

And you think that would be something of a relief in some ways. No words to trust, no risk to take, and no God to tell you what to do.

Nothing to make you feel guilty. I'm free from, I'm free from restraint. You'd spend your money in any way you like. Treat people how you like.

[1 : 25] You'd be grouchy all day, and never feel any obligation or apologize for anyone at home. You'll have sex in whoever you want. And you can build a fence, and you can tell God, you stay on your side of the fence, Lord, but on my side of the fence, I live my life in my way.

As I'm talking, you might think, well, that is exactly how I live my life anyway. Well, I'm glad you're here tonight, if that's the case, because that means you're not a Christian. And we really are glad that you're here. But what I want to do for us tonight, is explore the life of one man, who's systematically shut God out of his life.

It's my last sermon on one Samuel. I've really enjoyed grappling with it. I've kind of preached in a different way. I've kind of given up on points, which some of you might like, and some of you might hate.

And I've really enjoyed it. It's been really hard work. But early on in one Samuel, do you remember, we saw how God's people have asked God for a king.

They'd asked God for a king who will lead them into battle. They'd asked God for a king who will guarantee their future. It was a slap in the face of God himself. Why? Because he was their king.

[2 : 44] He is the king of kings. And they wanted to put their destiny, didn't they, in the hands of a human? Who they could see. And not a God who they couldn't see. Well, God warned them.

And then God gave them their request. He answered that prayer. And so he gave them a king, just like all the other nations, a king who was called Saul. A man who systematically rebelled.

A man who refused to hear and refused to obey the word of God. And at first, in Saul's career, we saw him picking and choosing which word he was going to obey. But by the end of his life, and we're now, right at the end of his life, he's pretty much progressively ignoring it all.

But it wasn't always like that. Look at verse 3 of Acts 27.

So, sorry, I'm trying to get you. Now, Samuel had died, and all Israel had warned of him, Samuel's the prophet, and buried him in the law in his own city.

[3 : 54] And Saul, well, at some point, he'd put the mediums, the spiritists, and the necromancers out of the land. At some point, he'd done that. He'd got rid of the spiritists.

But it's clear, as we read through one sound, that Saul's best days were way behind him. There is a brief moment where Saul, in his life, did what God had commanded him. He had, as the book of Deuteronomy expected, the king could do, to get rid of mediums, and spiritists, like King Solomon would do.

And Saul, like Solomon, started really, well, started well. And then he ended up so badly. And you'll notice, both Saul and Samuel are not to be found in Hebrews 11, the great hall of fame.

The Hebrews of faith. Because Saul's best days are behind him. So let me ask you, Jane, are your best days, the Christian, behind you? We often use that phrase.

You know what's some of the clues are? If ever you say, well, I've done my bit. I've served hard for 10 years, but that's enough.

[5 : 05] Now it's somebody else's turn. I'm told that, in the UK, it isn't so few, but I'm told that there's a crisis, because people, who have done ministry for years, took a break during COVID, and now you don't want to go back.

Someone else's turn. And I think that's usually a sign, that you ought to worry, because, because, if you are saying, well, I've done my bit, it's time for someone else.

If you're fed up doing what you're doing, it may be time, for you to serve in another ministry, because we are saved to serve, isn't it? We have been blessed, so we are blessed to others.

And so consistently, deliberately, resist the urge to think, that you can put your Christian life on hold, or in neutral. I'm not talking about if you're sick, or if you're burnt out.

I'm not talking about the exception to the rule, but God is actually giving you His Spirit, and He is transforming you, from one glory, one degree of glory, to another.

[6 : 17] And so from the moment, that you say yes to Jesus Christ, to the day you breathe your last, breath, He wants you to serve. And He doesn't want you to serve well, for the first ten years, He wants you to progressively, grow more and more like Jesus Christ, day in, day out, here in, and so your best days, as a Christian, must always be in front of you.

Even if you find yourself, at 95 in a nursing home, shut in, and all you can do, is pray through the prayers. You can pray for the church, that you can no longer, physically attend.

