



When you go to seminary, you discover...

Saul paper: some say Samuel/God was unfair...

You can see it:

Saul/David: both chosen by God, anointed by Samuel, gained people's support...

Saul's great sin: improper sacrifices

David's: adultery and murder

Saul's legacy v. David's

It's easy to see the difference if Saul's religion was fake...



Was Saul a true believer?

“The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person... As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul’s heart...”

- 1 Samuel 10:6, 9

Was Saul a true believer?

1 Samuel 10:6, 9—“The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person... As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul’s heart... ” Was this a true conversion?

Evidence that it wasn’t...

Violence later in life

Demonstration of prophetic gift: “Is Saul also among the prophets?”

Evidence it was...

Descent into madness: unlikely someone with no heart for God would be affected like this

Comparison to Jeroboam

Language in text: “different person... heart”

Let’s review Saul at his best...



Saul at his best:

- *Boldness in following the Spirit's leading*
- *Relying on the power of the Spirit.*
- *Serving people to please the Lord (not people)*

Boldness in following the Spirit's leading,

relying on the power of the Spirit in what he did,

-serving people to please the **Lord**, not the people...

If it is a true conversion...

Place in OT for being "born again"

Example for how a believer's life can deteriorate as a result of disobedience

Cautionary tale for today

Today we're going to look at what Saul's downfall was as king.... And then his downfall as a man.



Saul's Fatal Flaw: Showcase religion

Saul's Fatal Flaw: "showcase" religion

Began at a time when the Israelites were mustering for all-out war with the Philistines...

Philistines: losing to them for generations

People: wanted sacrifice from Samuel before battle

Began to desert... Saul made the sacrifice.

Saul believed outward act of sacrifice was more important than whether it was done according to the Lord's directives

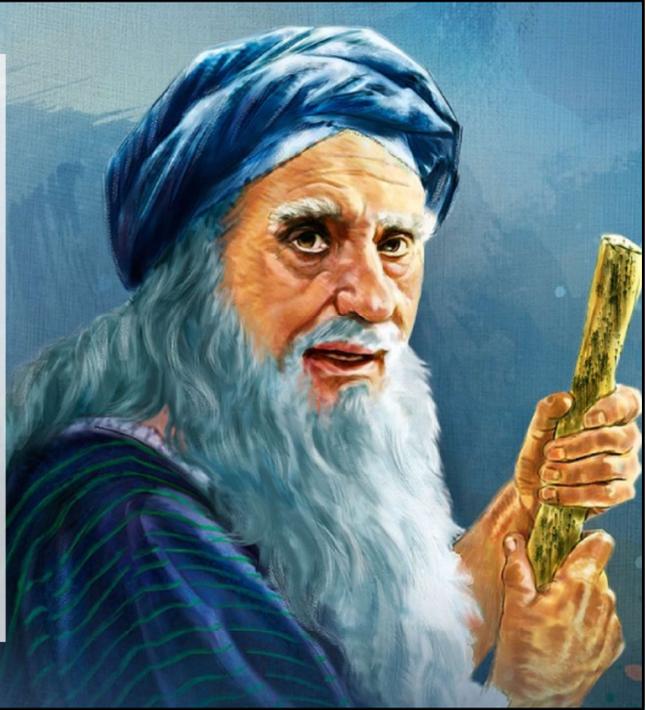
Believed he could win God's favor through disobedience

Superstitious attitude toward God—victory depended on religious things they did rather than God's purpose/power

