

1st Samuel Chapter 28 – John Karmelich

1. My title for this lesson is “God’s will for our lives and God’s judgment”.
 - a) This is about the fourth or fifth lesson where I emphasize the topic of “God’s will for our lives. I have to admit, when I first started writing commentary on 1st Samuel, I didn’t expect this to be a series about learning God’s will. It just happened that way. ☺
 - b) What this lesson focuses upon is the fact that God does judge us. There is a limit to God’s patience with disobedience. We don’t know what that specific time limit is, but it’s there.
 - c) The past lessons of “God’s will” focused on what we have to do and not do to be in God’s will at any given moment. In a sense, this chapter is different. It is about God saying, “OK, you can only be disobedient to me for so long and time’s up. It’s judgment time!”
 - d) Let’s start with the question, does God judge people hear on earth?
 - i) Yes He does. He judges nations as well. Our problem is we never know if something bad happening is a judgment by God or not. Unfortunately there are too many “Pharisees” around assuming every disaster is judgment by God.
 - ii) I do believe disasters do serve some ultimate purpose for believers. That is the idea behind Paul’s statement in Romans 8:28 how “all things work for good”.
 - iii) Further, God often allows bad things to happen to us to get our attention. Let’s face it, we pray more when we’re hurting then when things are going well.
 - e) The specific issue here has to do with judgment by God for a lack of obedience.
 - f) In this lesson, Saul learns he will die an untimely death the next day. The reason is because of disobedience to God. God judged Saul and pronounced sentence.
 - g) Before you say this is just an “Old Testament thing”, in the New Testament Book of Acts, there was a husband and wife that lied to the apostles about how much money they sold their house for, with the proceeds being given as a donation to the church. This couple was not required to make this donation. Their sin was lying about how much money they got for their house. Peter predicted that couple would die in a matter of moments. God “struck them dead” pretty much on the spot. (Acts 5:1-11).
 - h) My point is God does judge people. It doesn’t mean we are to go around asking that sinners be struck dead. ☺ It’s amazing how we have senility when it comes to our sins and great memory recall of other people’s sins. ☺
2. Christians tend to get confused on the issue of judgment.
 - a) On one hand, Jesus said, “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” (Matthew 7:1-2, NIV) To paraphrase: “Hey folks, what goes around, comes around. Have mercy on others just as God has mercy on you for your faults.”
 - b) At the same time, Jesus did judge other’s behavior. He condemned the Pharisees on a regular basis for their behavior. The apostles judged lots of people in the Book of Acts.
 - c) When someone says, “You shouldn’t judge people”, they think it is an end-all to an argument. My response is usually, “What’s wrong with judging? In fact you’re judging me with your statement of “don’t judge”.
 - d) So should we “judge” or “not judge” others?
 - i) When it comes to salvation, I don’t believe we should ever judge. Our job is to be witnesses for God. It is “His problem” as to who spends eternity with Him.
 - ii) We don’t get points for everyone who gets saved because we said something to them. Our job is to be a witness for God and then let God work on their hearts.

- e) When it comes to behavior, I do believe it is proper to judge. The key is to do it with tact and with a loving heart. When you get aggressive, people get defensive. To make statements about one's behavior in a submissive, loving way goes a lot farther.
 - i) For example, one could say, "You know, what you said awhile ago really hurt. I'm not saying I'm a better person than you, but I know that you're capable of being a much better person..."
 - f) Tying this back to 1st Samuel, Chapter 28 is mostly about Saul and judgment. Most of the chapter focuses on Saul and the fact that he gets a judgment pronouncement on him by God, as spoken through the prophet Samuel.
3. Chapter 28, Verse 1: In those days the Philistines gathered their forces to fight against Israel. Achish said to David, "You must understand that you and your men will accompany me in the army." ² David said, "Then you will see for yourself what your servant can do." Achish replied, "Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life."
- a) Every now and then I ponder, who picked the chapter breaks and why? When the text was originally written, there were no chapter breaks. Those were added around the 12th Century AD. I want to meet the person who made those decisions and ask them what they were thinking. ☺
 - i) I say this because Verses 1 and 2 fit real well with Chapter 27.
 - ii) They have almost nothing to do with the remainder of Chapter 28.
 - iii) With that pessimistic introduction, ☺ let me talk about these two verses.
 - b) To recap Chapter 27, David got tired of being on the run, and moved to Philistine country.
 - i) Chapter 27 stated he was living amongst the Philistines a total of 16 months.
 - ii) David, his 600 men, their wives and kids, lived essentially by themselves out in the country. They would go raid the enemies of Israel. They would bring part of the spoil to the local Philistine king as a tribute ("taxes"). David would imply that he was really killing Israelites in order to impress the Philistines. David would kill everyone in the raids as to not leave a witness.
 - iii) None of this was good. This is a period of time of a lapse of faith in David's life.
 - c) By the first Verse of Chapter 28, David had "sunk so low", that the local king of the Philistines, named Achish asked David to join him in battle against Saul.
 - i) I suspect this was a real temptation for David and his men. They spent a good portion of their adult life on the run from Saul.
 - ii) This was also a good deal for King Achish. The king figured David knew Saul and Saul's battle strategies. Having David on his side would be beneficial in battle.
 - d) The story of David joining the Philistine army will continue in Chapter 29.
 - i) The story is "interrupted" as the rest of Chapter 28 changes its focus to Saul.
 - e) If I had to ponder why these verses were included in Chapter 28, as opposed to Chapter 27, it is because Chapter 28 is all about the consequences of not being obedient to God.
 - i) David was told he would be king one day. He was never told to flee to Philistine country for "safety". This is David running away from his problems. David had a time of "peace and safety", which was roughly 16 months. Then David had to face the reality that he had sunk so low in his relationship to God that now he was being asked to go fight against his own Israelite brothers.
 - ii) The main story of this chapter has to do with Saul. We are going to read of the final days of Saul's life due to his lack of obedience to God.
 - iii) The two stories tie together as they are both examples of the "results" of a lack of obedience to God in our lives.
 - f) OK, onto the main story, which begins in Verse 3.