But please make sure, it's right, that your best days, as a Christian, are in front of you. So we'll find out, if you reject, God's word consistently, if you keep saying to God, consistently, I will not listen, you will find, that there is no God, to come for you, and no God, to speak to you.

And in chapter 28, He's now at a point, where He's about to face, an enemy, it is long standing, in ever since the Philistines, they've regrouped, in the valley of Jezreel, and they are outnumbered, and they are outclassed, and they are outgunned, and Israel is in massive trouble.

And it would be alright, if David was there, because David, God was with David, but actually, David is now hiding, amongst the Philistines, because Saul, has tried to kill him.

[7 : 48] And in verse 5, of chapter 28, we see that when, Saul saw the eye, of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart, trembled greatly.

It always happens, when you shake God, out of your life, you are left, to your own resources. And you know, and I know, that your own resources, are one enough.

I can think of one man, on his deathbed, who was a professor, who in his healthier days, pronounced that there is no God, pretty defiantly, in the dead.

But on his deathbed, with cancer, in the face of the enemy of death, I quote, he was like a sterile boy, afraid to have his own wife, leave him. And Saul, is desperately afraid.

And so he seeks out, a word from the very God, he has rejected. And what you get now, is the piercing silence, of God's own, verse 6, 28.

[8 : 58] And when Saul, inquired of the Lord, the Lord, did not answer. He did not answer him, either by dreams, or by the Hebrew, or by the prophets.

And so by this stage of his life, King Saul has deliberately silenced, every avenue, for God to speak to him. He consistently disobeyed God, which meant, God had removed his spirit from him, and given it to David.

Which meant now, that God was not directly speaking to him. Those God-given dreams, were now over, till you get them anymore.

Saul had consistently, half-heartedly, responded, to the word of God, through Samuel. So then in the end, Samuel has nothing to do with Saul.

And anyway, Samuel is dead now, so that happening, has been shut down. Saul has wiped out, do you remember, he wiped out the 85 priests, and what was the job of the priest? The job of the priest, was to teach the word of God, Saul and the Thuram.

[10 : 04] And the Eurim and the Thuram, they're basically, a means by which, God guided the kings of Israel, through the priest. And since Saul had wiped out, any five of them, that kind of, avenue of guidance, was shut down.

There's only one left, his name was Abiathar the priest, but he was with David. So can you see what's happened, in the course of 1 Samuel, is that Saul has basically, gagged God.

So when the enemy comes, and he knows his future is uncertain, now he becomes desperate, desperate for a word from God. He's desperate to get God to speak.

Not because he wants to know, the will of God, but only because he wants to know the future. And that's the difference, isn't it? That's, that's what horoscopes, really are about.

If you look at horoscopes, and that whole world, which, which remember, is really a kingdom of darkness. The thing about horoscopes, is it allows you to want to know, the future, without ever really wanting, to know God.

[11 : 14] And that is deeply offensive to God. You want to know the future, but you don't want to know, the God who controls the future. It's really a way, of not having to trust him.

To find access, to information, without actually having to refer to him, and repent. So Saul, now seeks a medium, a clairvoyant, a spiritist, a channeler of the spirits, a woman who contacts the dead.

In the verse seven, Saul, then said to his servants, seek out for me a woman, who is a medium, that I may go to her, and inquire of her. And his servant said, if he holds, there's a medium, an end all.

If your life, is all about you, then any word will do. And Saul, only wants to know the future, because he's only interested, in protecting himself. And the main character, in Saul's life, is Saul.

And so, it's been said, that if you believe in nothing, you'll end up falling for anything. And Saul is now falling for anything. He's calling the spiritists.

[12 : 28] He's got those little cards, that that person hands out, outside Eden Broadway. He's knocking on the door, of the Spiritist Church, on X-Bridge Road. But it's a paradox here, isn't it?

What does he want to do? He wants to contact, a medium, which the word of God, has been given. And that he himself, is to remove from Israel, so that he can speak, to a dead prophet, who he never listened to.