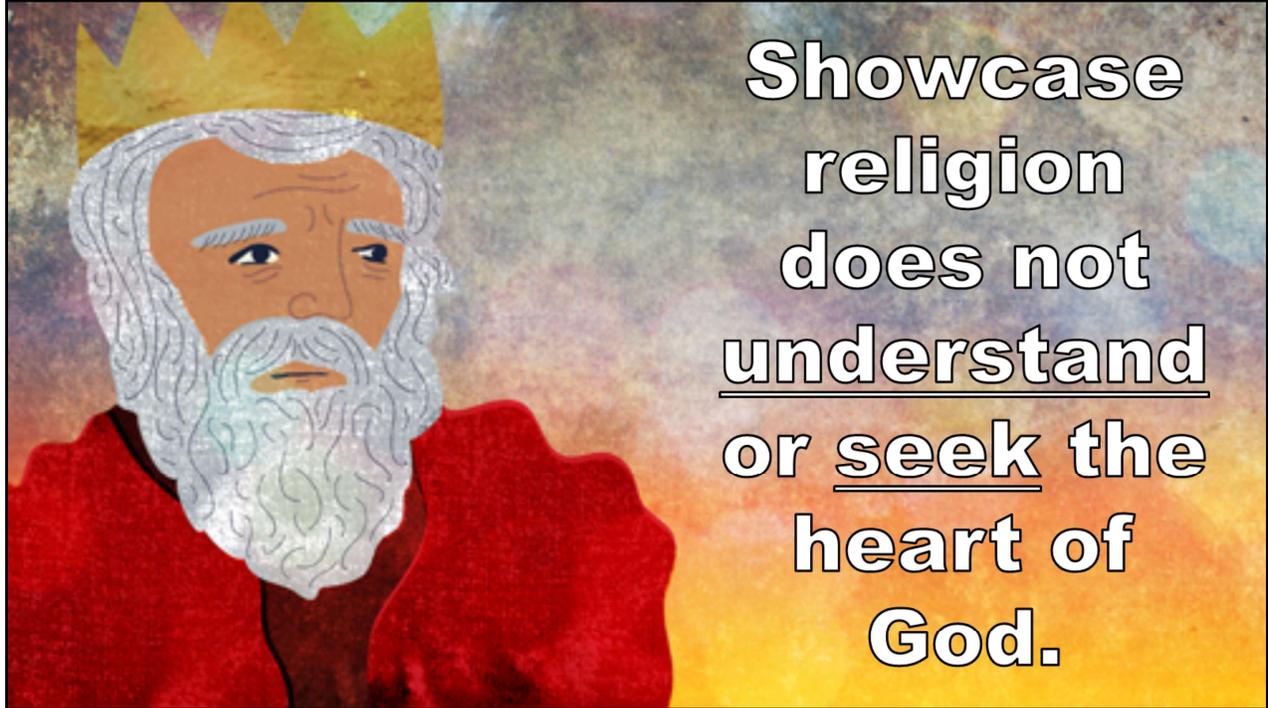
Appearance of piety, but really disobedience

“You acted foolishly,” Samuel said. “You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD’s command.”

- 1 Samuel 13:13-14



Samuel’s harsh response: 1 Samuel 13:13-14—“*read*”



Showcase religion does not understand or seek the heart of God.
You end up following your own made-up religion...

Saul valued appearance over substance... surfaced again in incident that broke Saul's fellowship with Samuel & the Spirit...

Amalekites... Agag... the command... Saul's actions



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; make war on them until you have wiped them out.’ Why did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of 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.”

- 1 Samuel 15:17-20

Response is most telling: 1 Sam. 15:17-20—“read”
Saul: “I did obey the Lord”... he had lost touch
Thought he could do it his way and still be obedient

Blamed soldiers (wanted sacrifice)...



“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 voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king.”

- 1 Samuel 15:21-23

vv. 21-23—“*read*”

Saul still didn't get it, wanted outward show:



“Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned. I violated the LORD’s command and your instructions. I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them. Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD.”

But Samuel said to him, “I will not go back with you. You have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you as king over Israel!”

As Samuel turned to leave, Saul caught hold of the hem of his robe, and it tore. Samuel said to him, “The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbors – to one better than you. He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind.”

Saul replied, “I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD your God.” So Samuel went back with Saul, and Saul worshiped the LORD.” **(1 Samuel 15:24-31)**

Saul still didn’t get it, wanted outward show: vv. 24-31



Showcase religion's audience is people, not God.

