

The Dark Night of the Soul

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[0 : 00] The scripture reading comes from 1 Samuel chapter 8, 28. Please follow along on the screen in your bulletin or your own Bible.

In chapter 28, verse 1, we read, In those days the Philistines gathered their forces for war to fight against Israel. Then in verse 3, Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city.

And Saul had put the mediums and the necromancers out of the land. The Philistines assembled and came and encamped at Sunim. And Saul gathered all Israel, and they encamped at Gilboa. When Saul saw the army of Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or by prophets.

Then Saul said to his servants, Seek out for me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a medium at Endor.

[1 : 18] So Saul disguised himself 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 spirit, and bring up for me whoever I shall name to you. The woman 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? But Saul swore to her by the Lord. As the Lord lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing.

Then the woman said, Who shall I bring up for you? He said, Bring up Samuel for me. When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice.

And the woman said to Saul, Why have you deceived me? You are Saul. The king said to her, Do not be afraid. What do you see?

[2 : 25] And the woman said to Saul, I see a god coming up out of the earth. 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 face to the ground and paid homage. 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. And Samuel said, Why then do you ask me, since the Lord has turned from you and become your enemy?

The Lord has done to you as he spoke by me, for the Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David.

[3 : 31] 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. 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.

The Lord will give the army of Israel also into the hand of the Philistines. Then Saul found the ones who lay 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. And the woman came to Saul, and when she saw that he was terrified, she said to him, Behold, your servant has obeyed you.

I have taken my life in my hand, and have listened to what you have said to me. Now therefore you also obey your servant. Let me set a morsel of bread before you, and eat, that you may have strength when you go on your way.

He refused and said, I will not eat. But his servants together with the women urged him, and he listened to their words. So he arose from the earth and sat on the bed.

[4 : 48] Now the woman had a fattened calf in the house, and she quickly killed it, and she took flour and kneaded it, and baked unleavened bread of it. And she put it before Saul and his servants, and they ate.

Then they arose and went away that night. And she said, I will not eat. This is the word of God. Great. Thank you, Justin and Annabelle.

And good morning, Watermark. It is so good to be back with you this morning. And it is such an honor and a privilege to be able to bring God's word to us, and for us to look at the scripture together.

I really want to just thank Chris and the staff for doing such a great job while I was away. And especially I want to thank Nathaniel and Mowuli, who we heard from a few weeks ago.

I listened to your guys' messages. Nate, when I was in South Africa, I listened to you. Mowuli, we were in quarantine. And it was so wonderful to hear you guys opening up God's word. You did a wonderful job.

[5 : 48] And we as a church look forward to hearing from you more in the months and years to come, as well as a bunch of other new preachers. So I just want to say it is great to be back with you, and a real privilege and an honor to be able to look at God's word together this morning.

One other thing I wanted to say from a pastoral perspective, and I say this on behalf of us elders, is that I know this time with COVID, there are many of us in the church that maybe have had colleagues or family members that have got sick.

Maybe some of us are even feeling sick at the moment. And especially if you are alone, you're staying by yourself and you're not feeling well, I want to encourage you to reach out.

Please don't handle this on your own. I know that sometimes we may feel like we just want to keep it quiet. We don't want others to know. But really, we do want to be community to you at this time.

You can reach out to elders.

You can email us elders at watermarkchurch.hk. You can text me or any of the other staff or the leaders. But really, we want to be community at this time. Don't let's go through this alone.

[6 : 53] Well, why don't we pray briefly, and then we're going to dive into this very interesting passage in 1 Samuel 28. So let's pray together. Heavenly Father, great and glorious God, tender and kind Savior.

We come before you this morning as we look at this passage. God, it's so easy for us to look at Saul and to mock him from a distance. And yet, God, I think you want to speak to us today.

Won't you help us to see our own hearts? Won't you help us, God, to not be defensive and proud? God, won't you come and shine your light into our hearts and bring us grace and freedom and truth?

God, help us to walk in freedom and in light. And God, lead us in the path of life, we pray. Come and have your way in your awesome and your tender name.

Amen. Well, for the last six weeks or so, we've been looking at this wonderful book in the Bible, this Old Testament book of 1 Samuel. And we've seen this consistent theme that all that glitters is not necessarily gold.

[7 : 58] In other words, 1 Samuel paints in such dramatic picture the upside-down nature of God's kingdom. That often, in the ways of God, the things that glitter and the glamour of the world, the things that are not really all that important.

