

Dr. Robert Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 15, 1 Samuel 26-28

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This is Dr. Bob Chisholm and his teaching on 1 and 2 Samuel. This is session 15 on 1 Samuel 26-28. David Spares Saul Again, chapter 26. David Flees to Gath Again, chapter 27, and Seance in Ein Dor, Bad News Beyond the Grave, chapter 28.

In our next lesson, we're going to be looking at 1 Samuel chapters 6 through 28. Let's just review what we saw in chapters 24 and 25. Saul is, of course, chasing David all over the wilderness. He wants to kill him and get rid of the one that he believes intends to be his successor.

In chapter 24, things come to a head a little bit. By the providence of God, Saul wanders into a cave to relieve himself. David and his men happen to be in that cave.

David's men say to David, this is your opportunity to get rid of your enemy. But David refuses to do that. He says I will not raise a hand against the anointed of the Lord.

David sneaks up and cuts off a corner of Saul's robe. When Saul leaves the cave, David comes out and confronts him and says, I had an opportunity to kill you, but I didn't do it. To prove that I had that opportunity, here's a corner of your robe.

And Saul realizes that David is not his enemy. David argues that he is innocent, and that he has no intentions of killing Saul. If he had wanted to kill him, he could have done it in the cave.

Saul admits this, and Saul confesses that he has done wrong. David is in the right, he is in the wrong. Saul also speaks of David someday becoming king.

So, in the apology for David, the defense of David that the author is developing in the book of 1 Samuel, is exhibit A. Out of Saul's very own mouth, he confesses that David is the one whom God has chosen to be king, that he is guilty because of his attempt to kill David, and David is innocent. They go their separate ways. In chapter 25, David comes across a fellow by the name of Nabal, a foolish man, but he has a very wise wife, Abigail.

David gets angry with Nabal because David and his men have protected Nabal's herdsmen and flocks, but Nabal doesn't appreciate this, and he insults David. And David is ready to kill Nabal and every male in his household. This would be wrong, this would be murder on David's part.

Abigail, this wise wife of Nabal, comes to David and essentially talks him out of doing this rash, murderous deed. David recognizes that she is an agent of the Lord, and he admits that he was wrong, and he backs off from his stated intention of killing Nabal and his household. And here we see that David listens to the voice of wisdom.

But in both passages, there's an important theme that comes through, stated by David in chapter 24, that we leave vengeance to the Lord. The Lord will take care of that. So that's the background.

Here in chapter 26, we're going to read about an incident that's very similar to what happened in chapter 24. In fact, I've entitled chapter 26, David Spares Saul's Life Again. If you recall, we entitled 1 Samuel 24, David Spares Saul's Life.

Now here in 26, he's going to do that again. He's going to have another opportunity to kill Saul, but he's not going to do that. And so, if 1 Samuel 24 was at exhibit A in the defense of David's integrity, 1 Samuel 26 would be exhibit B, I suppose.

But both demonstrate that David has no intention of killing Saul. He's not Saul's enemy, even though Saul perceives him that way. Some scholars, some critical scholars, as they are prone to do, just can't seem to believe that something like this could happen twice.

And so, they will argue, well, there was only one incident where David spared Saul's life. We've just got two different versions of it, two traditions of this. Well, actually life is full of *deja vu* moments.

Things like this happen sometimes repeatedly. And these stories are similar in some ways, but they're so very, very different. In 1 Samuel 24, God's providence brings the opportunity.

Saul just happens to wander into this cave where David and his men are. In 1 Samuel 26, David is going to initiate the contact. And so, if you read these stories side by side, they're actually quite a bit different.

And so, we have two separate incidents. You may be thinking, yeah, but Saul was talking very positively about David in 1 Samuel 24. He wouldn't actually chase David again, would he, after all that he said in chapter 24? Oh, yes, he would.

Saul is very unpredictable at this point in time. Remember, he has an evil spirit that's tormenting him, and he's up and down, and he's unreliable. And of course, that's part of the genius of the presentation here.

Saul has clearly been rejected by God. His behavior demonstrates it. And so, 1 Samuel 26 is an important plank in the author's defense of David right alongside 1 Samuel 24.

In 1 Samuel 26, we read the Ziphites went to Saul at Gibeah. Remember, they reported on David before. And they said, is not David hiding on the hill of Hachilah, which faces Jeshimon? And so, Saul went down to the desert of Ziph.