One of the last bits of instruction from Samuel → Saul: "God is not a man"...

God sees what man doesn't and his desires are not for surface-level honors than mean nothing. Saul wanted to win God's favor with sacrifices, excuses and other shows, but he would not change his heart.

Would not change to go God's direction, and God is not a man who would change to go Saul's, so Saul and God parted ways.



Brings us back to chapter 16... Samuel is grieved... “what went wrong?”... Comes down to this: Saul was too much like the people who demanded him.

Key question: “Do you want God as your leader or not?”

Saul has *uses* for God (unite the people, law of the land, answers to tough questions, strength in battle) but he didn’t know him and would rather follow his way and the whims of the people

We have our uses for God (right and wrong, feeling righteous, meaning, comfort, salvation) but do we want him as our *king*?

Saul won the approval of the men, but was rejected by God



How did Saul ruin his life (as a man)?

Now we turn to Saul as a man rather than a king...

Final word on Saul the king was spoken when Samuel walked away... kingship lost, not getting it back.

But nothing truly tragic had happened yet... his decision on how to handle the Lord's rebuke would set the course for the rest of his life.

Saul was not beyond God's capacity to forgive, but he stubbornly chose a life apart from God...

Saul's story is a cautionary tale for us. It's what can happen to you or to me—or to that stubborn person you know—when lack of faith, lack of fellowship, and a refusal to repent create a downward spiral of sin that leads to ruined potential and a destroyed life.



Saul lacked FAITH

Saul's lack of faith

We've seen Saul's superstitious attitude toward God already...

It stands out clearly when compared to David's faith in the battle against Goliath...



Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us." Then the Philistine said, "This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other."

On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.

- 1 Samuel 17:8-11

Representative battle (1 Sam. 17:8-10—"read")...

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overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us.”

Then the Philistine said, “This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other.”

- **1 Samuel 17:8-10**

Saul’s reaction: v. 11—“On hearing the Philistine’s words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.”

(probably about 60 years old) – hopefully Israel had a better candidate than their 60-year-old king (we’re not sending the ‘92 Dream Team to the Olympics)

No leadership... (sent no one)



David asked the men standing near him, “What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?”

...But David said to Saul, “Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God.”

- 1 Samuel 17:26, 34-36

David’s reaction: v. 26, 34-36—“*read*”

Perhaps best illustration: David’s refusal of Saul’s armor



- Saul's armor was ***outward***, a sign of strength for ***others*** to see.
- David's armor was ***inward***; it was his trust in God and God's ***Spirit*** what was with him.

Saul's armor was an outward, a sign of strength for others.

David's armor was inward; it was his trust in God and God's Spirit that was with him.



Saul lacked FELLOWSHIP with God

Saul's lack of fellowship with God

Began with departure of Samuel and the Spirit...

Samuel's place in Saul's court had established office of prophet, through which God's kingship was retained

No one replaced Samuel, so God fell silent to Saul

Saul's desperation for fellowship seen in several cases...

Spirit of God in David...

Soothed him when David played the harp

Moments of clarity when David spared his life

Should have made him realize his need for God and pointed him toward repentance, but instead...

Saul *feared* the Spirit on David.



When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes. As they danced, they sang: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?" And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

- 1 Samuel 18:6-9

Saul feared the Spirit on David...

Knew kingdom was going to slip away, then he heard this song: 1 Samuel 18:6-9—*"read"*

Tested it out: vv.10-12...

Saul *feared* the Spirit on David.



The next day an evil spirit from God came forcefully upon Saul. He was prophesying in his house, while David was playing the harp, as he usually did. Saul had a spear in his hand and he hurled it, saying to himself, "I'll pin David to the wall." But David eluded him twice. Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with David but had left Saul.

- 1 Samuel 18:10-12

Tested it out: vv.10-12—*"read"*

So now Saul knew the will of God, but he decided to fight against it...

Saul *fought* the will of God.