4. Verse 3: Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in his own town of Ramah. Saul had expelled the mediums and spiritists from the land.
- a) Samuel died back in the first verse of Chapter 25. So why was it mentioned here again?
 - i) This verse is not to mark the date of Samuel's death, but to state the spiritual condition of the Nation of Israel at this time.
 - b) This verse is saying in effect, "Our recent spiritual leader Samuel is dead and the whole nation mourned for him." At the same time, the occultists were expelled from Israel.
 - c) This is as good a time as any to talk about "mediums and spiritists".
 - i) First, let's be blunt about what this is. This is about the practice of "speaking" to dead people. The modern term is "channelers". Part of the New Age practice is the ability to "channel" the voice of people who have lived in the past. There is nothing new about this moment. It is as old as the bible.
 - ii) Let's see what the Old Testament says about "mediums and spiritists":
 - a) "Do not allow a sorceress to live." (Exodus 22:18)
 - b) Don't let the word "sorceress" fool you. It is the same idea as mediums.
 - iii) Let's see what the New Testament says about "mediums and spiritists":
 - a) "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft.... I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God". (Galatians 5:19-20 NIV)
 - b) "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Rev. 21:8 NIV)
 - iv) There are some issues in the bible that are debatable. When it comes to issues like sorcery, witchcraft, mediums, etc. the bible is real clear. If you don't believe the bible is the word of God, that is a different issue. If you happen to believe the bible is the Word of God, then such practices are forbidden for believers in God.
 - v) As an American, I do believe in free speech and freedom of expression. I don't believe in capital punishment for such practices. At the same time, if you are a practicing Christian, you should have nothing to do with this.
 - vi) Let's talk about the "why" question. Why is such practice forbidden?
 - a) In a sense it doesn't sound so bad. Let's say someone you love recently died. If you could still talk to them, you could resolve some things that were never said and be comforted by them.
 - b) I believe the key issue is God wants us to look to Him for guidance. If we are talking to the dead, you are focusing on looking to others for guidance.
 - vii) Does God allow Satan the power to "channel" the dead?
 - a) First of all, there are a lot of scam artists out there. Many people don't have any power at all, demonic or otherwise.
 - b) Do "some" have this power? The answer could be yes. First of all, God wants us, out of our own free will to choose Him. In order to know if our choice is genuine, God allows Satan all sorts of "tempting powers" to turn us away from Him. Those temptations have to be "tempting" (for a lack of a better word) in order for us to learn to choose right from wrong.
 - c) Does that mean that people with such power secretly worship Satan? Do they have closets with statues to the devil? ☺ No.
 - (1) The point is they have no idea "what they're messing with".
 - d) Christians are also taught to avoid "entry points" into such spiritual worlds. This includes playing with Ouija boards and going to séances.