He's got all these troops with him. He makes camp. It's clear that Saul has changed his tune from chapter 24.

When told that David is in the vicinity down there, Saul goes after him again. You can't trust Saul at this point in time. We read in verse 5 of chapter 26, then David set out and went to the place where Saul had camped.

There's no cave this time. David is doing this intentionally. It's not just accidental.

David is intentionally seeking Saul out. And he saw where Saul and Abner, son of Ner, the commander of the army, had lain down. Saul was lying inside the camp with the army encamped around him, just as you would expect.

You would expect the king to be in the interior, in the center with the army around him. So, there's relative security there. And then David asked Ahimelech the Hittite and Abishai, son of Zeruiah.

Zeruiah is David's sister, Joab's brother. So Abishai is a nephew of David, along with Joab. Who will go down into the camp with me to Saul? So, David is going to march into Saul's camp.

I'll go with you, said Abishai. So, David and Abishai went to the army by night. So apparently the sentries, no one saw David.

He waltzed right into Saul's camp. And there was Saul, lying asleep inside the camp with his spear stuck in the ground near his head. We made a comment about this spear before.

When that spear shows up, it reminds us of some things. It's a reminder of Saul's hostility toward David, and his murderous intentions. Twice he threw his spear at David but missed him.

He also threw it at his own son Jonathan one time. So that spear, the very image of that spear would remind David, this man is your enemy. He's trying to kill you.

It also presents an opportunity, because there's a weapon right there that could be used. And it's stuck in the ground near Saul's head. Abner and the soldiers were lying around him.

Abishai said to David, remember in the cave, David's men had told him, this is your opportunity. You need to take Saul out of the picture. And David said I will not raise my hand against the Lord's anointed.

It's almost as if Abishai here, realizing David doesn't want to kill Saul, said, well, okay, I'll do it for you. Today, God has delivered your enemy into your hands. Abishai is thinking this way.

God allowed us to come in here undetected. There's the spear. There's Saul.

God must be giving us this opportunity. Sometimes it's easy to interpret events in terms of God's will. And you can be wrong.

You can be dead wrong. Things might look like God is orchestrating something in a certain direction, but you don't really know. And Abishai's wrong here.

Today, God has delivered your enemy into your hands. That may be true, but that doesn't mean that David is supposed to kill him. Now, let me pin him to the ground with one thrust of the spear.

I won't strike him twice. Abishai says all it will take is one thrust. But David said to Abishai, don't destroy him.

Who can lay a hand on the Lord's anointed and be guiltless? As surely as the Lord lives, David takes an oath. He said the Lord himself would strike him. So, we see David's philosophy here.

Yeah, maybe the Lord has delivered Saul into his hands, but not to kill him, but just to give David another opportunity to show his innocence before Saul. So, David's attitude here is maybe the Lord himself will strike him, or his time will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish. So, David envisions different ways that the Lord might take Saul off the playing field.

The Lord might just strike him, kind of like he did in Nabal, or maybe his time will come. Everybody gets old eventually and dies, or maybe he'll go into battle and perish, and of course, it's that third one that's going to actually transpire. But the Lord forbid that I should lay a hand on the Lord's anointed.

Now get the spear and water jug that are near his head and let's go. Just as before, when David cut off a little portion of Saul's robe to prove to Saul that he had the

opportunity, he's going to use that spear and water jug for the same purpose here. So, David took the spear and water jug near Saul's head and they left.

No one saw or knew about it, nor did anyone wake up. They were all sleeping. And you may have been wondering all along, how come they were able to waltz in here and not be heard and not be detected and no one did anything? Well, we find out here that the Lord is indeed in this.

He is with David in all of this. Not because he wants David to kill Saul, but because he wants David to have another opportunity to prove his innocence. Because the Lord had put them into a deep sleep.

So, the Lord had just sprinkled his dust over all of Saul's army and they were sleeping away. And then David is going to make sure that he gets at a safe distance. When you're dealing with someone like Saul, you do need to be careful.

And then David crossed over to the other side and he stands on top of a hill and there's a wide space between him and Saul's army and he calls out to the army and to Abner, son of Nair. And David is going to do a little trash-talking here. He's going to rub it into Abner because Abner's the commander of the army.

Abner is responsible ultimately for protecting his master Saul. And so, David cries out, aren't you going to answer me, Abner? And Abner replied, who are you who calls to the king? And David said, you're a man, aren't you? And who is like you in Israel? Why didn't you guard your Lord the King? Someone came to destroy your Lord the King. What you have done is not good.