Then Saul ordered his attendants: "Speak to David privately and say, 'Look, the king is pleased with you, and his attendants all like you; now become his son-in-law.'" They repeated these words to David. But David said, "Do you think it is a small matter to become the king's son-in-law? I'm only a poor man and little known." When Saul's servants told him what David had said, Saul replied, "Say to David, 'The king wants no other price for the bride than a hundred Philistine foreskins, to take revenge on his enemies.'" Saul's plan was to have David fall by the hands of the Philistines.

- 1 Samuel 18:10-12

Saul fought the will of God

Used his daughters... 1 Samuel 18:22-25—"read"

Shows how his focus on the external blinded him to God's ways:
Knew he couldn't kill David, but thought this "invisible murder"
might work

Saul *fought* the will of God.



Saul's anger flared up at Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of a perverse and rebellious woman! Don't I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you? As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Now send and bring him to me, for he must die!" "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" Jonathan asked his father. But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David..

- 1 Samuel 20:30-33

Fought his son: 1 Samuel 20:30-33—*"read"*

Reveals that his motives had nothing to do with love for Jonathan;
purely selfish

Saul said to him, "Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, giving him bread and a sword and inquiring of God for him, so that he has rebelled against me and lies in wait for me, as he does today?"

Ahimelech answered the king, "Who of all your servants is as loyal as David, the king's son-in-law, captain of your bodyguard and highly respected in your household? Was that day the first time I inquired of God for him? Of course not! Let not the king accuse your servant or any of his father's family, for your servant knows nothing at all about this whole affair."

But the king said, "You will surely die, Ahimelech, you and your father's whole family." Then the king ordered the guards at his side: "Turn and kill the priests of the LORD, because they too have sided with David. They knew he was fleeing, yet they did not tell me."

But the king's officials were not willing to raise a hand to strike the priests of the LORD. The king then ordered Doeg, "You turn and strike down the priests." So Doeg the Edomite turned and struck them down. That day he killed eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod. He also put to the sword Nob, the town of the priests, with its men and women, its children and infants, and its cattle, donkeys and sheep.

- 1 Samuel 22:13-19

Fought the priests

Story of the priests at Nob

Saul's reaction: 1 Sam. 22:13-19—*"read"*

Driven mad by not being able to fight God, but he showed power by killing his priests

Only Doeg the Edomite would carry out his orders: shows that he had more in common with godless nations than with people
A king "such as all the other nations have"



Saul stubbornly refused to REPENT.

Saul stubbornly refused to repent

As much as Saul fought God's will, David trusted God and was patient, twice sparing Saul's life...

First incident (In the cave...)



When David finished saying this, Saul asked, “Is that your voice, David my son?” And he wept aloud. “You are more righteous than I,” he said. “You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly. You have just now told me of the good you did to me; the LORD delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me.

When a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed? May the LORD reward you well for the way you treated me today. I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands.

- 1 Samuel 24:16-20

First incident (In the cave...)

Saul’s reaction: 1 Samuel 24:16-20—“*read*”



Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Come back, David my son. Because you considered my life precious today, I will not try to harm you again. Surely I have acted like a fool and have erred greatly." ...