- e) There are case studies of people who have become demon possessed. It usually begins being when they play with “entry points” into such worlds.
 - f) My point is that many who are in this profession are harnessing satanic powers even though they don’t realize it.
 - viii) Meanwhile, back in 1st Samuel. ☺
 - d) Of all people, Saul expelled these mediums from Israel. What motivated Saul to do this is unknown. Maybe he figured “Well, if the “good” spiritual leader Samuel is dead, we need to rid the land of “bad” spiritual people as not to have a corrupting influence. For what it is worth, Saul might have made the right decision.
 - i) The point of this verse is that Saul himself will consult a medium in a matter of verses. It shows another point of the lack of Saul’s obedience when he goes back against his own commands to get a medium for himself.
5. Verse 4: The Philistines assembled and came and set up camp at Shunem, while Saul gathered all the Israelites and set up camp at Gilboa. ⁵ When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid; terror filled his heart.
- a) If you know your geography and history, this verse will make a little more sense.
 - i) The Philistines had a military advantage over the Israelites in that they had chariots and the Israelites did not.
 - ii) Horses and chariots only give you an advantage on flat terrain. Much of Israel is hillside country. If a battle takes place in a steep terrain with a narrow bottom (like where David fought Goliath), then chariots do not have an advantage.
 - iii) The place where the Philistines assembled was flat terrain. Further, it cut off Saul from the northern-most tribes and Saul had a smaller army.
 - b) Here we read again of the words “Saul” and “fear” together in the same sentence.
 - i) If you’ve been following the story of 1st Samuel, since the early chapters, this is a common association.
 - ii) I’ve stated that the opposite of faith is fear. When one gets their focus on their problems and not on God, is when fear comes into play.
 - iii) Saul did not say for example, “Well, God will protect His people and He has anointed me as their leader. Who cares where the Philistines are specifically located? Let’s go attack them!” Instead, he focuses on the military advantage of the Philistines and his fear of losing.
 - iv) In organized sports, if you can put fear into your opponent before the game begins, it is over before it starts. That is the case here with Saul.
 - v) Remember that the attitude of the leaders will reflect the others as well. If Saul gets scared, I’m sure his soldiers will as well.
6. Verse 6: He inquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him by dreams or Urim or prophets.
- a) Saul did what most people do when they get scared. They start praying.
 - b) This reminds me of a classic bumper sticker: “As long as there are math tests, there will be prayer in school!” ☺ That is the attitude of many unreligious people toward prayer. It is the last resort when all of their resources fail.
 - c) Here is Saul in a tough situation and he can’t think of a way to get out of it. Therefore, as a last resort, he turns to God for help.
 - d) The attitude of the Christian should be the opposite. Jesus taught to “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matthew 6:33 NIV) “These things” include all the needs of our lives (not all our “wants” but all our “needs”). The point is God wants us to seek Him first, not last.

- e) Let's get into some of the specific's here:
 - i) God did not answer Saul by dreams. Saul probably went to bed and said, "Lord, answer me in a dream what I should do here". He probably woke up morning after morning and couldn't remember his dreams.
 - ii) The next thing Saul tried is the "Urim". A great mystery of the Old Testament is what exactly is the "Urim and the Thummim". (References: Exodus 28:30, Leviticus 8:8, Numbers 27:21, et.al.) Most likely they were dice like objects used to discern God's will.
 - a) (The Mormon's argue the Urim and the Thummim were special glasses given to Joseph Smith to discern the bible. There is zero biblical or external evidence to support this theory, but I digress. ☺)
 - iii) What probably happened is Saul asked a question, and the "Urim" said "yes". Saul tried it again and the "Urim" said "no". In other words, there was no consistency in the answers to discern it was God's will.
 - iv) The final thing Saul tried was to find a prophet.
 - v) Saul may have had some guy on his payroll. Most likely that person or persons could not give Saul any special revelations.
 - f) In summary, God was silent here. We'll get to the "why" in a matter of verses.
 - i) I should add that I believe God answers all of our prayers. When we get "silence", the answer could be either "no" or "not now". In Saul's case, the answer was in a sense "no" to his questions due to a lack of obedience in His life.
7. Verse 7: Saul then said to his attendants, "Find me a woman who is a medium, so I may go and inquire of her." "There is one in Endor," they said.
- a) Saul couldn't get answers from God, so he went to look for a medium.
 - b) In Verse 9, we'll discover that not only were mediums expelled from the land, but also it was a death sentence to practice such a thing in Israel. Saul was enforcing the command as stated in Exodus Chapter 22.
 - c) It is interesting that there just "happened" to be on in Endor, a town in Israel. If you've ever heard the term, "The witch of Endor", that comes from the King James Version of this passage of the bible.
 - d) Whoever this person was, she was willing to risk her life in order to keep her practice. It shows the enticement of its power that people are willing to practice it.
 - e) What caught my attention was somebody in the throne-room "happened" to know of such a medium. Did the palace guards search and find this person, or did they happen to know one? It also shows that if you're willing to go the occult route, there is always someone willing to help you get there.
 - f) What's the application of all of this for us?
 - i) God designed us with a need to worship Him. The same way we have a need for food, shelter, air, etc. we also have a need to worship God. If we ignore God, there are substitutes available. One of those choices is the occult world.
 - ii) For most nonbelievers, they choose other things to worship other than God. Find out where a person spends most of their spare time and spare income, and you'll usually find their "god".
 - iii) "Instead of believing what they knew was the truth about God, they deliberately chose to believe lies. So they prayed to the things God made, but wouldn't obey the blessed God who made these things." (Romans 1:25, The Living Bible)
 - iv) The application for believers is that when God is "silent", we are to still trust in God despite the circumstances around us. Remember that God tests us. Part of that testing is difficult times and times where we don't "sense" God helping us.