As surely as the Lord lives, you and your men must die because you did not guard your master, the Lord's anointed. Look around you, where are the king's spear and water jug that were near his head? So, David is kind of rubbing it in here. And Saul recognizes David's voice.

And just as before, again, there are similarities between chapter 24 and chapter 26, but life has these kinds of moments. Many times, I've been recalling something that happened in my experience in the past. And there was another incident that was similar to it.

And I realized, as I begin to tell the story and weave the details together, I'm merging these two stories. There were actually two events and I'm merging them as if they were one. Same thing here, similarities, but some marked differences.

And Saul says, is that your voice? David, my son. It's not the son of Jesse, it's David, my son again. So, he's talking in a more endearing way, just as he did in chapter 24.

And David replies. And once again, David's words are going to reflect his attitude towards Saul, his humility, and his recognition that Saul is indeed his Lord. And he says, yes, it is my Lord, the king.

And he added, why is my Lord pursuing his servant? So, an argument very similar to the one that he mounted earlier. What have I done? And what wrong am I guilty of? Now let my Lord, the king, listen to his servant's words. If the Lord has incited you against me, then may he accept an offering.

If, however, people have done it, may they be cursed before the Lord. They have driven me today from my share in the Lord's inheritance and have said, go serve other gods. Now do not let my blood fall to the ground far from the presence of the Lord.

The king of Israel has come out to look for a flea as one hunts a partridge in the mountains. David kind of speaks of himself in demeaning terms. Who am I? I'm no threat to you.

But David here, it's interesting, he offers two possibilities as to why Saul is persisting in doing this. One is that the Lord has incited Saul against David, which may seem a little odd. The Lord is clearly on David's side.

Why would he incite Saul to try to kill David? Is the Lord conflicted? No. I think David has in mind here that evil spirit. Remember, when David was first hired, why was he hired? Way back in 1 Samuel 16, this evil spirit from the Lord had been tormenting Saul.

And they brought David on board in order to play the liar, to calm Saul down. So, David knows that the Lord has been tormenting Saul and so he says, you know, if the Lord is the one who's inciting you against me for whatever purpose, and I think the Lord, we've talked about this before, the Lord is doing this in order to demonstrate that Saul is not the chosen one. And if that's the case, then may the Lord accept an offering from you.

You need to do something. You need to repent and come before the Lord with an offering and may he accept that from you. If people are the ones if human beings are encouraging you to do this, then may they be cursed.

Because what they're in essence doing is they are driving me away from my share in the Lord's inheritance. They're trying to drive me out of the land. And when I leave the land, in the way they think in the ancient Near Eastern world, there are patron deities in these different lands.

It's as if they're trying to drive me away from the Lord's land to a foreign land where I have to serve other gods. And David isn't suggesting that he would do that, and he didn't do it when he went to Philistine territory or whatever, but he is saying this is in essence what they're tempting me to do. You could look at it that way.

I don't even think David was tempted, but his argument is they're trying to drive me away from Israel so I'm not even an Israelite anymore. They're trying to put me in a position where I have to disown my own people and my own God. That's not right, David says.

Then Saul is going to respond, I have sinned. He said this before, he says it again, I have sinned. Come back, David, my son.

He invites David to come back. He didn't do that before. Because you considered my life precious today, I will not try to harm you again.

Surely, I have acted like a fool and have been terribly wrong. Now this is very important in the apology of David, the defense of David. Once again, Saul himself is saying I have sinned, I have been wrong, I've been a fool in trying to pursue you and kill you, I've been terribly wrong in this, you're innocent, I'm guilty.

So, in the future, if there's any doubt among the Benjaminites as to who's right in the right and who's in the wrong, these stories right here would demonstrate that David is in the right. Nevertheless, what we're going to see as the story progresses is people, including Benjaminites, are still going to accuse David of wrongdoing. So you can see why the author includes this.

We've actually got Saul witnessing twice the fact that David is innocent. Two witnesses, and in this case Saul, two different times. Now David is going to really drive home his argument, so to speak.

Here is the king's spear, David answered. Let one of your young men come over and get it. So, the point is, I got your spear, I could have killed you, just as before.

The Lord rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness. The Lord delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on the Lord's anointed. As surely as I valued your life today, so may the Lord value my life and deliver me from all trouble.