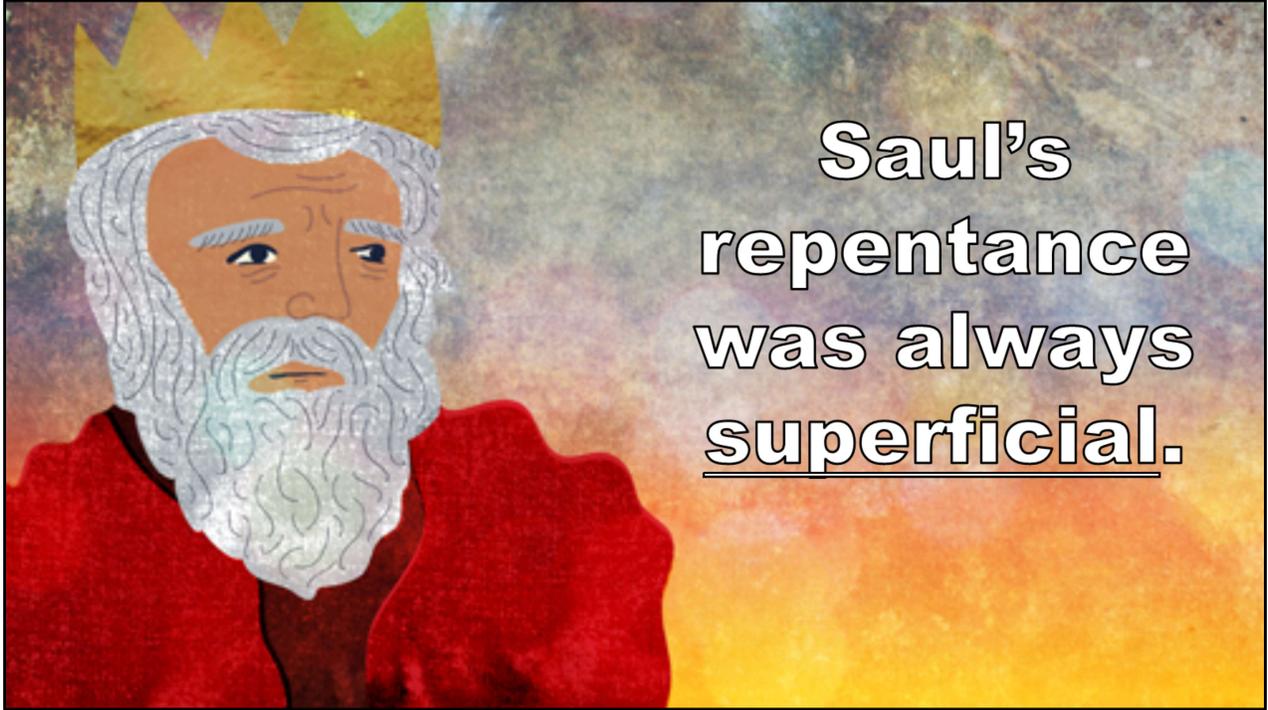
Then Saul said to David, "May you be blessed, my son David; you will do great things and surely triumph." So David went on his way, and Saul returned home..

- 1 Samuel 26:21, 25

Second incident...