And actually, it's the things that are hidden, the unseen nature of our hearts, that really God is looking after. In God's kingdom, those that try and grab hold of life and preserve their lives often lose it.

And it's those who give themselves away that actually find life. And we've seen this again and again throughout 1 Samuel. And today, we're coming to towards the end of the book of 1 Samuel.

We'll finish next Sunday. And the end of 1 Samuel corresponds with the end of the life of King Saul, Israel's first king. And one of the things that the authors wanted us to see throughout this book is that the more Saul tries to preserve his life, actually, the more he facilitates his own downfall.

The more Saul tries to look honorable in the eyes of others, the more he looks like a fool. The more Saul tries to take hold of the kingdom and hold on to the throne, the more the kingdom slips through his hands.

[9 : 10] And throughout this book, as Saul has tried to preserve his life apart from God, apart from trusting God and faith in God, actually, he's facilitated, precipitated his own demise.

And so today, we come to chapter 28. And the point of this chapter is to show us in very stark and vivid ways how Saul's self-preservation efforts end.

All throughout the book, we've been seeing Saul trying to hold on to his life and preserve himself.

And today, we see how it comes to an end, how that story ends. And really, the more Saul has refused to trust God and obey him, the more his life has spiraled out of control.

And that's the point of this passage today in chapter 28. Now, today, I don't have three points for us or four points for us like we normally do. Rather, I want us just to walk through the story, and we'll comment in bits and pieces here and there.

But really, I want the heaviness of the story to weigh upon us. And the one big idea for today, and that is this. We should have it on the screen. Through the life of Saul, we see that trying to save ourselves and preserve our lives, apart from trusting God, apart from faith in God, is actually the way of darkness that ultimately leads to death.

[10 : 31] That's, I think, the big idea that the author wants us to get. That through the life of Saul, we're going to see that the more we, like Saul, try to preserve our lives and build ourselves up apart from Christ and who God is, actually, we enter counterintuitively into the way of darkness and ultimately into the way of death.

And so let's look at what's happening here. The context is that the Philistines are attacking, have gathered their forces, and they're getting ready to attack Israel once again.

In chapter 27, the Philistine lords have come together. They gather their forces, and they are on the border of Israel. And this is a familiar sight for Saul. Early in Samuel, we were told that throughout Saul's reign, the Philistines were constantly attacking.

There's nothing new about this. But there's something different about this time. Look at verse 3 to 5 with me. The author is setting the scene where he says, verse 3, Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city.

Now again, this isn't the first time we're hearing that Samuel's died. We were told that in chapter 25. But the author tells us this for two reasons. One, it's important for the rest of the story that we know that Samuel really has passed away.

[11 : 45] But the second reason is because, remember, Samuel is Israel's prophet. He is God's mouthpiece to the nation of Israel. Samuel is the one who brings God's word to Israel that they may stay true and faithful to God.

Throughout Israel's history, whenever they honor God's word and listen to God's word, they flourish, they prosper. And when they reject God's word, things go downhill.

Remember in chapter 3, right at the beginning of the book, it says, The word of the Lord was rare in those days, until God called Samuel to be his spokesperson, his prophet, his mouthpiece to the nation of Israel, to bring his good word to Israel that they may trust him.

And the author is delivering an ominous sign. And Samuel, God's spokesperson, his prophet, has passed away. And things are not looking good. But it goes on and says, And Saul had put the mediums and the necromancers out of the land.

And mediums and necromancers were spiritualists. They were those who consulted the dead on behalf of the living. And Saul, in one of his previous times of heyday, when he was still trying to honor God, Saul once obeyed God and he banished all the spiritualists from out of the land that Israel may follow Yahweh, God himself.

[13 : 05] And look at verse 4. It says, The Philistines assembled and came and encamped at Shuman. And Saul gathered all Israel, they encamped at Gilboa. But when Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid and his heart trembled greatly.

Saul is not in a very good place. Samuel has died and the Philistines are coming to attack them. And what's more, in chapter 27, we hear that David is an exile in Philistine territory.

For all Saul knows, David might be with the Philistines. His once loyal servant has now joined the enemy and might be on their side coming to attack him. And so Saul is in deep trouble.

But actually, that's not Saul's greatest problem. Sure, Samuel's passed away. Sure, the Philistines are on the border ready to attack. If you've been watching the news this week and the situation in Ukraine and Russia, that's exactly how Saul is feeling.

