

“How Not to Die” // 1 Samuel 28, 31 //

*The Life of David #10*¹

Live Baptism

Today is going to be a great day because, as some of you just saw at your campus, we are celebrating baptisms all across the Triangle. And the good news is that **you will also have the opportunity to make that decision today.**

- Baptism is the public declaration that you have decided to follow Jesus. We often say it's like putting on the wedding ring. Putting on the ring doesn't make me married, and technically it's possible to be married without putting on the ring. But the ring is a very important symbol that you are.
- We believe the Bible teaches that baptism is something you do after you choose to follow Jesus. That makes sense, right? This ring is meaningful to my wife because I chose to put it on as a symbol of our commitment. Baptism is meaningful because it is a declaration of your faith.
- Maybe you got baptized as a baby--which is great, but I'm guessing you didn't have a lot of say in the matter. Your parents were expressing a desire for you to grow up and follow Jesus. And again, that's beautiful. It's time for you to ratify that decision by choosing to be baptized yourself. In a way, you are not rejecting that first baptism; if anything you are fulfilling it.

¹ Works Consulted: Tim Chester, *1 Samuel For You: For reading, for feeding, for leading (God's Word for You)*, The Good Book Company, September 15, 2014; John Sailhammer. *NIV Compact Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994); Paul Tripp, "[David and Saul](#)," sermon was preached at Tenth Presbyterian Church on May 19, 2013; Dale Ralph Davis, "[You Asked: How Do You Explain the Witch of Endor?](#)," this interview was hosted by The Gospel Coalition on October 18, 2012; John Piper, "[The Good End of Godly Regret](#)," sermon was preached at Bethlehem Baptist Church on December 30, 1984.

- Every baptism we see in the NT happens after someone professes faith in Christ, and so we are going to offer a chance today for all those of you who have received Christ but not yet taken the step to declare it to do so. Today.
- We've got everything you'll need, and I'll be giving you a chance to respond right at the end of this message, which your campus teams will lead you through.

Today's passage will address another group of you who might need to consider this: those of you who have grown up in church but never trusted Christ personally, for yourself. **1 Samuel 28, if you have your Bibles...**

I was on a panel with an older pastor the other day--the guy was probably in his 60's--who said that his wife became a Christian about 10 years into their ministry. When he said that, you could tell the room was confused. He said she was never resistant to faith or some kind of blatant hypocrite. She'd grown up in a Christian home and always gone along with everything, signed off on the doctrines, and participated in the activities. She'd always played the role of pastor's wife really well. But about 10 years into their ministry, he said, she realized her faith had never truly been her own. She'd never surrendered her life to Christ or trusted him personally with her soul. She said, "*Faith was something I confessed with my mouth but didn't embrace with my heart.*" "So," this pastor said, "10 years into ministry, my wife got saved." He said, "She did start to enjoy ministry a lot more after that, I noticed."

Maybe you think that is a crazy fluke of a story, but Jesus said that there's a lot more people in his church like that than we seem to acknowledge--people who on that last day will hear Jesus say those awful words, "Though you were active in my church, I never actually knew you. *Depart from me, you worker of iniquity.*"

Billy Graham used to say that many people in our country will miss heaven by 18 inches--"18" is the distance between your head and your

heart. 1 Samuel 28 gives us a picture of a man in just such a category. We've seen this man before, but today I want you to recognize the warning he is to those of us in the church. His name is Saul.

Just to remind you: The books of 1st and 2nd Samuel are about the life of David, and we have been systematically working our way through them. Saul was the king before David--he'd been the people's choice for king: he was tall and good-looking and a great warrior-leader. An obvious choice. But, he refused to trust God and do things his way, so God rejected him. God then had Samuel, Israel's premier prophet, anoint David as the next king. Saul then became super jealous of David, and several times tried to murder him. And Saul's life began to unravel.

1 Samuel 28:3-20 [3] Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city.

Now Saul had put the mediums and the necromancers out of the land. (a "medium" is someone who attempts to communicate with spirits--think a fortune teller or horoscope writer; a necromancer is someone who attempts to talk with the dead.)

- **Saul had sent these people out of the land**, which was a good thing. God had said these things were not to be tolerated in Israel. Saul had banished them all to Hogwarts or whatever.