8. Verse 8: So Saul disguised himself, putting on other clothes, and at night he and two men went to the woman. "Consult a spirit for me," he said, "and bring up for me the one I name."
- a) Let's face it. If Saul went to a medium in "official garb", no medium would help him knowing this was a death sentence.
 - b) This shows how low of a spiritual state Saul was sinking to disguise himself to go find someone performing an ungodly practice that he personally outlawed. So Saul got one of those fake rubber noses and plastic rim glasses and went on his way. ☺
 - c) Saul did the "religiously correct" thing and outlawed mediums. He then failed to "walk the walk and talk the talk" and disobeyed his own commands.
 - i) If I had to pick one word to describe the Christian life, it would be obedience.
 - ii) The word "repent" means to change one's lifestyle.
 - iii) Are we saved by faith alone? Of course. What good is that faith unless we act upon it? The classic example is the elevator. If you have faith the elevator can hold your weight, how will anyone believe you unless you get in that elevator?
 - iv) My point for you and I is nonbelievers look at our behavior far more than any and all words that come out of our mouth.
 - v) What do we do when we mess up? Start by confession. God doesn't expect perfection, but he does expect obedience and to confess when we fail. If you want to be good witness to your neighbor, apologize for your bad actions and say it was wrong of me to do that. That action can go a lot farther than quoting the bible!
9. Verse 9: But the woman said to him, "Surely you know what Saul has done. He has cut off the mediums and spiritists from the land. Why have you set a trap for my life to bring about my death?"
- a) If you were a medium in a town where it was a death sentence to do so, you're not going to hang sign outside your door saying, "Channeling available here - \$20 per hour". ☺
 - b) This woman practiced secretly and had to check out potential new customers and make sure they are not "the police". Essentially she is asking, "Is this a sting operation?"
10. Verse 10: Saul swore to her by the LORD, "As surely as the LORD lives, you will not be punished for this."
- a) You have to see the irony in Verse 10: Saul is about to perform an act that is forbidden in the bible and considered a death sentence. Yet Saul invokes God's name in saying he won't punish this woman!
 - b) Apparently, even though Saul was disguised, the woman still assumed Saul was Jewish. Thus, she accepted his oath before God.
 - c) Why would you take such an oath seriously when you're committing a nonbiblical act?
 - i) God does consider oaths binding. He cares about our reputation for keeping our word. If we can't be trusted in keeping our word in "nonbiblical" things, how can we be trusted when we speak of God himself?
 - ii) Religious Jews consider oaths binding no matter what the reason. There are biblical verses to support this, over and above the actions surrounding the oath. There are some exceptions (e.g., to commit violence), but in general oaths are considered binding.
 - iii) This reminds me of Jesus saying of "let your 'yes' be 'yes' and your 'no' be 'no'". (Matthew 5:37). The point Jesus was making was for example, If you say, "I swear to God this is true", does that mean we can't trust you when you don't invoke God's name in an oath?
 - iv) This also reminds us to be leery of those invoking God's name, especially when they are committing an act that the bible forbids. How seriously should we take someone's word about truth when they have no fear of God in their life?

