



Series: 1 Samuel

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Speaker: Spence Shelton, Lead Pastor

Text: 1 Samuel 28

Title: Why Your Worst-Case Scenario Can't Happen to You

Union County Interest Meeting: 12:30 MPR / next week MNE.

Intro - Worst Case Scenario

How many of you find yourself playing the worst-case scenario game in your head...on a regular basis? Sadly, I'm the culprit in my house. It has been a lifelong spiritual struggle for me to NOT ASSUME the worst is going to happen.

- 3 steps from Homeless Under a Bridge

That is how fear shows up in my head. What is the worst thing that could happen...let me think about that. It's terrible. It's fear. What I want to submit to you today is that the bible tells us our worst-case scenario. It's not our failure, or rejection, or

death or our child's death or whatever you can conjure. The bible tells us it's actually something way worse. And those words are going to appear in our passage today.

And then tells us that **in Christ...listen - the worst thing that can happen to you cannot happen to you.**

And the peace & security THAT truth brings...when you allow your heart to go there, will actually begin to flow into those other scenarios and slowly but surely the promise of Jesus in Philippians 4.7 will come true for you. the peace of Christ that transcends all understanding will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus.

So, here's what's gonna happen. We are going to see the worst-case scenario as we watch the demise of king Saul. Today is our last weekend in 1 Samuel. Started back in January and now here we are. Spoiler alert - we will be moving next weekend into 2 Samuel. Because originally it was just "Samuel", but the scroll was so big they were like...we gotta divide this up. 2 Samuel goes a lot faster so not as many weeks in it.

But today is the tragic demise of king Saul. And as we see his worst-case scenario, I want you to see yours and mine. We'll walk through 1 Samuel 28. And then...we'll see HOW if you are



in Christ the worst thing that could ever happen to you can't happen to you.

CHAPTER 28

At that time, the Philistines gathered their military units into one army to fight against Israel. So Achish said to David, "You know, of course, that you and your men must march out in the army with me."

Ok so this is a pretty crazy situation that is unfolding. If you remember last week - David spared Saul's life. We saw that Crisis & Conflict are opportunities to APPLY your faith & not decide it. Well, David applied his belief that Saul was the Lord's anointed and therefore Saul was not David's to kill. Even though Saul was attacking him. Well, David's choice to spare Saul meant that David still had to be in exile away from Saul. So that he didn't kill him.

So, chapter 27 talks about how David was living WITH THE PHILISTINES. And actually, became the MVP of the Philistine army. How insane is that? This is like if Captain America joined THANOS' army for the final battle scene in Avengers End Game.

The very people he dominated as a boy with a sling...Remember that? Now he is fighting FOR them as they fend off neighboring armies. But up to this point no battle has happened between them and Israel. Well, now it's about to go

down. And the philistine king says, "you know you gotta fight on my side this time." But David knows he can't. Because circumstance doesn't determine what he believes. He will not lift a hand against Saul. So, he gives a pretty cryptic clever response that has that classic trash talk David vibe.

2 David replied to Achish, "Good, you will find out what your servant can do." So Achish said to David, "Very well, I will appoint you as my permanent bodyguard."

Ha! Achish is no dummy. David is a great warrior. And the best leaders keep their friends close and their enemies closer. So that's what's going on with David & his crew. They are in the philistine camp.

3 By this time Samuel had died, all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his city, and Saul had removed the mediums and spiritists from the land.

All very important to the setting. We already knew about Samuel's death from Chapter 25. But in our encounter today it's really important that Samuel is dead. The other piece of information very important to today - Saul removed the mediums & spiritists from the land. These are the people who conjure up the dead. They are practicing with dangerous things they can't control. And for the good of his people God has forbidden his people to associate with such evil spirits. Saul removed them from the land because he was supposed



to. Because God's people were not to be like their neighbors. They were to depend on the Lord alone. And the Lord was really serious about this.

6 "Whoever turns to mediums or spiritists and prostitutes himself with them, I will turn against that person and cut him off from his people. -- Leviticus 20:6

To consult a witch was the equivalent of cheating on God with a cheap substitute. This was repeated multiple times.¹ So King Saul had done a good, God honoring thing. He had obeyed the Lord, and this had been good for him and for the people. But it's interesting how the condition of your heart is revealed when the clouds start forming.

4 The Philistines gathered and camped at Shunem. So, Saul gathered all Israel, and they camped at Gilboa. 5 When Saul saw the Philistine camp, he was afraid, and his heart pounded.