The Philistines are at the border. They've amassed the soldiers any day now. They can march into Israel and try and take over. That's how Saul is feeling. But that's not his greatest problem. [14:10] Look at verse 6 with me. It says, Saul saw the army. He trembled greatly. Verse 6. But when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him. Either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets.

When Saul inquired of the Lord, all he got was silence. Friends, it must be one of the most devastating verses in all of Scripture.

Saul comes asking God. And all he gets is silence. Look at how Saul says it in verse 15.

He says, And Saul understands it wasn't just that God didn't answer him.

Actually, it was worse than that. God had turned away from him. Finally, God had turned away from Saul. He who his whole life had been turning away from God.

[15:14] And here is Saul in one of the greatest crises of his life. And the answer he gets is silence. He is without God and without hope in the world. Now, we've got to reckon with Scripture here.

Because the book of 1 Chronicles, which looks at the story of Israel, David and Saul, from a different angle, a different vantage point, tells us that Saul didn't inquire of God.

And so what do we mean to make of that? I mean, is Scripture contradicting itself? 1 Samuel says he inquired of God. Chronicles says he didn't inquire of God. Is the Bible contradictory? What's going on there?

Well, one of the answers is that we read the Bible in English. And the Bible is originally written in the Old Testament in Hebrew. And Hebrew scholars will tell us that actually there's a different word used in Hebrew for inquiring of God there.

In Chronicles, it tells us that Saul never sought out God's will. Saul never came to God in humility. The word for inquire there is to try and find out God's will.

[16:17] To try and ascertain God. What is on your heart? What do you want me to do here? The word in Samuel that we look at here is to demand something. To interrogate someone.

To lay claim to something. And Saul is coming here and he's saying, God, I've got a problem. You tell me what to do. You solve my problem. God, the first signs are here. You made me king.

It's your problem. You get me out of here. And you see what's going on here? The Bible is issuing us a stark warning that Saul comes not to seek God's will, but to seek God's solution.

All his life, he's been turning away from God. He's been rejecting God's word. And now when he comes and says, God sought out my problem. The answer he gets is silence.

And friends, the Bible gives us a stark warning that when we consistently turn away from God and reject his good word to us, it's actually possible to so harden our hearts, to so harden our hearts to God's word and to his voice, that we cut ourselves off from the one thing that we need to get us out of the darkness and back into the light.

[17:28] It's possible to so walk away from God that actually his word becomes deaf to our hearts because our hearts are hardened to him. And that actually makes sense. If you think about human relationships, it works the same, right?

If someone's pursuing you or trying to reach out to you and you are frustrated with them and you reject them and you rebuff them and you push them away, the more that they try and reach out to you, actually the more frustrated you get.

And the more your heart hardens to them. And eventually even their kindness becomes offensive to you. And that's what's happened to Saul. And Jesus actually speaks about the same thing in the Gospels.

Do you remember that time when the Pharisees are saying to Jesus, Jesus, we don't believe you are the Messiah. Do some sign to show us, prove to us who you are. And Jesus has done multiple signs and miracles.

And at one stage he cast a demon out of a boy. And the Pharisees look and say, that's not a miraculous sign. He's casting out demons by satanic power, by the prince of demons.

[18:30] And Jesus says that the only sin that is unforgivable is what he calls blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. And what Jesus is saying there is, he's not saying, listen, most sins God can forgive, but there's one that if you do it, that's one too far.

Now you're done. You've stepped over the line too far and God cannot forgive you. That's not what he's saying. What he's saying is the nature of that sin is that when your heart is so hard towards

God, that you cut yourself off from the one thing that you need to get you out of the darkness, which is his grace.

When you can't even recognize his kindness towards you, when his grace and his kindness bounces off the hardness of your heart, you're in such a desperate place that the one thing you need, his grace, actually is not able to penetrate your hardness of heart.

And that's exactly what's happening to Saul here. Almost all of his entire life, Saul has been shouting out God's word, rejecting God's voice, hardening his heart to the one thing that he needs to be brought out of the darkness into the light.

And now he cannot even recognize the kindness of God to him. Friends, I want to be clear that Scripture doesn't say that you can sin beyond God's ability to save you or rescue you.

[19 : 49] Sin is actually not the problem. So if sin was the problem, we'd all be in deep trouble. No, no, friends, the problem is when our hearts are so hard that we cannot bring ourself to acknowledge our need for God, for repentance and for mercy, when we cannot turn to Christ in faith and repentance because our hearts are so hard.

