



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

NOVEMBER 11 2023

Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 15; 28; 31.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 61, 66, 67.

so long, Saul



Photo by Audrey Goforth

flashlight

"When Saul chose to act independently of God, the Lord could no longer be his guide, and was forced to set him aside. Then He called to the throne 'a man after His own heart' (1 Samuel 13:14)—not one who was faultless in character, but who, instead of trusting to himself, would rely upon God, and be guided by His Spirit; who, when he sinned, would submit to reproof and correction" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 636).

keytext

"Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel: 'I regret that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions.' "

(1 Samuel 15:10, 11, NIV)

what do you think?

Agree or disagree?

- The root cause of depression is selfishness.
- Mental health and spiritual health are closely related.
- Satan cannot tempt us if we are fully committed to God.
- One of the ways Satan gains access to our minds is through horoscopes.

did you know?

When temptations assail you, when care, perplexity, and darkness seem to surround your soul, look to the

place where you last saw the light. Rest in Christ's love and under

His protecting care. When sin struggles for the mastery in the heart, when guilt oppresses the soul and burdens the conscience, when unbelief clouds the mind, remember that Christ's grace is sufficient to subdue sin and banish the darkness. Entering into communion with the Saviour, we enter the region of peace."—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 250.

INTO THE STORY

"Samuel said, 'Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel. And he sent you on a mission, saying, "Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; wage war against them until you have wiped them out." Why did you not obey the LORD?'. . .

" 'But I did obey the LORD,' Saul said. 'I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal.'

"But Samuel replied: 'Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD? To obey is bet-

ter than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.' "

"The Philistines assembled and came and set up camp at Shunem, while Saul gathered all Israel and set up camp at Gilboa. When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid; terror filled his heart. He inquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him by dreams or Urim or prophets. 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.

"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.' "

"Now the Philistines fought against Israel; the Israelites fled before them, and many fell dead on Mount Gilboa. The Philistines were in hot pursuit of Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua. The fighting grew fierce around Saul, and when the archers overtook him, they wounded him critically.

"Saul said to his armor-bearer, 'Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me.'

"But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it. When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. So Saul and his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men died together that same day."

(1 Samuel 15:17-22; 28:4-8; 31:1-6, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Who are the main actors in this story?

What do you think is the key verse in Saul's story? (*Underline it.*)

What character defects do you see in Saul? (*List them.*)

What emotions, actions, or adjectives enrich this story? (*Draw a rectangle around them.*)

What words or phrases most capture the various emotions involved? (*Circle them.*)

What were the results of Saul's disobedience?

If you were to tell the story of Saul to a class of kindergarten kids, what moral would you stress to them?

How does this lesson apply in our lives today?

What does the lesson teach us about selfishness? Depression? Mental health?

punch lines

“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (**Mark 14:38, NIV**).

“The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation” (**Exodus 34:6, 7, NIV**).

“Be careful to obey all these regulations I am giving you, so that it may always go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is good and right in the eyes of the LORD your God” (**Deuteronomy 12:28, NIV**).

“Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD; he did not keep the word of the LORD and even consulted a medium for guidance, and did not inquire of the LORD. So the LORD put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse” (**1 Chronicles 10:13, 14, NIV**).

“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (**1 Timothy 4:1, NIV**).

further insight

“The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.”—Ellen G.

White, *Education*, p. 57.

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Peter 5:8, 9; and James 4:7.

The *What Do You Think* section of the lesson connects Saul's story with modern-day temptations posed by the occult. How can Christians stand against Satan?

Sunday

Read 1 Samuel 15: 28; 31; and 2 Samuel 11.

In 1 Samuel 15:10, 11 God tells Samuel that He is grieved He made Saul the king. How would you explain these kinds of regrets expressed by God? Why did God choose Saul as king in the first place? Did God not know how this decision would turn out?

Another question that emerges from the story is this: What was Saul's "big" sin that ultimately contributed to his demise? Why did Saul's sin of keeping animals to sacrifice to God result in the death penalty and yet David committed adultery and murder only to be venerated as a man after God's own heart? What was the difference, in God's eyes, between David and Saul?

Monday

Read 1 Samuel 15:10, 11.

Memorize the *Key Text* then reflect on these questions:

Have I ever grieved God? If so, how?

Does God still "turn away from" people He has called to leadership? Why or why not?

What can I do to safeguard myself from God's withdrawing His Spirit from me?

Tuesday

Read Acts 13:22.

Identify two people you know who strike you as persons who might be described as David was (i.e., a person after God's own heart). List the characteristics that come to mind when you think of these people.

Wednesday

Think about the steps that led to Saul's downfall. Read 1 Samuel 15:9-11 and notice how spiritually strong Saul was when he began. Note how in the beginning of Saul's career that "God changed Saul's heart" (1 Samuel 10:9, NIV) and he prophesied along with the prophets in Gibeah. Notice the story of Nahash the Ammonite and think about Saul's fearless resolve to fight for God.

But then, as you see in the *Punch Lines*, something deep within Saul's character began to unravel. Identify the steps in Saul's downfall. What can we do today to avoid this spiritual spiral toward destruction?

Thursday

Read James 2:19.

C. S. Lewis wrote in *The Screwtape Letters*: "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them."¹

Which ditch am I more inclined to fall into—the ditch of disbelieving in demons or the ditch of obsessing about them? How can I view them in a balanced way?

Friday

Read Mark 14:38.

One of the primary reasons for Saul's demise was his selfishness. Ask yourself: How can I become more selfless? What examples from Christ's life give me a picture of what a selfless life looks like? Who is God calling me to selflessly serve today?

¹ C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: Macmillan, 1959 and 1961), Preface.

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 61, 66, 67.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#URlhF1rB09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.