Well, [4] The Philistines assembled and came and encamped at Shunem... [5] When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly.

- Fear and insecurity are recurring themes in Saul's life. After Saul lost the assurance of God's protection, he was scared of everything:
- Fear of the **future; death; going bankrupt;**
- someone else, like David, **succeeding and threatening his status**
- fear of **what everyone else thought about him**

Fear and jealousy are usually the first indicator-lights that you are out of fellowship with God.

- You see, when you are surrendered to God, you have confidence in the fact that he will provide all your needs.
- You're less worried about what everyone else thinks because you are living for his approval.
- You're less worried about death or tragedy because you know not one hair falls from your heads without his knowledge.

But when you strip yourself of that by going out on your own, you live with fear and jealousy.

[6] And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets.

- Saul went to the priests and sought direction by God. Dreams, prophets and Urim were the 3 primary ways God spoke to people back then. Now, dreams and prophets are pretty self-explanatory, but you may not know what Urim is. Think of Urim as the OT equivalent of the Magic 8-ball, except it was **specifically affirmed by God** in Exodus as a way of discerning his will.²
- The Urim was basically 2 rocks – one was called Urim, the other Thummim. On one side of each rock was written 'yes,' and on the other side was 'no'.
- When the people needed direction, the priest would throw down the rocks. You could have 'yes, yes'—that meant God was saying, "Get on with it;" 'no, no' meant "Don't do that." But if it was 'yes, no' or 'no, yes' then that meant there was no clear direction from God.
- Now, some of you are sitting there thinking: Where can I get me a set of those?" I'm selling them on the church website for \$20,000 a pair.

² The Urim and Thummim are first mentioned in Exodus 28:30 (as part of the priestly garments), but their first use to discern God's will is from the book of Numbers: "And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the Lord" (Numbers 27:21).

- Just kidding. This is an OT provision that doesn't carry over to church life--because now we have the Holy Spirit to guide us.³

Probably what was happening here, in Saul's case, is the priest would throw down the rocks and he would get 'yes, no.' He'd do it again, then 'no, yes.' Yes/no. No/yes. It would be like shaking the 8-ball and continuously getting "Ask again later," or "Reply hazy." If that happens like 300 times in a row you might think something is up. God had shut out Saul from his direction.

So, [7] Then Saul said to his servants, "Seek out for me a woman who is a medium (a witch), that I may go to her and inquire of her." And his servants said to him, "Behold, there is a medium at En-dor." (You're like, "En-dor. Isn't that where all the Ewoks in Star Wars were from?" Yes. Different En-dor.)

[8] So Saul disguised himself as a Jedi warrior and put on other garments and went, he and two men with him. And they came to the woman by night. And he said, "Divine for me by a spirit and bring up for me whomever I shall name to you."

[9] The woman (not recognizing the man in the costume to be Saul, of course) said to him, "Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the necromancers from the land. Why then are you laying a trap for my life to bring about my death?"

- **First, what kind of medium is this?** Supposedly she can see the future, but she can't see through THE COSTUME of the guy in front of her?
- Listen, some sorcerers have genuine demonic power, and I don't want to make light of that, but you know a lot of these people just

³ The Apostles do take use of a similar process—casting lots—in Acts 1 to choose a replacement for Judas, but that is the last time we see that, and reads more like the end to an era than a rite of the new one. From that point on, in the numerous places that the Apostles instruct us or demonstrate for us how to seek counsel, it is never by the Urim and Thummim or casting of dice.

make stuff up for money. Have you ever noticed how general and obvious and non-contradictable a lot of their predictions are? "I'm seeing something... Did you ever have a grandparent?" "Yes." "Did they die?" "Yes." "Hmm. Did they die of NATURAL causes?" No, actually they got run over by a tractor-trailer. "Well, then naturally, they're dead." (Little Brian Regan shout-out for you.)

- This woman, like so many of these people, is probably 95% trickster.

So, she doesn't know this is Saul, and she's afraid he's a spy, so: [10] But Saul swore to her by the LORD, "As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing."

- Y'all, don't miss that. Is there any limit to Saul's brazenness? He's trumping God: "Look, I know God says you should be put to death for doing these things, but I guarantee you protection."⁴

[11] Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" He said, "Bring up Samuel for me."