Do you remember Jesus says in John 6, anyone who comes to me, I will never turn away. But that's the key, isn't it? We have to come to him. And that's the one thing Saul does not want to do.

He does not want to come to God. Did you notice in verse 15, he says, I am in great distress. The Philistines are warring against me. And God, he uses the generic word for God there.

He doesn't even use God's name, Yahweh, the Lord. So far God, he can't even call God by name. He uses the generic God. The God out there, your God, Samuel, has turned away from me.

Dale Relf Davis says this, Saul's need was not for information, but communion with God. Not so much to prepare for battle, but to recover God's presence, God's grace.

[20 : 57] Saul, it seems, wanted the results of God's favor more than he wanted God himself. And in the darkest moment of his life, he comes to God's man, and he says, I need an answer.

And the answer he gets is silence. And this leads Saul to do a very unusual thing. Saul does something that he thought he would never do.

In fact, he does something that if you'd asked him early on in his life, he probably would have promised he would never have done. Look at, do you remember in verse three, it says, Saul put out the mediums and the necromancers out of the land.

He banished them. And now look at verse seven. Saul says to one of his servants, seek out for me a medium that I may go to her and inquire of her.

Now the word there inquire is actually the same word that Chronicles uses. It's that I may go and seek her will, that I may go and get guidance and direction from her. I wonder if you can relate to that.

[21 : 58] I wonder if you've ever found yourself doing something, that crossing a line that you swore you would never cross. Maybe you once allowed yourself just to dabble in a little bit of something.

You thought, I've got a handle on it. I can control it. I won't let it get out of hand. It's just a little bit of this, a little bit of substance abuse, just a little bit of pornography. It's just a little flirtation with someone who's not my spouse.

And, and years down the road, you find yourself so far beyond those lines that you promised you'd never cross. And you don't know how you ever got there. And that's what's happened to Saul.

He once promised himself, we're going to get rid of the spiritualists in the land. And here, just a few years later, he himself is seeking them out. And you see, the problem with hardening our hearts towards God's voice, as soon as Saul, as Saul is going to soon find out, is that it always costs us more than we're willing to pay.

I'm not sure if you remember this verse. We looked at it last year in Ephesians chapter four, when we went through Romans 12. And there's this amazing verse in Ephesians four. The apostle Paul writes this. He says, I say this to you, and I testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do.

[23 : 10] The Gentiles are those that do not know God, those that were not God's people. He says, in the futility of their minds, they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them.

And notice what he attributes, this futility of thinking, this darkened of understanding, this ignorance. It's not to lack of education. It's not to the finiteness of their minds.

It's not that, you know, their parents didn't teach them well. Look what he says. It's that it's in them due to the hardness of their hearts. You see that? The apostle Paul is saying that when we continue to harden our hearts, to reject God's word, it actually leads to us becoming illogical, to kind of futility and incongruity in our thinking, in our minds.

We find ourselves doing things that we swore we would never do. We find ourselves doing things that actually we hate to do. In Romans 1, it says that, while claiming to be wise, the hardness of our hearts has actually made us fools.

We get confused about what's real and true. We believe things that are false and we treat them as if they are true. It makes us do things that we once swore we would never do. We become the kind of people that we swore we'd never become.

[24 : 29] And that's exactly what's happened to Saul now. And one day she's getting rid of the spiritualists in the land, and now he's seeking them out. And so Saul, in his desperation, does what he swore he'd never do.

He puts on a cover in a disguise and he goes and he finds this medium. And he wants to know what he must do about the invading army. God is not answering. And so in his desperation, he seeks out this medium.

And at night he disguises himself. He goes around the Philistine army. She is on the other side of the Philistine army and he goes there and he knocks on her door and he says, I've come to seek help.

She doesn't recognize him at first, but she is reticent because she knows that what she does is against the law of the land. She's also heard about these government sting operations. So she says, hang on, hang on. Are you coming here to trick me?

And notice the irony of verse 10. Saul says, As the Lord lives, no punishment will come upon you. Saul, the one who has rejected God's word, swears by the Lord that nothing will happen to her.

[25 : 35] And the irony continues because Saul, who in verse 5 was so afraid of the Philistines, Saul, who later we're going to be told is petrified at Samuel's words to him, swears to her, do not be afraid.