David prays for himself here, and he's right to do so. He's saying the Lord, first of all, the Lord is in the business of rewarding righteousness and faithfulness. I had an opportunity to murder you.

I didn't take it, because you're the Lord's anointed. I showed respect for you and for the Lord who anointed you, and so I'm asking the Lord to reward me. I think I deserve it, and I'm asking the Lord to value my life and to deliver me from all trouble the way I valued your life and delivered you.

It may seem boastful, it may seem self-promoting, but it's perfectly within David's right to do this, given that the Lord is the just ruler. And then Saul said to David, may you be blessed, David my son. Saul seconds this.

May you be blessed, David my son. You will do great things and surely triumph. David does not take the opportunity to join up with Saul.

He turns down that invitation, and we read at the end of chapter 26, so David went on his way and Saul returned home. And so if we're thinking in terms of the main theme of this chapter, it's really the same as in chapter 24. The Lord vindicates his chosen servants when they look to him for justice.

And just as before, a couple of key principles emerge here, which are when the fulfillment of God's promise is delayed, God's chosen servants, in this case David, must resist the temptation to force the issue. Abishai wanted David to kill Saul, or actually volunteered to do it himself. No, no, no, you don't force the issue.

Instead, you do what's right and you wait for God's good timing. And David is again doing that. And just as we saw before in chapter 24, when enduring oppression, as one waits for God's promise to materialize, one must look to God for vindication.

And so, for the third straight chapter really, David has decided to leave vengeance in God's hands, to let God vindicate him. He came very close to taking justice into his own hands in chapter 25 with Nabal, but Abigail talked him out of it. He listened to the voice of wisdom.

And so, David is on a good track here. It's a little surprising what happens next, however. In chapter 27, which I've entitled David flees to Gath again, this will be the second time that David decides to leave the land and go to Philistine territory, and he's going to go to Gath.

You recall back in chapter 21, David did this. He was running away. Saul was after him and he was alone.

He went to the priest. He got Goliath's sword and he went to Gath by himself. He had to use deceit to get himself out of a very difficult situation that he put himself in by leaving the land and going to the Philistines.

Remember when they saw him, they said, whoa, this is the king. This is the one who has killed many Philistines in battle. And David realizes they know who I am.

I'm in trouble, and he has to pretend that he's insane to get out of the situation. And remember, Achish, the king there, says, I have enough madmen around me. I don't need one more.

And so, he lets David go, thinking he's insane. But David had to use deceit to get himself out of a very difficult situation. Now he's going to go to Gath again, oddly enough.

I think he's just decided Saul is completely unpredictable. I'm tired of this. We have to kind of decide, is this a positive thing? I don't think it is.

Remember the first time David went away, the Lord forced him back. He went over and he went to Moab. And the prophet told him, your place is back in Judah.

So, I don't see this as a positive thing. David is going to get himself into a difficult situation again, and he's going to have to use deceit to get himself out of it. And I'm not so sure in this particular case the Lord is endorsing David's deceit.

You know, we talked about the fact that sometimes deceit's okay. You've got to look at each context very carefully. Sometimes it's more neutral.

Sometimes it's not okay. And before, when David left the land, it was viewed negatively. And I have to believe that the author would view it negatively here.

And David does get himself into a very difficult situation, as we'll see. And so David flees to Gath again. In fact, we are privy to his thinking.

In 1 Samuel 27:1, David thought to himself, one of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. Now this is unfortunate because David has been given assurances that this would not happen. Jonathan, Saul's son, came to David and said, my father won't be able to kill you.

You are destined to be the king of Israel. I'll be your second in command. So, Jonathan, Saul's own son, had come and encouraged David when he was running.

Saul himself predicted in chapter 24 that you will become king. In chapter 26, he said, you will triumph. Abigail talked about the fact that David would eventually prosper.

And the Lord would defeat all of David's enemies. And so, the Lord has been using individuals, key individuals, Jonathan, Saul, and the voice of wisdom, Abigail, to

ensure David that he would prosper. But sometimes in life, we get under so much pressure.

We lose sight of these promises of God. And we just get swallowed up by circumstances. And that's what happens to David here.

One of these days, I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. I'm not sure that's true.

I'm not sure that's the best thing he can do. Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel and I will slip out of his hand. So, David has lapsed into this kind of thinking that I'm the master of my own destiny.

And he's really not showing faith in the Lord at this point. It looks good on the surface. It's a very practical kind of reasoning.

But I think it is not. David is walking by sight at this point, not by faith. And so he takes his 600 men.