To hear a word, that isn't going to be near anyway. So the whole process, kind of violates, the thing that he's doing. It's mixed religion, isn't it?

Which is technically, called synchronicism. So I got into an Uber, the other day, and Uber driver, he had a cross, and a fluffy dice, hanging from his mirror.

And I wanted to say to him, which is it? Which is it you're trusting in? Is it the Lord or luck? The person who's praying, to the Lord Jesus, for a relationship, which is a good thing.

[13 : 35] And then they come to see, if their prayer is answered, by flicking through the horoscope, to see whether God, is going to provide, I told our handsome stranger, this week, the stranger of your dreams, or walk into your life.

Which is it? You trusting God, or the lighting up of the planets? People sometimes surprise you, don't they?

People dabble, that sort of thing. You should have heard that person. They knew my story. They knew exact details, which they couldn't have known, without it being true.

But of course, it's demonic. And of course, they will have access, to that information. As Christians, we shouldn't be impressed by that. We shouldn't be surprised by it. It's not as if the Bible, doesn't speak about it, doesn't it?

Do you remember, the Apostle Paul, was preaching in Philippi, and the slave girl, has got a demonic spirit, and she can actually, read the future, and the moment he casts, the demon out of her, she's of no use, to her own it.

[14 : 45] And they get really upset, because they've lost, the ticket to some serious income. And so it happens. Don't be surprised, by darkness, and evil. Just nothing will do with it.

Now, Saul, what Samuel, the prophet, the speaker, that is the irony, when Samuel was alive, Saul never bothered to listen to her. But now that he's dead, Saul wants to hear from him.

And as Samuel is brought up, in this kind of seance, in what form, we don't know, and he's brought up, to speak a word, and he falls flat on the ground, as he hears the word, verse 16.

Why then do you ask me, since the Lord has turned from you, and become your enemy, the Lord has done to you, as you spoke by me, for the Lord has turned, torn the kingdom out of your hand, and given it to your neighbour David, because you did not obey, the voice of the Lord, and you did not carry out, his fierce wrath against Amalek.

Therefore, the Lord has done this thing, to you to this day. Moreover, the Lord will give Israel, also with you, into the hand of the Philistines. And tomorrow, 24 hours, you and your sons, will be with you. The Lord will give the army of Israel, also into the hand of the Philistines.

[15:56] There's no new word there. That's nothing that Saul has not heard before. The only thing different, is the timing, 24 hours. You Saul, you and your boys, even the godly Jonathan, will be in the place of the dead, tomorrow, Cheryl.

In the Old Testament, it often speaks of the place of the dead, as Cheryl. Jesus Christ brought life, and immortality to light.

There's a haziness, in the Old Testament, that is crystal clear in the deal. And Samuel is saying, Saul, you and your boys, will be joining me, in the place of the dead.

It's the place, the righteous and the unrighteous, both of them. Awaiting the final age of the dead. Once the judgment happens, there'll be no second chances.

There'll be no chance to repent. You know that, don't you? And when the judgment of God comes, all the annuities in the world, are going to be too late. That'll be the time, when the verdicts are handed out.

[17:07] Not when the decisions, are being worked out. So what does Saul do, with this final word? The Anglican Prayer, it's got a little phrase in it, that says, good Lord, deliver us from unexpected death.

There is a sense, where it's always nice to know, when it's going to happen, so you can be prepared. That's not always the case.

But in, a sense, every single human being, needs to live, as though, any moment, might be their last moment. So are you ready, to be your maker?

Are you ready, if it was today? If it was five minutes from now, if it was 24 hours from now, are you ready, to stand before the judge, of all the earth, and the earth, and the earth?

Well, Saul knows, doesn't he? He's got 24 hours, he's got a window, of opportunity. But what does he do, with this final word? Absolutely nothing.

[18:24] Absolutely nothing. So close to death, and yet, not even a hint of repentance. Not a hint of it. I was talking to a taxi driver, not the Uber driver, but the guys.