The irony, Saul cannot even see the words that he's saying. He cannot even see his own heart. He cannot hear the words that are coming from his mouth. And so, having convinced this medium to help Saul, he asks her to consult the dead prophet, Samuel.

And to bring Samuel up to give him guidance and direction. Now, to be honest, this passage raises a lot of questions. And it's the kind of passage that commentators love to write pages and pages of information about.

But really, it leaves us with more questions than answers. One of the questions here maybe, is God's Word advocating this kind of behavior? I mean, is this fine?

Is God saying, listen, if you don't know what's going on, you need some answers, just go and consult the spiritualists. Maybe you've got a decision to make, you can't find the answer in the Bible somewhere, your CG isn't helping, maybe you should go and consult tarot cards.

[26 : 45] Or go to Yamate and consult on the palm readers. Or look at the horoscopes. And no, friends, Scripture is absolutely clear. You should not do that. Don't go there.

God's Word is absolutely clear that His people should not go and consult the spiritualists and the darkness of this world in order to find light on our path. And one of the reasons that God says that His people should not do this is not just because they are futile, but actually because they are pagan, because they are wicked.

It's not that God says that they don't necessarily work in some ways, or that there's nothing spiritual about them, but it's because God's people don't need to consult the dead to find answers about life.

Actually, God says that in His Word, He's given us everything we need for life and godliness.

Between God's Word and the Holy Spirit and the community of believers, God gives us what we need.

And the answer is not that God's Word wasn't sufficient, it was that Saul had been rejecting God's Word, that he didn't know where to turn, and he turned to this medium. But the other question that appears is, who actually appears to Saul?

[27 : 54] I mean, this person that comes up and speaks to Saul, is it really Samuel? I mean, did Samuel rise from the dead? Is this just an apparition, a picture, an appearance? Is this maybe a demon that's pretending to be Samuel?

What's going on here? And to be honest, the Bible doesn't actually give us a lot of detail about what he looks like and what form he takes. But one way or another, it seems that the real Samuel speaks to Saul.

And Saul really hears from Samuel and hears his message. And Samuel doesn't tell Saul what he wants to hear.

Saul comes and he says, Samuel, tell me what to do. Tell me how to fight this battle. Tell me which way I must go. I'm demanding an answer. God is not telling me.

You tell me. What must I do? And Samuel doesn't tell Saul what he wants to know. Rather, Samuel gives Saul four pieces of devastating news.

[28 : 53] He reminds Saul of the word that he brought him back in chapter 15. He says, Saul, this has happened to you because you've rejected God's word. He says that God has become his enemy.

He tells him that the kingdom is going to be handed over to his arch enemy, David. And finally, he tells him that, Saul, you're going to die at the hands of the Philistines.

He says, tomorrow, the Philistines are going to take your life, you and your sons. And back in chapter 9, when Saul first became king, when Samuel anointed Saul, he anointed him and said, you are God's anointed one, his chosen one, to deliver God's people out of the hands of the Philistines. And here, after a lifetime of rejecting God, Saul is going to be delivered into the hands of the Philistines. Friends, the point of this entire chapter is to show us the end of the road for the one who's been rejecting God's word his entire life and embracing darkness.

And early in chapter 15, Samuel comes to Saul and he says, Saul, don't you know that rebellion and disobedience is the same thing as witchcraft. And what Saul was trying to tell him way back there is that Saul, you're sowing the seeds.

[30 : 15] The darkness of your heart is an embryonic form. Take stock, take notes, see what's in your heart. Samuel's trying to warn him all the way back there, but all the way back there, Saul had been sowing the seeds of darkness.

And now, the darkness that he's been following and investing in, he's got his return on investment. It's finally come to fruition. And the reason for the strange passage of scripture is here is because while Saul has been spiraling downhill his whole life, this passage shows us in dramatic fashion where Saul's rejection of God and his word ultimately leads him.

And where does it lead him? It leads him toying with darkness in order to find the light. It leads him to consult the dead in order to find a path to life.

And all the while the stench of death is rising and Saul's got one foot in the grave and yet he cannot smell it. All around the stench of death is rising and Saul is desperate to find a way out of the darkness and yet having shut off the light and shut off God's word to him, his last desperate means is to go and consult the dead in order to try and find life.

Now friends, our passage ends with miserable Saul collapsing in devastation with his servants and this spiritualist preparing a final meal, a last supper if you will, for him to eat before he goes out into the night.