Now these are the same Philistines Israel had defeated before. The same ones. But instead of remembering God's power & victory he fears. His heart starts pounding. You can hear the adrenaline beating against his eardrums man. And then what

¹ Lev. 19:31; 20:6; Deut. 18:10-11

happens next...Saul reveals just how much of a contrast to David he is. And this contract is for our good.

6 He inquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him in dreams or by the Urim or by the prophets.

It was the right step. Seek the Lord. And this is common for Saul. When a moment of PANIC happens...THAT is when Saul seeks the Lord. Not all the time, just in panic mode.

And now, The Lord doesn't answer Saul. Because the Spirit of the Lord had left Saul way back when Saul turned from the Lord. When Saul decided to do things Saul's way. Samuel had already told him the Lord had rejected Saul because of Saul's rebellion against God's command.

23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and defiance is like wickedness and idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king. -- 1 Samuel 15:23

Well now in the greatest of Ironies...where does Saul turn looking for some help?

7 Saul then said to his servants, "Find me a woman who is a medium, so I can go and consult her."



To divination. The very thing Samuel compared Saul's rebellion to. To a witch. To the very things God has forbidden and to the very things Saul himself had outlawed in obedience to God. Man, the irony is thick.

His servants replied, "There is a woman at En-dor who is a medium."

And all the star-wars fans said...Wait a second. En-Dor? Is this medium small & furry & good at throwing rocks? And the rest of you can just groan and roll your eyes. Like Courtney has been doing for 19 years now.

8 Saul disguised himself by putting on different clothes and set out with two of his men. They came to the woman at night, and Saul said, "Consult a spirit for me. Bring up for me the one I tell you." 9 But the woman said to him, "You surely know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and spiritists from the land. Why are you setting a trap for me to get me killed?"

She's saying "Are you a narc? If you are a narc you have to tell me."

10 Then Saul swore to her by the Lord: "As surely as the Lord lives, no punishment will come to you from this."

In his panic he doesn't realize what he's even said. Because bro as surely as the Lord lives YOU WILL BE PUNISHED for this. Like it's a guarantee from his word. Man, he is sealing his fate.

11 "Who is it that you want me to bring up for you?" the woman asked. "Bring up Samuel for me," he answered. 12 When the woman saw Samuel, she screamed, and then she asked Saul, "Why did you deceive me? You are Saul!"

Gig is up. Something about this moment that we are not privy to frightens her. It could be that she's more of a con artist and usually fakes these things but now something real is happening & that frightens her. We don't know. What we know is that seeing Samuel also reveals Saul's identity to her. And now she's real scared. Because Saul is the very one who outlawed the very thing she is doing in the very moment. Yikes.

13 But the king said to her, "Don't be afraid. What do you see?" "I see a spirit form coming up out of the earth," the woman answered. 14 Then Saul asked her, "What does he look like?"

"An old man is coming up," she replied. "He's wearing a robe." Then Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he knelt low with his face to the ground and paid homage.

Ok things are about to get strange. Saul is going to talk to dead Samuel. And back in my intro sermon to 1 Samuel, I told you this was one of the wildest books of the bible I didn't even mention necromancers and conversations with dead guys. But



here we are. And I imagine you will have some questions. Like...all of them. Are ghosts real? Where was Samuel? Does this still happen? Is this what ouija boards are for?

I'm going to give this just a couple of minutes because it is my job to disciple you in following Jesus and I want you to have some handles on how to think about witchcraft...and that is what this is... as a Christian.

The spiritual realm is real & the supernatural happens. And in fact, it is not some alternate dimension like the upside down from stranger things. The physical world is the spiritual world, and the spiritual world IS the physical world. The western mind has been trained to think the physical is all there is. And that works until the spiritual breaks in. And gets dubbed phenomena. When all the while the world isn't 2D it's like 5D.

The devil is real 2 Corin 11 he is scheming. And looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5.8). And according to Jesus in John 14 the devil has authority in this world.

Demons are real. Angels are real. God is real. God's Holy Spirit is real. We ourselves are spiritual beings. And the reality that the unseen exists alongside the seen...THAT is reality. Why Jesus says the most important commandment involves the whole self. Matt 22 Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, & strength...

Some of you simply have never chosen to believe in a spiritual reality and your western setting has accommodated that choice. You've been taught faith & spirituality are private preferences instead of public reality. But newsflash the spiritual realm is REAL and does not need your endorsement to exist and to exert influence on our world.

