

The Book of SAMUEL

Saul's Tragic End

1st Samuel 28:4-6

January 31, 2026

Last week, we went on the run with David as Saul relentlessly pursued him. They parted ways after David chose to spare Saul's life at the cave in Desert of En Gedi.

Now the Bible informs us that Samuel has died. With his death Israel's transition from a Theocracy to a Monarchy was complete. Only one problem remained: Saul had chosen to reject God's leadership and David was not yet ready to be king.

David moved into the Desert of Maon and took on the job of protector for the local shepherds. David and his men made sure the herds were not molested – either by raiders or wild animals. Apparently, David had positive dealings with these shepherds, so when the time came to shear the sheep, he sent 10 of his men with a greeting of peace to the owner with a request that his kindness be returned with the provision of food – giving the owner the opportunity to express his gratitude and generosity.

Nabal is described this way – He was:

- A Calebite.
- Very wealthy – having 1000 goats and 3000 sheep.
- Surly and mean in his dealings.
- Married to Abigail – a beautiful and intelligent woman.

After David's men greeted Nabal, this is how he responded, *Who is David? Why should I give my food to men who are coming from who knows where?*

This was a grave insult, so when David's men reported back to him, his response was angry and swift: *"Put on your swords!"*

400 men went with David and 200 stayed with their supplies.

Enter Abigail. One of the servants reported to her how Nabal had insulted David's men even though, *"they were very good to us. They did not mistreat us and nothing was missing. Night and day they were a wall around us. Please see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our master and his household. He is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him."*

Without consulting Nabal, Abigail wasted no time. She took 200 loaves of bread, 2 skins of wine, 5 prepared sheep, 5 measures of roasted grain, 100 cakes of raisins and 200 cakes of figs – put it all on donkeys and went quickly to intercept David.

He had just finished venting, *"What a waste! All this time we have been watching over this fellow's property and he pays me back evil for good. May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him!"* when Abigail arrived.

She got off her donkey and bowed before him. She took the blame for Nabal's behavior and suggested that David not waste his time on Nabal because he was a foolish man who took stupid with him wherever he went. She said, *"Yahweh has prevented you from taking revenge, so please take the gifts I have brought. Please forgive Nabal, for Yahweh will certainly make you a lasting dynasty because you fight for him. Let no wrong doing be found in you as long as you live and when Yahweh*

has done for my master every good thing he promised and you are king over Israel, you will not have to carry the staggering burden of needless bloodshed. When Yahweh has brought you success, remember me."

David praised God, realizing that He had sent her. He blessed her for her good judgment and for keeping him from shedding innocent blood. *"For as surly as Yahweh lives," he said, "if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive. Go in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request."*

When Abigail arrived home, she found Nabal hosting a feast - he was very drunk. She decided to wait until morning to tell him her story. Upon hearing that he had narrowly escaped death, Nabal collapsed – he'd either had a heart attack or a stroke. 10 days later he was dead.

When David heard that Nabal was dead, he praised God that he did not take matters into his own hands ---- then he asked Abigail to be his wife.

David now had three wives: Michal, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail. However, Saul ended David's marriage to Michal and gave her to a man named Paltiel instead.

Attempt 11 –

David's intuition had been correct. Despite all his promises, Saul was still intent on killing him and now the Ziphites turned on David, reporting his location to Saul. Again, Saul took 3,000 men to hunt him down. One night, as Saul and men slept, David and his nephew, Abishai, snuck into the camp – making their way to where Saul lay.

Abishai: *"Here's your chance! God has given Saul into your hands. Let me stick him to the ground with a spear."*

David: *"No! You cannot kill Yahweh's anointed without incurring guilt. Yahweh will kill him, or he'll just die or he'll die in battle – regardless, I will not be responsible for killing God's anointed king. Take his spear and water jug and let's get out of here."*

David took the spear and water jug and they left. No one saw or knew about it, nor did anyone wake up. They were all sleeping, because Yahweh had put them into a deep sleep.

David went to the top of a hill and called out to Abner (Saul's cousin and general of the army) taking him to task for not guarding Saul properly: *"You deserve to die, you and your men, for not guarding the king as you should have," he said. "If you don't believe me, look around. Do you see the king's spear or water jug that lay near his head?"*

Saul recognized David's voice and called out, *"Is that you David, my son?"*

David: *"Yes – Why are you chasing me? What have I done to you?"*

Saul: *"I have sinned! Come back with me; I will not try to harm you again because you did not kill me. I have acted foolishly."*

David knew better than to trust Saul and it became clear to him that Saul would not stop his pursuit – despite every promise he made. David would always be running – always looking over his shoulder - always wondering who he could trust. That kind of prolonged stress can lead to cracks in even the strongest faith – and David was cracking.

Without consulting Yahweh, he decided his best option was to go to Philistia - Land of the Philistines.

Fear and self-preservation drove him and as a result, this will be one the most difficult periods in David's life. He will place himself and his men in a position where they will have to convince the Philistines – Israel's sworn enemy, that they too, were Israel's enemy. His choices will put others at risk and will dishonor and misrepresent God. The consequences will be devastating.

And so, David, his wives and his 600 men went back to Achish, king of Gath.

David asked for a town in Philistia and Achish gave him Ziklag – conditional to David's continued allegiance and service.