The other time he was all by himself. Now he's got a little private army with him. He's got something to bargain with.

And so, he leaves and he goes to Achish, king of Gath. And David and his men settled in Gath with Achish. And each man has his family with him.

David has his two wives, Achinoam and Abigail at this point. Remember, Michael had been given to someone else. And when Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him.

So, David was right. At a very practical level, he said, the best thing for me is to get out of the land. Saul, if he knows I'm not here and I'm in Philistine territory, he won't be pursuing me anymore.

I don't want him breathing down my neck. I've had enough of this. And so, at a very practical level, David was right.

Sometimes when we walk by sight, not by faith, initially at least, the decision looks like a good one. Looks like a smart one. And that seems to be the case here.

But things are going to get complicated. Then David said to Achish, if I have found favor in your eyes, let a place be assigned to me in one of the country towns that I may live there. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you? In other words, I'm not doing you any good here.

Why don't you assign me to one of the border towns that you have jurisdiction over? And so, on that day, Achish gave him Ziklag. And it has belonged to the kings of Judah ever since. So, David is assigned to Ziklag.

That's where he goes. And David lived in Philistine territory for a year and four months. So he's here for some time.

Now, what is David doing during this time? Well, in verse 8, David and his men went up and raided the Gishu rites. And these Gishu rites, they shouldn't be confused. David is not in Transjordan.

He's not east of the Jordan here. He's over in Philistine territory to the west. The Gishu rites are not the Gishu rites that we know about who live in Transjordan.

They are probably the Gishu rites that are included in a list of people that the Israelites were to conquer in Joshua chapter 13. What that means is these are native Canaanite population. And so, David has every right to exterminate them, because that was the original command by God to Joshua.

These were one of the people that were to be destroyed. And so, they're legitimate candidates for that. We also read of the Gerzites.

We don't know who they are. We don't really know about them. But we do know that the third group, the Amalekites, the hated Amalekites, are arch enemies.

Moses had put them under an edict of extermination if you recall. They attacked the Israelites way back when in the wilderness. And the Lord said, I want them destroyed.

And the Lord has the right to make that kind of decision. They weren't destroyed. They were just as wicked in David's time as they had been earlier.

Saul was supposed to wipe them out. Apparently, he wiped out a lot of them, at least ones that he could reach in that vicinity. But there still are Amalekites around.

Saul did not wipe them out completely. And so, there are Amalekites as well. From ancient times, these people had lived in the land extending to Shur in Egypt.

Whenever David attacked an area, so he attacked these people. We don't know about the Gerzites, but he has every right to attack them and certainly the Amalekites. Whenever David attacked an area, he did not leave a man or woman alive but took sheep and cattle, donkeys, and camels in close.

And then he returned to Akish. And why is David doing that? Why is he wiping everyone out? Well, he's got a plan here. See, David doesn't want to attack the Israelites.

He doesn't want to do that. He wants to do the work of the Lord, even when he is in a foreign land. So, this is a positive.

David is doing the Lord's work, fighting Amalekites, even when he's in a foreign land. In contrast to Saul, I think. So, when Akish asked him, where did you go raiding today? David had to report in.

And David would say, against the Negev of Judah, or against some others. And so, David is saying to Akish, I've been attacking Judah. So what David is doing, he's making himself look like a loyal subject of Akish.

I think David is trying to communicate to Akish, I have disowned my people. I'm with you now. I'm a mercenary, and I have become one of your loyal followers.

But there's a problem. If some of these Amalekites or Geshurites were to survive, they could conceivably report to Akish what David is really doing. And he doesn't want that to happen.

So, he did not leave a man or woman alive to be brought to Gath, where he thought they might inform on us and say, this is what David did. And we wouldn't want that. And such was his practice, as long as he lived in Philistine territory.

So, what is David having to do? He's having to use deception again. Whether you consider it positive or negative, David is doing some good here. He's fighting Amalekites.

The Lord wants that. But he's having to really compromise in a lot of ways in order to make Akish think he's loyal. Well, it works.

When you walk by sight, not by faith, sometimes things seem to work out. But in the end, not so much. Akish trusted David and said to himself, he has become so obnoxious to his people, the Israelites, that he will be my servant for life.

So Akish is convinced that David is a loyal follower. And we read in 1 Samuel 28, verse 1, that in those days, the Philistines gathered their forces to fight against Israel. And now here's where things are going to get complicated.