God has made a way to for us to access the spiritual realm. IT IS NOT MADAM ZARONI for a dollar a minute. In Christ he has given us his promised Holy Spirit. That is the only guide we will ever need. That is why 2 Timothy says you have been given a spirit of POWER, LOVE, & SOUND MIND.

He, the Holy Spirit, is God himself. And when we PRAY...he PRAYS FOR US. ROMANS 8.26-27. When we pray, we have access to the THRONE OF GRACE Hebrews 4.

Man, you have the POWER of GOD when you go to pray. He has also provided us his word and his church. In short, we have an abundance of God's prescribed guidance available to us to navigate the spiritual realm. We do not need to go slumming with Madam Zaroni. And not only do we not need it, to do so goes expressly against God's commands. And it is destructive for us. It is willfully putting ourselves in harm's way. Like a child told not to play in traffic but is like OOOO look at that double yellow line, lemme go check that out.

Our job is to fight against & flee from the darkness God has saved us from. Ultimately what we are seeing from Saul is a



desperate attempt to go around God to get what he wants. So, he goes into the darkness of what God has forbidden. And listen this is a real thing now man. If you want to play with demons & spirits, you'll find people who will help you. Currently there are 1.5 million practicing pagans. Like practicing in the occult. It's more mainstream in pop culture. You don't have to look far to see subtle, and sometimes overt, homage to satan in music & film. It is more acceptable in pop culture than being a Christian. I'm not saying we should go live in caves far away from those things. Jesus left us IN the world to preach to the world. But I am saying we should not be naive about this darkness nor in fear of it. We should be ready for battle.

10 Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by his vast strength. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens. 13 For this reason take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand. -- Ephesians 6:10-13

But I'm telling you witchcraft is deadly & it's deceiving. if you are in Christ, you'll be able to feel the darkness around it. That's the enemy's camp. And you are called in Christ not to

play with it but to flee it. Because the goal of what you are messing with is to destroy you. Plain and simple. Saul disobeys God's law here and the end result is only an affirmation that he is cut off from God. NOTHING GOOD comes from this for him. Only a death sentence. And that's probably a good warning for us.

Ok with that now said, let's look at the conversation. Because the conversation matters a great deal more to our overall point.

15 "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" Samuel asked Saul. "I'm in serious trouble," replied Saul. "The Philistines are fighting against me and God has turned away from me. He doesn't answer me anymore, either through the prophets or in dreams. So I've called on you to tell me what I should do."

These are the saddest words in scripture. God has turned away from me.

This is Saul's worst case scenario. God has turned away from me. My enemies are surrounding me...yes that is bad. But God's people get surrounded all the time. Man, what is really bad - is the reality setting in that God has turned away from him. There's nothing worse than that.



This is the takeaway I want you to hear today in Saul's story. The worse thing that could ever happen to you is for God to turn away from you. For you to be cut off from God forever. See Saul is a tragic figure who ultimately serves as a warning for all who will read and hear this. and this is why. He turned from God and eventually, God turned from him. And there is nothing scarier, nothing more hope-less, nothing worse than God turning from you. Which means you spend forever apart from him. But I promise, there is hope coming.

16 Samuel answered, "Since the Lord has turned away from you and has become your enemy, why are you asking me? 17 The Lord has done exactly what he said through me: The Lord has torn the kingship out of your hand and given it to your neighbor David. 18 You did not obey the Lord and did not carry out his burning anger against Amalek; therefore, the Lord has done this to you today. 19 The Lord will also hand Israel over to the Philistines along with you. Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me, and the Lord will hand Israel's army over to the Philistines."

It's over for you Saul. You will die tomorrow. And sure, enough the story unfolds just as Samuel says. David is actually rejected by the Philistine soldiers & sent away from the army. The Lord provides for David a way to avoid the battle. And then the Philistines attack and Saul and his sons, including David's good

friend Jonathan, are all killed. 1 Samuel ends very bleak. The king is dead, and the kingdom is overrun by their enemies.

Back to the moment here though. The woman makes Saul eat even though he's in abject despair. Watch what happens!

24 The woman had a fattened calf at her house, and she quickly slaughtered it. She also took flour, kneaded it, and baked unleavened bread. 25 She served it to Saul and his servants, and they ate. Afterward, they got up and left that night.

In the dark of night, after eating a meal, they slink off into the darkness doomed to their fate.

Pretty bleak right? OK. What do we do with this? I want to be clear about the worst thing that can happen to you and then why it can't happen to you IN CHRIST.