11. Verse 11: Then the woman asked, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" "Bring up Samuel," he said.
¹² When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out at the top of her voice and said to Saul, "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!"
- a) I'll start by saying there are libraries full of commentaries on these two verses. Opinions by good scholars vary. Now that my disclaimers are out the way, here we go! ☺
 - b) This woman was able to bring up Samuel from the dead. Reading the next few verses in context, it appears the women did not know at this point it was Samuel. She just knew that she did something more powerful than was her normal custom. The Hebrew implies that she "did something she never did before".
 - i) The "how" she resurrected Samuel is a matter of speculation. Let me give you two common views. Nowhere does the bible indicate that demons, or Satan for that matter can read our thoughts. Most likely they can travel in and out of "time" as we know it, but they can't read thoughts.
 - ii) Satan can plant thoughts in our heads. When Jesus stated how he was going to cross, Peter rebuked him. Jesus' next words were "get behind me Satan" (Matthew 16:23, et.al.) as if to state that Satan himself planted that thought into Peter's mind. I'm sure Peter thought those thoughts were his own, but Jesus stated Satan planted that thought in his mind.
 - iii) Given that, one wonders whether or not channels can actually bring up the dead, other than this one instance. A view is that because demons can watch our behavior and the past behavior of those who are now dead, those same demons can then give "true messages" about historical facts of those who have died to those who are willing to pay for a medium's service. The reason a medium can correctly tell you about your past or your departed love one's past is that demons have watched your behavior over the years and can pass that information on.
 - iv) The other view is that mediums are "granted" the power to conjure up the dead or speak on their behalf. Since that is what this medium did here in 1st Samuel, the assumption is that they have this power.
 - v) As I stated earlier, I do believe that most of the "psychic's" that are around today are con artists. There is also a smaller percentage that has some sort of demonic power at their disposal, whether they realize it or not.
 - c) The original Hebrew text implies that this woman was shocked that she was actually able to bring up Samuel from the dead. To paraphrase her, "Woe, that's not the way it's worked in the past. Usually I get a "message-felling" in my head and pass it on. I never get the real spirit coming back from the dead. I've never done this before!"
 - i) The point is she was so shocked by what she did, somehow she knew this was really a dead person coming back again and she knew that the "customer" was really Saul. We don't know how she all-of-a-sudden knew it was Saul.
 - d) Next, let's talk a little about life after death from an "Old Testament" perspective. The best information we have on this topic comes from Jesus true story of two men in hell. One was in the "good part" of hell and one in the "bad part" of hell.
 - i) This story is told in Luke's Gospel, Chapter 16. It is the story of a beggar named Lazarus and an unnamed rich man who was in the "bad part" of hell. Apparently, there are only two parts, as Jesus never mentioned any other section.
 - a) (This is not the same Lazarus that Jesus raised from the dead in John 11.)

- ii) A parable is an illustration designed to teach. None of Jesus' parables ever have a person named by name. That is why the story in Luke 16 is different. Lazarus is in the "good part" of hell, as he will be saved for eternity. The person in Jesus' story in the "bad part" of hell is unnamed on purpose as the condemned are to be "permanently forgotten" by God.
- iii) Jesus' story teaches that the people in the bad part of hell can see the people in the good part. The condemned man in the bad part is aware of the "good section". There is a gulf (chasm) separating the two sections (See Luke 16:26).
- iv) One has to remember that Jesus was the first "person" to enter heaven. The reason the good-people were kept in this "nice holding tank" ☺ in hell is the price for sins was still to be paid for sins until Jesus died on the cross. Paul stated in Ephesians 4:9 that Jesus went there prior to his ascension into heaven. The reason, most likely is to get those people in the good part of hell to take them into heaven.
- v) There is only one other "key" story of raising someone from the dead:
 - a) Jesus did perform the miracles of raising people from the dead, as well as some of the apostles in Acts. Those people then died a second natural death again and assumedly, went to heaven after that.
 - b) The only other story similar to 1st Samuel is when Jesus appeared with Moses and Elijah. That story is told in Matthew 17, Mark 9 and Luke 9. To summarize, Jesus went up on the mountain with a few disciples. All of sudden Jesus appeared "glowing white", and Moses and Elijah show up. (How did the disciples know it was Moses and Elijah? Did they have nametags? Did Jesus introduce them? How did the disciples know which is one is Moses and which one is Elijah? I think about this stuff too much! ☺)
 - c) In that story, we learn that Moses and Elijah were speaking about Jesus coming (future) death. These resurrected "saints" were prophesying about a future event from the disciples perspective. (Luke 9:31).
 - d) In John 11, Jesus said He is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). That statement may mean more than we realize. It means that Jesus himself is in charge of who gets resurrected, when and "how".

12. Verse 13: The king said to her, "Don't be afraid. What do you see?" The woman said, "I see a spirit coming up out of the ground." ¹⁴ "What does he look like?" he asked. "An old man wearing a robe is coming up," she said. Then Saul knew it was Samuel, and he bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground.

- a) Again, notice that the woman did not know it was Samuel as of yet.
- b) She described this spirit as an "old man wearing a robe".
 - i) I have to admit, when I first read that part, I was a little sad. I always figured that when we are resurrected, we are going to come back with new bodies in the "prime of our life", not as old people. I don't want to spend eternity as an "old man". ☺ Actually, the bible hints that are new bodies will be "glorious" (See 1 Cor. 15:38; 2nd Cor. 5:1).
 - ii) Then I realized that God "allowed" Samuel to be resurrected with this specific appearance. If Samuel were resurrected as a young man, Saul would not have recognized him. Therefore the physical appearance of Samuel was at an age and with a robe that Saul would recognize.