- (Honestly, I'm not sure WHAT Saul was thinking here. If I were summing someone up through a Satanic ritual in direct violation of God's word, I'm not sure fire and brimstone Samuel would be my first choice.

[12] When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice.

- This strikes me as humorous. Samuel appears and she's like, "Ahhh! What in the... (I'm not used to this working. Usually I just blow some smoke & play a little Enya & then make some stuff up.)"
- But this time Samuel is legitimately there and she flips out.

Then this woman has a true moment of clairvoyance and says (v 12): ~~And the woman said to Saul,~~ "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul." (There you go, Einstein! Now you're seeing stuff clearly.)

⁴ Exodus 22:17

[13] The king said to her, “Do not be afraid.” And she was probably like, “What? You think I’m afraid of YOU right now? I have got a dead prophet standing in front of me--one who was known to hack the enemies of God into pieces--and you think *you’re* the one I’m concerned about?”

Saul presses in: “What do you see?” And the woman said to Saul, “I see a god coming up out of the earth.” (This is what Samuel looks like to her). [14] He said to her, “What is his appearance?” And she said, “An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe.” And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and paid homage. Saul is a confused dude.

[15] Then Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?” Saul answered, “I am in great distress, for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dreams. Therefore I have summoned you to tell me what I shall do.”

I think there is an important lesson here: It’s possible to seek God’s will and not really be seeking God.

Many Christians, in fact, I believe, make an idol of finding God’s will... They’re not really seeking God’s will to be pleasing to him; they are seeking it as some kind of guarantee or protection in the future.

Here’s the truth: God never tells me that I won’t fail at anything; what he tells me is that in all things--success or failure--he will sustain me. Yes, I pray for guidance, and I trust him to provide for me anywhere he sends me. But ultimately my life is not about using him to get success, it’s about giving my life fully to him to be used for his purposes. Some of you have sought God’s will not for God’s sake, but as some kind of safety net guaranteeing you won’t fail.

So, I’ll say it again: *Some of you have made an idol out of God’s will*, because you seek to know God’s will more than you seek to know him.

Samuel responds: [17] ...The LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David. [18] Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD and did not carry out his fierce wrath against Amalek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you this day.

- You may remember this story: God had told Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites, and to keep none of the spoils for himself. But Saul kept a bunch of the spoils, and attempted a compromise by saying he’d sacrifice some of those things to God.
- Through Samuel, God said, “I’d rather have your obedience than your sacrifice” and he rejected Saul as King.
- Saul was sad about that, but he never repented of his defiance, and that’s why he’s not hearing from God.
- BTW, some of you wonder why God won’t hear their prayers. And maybe, for some of you, you can go back to a time in your life where you started saying ‘no’ to God about something and you’ve never repented of that, and God won’t hear your prayers today because you are still in broken fellowship with him. You start praying about “this now,” and he doesn’t want to talk about “this now,” he wants to talk about “that there.” Unconfessed sin; known rebellion, cuts you off from fellowship with God.
- Now, I want to be clear: what I DON’T mean is that you need to live in fear that there is some sin way back there in your past that you’ve forgotten about and God can never bless you until you remember it. No, I’m talking about some area of your life you know is not surrendered to God and you continue to live in rebellion. God doesn’t want to talk about your problems until you deal with your rejection.

Then Samuel says this, vs. [19]: Moreover, the LORD will give Israel also with you into the hand of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and

your sons shall be with me. (That's the last thing you want to hear from a ghost. Tomorrow you and your family will be with me.) The LORD will give the army of Israel also into the hand of the Philistines."

[20] Then Saul fell at once full length on the ground, filled with fear because of the words of Samuel. And there was no strength in him, for he had eaten nothing all day and all night...