Went with Abishai through camp, took spear and jug

Saul's reaction: 1 Samuel 26:21, 25—*"read"*

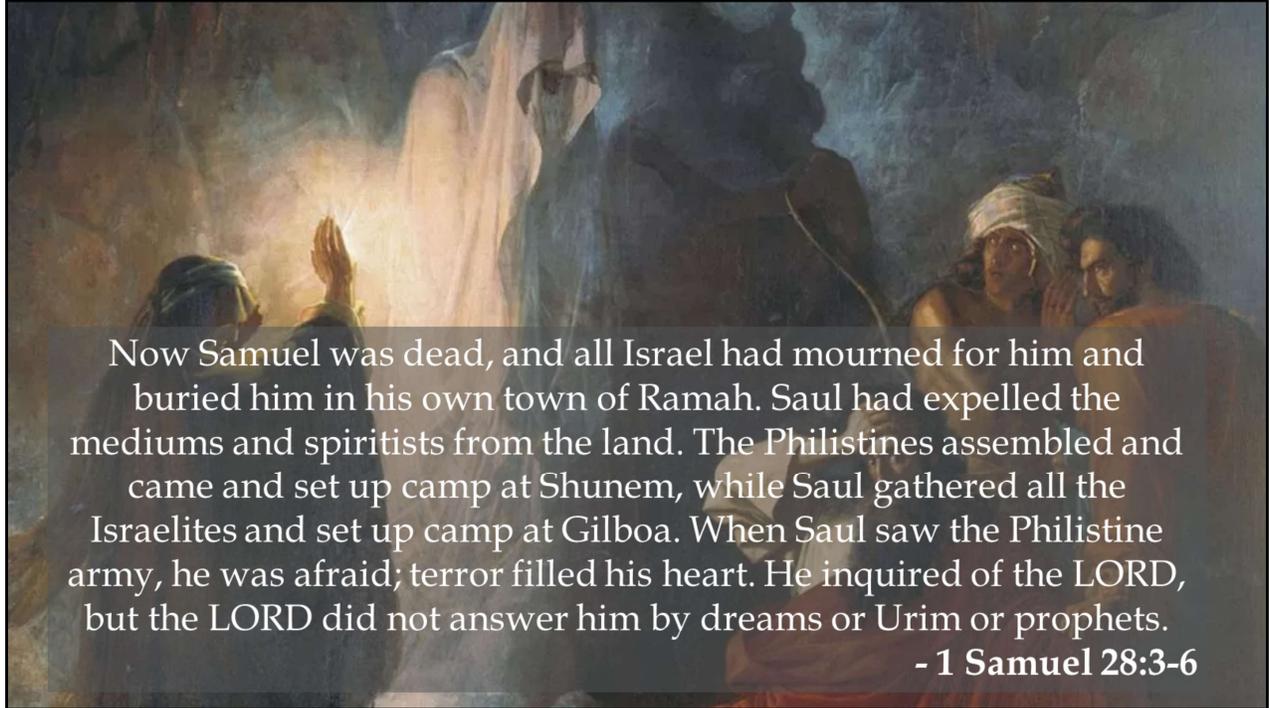


Saul's repentance was always superficial.

Never truly repented; only admitted defeat out loud

Saying you're wrong and foolish is only the start...

Theologian J. Sidlow Baxter: "The end of all these ways of sin and folly is moral and spiritual suicide. We can only finish any such downward spiral with the pathetic groan of Saul: "I have played the fool'"



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. The Philistines assembled and came and set up camp at Shunem, while Saul gathered all the Israelites 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.

- 1 Samuel 28:3-6

Saul's death was tragic and tragically fitting for the life he chose

1 Samuel 28:3-6—*“read”*

No fellowship with God: dreams (personal)... through priests (cut off at Nob)... nor prophets (Samuel dead)

Medium... vision of Samuel... mortally wounded

Fearing torture and ridicule, he fell on his own sword

Fitting: so concerned about public image

Final act of faithlessness, godlessness and self-destruction



Final act of faithlessness, godlessness and self-destruction

Ironic twist: body was found, stripped, decapitated, hung...

As his body hung naked and headless in a pagan temple, his worst fear had come true. There he hung, ridiculed, worthless and defeated, despite having spent a lifetime living to prevent a moment like this at the expense of his relationship with God, his relationship with his family, and his own sanity. It was horrible and tragic, mainly because it did not have to end this way.



What life will you choose?

What life will you choose?

Saul dizzied himself looking around to see how others perceived him, preoccupying himself with appearances, speech, and ritual, and completely neglected his inner man and standing with God

Maybe that's why people are so hard on Saul...

too human: preoccupied with outer appearance, slow to faith, negligent of heart relationship with God, too prideful to repent.

You can see a little Saul in yourself, can't you?

When faced with your own guilt...



- ~~“Argue your case”~~ → **OWN UP**
- ~~“Plead the fifth”~~ → **‘FESS UP**
- “Throw yourself on the mercy of the court” → **MOVE ON**

When faced with our own guilt, there are 3 ways to react...

“Argue Your Case”

Saul refused to accept...

We argue our case, too...

It’s time to **“Own up”**

“Plead the Fifth”

Hide/bury sin, develop a double life, pretend it never happened...

Time to **“Fess up”**

“Throw yourself on the Mercy of the Court”

Plead guilty... as for mercy

It’s only then that you can **“Move On”**

Challenge for This Week

- Offer yourself to be led by God, rather than using Him.
- Ask God to show you ways that you are pretending to please him but are looking to please people.
- Release those stubborn areas to God.