13. Verse 15: Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" "I am in great distress," Saul said. "The Philistines are fighting against me, and God has turned away from me. He no longer answers me, either by prophets or by dreams. So I have called on you to tell me what to do."
- a) We don't know a lot about the "good part of Hades", but whatever it was like there, Samuel was pretty ticked off that a medium disturbed him to bring him back! ☺
 - i) It gives a hint that the peace of heaven takes away our desire to be on earth.
 - b) To paraphrase Saul, he is saying, "Look Samuel, sorry to have to wake you and all that, but I'm scared and I'm desperate. God won't speak to me and I'm in big trouble. You were my spiritual mentor at one time, so I'm asking what should I do?"
14. Verse 16: Samuel said, "Why do you consult me, now that the LORD has turned away from you and become your enemy?"
- a) My paraphrase of Samuel: "Look Saul, if God is against you, what makes you think that I could help, now, before or ever?"
 - b) Before I get into the main topic of this verse, notice the words, "Samuel said".
 - i) There are those who doubt that Samuel was really was raised from the dead.
 - ii) My response is "Samuel said". The text does not say, "The ghost that bared physical resemblance to Samuel said".
 - iii) If you believe the bible is the Word of God, then we must take the text at face value. Somehow, some way, Samuel was actually raised from the dead.
 - c) Now we're back to the theme of God's judgment. There is a "point of no return" with God. We'll get into the specific reasons why Saul had reached that point in a minute.
 - i) The application for nonbelievers is that there is a point where God does say to people, "Ok, you don't want to believe in me? Fine, I'll grant your wish. In fact, I'll make it impossible for you to do so by "hardening your heart".
 - a) Paul said, "Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done." (Romans 1:28).
 - b) The Greek term for "gave them over" implies a physical change.
 - c) So when does a person "hit a point of no return?" The answer is we don't know and in my opinion, we are not allowed to know. That is God's problem. Our job is to witness to everyone and pray for all and then let God deal with the results.
 - ii) Many chapters ago, Saul failed to obey God by killing the Amalekites. At that time Saul told him he would lose the throne.
 - a) God does not say, "Oh Saul, that was a long time ago. Forget about it.
 - b) Time is "meaningless" to God. If God gave a command or an order, it still stands all through our life.
 - c) What is to be learned from this section is that if God is "silent" in our lives, we need to stop and examine and our life. There may be some past issue of lack-of-obedience on our part that we have failed to comply.
 - d) God is patience. He gives us time to comply. Other things may come and go in our life. Still, God demands obedience. In that sense, life is a "test" to see whether or not we will be obedient to God.

15. Saul continues his speech. Verse 17: The LORD has done what he predicted through me. The LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hands and given it to one of your neighbors--to David. ¹⁸ Because you did not obey the LORD or carry out his fierce wrath against the Amalekites, the LORD has done this to you today. ¹⁹ The LORD will hand over both Israel and you to the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The LORD will also hand over the army of Israel to the Philistines."
- a) To summarize: Samuel is condemning Saul. Samuel is stating almost the same concepts he used to condemn Saul when he was alive (Compare this with 1st Samuel, 15: 26-28). The only "new news" we have in this commentary by Samuel is that Saul and his sons will die in the battle tomorrow.
 - b) I want to digress and discuss a couple of things about "dead, saved people". We can imply a few things about what life after the resurrection is like based on this text.
 - i) Resurrected people think. Samuel responded to Saul's question and answered it.
 - ii) Resurrected people talk. We won't be mute for eternity. ☺
 - iii) Resurrected people have memory recall of their life on earth. Samuel remembered what he said to Saul while he was alive.
 - a) Personally, this tells me that people who are condemned to hell will be aware for eternity why they are in hell as they retain memory recall.
 - iv) A resurrected person can prophesy! While Samuel was alive he was a prophet. In Verse 19, Samuel states that tomorrow (the next day) Saul and his sons will die in battle. That specific prediction was not stated when Samuel was alive. That prediction was given not only for Saul's sake, but to validate Samuel's words as truth. (Again, Moses & Elijah prophesied about Jesus death in Luke 9:30).
 - c) Let's get back to the specifics of the text: Samuel stated that Saul was condemned because he failed to kill all the Amalekites as ordered.
 - i) This goes way back to Chapter 15. I'm speculating it was as long as 10 years ago.
 - ii) At that time, Saul was ordered to kill all the Amalekites. This was a judgment-call by God as this tribe attacked the Israelites when they were first traveling from Egypt to the Promised Land. It is an example of "God is slow to judge, but when He does judge, His judgment is thorough".
 - iii) Anyway, Saul failed to be obedient to that command. It is now many years later. My point again is "God doesn't forget". Just because it was a long time between that date and this date, doesn't mean the judgment God past on that date has not come true.
 - iv) The application for nonbeliever is "judgment is coming". They may live in prosperity now, but that is the only prosperity and happiness they will ever have. God is patient and hoping for repentance, but judgment is coming.
 - d) Let's discuss Samuel's specific prediction: He said, "Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me."
 - i) First of all, what did Samuel's sons do to deserve this punishment? It wasn't their fault Saul was such a bad egg. ☺ We read many chapters ago about Saul's son Jonathan. This was a good guy. Why should he be punished?
 - a) The reason God did this has nothing to do with the Jonathan. This is about judgment on the reign of Saul and his family.
 - b) It was to show the Nation of Israel that God is judging the reign of Saul and because of the sins of Saul, his sons have to suffer as well.

