

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

May 1

MONDAY

David and his 600 men did some serious fighting, battling assorted Canaanite forces near his hiding place in Ziklag. In his victories, David killed many, and claimed all their wealth (mostly livestock) as his own.

READ: I Samuel 27:8-9

These verses are hard to interpret. Was David's heart right in all this? Was he doing what Saul should have done: protecting Israel and destroying these tribal nations which God had commanded destroyed hundreds of years previously? Or, was he out for personal gain and fame? Since we can only read the story and cannot see his heart, we are left to wonder. But since, once before, David had done something similar to this in the name of the Lord and for His people Israel, that is likely the case here as well. If that's the case, we see David's heart as he cares for God's people.

TUESDAY

When Achish, king of Gath, asked David about his activities (Achish must have heard rumors), David told him that he was fighting against other enemies, enemies of Achish. David, in fact, had been fighting against allies of Achish, but he never allowed any survivors to live to tell about it. But Achish thought that David's actions would turn the people of Israel against him..

READ: I Samuel 27:10-12

In these verses, God gives us a lesson about trust. David's logic must have been that to tell the truth at this moment would have been disastrous for him and his men. He imagined the worse and decided that it was necessary to lie in order to make things right. In this, David failed to trust God. He depended on his own wisdom (to see the future) and his own cleverness (to manipulate it). But God demands truth. We should never distort or pervert truth in order to avoid what it will bring. God, who is truth, works through truth to accomplish His purposes. Let us trust Him with whatever befalls.

WEDNESDAY

King Achish and the Philistines decided to battle against Israel. The king asked David whether he would be willing to fight with him against Israel's army which was led by Saul, David's enemy. David answered ambiguously: *You know what I can do*. Achish interpreted this remark to mean YES and so he declared that David would be his personal body guard, the keeper of the king's head.

READ: I Samuel 28:1-3

There's a problem: the Philistines are going to attack Israel. Now remember, they should have been totally destroyed centuries before (if the Jews at the time of Joshua had obeyed God). And Saul (if he had obeyed God) should have wiped out the last remnants. But they had not been obedient, the Philistines remained, and now they are harassing Israel again. Our disobedience will catch up with us. We reap what we sow. Our sins will find us out. We must obey God and do so completely!

THURSDAY

Samuel died and the whole nation of Israel mourned. While Samuel lived, Saul forced all the fortune tellers and such to leave the country. But now, as Saul prepared to send his army out to face the Philistines on the field of battle, he lost heart and became extremely fearful. He asked the Lord about the outcome but received no answer.

READ: I Samuel 28:4-6

Is it possible to seek the Lord in some way and not find Him? That seems to be Saul's situation, and we might wonder how that fits with Scripture which says *all who seek Him, shall find Him*. But Saul is not seeking God here; he's seeking information from God. And his thinking is this: if not from God, then maybe from someplace else. He is not seeking in faith. Saul wanted to encounter God on his own terms. A bad idea.

FRIDAY

Hearing nothing from God, Saul commanded his servants to find him a fortune teller. The servants knew of such a woman at Endor. One night, Saul disguised himself, and with two guards, sneaked off to consult her. Saul asked her to *call up* someone. She suspected that this was a trap to catch her in the act of doing what Saul had forbidden, but the king assured her, in the name of the Lord, that such was not the case.

READ: I Samuel 28:7-10

How low can a person sink? Saul's life answers that question: selected by God and filled with His Spirit, Saul was the divinely appointed leader of God's people. He declared himself God's man, and expelled from Israel all who dealt with false spirits and demonic powers. Now we see him visiting one of these who had been expelled. And he uses the name of the Lord to get his own way! What does this have to do with us? Lots. We have within us the potential for doing the same thing Saul did. We might think otherwise, but our hearts deceive us. Knowing this, we need to guard our hearts from sin. We need, day-by-day, to throw ourselves upon His mercy and plead for His protection. *Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil*. For Thy name's sake.

SATURDAY

Saul told the witch of Endor that he wanted her to call up Samuel from the dead. She did so and then suddenly realized that it was Saul who sat before her in disguise. She told the king that in her trance, she had seen gods going up from the earth, and that she had seen an old man covered with a mantle. Saul felt that this must surely be Samuel, and so he bowed himself to the ground.

READ: I Samuel 28: 11-14

Notice this account: Samuel asked to see Samuel and she called him up from the dead. There is no explanation of how she did so. Why? For one reason, we should have nothing to do with the works of darkness. There are some things which we should not even speak of, so evil are those things. We want to be careful about this: we should be wary of repeating language that brings evil into our minds in a vivid way. There are some topics too evil to dwell on, and some words or expressions too filthy to repeat or acknowledge. Oh, be careful little mind what you think. And be careful little mouth what you say! And even how you say it!

#28