This guy was, in his 70s, he was not a, particularly a picture of health, I think that's a kind way, of putting it. He certainly doesn't have, too many decades left in it.

You know, I'm talking about, what I did, about Christianity, and he said to me this, he said, I always thought, Christianity was for young people. Very strange, because when I talk to young people, they say, oh, I always thought, Christianity is for older people.

If it's not for you, when will it be? I didn't say it, but I wish I'd said to him, listen mate, you don't look like, you've got many years left, in front of you.

And for Saul, having the kingdom back, was not going to be an option. It had gone to David. But having your soul back, was.

[19:39] And so I have to tell you, there are kings, that we'll probably get to study, over the next couple of years. There have been kings, in the Bible, that have been as bad, if not worse than Saul. And that is not what sets them apart.

So if you know anything, about the story of the kings, of Israel, you go to somebody like Manasseh, and Manasseh is a nasty piece of work, he's a horrible man. I mean, unlike Saul, he actually worshipped other gods, and then unlike Saul, he actually offered, his own child, as a human sacrifice, for those other gods.

You kind of get to the bottom, of the barrel, with Manasseh. He's the piss, he's the worst of men, he's the worst of kings. But even Manasseh, blinded, hooked, dragged to Babylon, in his prison cell, cried out to a godly defender.

And God heard his cry. But not so with Saul. Not a hint of mercy. And the story of Saul, interestingly, concludes, as you may or may not know, if you keep reading on Samuel, that like Judas, Saul will completely harden his own heart.

And he'll take his own life. He'll fall on his own sword, the very sword, that he and Israel, had trusted in. To save them. How tragic.

[21:11] We want a king like all the other nations, and he took his life. The story of Saul, concludes actually with the banquet. He's fed his need, the end of 28, by a medium from Endor.

There's something about it, that I can't help but think of, the Apostle Paul, who said, if there is no resurrection, from the dead, well then, let us eat, and drink, and the foreign one.

And so here he is, 1 Samuel 28, eating and drinking, and 24 hours, and 18 seconds. Falls on his own sword. Forsaken by God and man, Saul, a man cursed by God.

And only because he kept, resisting, the word of God. Saul is to me, I think, a walking picture of Helen, itself. That, you see, he starts hardening, his heart, shutting down, the word of God in his life.

He's a tormented figure, in self-imposed exile. He's in torment, as he tries to silence, and gag God. And when he came to the crunch, when he desperately needed God, to comfort him, God wasn't there.

[22 : 30] And so to be abandoned by God, is the greatest curse of all, is that? It's hell. I think, even as Christians, we get a momentary, glimpse of that sometimes.

I think there are times, I can think back in my own experience, I'm sure you can, when we consciously walk into sin. We deliberately know it's sin, we deliberately do it.

And we are aware, that God has withdrawn, his felt presence from us. That real, acute sense of God saying, I love you, but you are not going to get, the comfort of my fellowship, and my friendship, why do you are in this disobedience state?

Why does God do that? He does that, so we will tell ourselves, I'm never going to do that, we can help you. That after the joy of being brought, into his presence, of knowing him as my father, of knowing you as my brothers and sisters, I'm not going to numb myself, with sin, I shut myself out. It's a taste, it's a taste of hell. It wasn't that, that I wasn't a Christian, in that state, it was just that I was disobedient, when I'm paying the price for it.

[23 : 59] Maybe you know it from another angle, maybe there have been times, maybe there have been times, long seasons perhaps, and you've not meditated on the word of God.

You've kind of given out, reading it, and you've withdrawn yourself, from the fellowship, and friendship of God's people. And what you've done, is you've turned down the volume, haven't you, on God.

You might have even clicked the moon button. You've done your own silence, and you've got the gagging of God. And so in the end, the only thing that you can hear, is what? The words of men and women, in the culture we live in.

And you have a sense, as if the blood has departed. But it's you, you're the one that can press the button, you're the one that turned the volume down, you're the one that walked away. And so can I say, really simply to you tonight, if you're in that situation tonight, if you get into that situation, there's only one place to go, and that's to run into the arms of the Lord Jesus.