- ii) It is a reminder that when we sin, it has an affect on those around us. For example, one of the great lies of a drug addict is “he or she is not harming anyone but themselves”. That is a lie as they harm those around them.
 - a) The same can apply to Saul. His failure to be obedient to God not only caused harm to David, his army, but also his children as well.
- iii) In Exodus 20:5, God said, “(He is) punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me”. (Exodus 20:5 NIV).
 - a) That does not mean the children and grandchildren are punished for the sins of the sinner (See Ezekiel 18:20). It means the children suffer the consequences of the sins of the father, grandfather, etc.
- e) Which leads to the great debate question: Is Saul in heaven or hell?
 - i) I’ve read good bible scholars argue on both sides of this issue.
 - ii) In the New Testament, there are “two dimensions” to salvation. The bible teaches of two separate judgments. One is for believers and one is for nonbelievers. The believer-judgment determines our rewards in heaven based on our faithfulness and obedience. Nonbelievers are resurrected to a separate judgment a thousand years later. All of this is in discussed Revelation, Chapter 20.
 - iii) Given that, some people believe Saul is “saved”, because he put he still believed in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but that his rewards in heaven are minimal, due to a lack of obedience. Others believe Saul is in hell.
 - a) The “pro-Saul” argument is based on the fact that Samuel predicted “You and your sons will be with me tomorrow”. We know Jonathan was a “good kid” ☺ and is saved. Samuel implies that Saul and Jonathan will be “with him”. That implies that Saul will be with Samuel in the “good part” of hell (until Jesus showed up).
 - b) The “anti-Saul” argument is that Samuel is describing the “good part” and “bad part” of hell as a collective location. When Samuel is saying that Saul will be “with him”, it refers to “all of hell” as opposed to the good part.
- f) There is an interesting epitaph to Saul in 1st Chronicles:
 - i) “So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the LORD, because he did not keep the word of the LORD, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance. But he did not inquire of the LORD; therefore He killed him, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse.”
(1st Chronicles 10:13-14 NIV)
 - ii) That is Saul’s life in a nutshell. He believed in God, but didn’t act upon that belief. He failed to be obedient to God’s laws and God “killed” him for it.
- g) Remember Jesus’ words, “to much is given, much is required” (Luke 12:48). God holds us accountable for the gifts and power he has given us. Saul was raised up as a leader. Therefore, God was “tougher” on Saul as an example not only to the Israelites, but for you and I to read.
- h) The application for believers is to occasionally check our personal history and see if there are any issues where we have failed to be obedient to God. God is patient and waiting for us to change, but there is a judgment day for us as well.
- i) What is scary to consider as a Christian is all the power, spiritual gifts and knowledge that God has given us. God does hold us accountable for those items. Given the fact we live in a world where information, communication and luxury are so “easy”, God will hold us accountable for those items he has given us.

