

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

May 8

MONDAY

Called up from the dead, "Samuel" asked Saul what he wanted. Saul said that he was distressed because of the Philistines on the attack, and because God would no longer communicate with him. "Samuel" answered the king by asking him why he cared at all what the Lord had to say, since the Lord was now his enemy.

READ: I Samuel 28:15-16

Know this: the apparition that the witch of Endor saw in her trance was not Samuel. Samuel's spirit could not have appeared like a god ascending out of the earth, for he was in Paradise. Perhaps what she saw was Satan himself. He can transform himself into an angel of light; he can certainly transform himself to look like the old man she saw. It seems to have been the mantle (a robe) thrown over his shoulder that convinced Saul it was Samuel. Maybe that had been Samuel's unique way of dressing. In any case, Saul assumed it to have been Samuel. As believers, we are to have nothing to do with such forces, and to be free of the fear that they can somehow control us. There are such forces in the world today, but we are told to battle them by holy living. That's what we are doing this very day - resisting the evil one, and overcoming principalities and powers – in Jesus' name.

TUESDAY

The demon (who Saul wrongly thought to be Samuel) said that, because Saul had not obeyed God in the matter of the Amalekites, God had taken the kingdom from Saul's family line and given it to David; and that the Philistines would win the battle which was about to begin; and that Saul and his sons would die in that battle.

READ: I Samuel 28:17-19

When Satan comes to us with his whisperings, don't be deceived. He can be very persuasive and sound good, even religious. Here, in each phrase he spoke through the witch, he said "the Lord this and the Lord that." 5 times! Takes us back to the Garden where he used the same strategy against Eve. He even tried it on Jesus in the wilderness! And he will try it on us, to be sure. But we are warned and ready, strengthening the inner man day-by-day with the WORD of GOD, and claiming victory through Jesus Christ! We will not believe a word which the "father of lies" may speak to us, but rather, place all our trust in the One who is the Truth.

WEDNESDAY

Hearing Samuel's prediction that he and his sons will be killed in the battle, Saul collapsed. The witch whom Saul had consulted, returned, and seeing him, encouraged him to eat something. At first he refused but with the witch and his own servants pleading with him, he finally consented. He got up, sat on the bed, and began to eat. The witch cooked a fat calf, baked some bread, and served Saul and his servants. They ate and then returned home.

READ: I Samuel 28:20-26

Saul has just learned that in the coming battle, he and his sons would be killed and Israel would be soundly defeated. For a day he is distressed and refuses to eat. But soon he more or less recovers and is his old self again - that "old self" which cares not for the things of God. That old self which cares not for his own sons or for the nation. Notice what Saul did not do: he did not cry out to God for mercy upon his sons, and to spare Israel and punish Saul. He did not turn from his own sinful ways and return to God. We ought always to look carefully at adversity in our lives, to see if it is not God's chastisement, and with it, a call for us to return to Him.

THURSDAY

The Philistine army assembled at Aphek, and the Israelites set up camp at Jezreel. There were

thousands and Philistines. David and his men marched to the land owned by Achish. The Philistines asked Achish what David was doing on his land. Achish replied that David had been with him off and on for years and had never caused him any problems. But they expressed concern that in the coming battle, David might turn against them, and they reminded Achish that songs were sung in Israel about David's prowess in killing his enemies. In the end, they were insistent.

READ: I Samuel 29:1-5

What a great picture of God's deliverance! David had moved into the land of the Philistines and allied himself to a Philistine leader. War is about to break out. If he fights with Achish (ie. the Philistines) he will be branded a traitor in Israel. King Saul is going to be killed in the battle and David will be blamed for his death. On the other hand, if he fights for Israel and against the Philistines, he would be accused of treachery and ingratitude towards Achish who had been his protector and provider. God could have left David in this "no-win" predicament, but He did not. He put it into the hearts of the other leaders of the Philistines that David must go. In doing so, they unwittingly were God's instruments for getting David out of that predicament. How marvelous are God's ways! *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.*

FRIDAY

Pressured by the leaders of the Philistines, Achish confronted David. He expressed his admiration for him and his personal confidence in him, but explained that the leaders of the Philistines did not share his own feelings. David responded by asking Achish if he have ever done anything wrong in Achish's eyes? Or anything to even suggest that he would do anything other than fight side-by-side with him in battle?

READ: I Samuel 29:6-8

Notice the high regard Achish had for David. Think what lay behind it: the attitude and behavior of David must have been irreproachable. Notice the graciousness of Achish in the way he dismissed David from his service, and explained the reasons behind it. Notice the confusion in David's mind: how can this be happening to me. Though he failed to recognize God's hand at this moment, God's hand was at work! He works in us, and He works for us; we are, in every way, His workmanship!

SATURDAY

Achish affirmed David telling him that, in his sight, he was as good as gold. Still, he explained again, the leaders of the Philistines had decided that David must leave, so early the next morning, David and his men must depart. So David did. The Philistine army moved, too, up towards Jezreel, where Saul's forces were camped.

READ: I Samuel 29:9-11

What Achish says here about David's angel-like qualities, God says later of *the House of David* (Zech.12:8) that it should be *as the angel of the Lord*. Achish's words are a compliment but God's are a promise! As believers, we are not men-pleasers but God-pleasers! What we do may be commended by those around us, but it is not for such recognition that we live the way we do. We live as those who wish to point others to the One who loved us, died for us, and called us into His kingdom. We live as redeemed ones who choose to live for the One who redeemed us at such a great cost!

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