The Worst Thing that can happen to you is for God to turn away from you.

I think it's important to grab the weight of this statement. To get it you have to understand you are made by God for God. Your created purpose is to know God and walk with him. To experience deep communion with him now and forever more.

The blessing that the people of God in the Old Testament said to one another, and that we've said here: "24 "May the Lord



bless you and protect you; 25 may the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; 26 may the Lord look with favor on you and give you peace.” -- Numbers 6:24-26 (CSB) It’s a blessing of the FACE OF GOD looking at you. The blessing of relationship with God. That is the good life.

God’s presence with us is the one source of certain comfort & security we have. 28 But as for me, God’s presence is my good. I have made the Lord God my refuge, so I can tell about all you do. -- Psalms 73:28

It is the great promise of God to his people recorded in Jeremiah 29. 13 You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart -- Jeremiah 29:11-13 (CSB)

See the worst-case scenario is not your own physical death. It’s not even physical death of someone you love. The worst-case scenario is spiritual death. It’s for God to turn away from you. And for you to spend this life and eternity apart from him. THAT is the worst-case scenario. And that IS what we receive because of our sin.

The penalty for our sin was death, and the ultimate stage of death is separation from God²

² J.D. Greear, “So we would never have to be alone.”

That’s what we earn for our sin. It’s horrifying. It is the worst case. It’s liked we talked about earlier in this series. God gave ISRAEL over to their desires and gave them a king...and this is the result. Romans 1 says God’s judgment on unrepentant sin is giving you over to your desires. To what YOU want. Which ultimately leads to your destruction, not to your good.

And that is what makes the gospel so powerful.

The Good News: God turned away from Jesus and if you believe the gospel, he won’t forsake you.

Man, I have such good news to offer you. See this image of Saul eating a meal and then slinking away at night...it’s just like Judas. Who eats with Jesus and then walks out at night to go to his doom. Who chose to rebel against God and then when he scrambled at the last minute, God had already turned from him. Judas, like Saul, is a tragic warning for us.

But when we look to Jesus.... We see him substituting himself INTO our worst-case scenario. Our sin is our rebellion against God. And the payment for our sin is death. The penalty is God turning away from us. And us spending eternity in hell apart from him.



And out of his great love for us JESUS goes WILLINGLY to the cross in our place. But the greatest pain is not the crucifixion. No, it's the moment Jesus himself is forsaken by God.

45 From noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over the whole land. 46 About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" -- Matthew 27:45-46

In that moment JESUS is experiencing the FULL PENALTY OF SIN. He's experiencing OUR WORST-CASE SCENARIO. And if you are thinking wait, I thought Jesus was God, how could he be separated from him? It's a great question. A true mystery. Martin Luther said

"God forsaken of God, how can He expect us to understand this?" Not a separation of essence, but one of fellowship. The presence He had enjoyed from eternity; the presence He had leaned on in the Garden of Gethsemane gone!)

It was hell! Hell is abandonment by God. 6 hours. He lived our life; stood in our place of condemnation, received my beating, and now faces my abandonment from God. All of our fears about hell He absorbed into His body. He drank our cup to the dregs.

THAT is the good news of the gospel. We who deserve the father turning away from us, turned away from Christ instead. And so, he turns towards us with his son's payment and says receive this forgiveness. And be reconciled to me.

The promise of the New Testament. That we who were alienated from God because of our sin can now draw near to him & he will draw near to us. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. -- James 4:8

Turn and repent TODAY.

Christian - in crisis & conflict - recall who God is. Recall who he says you are. Take a moment and look at your worst-case scenario. And see the victory of God. The provision of God.

Closing

Look, I know many of you are hurting. Deeply. You cover it up with smiles, but you are human, and you hurt. You are in the midst of a great storm, the waves of pain are high, and the decks of your life are awash in anguish. Bruce Thielman in the cry of mystery said it well...

"I can offer no formula that will make all the pain go away. But I can say this to you: once on a sunny hillside in Galilee Jesus taught His disciples to pray, saying, "Our Father, which art in heaven," and that was very good. But once, on a dark hill



called Calvary, Jesus taught us that we could pray, “Our Father, which art in hell...” and that’s better, for it’s in the darkness that we need most to know of His love.”³

Jesus drank the cup of suffering so that you and I could drink the cup of love.

The Christian life is letting that victory begin to win the battles against fear in our hearts.

³ Bruce Thielemann, “The Cry of Mystery.”