He doesn't sit on a throne of grace for nothing. You know the downside of silence in God, is that you fail to hear him say to you, I loved you when you were at your worst.

[25 : 23] I forgive you, even when you broke my heart. And the truth is, if you silence God, what happens is you read from yourself.

And you miss out on the words like this, I am in control of the universe, so even when things are out of control, and even when you're really struggling with anxiety, I've got your back. And when times can be tough for you, if you silence God, you're left alone in this universe.

With no one to you, crying, and it is a torment of an experience. Maybe that's how some of you are here tonight, and it's really great that you're here.

It's good that you're hearing God's words are rarely preached. Saul here is such a contrast, he's such a contrast to David, that he can create a contrast in the Lord Jesus.

Let me take up on one contrast. Saul has systematically, consistently rejected God's word.

[26 : 37] And then at the end of his life, he normally takes his own life, and the Philistines grab his body, they chop off his head, and they pin him to the wall of the Philistine temple. He's left there, it's a picture of cursiveness.

But there's another man cursed in the Bible, the Lord Jesus. And he is cursed by his father. Why is he cursed by his father?

He's cursed by his father because he obeyed his father. As they strung out his body on the cross, there, the Lord Jesus takes your sin, and your shame, and your guilt, and he is there as our sins have stated.

That the righteous and the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God. He experiences the full judgment of God as the darkness sets in. On the face of God the Father, he's withdrawn from him. So what's the name of Christ? My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why? Why? Because he became your sins and mine. Jesus experienced the horror of hell at the cross for us.

[27 : 44] I think I've used this illustration once before, and I use it really sparingly. So can you imagine, those of you who are not in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, do you know what kind of picture awaits you?

My prayer is that by the end of this sermon, by the end of tonight, you will decide to turn back to Jesus. Here's how one writer puts it. Imagine that waking up from death, you discover that you are in hell.

He'd never felt such a loneliness before. Where is my wife, he took? There's only an awful echo. Not here.

Your wife is not here. He tried to piece it all together, but the darkness was too thick. Once in a while, he thought he could see a blurred figure, hear an anguished moan.

He remembers the pain of those last moments of terror, but it was nothing compared to the fear that was creeping into his awareness. Once again, he cried, where is my wife? Your wife is not here.

[29 : 00] Where are my children? My children are not here. Your children are not here. He started to grow up about in the darkness, but all was blindness.

My God, he hallowed again. Let me feel the presence of one single human being. My God. He hadn't said those words in such a long time.

My God. Oh, how they felt so empty and hollow. Terror was welling up inside of him like a small child, threatened by the deep, deep darkness. No candles anywhere.

No light anywhere. No voice anywhere. Where is my wife, he screamed? Your wife is not here. Where are my children, he screamed?

Your children are not here. Then the greatest fear came into his mind. His whole body trembled as he wailed into the nebulous night. Where, oh where is God? And as the deepest of all darkness closed in around his sorrowful eternity, he heard the hideous, echoing, whispering, the most horrifying of judgments.

[30 : 08] God is not here. And so in this church, we're not playing games. God is not here.

And there is a hell in Israel. But it does not have to have you in it. It does not have to have you in it. Because Jesus, if I could put it like this way, the words of the people, he went to hell for you. And so what is stopping you from embracing the saviour who went to hell for you?

Who experienced that? What could be more important to you? What could be more important to you that you would actually let it keep you from the saving arms of the one who entered into the experience of hell?

taking upon himself every judgment that you deserve so that you never need to hear those words that God is not here.

[31 : 17] And so today has got to be the day. Today has got to be the day when you come to finally, ultimately, and you take the hand of the saviour who lived in.

The Bible says this, God takes no delight in the death of the saviour. He longs for all people to be saved.

And he calls you, he calls you to come to him now. To come to him. Let not in another minute pass. Come to him. Pray with me. Let not in any