[31 : 54] Now, before we get to the light in this passage, I want to ask us just to take two minutes to reflect and just to think by yourself and I want us to think of these two questions and I'm literally going to give us two minutes.

If you're with someone else you can consult with them otherwise just think by yourself what does challenge you about this passage and do you see any hints of the heart of Saul in our own life? Let's take two minutes to think about that and then we're going to close off as we look at the glimmer of light in the midst of this dark passage. Let's take a look at a second and he's in the Kansas City and as we move as we go to the star with Argentina and Thomas in Grand Canyon and he's in the former he's in the crew and he's in the the heart of

Thank you.

Thank you.

[34 : 27] Thank you. Thank you.

Dale Davis says that though the story is heavy with hopelessness, there is a light that shines in the darkness. Look at the very last sentence of our chapter together.

Verse 24 says, That last supper, one of Jesus' disciples, someone who preached Christ, who performed miracles, who proclaimed to be a follower of God, and yet his heart was so hard to the

goodness of God that he could not even recognize the grace that was before him. Listen to how John's gospel describes how Judas Iscariot leaves that last supper. John 13 says, So having received his meal, he immediately went out, and it was night. When John tells us it was night, he's not telling us what the time was. Throughout John's gospel, night is always symbolic of darkness, of God forsakenness, of hopelessness. [36 : 53] But friends, do you know somebody else who that very next day would enter into the darkness? Do you remember how Mark describes the scene at Calvary while Jesus is on the cross?

Mark 13, Mark 15 says, Friends, there's a danger that we can make in that we look at Saul, and we look at Judas, and we can think, that'll never happen to me. I'd never be that stupid. I'm better than that. Sure, I'm not perfect, but come on. I'd never go to the lengths that they go to. And of course, that would be a fatal mistake. Because never are we so blind as when we think that we can see. Never are we more like Saul when we think that that could never happen to someone like me. Friends, don't you see how Jesus Christ deliberately entered into the darkness, into the God forsakenness of Calvary on the cross, so that people like Saul, and people like Judas, and people like me, and people like you can walk into the light.

Do you remember Saul laments to Samuel? He says, God has turned away from me. He answers me no more. Well, friends, don't you realize how Jesus Christ on the cross, as he cried out to God, his cries were met with silence.

[38 : 28] God turned his face away from Jesus and answered his cries no more. For not because of the rebellion and the sin of Jesus, but because of the rebellion and the sin of me, and you and us.

Friends, Jesus Christ, who knew no sin, entered and endured the darkness of Calvary, and the silence of heaven, so that we might experience the answer of heaven, the welcome of heaven, and the light of grace.

Friends, what about you? Where are you today? If you're not a Christian this morning, Jesus Christ went to the cross for you, so that you may walk out of the darkness and experience the welcome of heaven, and the light of his grace.

Friends, don't reject his word. Don't harden your heart. Don't turn away from him another day. If you hear his voice today, respond to his voice. Christ is calling you.

To follow him. To surrender to him. To hand over your life to him. To trust him. And to walk in the light of his grace. Friends, if you're a Christian this morning, what about you?

[39 : 37] If you found that in small ways you've turned and hardened your heart. In small ways rejected his word. Maybe God's been speaking to you about something. To reconcile with that person.

To forgive that person. To reconcile that relationship. To turn away from that one area of your life. And it's so tempting to harden our hearts. Friends, God has called you.

Jesus Christ went to the cross. That we can leave the God forsakenness of the darkness behind. And enter into his light. Friends, it's not too late. Maybe you feel like I've gone so far gone.

God could never forgive me. It's too late. I've crossed too many lines. I've crossed too many barriers. I'm too far gone. Friends, the fact that you're here today and that you're listening is proof that it's not too far gone.

God has not forsaken you. Friends, come to him today. Come and turn to Christ, your King. Come and embrace the one who embraced the darkness for you.

[40 : 33] So that you can walk in the light. Let's pray together. Lord Jesus Christ, in this dark and hopeless passage, a light shines forth.

That Saul's story does not need to be in any one of our stories. Because you, Christ, went to the cross. God, as dark as Saul's story is, it is nothing compared to the darkness that you, Jesus, endured for us.

God, we praise you. We thank you for that. And that gives us such hope. That now we, God, can turn away from the darkness. Because you, Christ, have gone before us. God, I pray for each one of us.

Won't you come and magnify your cross and what Jesus did on the cross in our eyes and in our hearts. That we can trust you. We pray this in your awesome name.

Amen.