David lived at Ziklag for 1 yr. 4mo.

During that time, David attacked the Geshurites, the Girzites and Amalekites, but told Achish that he was raiding into Southern Israel. He took the spoils back to Achish, but killed everyone, "leaving not a man or woman alive to be brought to Gath," because he didn't want Achish to learn the truth.

1 Samuel 27:11b-12 - *such was his practice as long as he lived in Philistine territory. Achish trusted David and said to himself, "He has become so odious to his people, the Israelites, that he will be my servant forever."*

Achish's misplaced trust and the lies that surrounded it will come back to haunt David, because it was war season and time for the Philistines move again against Israel.

Achish decided who better to go to war with than David. *"David, you and your men will fight with me," he said.*

The Bible now makes a point of telling us that Samuel was dead and that Saul had expelled all the mediums and spiritists in the land.

The Philistines were camped at Shunem and the Israelites camped at Gilboa.

When Saul saw the strength of the Philistine army, he was greatly afraid and *"terror filled his heart."*

Saul was desperate for answers, but Samuel was dead, he'd had all the priests killed and Yahweh had gone silent. But instead of realizing that God's silence was the result of his own sin and repenting, Saul doubled down on his rebellion - he chose to seek information elsewhere.

The night before the big battle his men found a medium from Endor and Saul went, in disguise, to consult with her - once again violating a direct command of God:

Leviticus 19:31 - *Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am Yahweh your God.*

Leviticus 20:6 - *I will set my face against the person who turns to mediums and spiritists to prostitute himself by following them, and I will cut him off from his people.*

Deuteronomy 18:9-12 - *When you enter the land Yahweh your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to Yahweh, and because of these detestable practices Yahweh your God will drive out those nations before you.*

When the woman brought forth the "spirit of Samuel," Saul did not actually see it. He asked the woman what she saw and based on her description, decided it must be Samuel.

The message was the same as it had always been – Saul's disobedience would lead to his downfall. The only new element was that his son's would die alongside him.

Saul was so afraid that he fell on the ground and was unable to get up or eat anything.

- **Ellen White {PP 679.3 & 683}**: It was not God's holy prophet that came forth at the spell of a sorcerer's incantation. Samuel was not present in that haunt of evil spirits. That supernatural appearance was produced solely by the power of Satan.....

The Scripture account of Saul's visit to the woman of Endor has been a source of perplexity to many students of the Bible. There are some who take the position that Samuel was actually present at the interview with Saul, but the Bible itself furnishes sufficient ground for a contrary conclusion. If, as claimed by some, Samuel was in heaven, he must have been summoned thence, either by the power of God or by that of Satan. None can believe for a moment that Satan had power to call the holy prophet of God from heaven to honor the incantations of an abandoned woman. Nor can we conclude that God summoned him to the witch's cave; for the Lord had already refused to communicate with Saul, by dreams, by Urim, or by prophets. 1 Samuel 28:6. ... and He did not pass them by to deliver the message through the agent of Satan.

The message itself is sufficient evidence of its origin. Its object was not to lead Saul to repentance, but to urge him on to ruin; and this is not the work of God, but of Satan. Furthermore, the act of Saul in consulting a sorceress is cited in Scripture as one reason why he was rejected by God and abandoned to destruction: *"Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; and inquired not of the Lord: therefore He slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse."* 1 Chronicles 10:13, 14. Here it is distinctly stated that Saul inquired of the familiar spirit, not of the Lord. He did not communicate with Samuel, the prophet of God; but through the sorceress he held intercourse with Satan. Satan could not present the real Samuel, but he did present a counterfeit, that served his purpose of deception.

Meanwhile, the Philistines were gathering and David was with them.

However, the Philistine army was like, *"What is David doing here? Make him go away! We don't want him to go into battle with us! He might turn on us and fight for Saul!"*

So, while the Philistine army moved to Jezreel, David and his men returned to Ziklag only to find a burned and empty town.

While David was fulfilling his obligation to Achish, the Amalekites had attacked the city, taking all the residents captive.

David's men were so angry with him that they actually talked of stoning him.

David decided to consult the Lord and after doing so, he chased the Amalekites and found them a little worse for wear, celebrating their victory. David and his men killed all but 400 young men who escaped on camels. So, David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken – nothing was missing.

Meanwhile at Jezreel....

The Philistines were winning. They chased Saul and his sons to Mt. Gilboa, killing Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchi. As the battle raged, Saul was hit by an arrow and mortally wounded. Fearing that, if found, he would be tortured, he asked his armor-bearer to kill him. The terrified armor-bearer refused and when he saw that Saul was dead, he killed himself.

So, Saul, his 3 sons, his armor-bearer and all his men died together that same day.

The next day the Philistines came to the battlefield to strip the dead and found Saul and his sons. They cut off Saul's head, stripped him and his sons and carried their bodies throughout the Land of the Philistines. They put Saul's armor in the temple of Ashteroth and his head in the temple of Dagon then fastened the bodies to the city wall of Beth-Shan.

1 Samuel 31:11-13 - *When the people of Jabesh Gilead heard of what the Philistines had done to Saul, all their valiant men journeyed through the night to Beth Shan. They took down the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth Shan and went to Jabesh, where they burned them. Then they took their bones and buried them under a tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and they fasted seven days.*

What a sad and unnecessary end!

Until Next Time.....