Now, I want to take you to 1 Samuel 31 and show you how Saul's life ends, but as you turn there, let me just point out something really important:

- Several weeks ago I told you that rebellion was to God like witchcraft. This is how Samuel had said it: "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft..." (1 Samuel 15:23)
- And I explained that a lot of us have trouble seeing that because our small areas of disobedience don't seem that bad to us...
 - You're like, "God, it's just a small thing. It's not that bad."
 - But I explained to you that Samuel's statement was not an exaggeration, because when you say "no" to God, that is the essence of the Satanic spirit.
- Deliberately saying no to God is like the sin of witchcraft. Well, here, in this story, you see the link completed. Saul's small compromises have grown into full-orbed dependence on the demonic.
- And this actually happens more than we realize. When we cut ourselves from the presence and protection of God, we look to other things to fill the role of the divine.
- For example, studies show that as participation in organized religion has gone down in our country, superstitious practices--things like use of tarot cards, crystals, amulets, palm reading, energy balancing, and chakra work--have all gone up.
- And the more irreligious a person describes themselves as, the more likely they are to be superstitious.
- It probably won't surprise you that the probably the most superstitious place in America, is Hollywood, also known as the

least religious. Superstitious and occult practices there are crazy high. An author by the name of Jason Storm, a professor at Williams College in New England, chronicles Hollywood's obsession with scientism and superstition:

- **Cameron Diaz** wears a "lucky necklace" she believes has a mystical anti-aging quality.
- **Before Jennifer Anniston** gets onto any airplane, she always taps the outside of the plane with her right foot and then steps on with that foot.
- **Rafael Nadal**, the famed tennis player: only crosses lines on the court with his right foot between points, always turns his tournament ID face up on the bench, and always turns his water bottle to face the exact same direction to help align energy.
- **Megan Fox** said she copes with her fear of flying by only listening to Britney Spears as she flies. "I know for a fact it's not in my destiny to die listening to a Britney Spears album, so I always play that through my [headphones] when I'm flying," she says. That actually may have some merit.⁵
- **The point is: We are created for a connection to the divine.** And when God no longer reserves that role in our lives, we search for the supernatural through some other kind of mysticism: horoscopes; mother nature; energy-centering; karma; whatever. And hear me: those are all portals to the demonic.

OK, **1 Samuel 31**, here is Saul's tragic end: [1] Now the Philistines fought against Israel, and the men of Israel fled before the Philistines and fell slain on Mount Gilboa. Just like Samuel had said. [2] And the Philistines overtook Saul and his sons, and the Philistines struck down Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchi-shua, the sons of Saul.

- Saul watches his army fall part and then his sons die right before his eyes--including Jonathan.

⁵<https://uncommondescent.com/intelligent-design/why-do-secularism-and-scientism-coincide-with-a-huge-rise-in-superstition/>

- Parents, our children will suffer for our mistakes. That's a sobering truth taught often in Scripture. You think, "My choices affect no one but me." That's not true. What you do affects the lives and eternities of many who are connected to you.

[3] The battle pressed hard against Saul, and the archers found him, and he was badly wounded by the archers.

[4] Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised (the Philistines) come and thrust me through, and mistreat me."

But his armor-bearer would not, for he feared greatly. Therefore Saul took his own sword and fell upon it. [5] And when his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell upon his sword and died with him.

[6] Thus Saul died, and his three sons, and his armor-bearer, and all his men, on the same day together. [7] And... the men of Israel abandoned their cities and fled. And the Philistines came and lived in them. Notice that at the end of Saul's reign, the Philistines are occupying Israelite territory.

[8] The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, they found Saul and his three sons... [9] So they cut off his head and stripped off his armor and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines, to carry the good news to the house of their idols and to the people. [10] They put his armor in the temple of Ashtaroath, and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan.

By the way, the place they hung up Saul's body was the same place where he was crowned.

And this is how the book of 1 Samuel ends.⁶

⁶ One commentary I was reading said this: "And now it was night; and the headless bodies of Saul and his sons, deserted by all, swung in the wind on the walls of

- Israel sought a **king** because they didn't trust God to meet their needs. That King turned out to be a **self-seeking coward** who **consulted demons** in a time of trouble...
- That king **didn't defeat** the Philistines; his life ended with the Philistines on the offensive, taking up residence in Israelite's cities.
- Saul's last act is to watch his **own sons die** and then he commits **suicide**.
- And then his **armor was stripped** from him and displayed in a pagan temple as a testimony to Philistine strength; and then his **body was fastened** up on the wall of a Philistine city to hang there in shame until the birds ate away his flesh.

Would it be possible for the Bible to give a more devastating end to a book?

