

What to Do when God Doesn't Answer
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The background event of this lesson is found in 1 Samuel 28-31. At this time, the Philistines were threatening the nation, and its king, Saul, knew he had been abandoned by the God he had despised. Saul was desperate for guidance, information; and he sought it from the last person who had brought him the words of God: the prophet Samuel. The problem was that Samuel was now dead, and so Saul sought information from a charlatan witch. In the end, though, God would make His will known to Saul -- more through events than through words.

Part 1:

1. King Saul believed in metaphysics: the fact that he went to the witch showed that he believed in the existence of the invisible. God, though silent, existed; and the dead still existed.
2. He knew the two aspects of reality, the visible and the invisible were linked, and he sought a way to connect them.
3. He knew that truth came only from the unseen side, not from earth.
4. Thus, determinance lies with the invisible.
5. Time isn't determinate, but it contracts back on the will of God. Samuel was the best source that Saul could hope for.
6. Saul knew that what Samuel had previously said was the will of God, and that it would be fulfilled. He just didn't know when, or if it would be in the present circumstance with the Philistines.
7. Saul knew at the very least that the phenomenon of revelation (v. 20) would lead to fear.
8. His respect for the metaphysical shows that he didn't believe history was determinant.
9. It's not just what you believe, but what you don't believe. If God is determinant, then you are not.
10. Esther teaches that the will and power of God operate in the reverse (the Jews were rescued) and the obverse (the Jews' enemies were killed.)
11. Saul believed that the duty of man was to extend the will of God into time, life and history (see 28:18.) He had failed at that.
12. Saul came to believe in a universal truth: God always wins, man loses when he opposes God (30:1-6.)

Part 2:

The witch of Endor knew that she, nor any other witch, had the power to summon up the dead; hence her shock when she saw the apparition.

The apparition didn't tell Saul what to do, only repeated the prediction of Samuel (verses 16-19.)

There comes a time when events generated by God will

- Grind men into dust
 - Lift men to victory
 - Vacate the will of man, because that will is shown to be irrelevant because the events of God either destroy or save.
1. God thus transcends time, history and the will of man.
 2. Saul (v. 3) expelled the mediums from the kingdom when he first became king
 3. It seems that the spirits of dead persons can be made visible to others, at least something that is recognizable to the viewer.
 4. The spirit of Samuel could only reiterate the will of God
 - You are judged for disobedience
 - You and your sons will die tomorrow
 - The army will be destroyed
 5. Therefore we would conclude that the spirits of dead people can only know what God tells them.
 6. Thus the authority of God is an inexhaustible continuum: He is has authority over the living, and authority of the dead in spirit form.
 7. Another conclusion from this story: We can't think of people in physical form only. Human life transcends the body.
 8. In a similar way, the human mind transcends biology, neurology, time, history, and sociology. Saul witnessed this.
 9. Everything ultimately rests on the authority of God.

Part 3:

1. Peter Watson, in his book *The Modern Mind: An Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century*, speaks of "the positive hour." He sees everything as a kind of wheel, with spokes or slices that include chemistry, biology, psychology, politics, self-understanding, and other elements of reality. The hub is science and evolution, he says, out of which all these other things proceed. Thus everything has a material explanation.
2. In contrast, everyone will come to acknowledge Saul's metaphysic, even if it's too late for repentance and change, at that time when every knee will bow to Jesus.
3. In the Phases of Faith, we speak of Phase One being the promises and commands of God; Phase Two is the time of contradiction, when circumstances seem to make the commands and promises impossible; and Phase Three, where God resolves all. While we like the idea that God keeps His good promises, it's sobering to see that Phase Three resolutions can apply to the disobedient, too: when God keeps His promises of punishment.
4. Thus we can experience the manifold of human "facts" before we are aware of the manifold of biblical faith.

5. Time contexts are not determinate. The Lord says in Saul's case: "It's fixed, you will lose."
6. It's all about the reality of God.
7. Mediums and spiritualists know nothing. The witch (and her kind) are subject to the beck and call of God, not the other way around.
8. Matthew 17 shows us that the Elijah and Moses were not "channeled."
9. The knowledge of the ages has now been made known to every person who has died. Perhaps even babies who die can understand with adult understanding.
10. There are no mindless phantasms as popular movies and television depict. All deceased people are under the will of God. They *know*.
11. We, on the other hand, praise God without that kind of knowledge, in the dark, so to speak.
12. Saul's sin was that he acted on his own experience, not what God had told him in the "dark" of earth life.
13. We are all operating on earth in the dark, so to speak. James 1:7 and following that speaks of needing wisdom, and James 4:15-17 show this.
14. Saul generalized, but he generalized from his own "human lived experience."
15. His HLE told him to spare the king and the plunder when Samuel had told him to destroy it (1 Samuel 15:14.)
16. But his metaphysics -- the information he had from the unseen side, conveyed to him on earth by Samuel and now from beyond the grave -- contradicted his HLE and "common sense." It also contradicted Saul's personal sense of the urgency of time (he thought Samuel was late, so Saul went on ahead without him, against the command of Samuel.)
17. Thus the apparition confirmed what Saul already knew: the Lord said again it was too late for him.

Part 4:

1. One thing can be constant as believers operate "in the dark" —praise.
2. In teaching children, we must keep them focused on unseen realities.
3. They need to know that their competencies are not in the seen, but in the unseen
4. They need to know they can trust God even "in the dark."
5. We're not just training their brains, but their minds.
6. Luke 17 gives a stern warning: Jesus said that sins will occur, but don't be the person by whom those sins come. We must watch ourselves. Rarely did Jesus give such a direct threat to us!

Conclusion: God has priorities, and they include pre-empting sin.

1. Training the mind to pay attention to the eternal part of reality does that.
2. An example of this was in the life of Abraham, when God appeared to Abimelech to tell him not to sleep with Abraham's wife/half-sister, Sarah. God kept Abimelech from sin.
3. For children and others, the goal of our training is not to create a better self-image, but to train for the pre-emption of sin.

4. A final example is in 1 Samuel 20:31 in the life of Saul. He learned that as long as the son of Jesse—David—was alive, his kingdom couldn't last. But Saul wasn't motivated to see and advance the will of God. He saw all his own preferences as more important. This shows that by the time he began knocking on the door of the witch of Endor, he had been on the road to her house for a long time.