Akish said to David, you must understand that you and your men will accompany me in the army. And David said, you might expect him to say, well, I can't fight against my own flesh and blood. Nope.

David said, then you will see for yourself what your servant can do. And Akish replied very well. I will make you my bodyguard for life.

So, it appears that David has gotten himself into a situation where his deception has been so, so successful that Akish is completely convinced that David is a loyal follower. And he has told David, we're going to march out and fight the Israelites. You're coming.

You're going to join us. And David seems to be saying, yeah, I'll do that. And at this point, we're just going to kind of leave the story right there, because what the author is going to do over the course of the next few chapters is he is going to go back and forth between David and Saul.

We've been focusing on David. David left the land and we've left Saul behind. Saul's back in Israel.

David is over here with the Philistines. We've been reading about David's activities. And there's this tension that has developed in the story.

Is David really going to go out into a battle and fight against Israel? Really? Is that going to happen? Well, we'll have to wait to find out, because the author is going to shift his focus over to Saul for the remainder of chapter 28. Then he will come back to David in 29 and 30, and then back to Saul in chapter 31. And so sometimes in storytelling, we have to do this.

If you think about the movie version of Lord of the Rings, Return of the King, we have Gandalf and Aragorn and all of those fellows in one place. And then we have Frodo and Sam and their quest to destroy the ring in Mordor. And you'll recall the story goes back and forth.

We'll focus on what's happening with Gandalf and Aragorn, then we'll switch over and we'll focus on what's going on with Frodo and Sam, because we're interested in what is happening on both fronts. And so, the way the story is told, we go back and forth. Sometimes when the story is told that way, we can't have everything in perfect chronological order.

Sometimes when we shift from A to B, there's a flashback that's involved, and so there's chronological overlapping that occurs. That's the case with this particular account. Robert Bergen, in his New American Commentary on 1 and 2 Samuel, does a nice job in here of putting it together chronologically.

We even know that from Return of the King, because Tolkien, at the end of the book, gives us a chronology of events, so we can see how things line up chronologically. So

there's going to be some of that chronological overlapping in the story. But when we come to chapter 28, the focus is going to shift to Saul.

And I call chapter 28, verses 3 through 25, I've titled it, Seance in Endor, Bad News from Beyond the Grave. So that's Seance in Endor, Bad News from Beyond the Grave. We read in 1 Samuel 28:3, Now Samuel was dead.

Remember, we were told that back in chapter 25. And I argued that that was kind of foreboding, at least for Saul, because the first main character of our story, Samuel, has passed off the scene. The second main character is Saul.

Maybe he's ready to pass off the scene. And he is. And we're going to read about that in this chapter.

Samuel was dead and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in his own town of Ramah. And we're getting some background information as well because even though Samuel is dead, he's going to show up in this account. He's going to show up in this episode, believe it or not.

Saul had expelled the mediums and spiritists from the land. You'll remember the Old Testament law said that mediums and spiritists, people who try to tap into the world of the dead, try to communicate with the dead to get information about what is going to happen in the future. The Old Testament law says Israel is not supposed to have these kinds of people in the land.

And Saul, to his credit, had gotten rid of them. He had obeyed the law. But this chapter is not trying to present Saul in a positive way.

This is something that he did that was positive, but he's actually going to violate the principle when push comes to shove. And so, the Philistines have assembled and they've come and they've set up camp at Shunem. We've jumped ahead a little bit here from where we left David, because before the Philistines were gathering in Aphek, and then they moved to Shunem.

And so we're getting ready for a battle here. We pushed ahead a little bit. And then we're going to have to, when we come back to David, we're going to go back again.

We're going to flashback. Saul gathers all of Israel and sets up his camp at Gilboa. Saul sees the Philistine army.

In typical fashion, Saul, who always walks by sight, not by faith, he's afraid. Terror fills his heart. He inquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him.

And some of the typical ways that people would try to communicate with God and get information from God these days were dreams. But the Lord wasn't giving Saul any dreams. He wasn't giving any prophets any dreams about Saul's future.

Urim or prophets. None of those methods worked. You might think that the Urim-Thummim method would work because you know, you just ask a question, reach into a bag, and out comes the answer.

Urim would be maybe yes, Thummim, and no, or vice versa. But that wasn't yielding an answer. And you may be thinking, why not? Well, we, in ancient Near Eastern literature, there's something very similar to this.