- The book ends worse than when it started: Remember, at the beginning of 1 Samuel, Israel had a corrupt leader--Eli, and because of Eli's corruption--both the leader and his sons died and Israel was oppressed by the Philistines. That's the same thing that happens at the end.
- The clear message: ***All attempts to be our own King will leave us worse off than when we started.***

But I think the main lesson from the life of Saul is a message to religious people.

After all, Saul was a really religious guy. I mean, think about it:

- He did a lot of great things: he led Israel to several great victories.
- He purged the land of witches and wizards
- He donated pretty heavily to Temple worship--we see him giving some pretty big financial gifts.⁷
- He seems to have been a pretty good family man. There's no stories about infidelity.

Bethshan, amid the hoarse music of vultures and jackals." Chuck Swindoll, *David: A Man of Passion and Destiny*, 204. From Alfred Edersheim, *The Bible History: Old Testament*, vol. 4, 149.

⁷ E.g. 1 Samuel 15

- He prayed to God when he was in a jam
- If he were alive today, he'd be the kind of guy active in the church; successful in his career; he'd be a big giver; have gone on mission trips. But he was lost.

Here are the lessons:

1. There is a difference between using God and serving God.

- Look at how the writer of 1 Chronicles (a parallel book to 1 Samuel) summarized Saul's life **1 Chronicles 10:13-14**, "Saul died for his breach of faith. He broke faith with the Lord in that he did not keep the command of the Lord, and also consulted a medium, seeking guidance. *He did not seek guidance from the Lord.*" You say, "But he did seek guidance, the Urim and the Thummim..." But he wasn't seeking God in those situations, he was seeking a way out of a jam.
- Saul wanted God on his life, but on his terms. He didn't want to surrender; he wanted to use God as his assistant. Saul wanted God to be his co-pilot. A co-pilot who would ride along, offer suggestions, and be there to help him out in a jam or in the case of a flat tire. Saul wanted God to be like the little lady who speaks to me from the navigation system in my car. I punch in where I want to go and she tells me the route. And if I choose to go a different route, she just patiently says, "Recalculating." I choose where we're going; you adjust to me. I told Veronica one time that I thought she should be more like the woman in my dashboard, that when she makes a suggestion and I ignore it, that she not get upset but patiently recalculate. The comment was not well-received.
- But God doesn't come into your life as a suggestion-giver or divine assistant. He comes as King. Only one person can be King in your life, you or God, and you've got to choose.
- Elisabeth Elliot: *If the distance between the sun and the earth were the thickness of one piece of paper; then the distance*

between earth and the closest star would be a stack of paper 70 feet high; the distance across our galaxy would be a stack of paper 310 miles high--and our galaxy is but a speck of dust on the floor or the Sahara desert. The Bible says God upholds all of us by the word of his power.... Is this really the kind of God you ask into your life as an assistant? He's God, he's the King.

- "Our problem is that we don't want to find God to know him; we want to find him in order to use him to make our lives work." Psychologist **Larry Crabb**
- But God won't come on those terms. You either come on his terms--total surrender, or not at all.

Similarly...

2. There is a difference between religion and repentance.

Saul did a lot of religious things, but he never repented. It's what Jesus warned about in Matthew 7 that I referenced at the beginning. On that final day there will be a lot of people, Jesus says, to whom he says, "You were active in my church; you were super religious; but you never really repented; so I never knew you."

Are you going to be in that number? Part of my own story of coming to Christ came after a Sunday School teacher confronted me with that in middle school. It was a Friday night and my whole small group had gone over to his house so we could go bowling. But before we went, he wanted to do a short Bible study, because that's what you do in student ministry: you bait kids with things like bowling and then hit 'em with Bible study. And I remember him reading this passage from Matthew 7, "Many will say to me..." And then he looked at us and said, "Boys, a bunch of y'all are going to be in that number." And that was about all he said. I knew in my heart it was going to be me.

I was super religious. Been in church all my life. And at my church, you had to go 3x a week for it to count: 3 to thrive! I always said that

the only drug problem I had growing up was getting drug to church. So, I was plenty religious, but I had never repented and surrendered to Jesus as King.