16. Verse 20: Immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, filled with fear because of Samuel's words. His strength was gone, for he had eaten nothing all that day and night.
- In two words, Saul fainted.
 - The text did mention Saul didn't eat all day because of his fears. That combination of being hungry, combined with seeing Samuel and the judgment on him, made him faint.
 - Fainting can be a physical reaction when our minds "can't handle" bad news.
 - The reason for this verse is that it ties to the last four verses of this chapter (21-24).
17. Verse 21: When the woman came to Saul and saw that he was greatly shaken, she said, "Look, your maidservant has obeyed you. I took my life in my hands and did what you told me to do."²² Now please listen to your servant and let me give you some food so you may eat and have the strength to go on your way."
- From Verses 21 to the end of the chapter (Verse 24), we have this strange epilogue story of how the medium made some food for Saul so he could have the strength to go home.
 - The big question of course, is why is this story included? We'll get to that in a moment.
 - In this verse, we have the story of medium still worried about her life.
 - Remember that "channeling" was illegal and a death sentence.
 - She discovered after the séance started that the "customer" was King Saul.
 - She was worried that now that this was done, Saul could go back on his oath to spare her life and kill her. After all Saul never kept his oath to stop pursuing David. I'm speculating that word was out how Saul's word isn't trustable.
 - Therefore, she's trying to bribe Saul with a meal.
18. Verse 23: He refused and said, "I will not eat." But his men joined the woman in urging him, and he listened to them. He got up from the ground and sat on the couch.²⁴ The woman had a fattened calf at the house, which she butchered at once. She took some flour, kneaded it and baked bread without yeast.²⁵ Then she set it before Saul and his men, and they ate. That same night they got up and left.
- Here we read in the last few verses of the chapter, that the medium killed a calf, made some bread, and essentially, made Saul a sandwich. ☺ The last thing we read is that Saul and his companions ate the food, and well, left.
 - Here is some interesting speculations:
 - If Saul believed Samuel's prediction that he would die tomorrow in battle, why would he go into the battle in the first place? (In the next few chapters, we'll read of Saul leading his men into battle). Wouldn't you avoid the battle if that were the case? Maybe the Philistines were about to attack and Saul didn't have a choice.
 - If I knew tomorrow was my last day to life, I'd order the best steak in town. ☺ Why would Saul want to avoid food? Why did he choose to eat anyway? The answer has to do with his fear of dying and then accepting the fact he had to eat anyway and move on.
 - Onto the big question: Why are these verses included? Why would God want us to know that the medium fixed Saul a lamb-burger ☺ and then Saul went on his merry way?
 - Part of the reason is to show that Saul didn't die from the event and predictions of Samuel's appearance and he went back to fight the Philistines.
 - The answer is to see what Saul didn't do:
 - We don't read of Saul on his knees begging God to forgive him.
 - We don't read of Saul making a great speech to his soldiers saying, "Tomorrow I'm going to die in battle for my mistakes. Learn from me and turn your life over to God".
 - Saul ate and "went back to life". As if Saul said, "Oh well, that was interesting. Time for me to get back to work".

- iv) It was the occultist-woman who gave the “strength” to Saul to go on. The message of the enemies of God is “You know, there is always time later to repent. Come on, its time to enjoy life, don’t be down. Here, eat a lamb sandwich, it will make you feel better.” ☺
19. OK, it’s time to wrap this up. Here are the main things to remember:
- a) I spent a lot of time talking about life after death in this lesson. The bible does not spend a lot of text teaching what life is like after we die. We only get a few clues here and there, and “here” are one of those places. Because the bible says so little about the next life, it is as if God is saying, “Let me worry about life is like in the next life. Just trust that it will be a very good thing if you are obedient to me. In the meantime, concentrate on life here-on-earth and being obedient to my commands for your life.”
 - b) The most important lesson, which gets back to my title, is “God’s will and judgment”.
 - i) Believers and nonbelievers are judged based on our actions.
 - ii) Believers go through a separate judgment in heaven based on how we acted as believers. God calls to obedience and we have eternal rewards (or the lack thereof) based on how we acted on our faith. It is one thing to say we believe in God and our salvation is simply based on that faith. The bible teaches that how we live for eternity is based on how we acted here on earth.
 - a) “Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.” (Rev. 20:6 NIV)
 - b) “Behold, I (Jesus) am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.” (Rev. 22:12 NIV)
 - iii) The second resurrection is for nonbelievers. This is where people will be judged or condemned based on what knowledge they did have about God the Father and Jesus and how they acted on that knowledge.
 - c) Saul blew it as he failed to be obedient in obedience to God.
 - i) He was “judged on earth” as he lost his kingship.
 - d) The other lesson to learn is to “learn from God’s silence”.
 - i) God didn’t answer Saul. In this case it was for judgment.
 - ii) When God is silent to us, it is for one of two reasons:
 - a) One possibility is that God is simply testing us. It is God saying, “I’m standing back for a time and see how you react”.
 - b) The other possibility is that there is some issue that God is patiently waiting for us to deal with. God does not change with time. If there is some issue of lack-of-obedience in our life in the past, God is still waiting for you to deal with it. It is an issue to pray about every now and then.
20. Let’s Pray: Heavenly Father our desire is to live in obedience to you. We do this out of gratitude for saving us for all of eternity. We may do it for the sake of our eternal rewards. The important thing is that by Your grace, we let You work through us to make us more of the person You want us to be. Help us to let go of control of our lives so that You can take over. If there are issues of past obedience we still have to deal with, bring them to the surface and give us the strength and boldness to deal with them head on. Help us to be better witnesses to You to the world around us. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.