And what we discover there is that sometimes it wasn't just a one-time answer. You don't ask the question. If you're using this method, you have to have the same answer in succession for a certain number of times.

In the Assyrian parallel that we have, you have to get the answer three times, I believe it was. And so, Saul could never get the same answer in succession the right amount of times. Urim and Thummim was always confused.

It never yielded a consistent answer for him. So, I think that's probably what's going on here. But the Lord was not communicating with Saul.

If you recall, all the way through the story, the Lord has been communicating to David. David has been consulting the Lord, inquiring of the Lord. Every time he inquires of the Lord, the Lord gives him an answer that is reliable.

And so, David has had no problem whatsoever. In fact, he's got Abiathar with him, with the Ephod, remember? Abiathar, the lone survivor from Nobe, the place where Saul wiped out the priests. So, someone tells him, Saul then said to his attendants, find me a woman who's a medium so I may go and inquire of her.

There is one in Endor, they said. So, Saul, who had recognized that this was wrong, spiritists, mediums, and all that, and gotten rid of them in the land, when he's desperate, this is the kind of thing he will do. The Lord isn't giving him a dream.

The Lord isn't answering his question when he uses Urim and Thummim. The Lord is not speaking through a prophet. The Lord is not speaking to Saul.

Communication has been cut off. And so, he decides, I've got to find a medium. I've got to get information from God, even if I have to violate God's law.

This is so typical of Saul. Ritual and that kind of thing always wins out over doing what's right. So, Saul disguises himself, good idea, the Philistine army is close by.

In fact, he's going to have to kind of move very close to it to get where he's going. He puts on other clothes. He doesn't want to look king-like.

And at night, in the dark, he and two men went to the woman. And Saul comes to this medium, often called a witch, but she's really a medium, the kind of person who is going to serve as a go-between between the land of the living and the land of the dead. And he says, consult a spirit for me and bring up for me the one I name.

But the woman said to him, surely you know, she thinks there's some kind of sting operation that's underway here, that they're trying to root her out as a medium. And 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? She thinks they're trying to trap her. But it's interesting, in her statement to Saul, that she is reminding him it's wrong to do this according to God's law, and Saul himself had done away with mediums and spiritists. So, Saul gets one more reminder of what's right.

And he had acted in alignment with that earlier, but not now. Saul swore to her by the Lord, oddly enough, as surely as the Lord lives, you will not be punished for this. Then the woman asked, whom shall I bring up for you? Bring up Samuel, he said.

Well, Samuel was a prophet in his day, and lots of people would go to Samuel for advice and information. And so, at this point, the woman doesn't seem to think of it as problematic. She doesn't say, if you're asking for Samuel, you must be Saul.

She doesn't reason that way yet. Lots of people probably had asked Samuel for information. Remember when Saul and his servant wanted to find out where their donkeys were? They were going to go and ask Samuel.

But when the woman saw Samuel... So, I think something is happening in her experience here that's out of the ordinary. I think normally she would tap into the world of the dead. And we know from the language that's used that she had an oave.

She had, what's called an oave, it was a ritual pit that was dug into the ground. There are references to this kind of thing elsewhere in the ancient Near East. And she would sort of tap into the underworld because, in their thinking, that's where the dead spirits are.

They're down in the underworld. And so, she had this pit, and I think she would go through her incantations, and probably she was used to a voice speaking. Just a voice.

Maybe some kind of visual contact, but a voice. But in this case, it's far more vivid than I think what she normally expects. So, 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.

And the reason I'm suggesting that it was this visual contact that was different in her experience is she's, I think when she actually sees Samuel, the spirit is not just going to talk to me. He's actually coming back. He wouldn't do that for just anybody.

If he's coming back and making a vivid appearance, it must be for the king. He just would not do this for anybody. You are Saul.

And the king said to her, don't be afraid. What do you see? Apparently, Saul can't see it, or he's not in a position to. I see her sort of peering over the pit, and she sees Samuel coming up.

And NIV translates it, I see a ghostly figure coming up out of the earth. Then Saul says, what does he look like? And she says, an old man wearing a robe is coming up. And this is the way Samuel is described.

He's wearing his prophetic robe. The problem is that in the Hebrew text, we've got plural forms used here. I see Elohim coming up, plural.

Remember Elohim is a plural form in Hebrew. It usually refers to the one true God or to one spirit. But when it is used that way, typically it has a singular verb with it.

Here it's plural. You could translate it, I see gods, I see spirits coming up out of the ground. And you could translate it that way.