Here's how you can know if you've substituted religion for repentance:

A. Rationalization

- You rationalize your sin. That's what Saul did. Look at all the good things I've done!
- You never think about your sin in terms of rebellion against God; only how you compare to others.
- **I'm not having an affair, it's just pornography.**
- **I may not be fully committed in my relationship with Jesus, but I'm a good person and go to church.**

B. Unchanged behavior

- **Your mouth says that Jesus is King, but your life says something different.**
- **There are 2 ways to tell what you believe:** what your mouth says and what your life says. If what your mouth says differs from what your life says, God accepts the testimony of your life.
- With Saul's mouth he said God was King. But his life said that he was.
- Write this down: **A repentance that does not change you in life won't save you in death, either.**
- Jesus' half-brother, James talks about this when he says, "You say you believe in God? Good. Even the demons believe and tremble... They believe so much that they tremble at the thought of God." But demon's aren't saved. Why? Because their belief doesn't lead to repentance.
- It's not what your mouth says that God takes as the indicator of what you believe. It's what your life says.

C. Worldly sorrow not godly sorrow

- Several times in his life, Saul wept over his sin. He did it there in 1 Samuel 28.
- A lot of people confuse worldly sorrow over repentance. Paul talks about it in **2 Corinthians 7:10**. He says, **"For godly sorrow produces a repentance that leads to salvation... whereas worldly sorrow produces death."**
- There are two types of sorrow over sin. There is worldly sorrow--worldly sorrow arises for all kinds of reasons. The embarrassment of being caught. Self-pity. Self-condemnation. Fear. None of those things equal repentance.
- **Confessing your sin is not repentance.** You may have just been trying to relieve your guilt or get something off your chest.
- **Repentance is the Greek word "meta-noia", which means a change of mind.** To repent means you change your mind about the Kingship of Jesus and adjust your life around that new reality.
- No change, no Jesus.

D. Partial compliance

- This is a big one. You start obeying God in one area but not all. Repentance is one of those things that has to be total or it is meaningless. Let's say that there was a man who was an adulterer. He had multiple affairs, a different one on every day of the week. His wife confronts him and says, "OK... I'll quit sleeping with Tuesday girl and Friday girl but Thursday girl and I are going to keep going for a while." That's not repentance.
- **Marital faithfulness** is one of those things that has to be total for it to be meaningful. A man can't be "mostly faithful" to his wife. She's either the only 1 or she's not.
- **The same thing is true of Lordship.** You are either surrendered to him or you're not. Or, as we say, he's either Lord of all or not Lord at all.

And I always want to be clear when I say this: I'm not talking about achieving sinless perfection. **We all struggle with sin and lapses of**

faith for the rest of our lives. That happens to me. But Jesus is the King of my life, and standing here before you right now, there's no area I am willfully holding back from him.

Think of it like this: A man who gets married doesn't suddenly become a perfect husband who loves his wife purely and completely at every moment. Every man struggles to be a loving husband. Sometimes you even have stray thoughts. But a man who is serious about his marriage is still, even in the midst of all that, a one-woman man. If you say you are married, and are still intentionally seeing other people on the side, your marriage is a sham. **Saying you belong to Jesus** even as you intentionally keep areas of your life back from him is a sham.

3. Unrepentant sinners die a terrible death

- Saul gives us a picture of someone dying without God. Religious, but utterly destroyed.
- Saul's body was hung up on the wall. Leviticus says that those who die hung up like that are cursed by God.
- And more than just personal tragedy, Saul's death looks like tragedy for Israel. Israel was humiliated; their King was stripped of his armor and the Philistines won. This was the end of Israel's best attempts at a King.
- But yet, there is a glimmer of hope for us in this dark, dark cloud. Because silently, in the shadows, another king was being prepared in Israel. This king, unlike Saul, trusted God and was willing to do things God's way.
- And that gave us a picture of how God's ultimate King would come one day. You see, Jesus would come to the throne the exact same way as David did. When Jesus came to earth, we, like Saul, had usurped the throne. But Jesus refused to take matters into his own hands. Like David, he trusted God and waited.
- But, and this was the twist--after living a perfect life, Jesus was not rewarded with the throne like David was; Jesus was **fastened** to a cross like a sinner. He took our curse.

- He died Saul's death, in our place. He told us that if we would look to him as our Savior, if we would receive him, receive him, he would save us.