Sometimes you can have a single referent, even with a plural verb, just for grammatical agreement. We're getting a little technical here. So we're not sure exactly what she's saying here, but she could be saying, I see spirits coming up.

The implication is that he's accompanied by other spirits. At any rate, Saul is not concerned so much about that. He wants to focus on Samuel.

And so, he says, what does he look like, he asked. And she says, an old man wearing a robe is coming up. Then Saul knew it was Samuel.

Her description was adequate. The robe, I think, did it for him. And perhaps the entourage.

At any rate, Saul knew it was Samuel and he bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. So, he's showing respect for the prophet. Samuel speaks

in verse 15, and it's very interesting what he says, why have you disturbed me by bringing me up? The Old Testament view of the afterlife is very interesting.

It's not as developed as we see in later scripture. And Samuel makes it sound as if he's been having a snooze down there or had been relaxing. And he says, why have you disturbed me by bringing me up? It's similar to what we see in Isaiah 14, where Isaiah is talking about the king of Babylon arriving in Sheol, the world of the dead.

And all Sheol is a stir. And there are kings down there who are occupying thrones. It's almost as if your status in the underworld mirrors your status in life.

We haven't got time today to talk about the Old Testament view of the underworld and the afterlife and all of that. That would probably take a couple of lectures to do adequate justice to that subject. But Samuel says, why have you disturbed me? He's speaking consistently with what you would expect from the Old Testament view of the afterlife.

And Saul says I'm in great distress. The Philistines are fighting against me and God has departed 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. I'm a desperate man. God has not been answering me.

And so, I just decided to conjure you up, Samuel. And Samuel says in verse 16, why do you consult me now that the Lord has departed from you and by your own words the Lord is against you? Why would you think that I am going to go against God? I'm an agent of God. You've got your answer.

The Lord has rejected you. Verse 17, the Lord has done what he predicted through me. I said all this would happen.

The Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hands and given it to one of your neighbors. And now Samuel is more specific. Remember earlier he spoke in more general terms, one who's better than you and all of that.

To David. David is the one. Because you did not obey the Lord or carry out his fierce wrath against the Amalekites, the Lord has done this to you today.

Remember, Saul had not killed the Amalekites. Isn't it interesting that Samuel makes reference to this in a chapter that's right after a chapter where David is killing Amalekites? The Lord will deliver both Israel and you into the hands of the Philistines and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me.

In other words, you're coming here. You're coming to Sheol. And the Lord will also give the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines.

So, Samuel's message hasn't changed. He basically says to Saul, why have you disturbed me? I predicted long ago, you know, the Lord had torn the kingdom away from you. You rejected his word.

He's rejected you. The day for that to be fulfilled has come. And a lot of people think, can this really be Samuel? Can we conjure up the spirit of Samuel? Maybe this is a demon or something like that.

I see no reason to draw that conclusion. Samuel's message is consistent with his message before. He's called Samuel.

He's described in the same way that Samuel was. I think this is a unique experience. Samuel was allowed to come back by God from the dead to speak to Saul, to reiterate his message to Saul, and to tell him that his time had come.

Saul obviously is not going to take this well. This is a tremendous shock to his system. And he falls full length on the ground, filled with fear because of Samuel's words.

His strength is gone. He hadn't eaten anything. The woman comes to him and sees that he's shaken and basically says, look, your servant has obeyed you.

I took my life in my hands and did what you told to me. Don't be taking it out on me, I think is the implication. I just did what you said.

You didn't like the message. You didn't like what he said. But don't be taking it out on me.

So 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. She's trying to butter him up, I think, a little bit. But he refused and said, I won't eat.

But the men join in with the woman and they urge him. And so, he gets up from the ground and he sits on the couch. And the woman prepares a meal.

They eat. And that same night they got up and left. So, we've come to the place in the story where Saul is going to be removed from the scene.

And this is going to open the door for David. But David has gotten himself into a difficult situation. This is his time.

Saul is going to die in battle. The time has come. But David is over with the Philistines who are going to be fighting against Israel.

So, David's in a difficult situation of his own choosing. And we'll talk about that in our next lesson.

This is Dr. Bob Chisholm and his teaching on 1 and 2 Samuel. This is session 15 on 1 Samuel 26-28. David Spares Saul Again, chapter 26. David Flees to Gath Again, chapter 27, and Seance in Ein Dor, Bad News Beyond the Grave, chapter 28.