You see, there's biblical precedent for that, too. In the book of Numbers, Israel had grieved the Lord and God sent in vipers as a punishment. When the people suffered from the bites, they cried out to God to save them. So God told Moses to construct a bronze image of a serpent and hang it high up on a pole. You have a cursed image in a cursed position--hanging up on a pole--but this time God said that all who looked at it would be healed. **This, Jesus said, would be** a picture of him. He was cursed in our place, but if we look at him in repentance, we will be saved.

In one of his most famous sermons, the great British pastor of the 19th century Charles Spurgeon recounted the story of his conversion.

He was a young teenager, trying to go to church one Sunday morning when he got caught in a terrible snowstorm and was forced to seek shelter in a "Primitive Methodist Chapel." **He said, and I quote:**

In that chapel there may have been only a dozen or fifteen people. I had heard of the Primitive Methodists, how they sang so loudly that they made people's heads ache (some of you think that about us); but that did not matter to me. I wanted to know how I might be saved, and if they could tell me that, I did not care how much they made my head ache.

The minister did not come that morning; he was snowed in too, I suppose. At last, a very thin-looking man, a shoemaker, or tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach.

Now, it is well that preachers should be instructed; but this man was really stupid (hopefully you don't think that about me--but maybe you

do). This poor uneducated man was obliged to stick to his text for the simple reason that he had little else to say.

The text was, *"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."*

He did not even pronounce the words rightly, but that did not matter. There was, I thought, a glimpse of hope for me in that text. The preacher began thus—

"My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, 'Look. Well, a man needn't go to College to learn to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look. But then the text says, 'Look unto Me.' Ay!" said he in broad Essex accent (Essex accent means he sounded like one of the Weasley's in Harry Potter), "Many of you are lookin' to yourselves, but it's no use lookin' there. You'll never find any comfort in yourselves. ... The text says, 'Look unto Me.'

Then the good man followed up his text in this way:

Look unto Me; I am sweatin' great drops of blood.

Look unto Me; I am hangin' on the cross.

Look unto Me; I am dead and buried.

Look unto Me; I rise again.

Look unto Me; I ascend to Heaven.

Look unto Me; I am sittin' at the Father's right hand.

O poor sinner, look unto Me! Look unto Me!

Then he looked at me under the balcony, and he must have known I was a stranger. He said,

"Young man, you look very miserable."

Well, I did; but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made from the pulpit on my personal appearance. However, it was a good blow—it struck right home.

He continued,

"And you always will be miserable—miserable in life, and miserable in death,—if you don't look to Jesus. Obey my text and at this moment you will be saved."

Then, lifting up his hands, he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do,

"Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothin' to do but to look and live."

I saw at once the way of salvation. I know not what else he said, I was so possessed with that one thought. Like as when the brazen serpent was lifted up, the people only looked and were healed, so it was with me.

Oh! I looked until I could have looked my eyes away. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun.

I could have risen that instant and sung with the most enthusiastic of them of the precious blood of Christ and the simple faith which looks alone to him: *'Er since by faith I saw the stream thy flowing wounds supply, redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die.'* Oh, that somebody had just told me this before, **"Look to Christ, and you shall be saved."**

I'm telling you right now. You either surrender to King Jesus or die the death of Saul. And just because you are super religious doesn't mean

you've personally repented and made Jesus your King and Savior. Are you sure you've done that?

Do you want to do it right now? You can surrender to him right now, and look to him, and he will save you.

PRAYER OF SURRENDER

Campus Pastors: Baptism

- Never been baptized?
- Baptized as a baby?
- Maybe you are like that religious person who has been active in church throughout your life, but you've never surrendered until just now. Or maybe you are not sure you have. We want to invite you to come and be baptized as a demonstration of that change.
- We have clothes and all you'll need

I'm going to have you stand, and when I do, I want you to come. Right now, if you want to come, maybe look at the person whom you came with and nod at them and ask if they'll come with you. Or maybe you have already been baptized, but you are picking up that the person beside you needs to go. Just nod at them right now to say, "I'll go with you."

OK, don't hesitate. Step out as soon as I stand you, and I'm going to do that on 3. 1, 2, 3... Summit, let's put our hands together to thank God for those who are coming this weekend.

