

# 1 Samuel Chapter 28 v 3 - 19

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[ 0 : 00 ] Stand up and bless the Lord, He be full of His joys.

Stand up and bless the Lord, Your God with heart and soul and voice.

Provide a powerful praise, A powerful blessing high, Who would not fear His holy name, And praise and magnify us.

Stand up and bless the Lord, The Lord your God at all, Stand up and bless His glorious name, And smoke forevermore.

Well, we're going to sit down and continue to bless God, As we come to Him in prayer together. So let us all pray. O Lord our God, Most wonderful and awesome and gracious and good and glorious God, We come to You again this morning as those who, By Your loving kindness and mercy, Have had our sins forgiven.

[ 1 : 36 ] Lord, we readily acknowledge that indeed we are sinners, That we have broken Your laws and Your commands, That we have lived in ways, O Lord, Which continue to be in opposition to Your good and perfect law.

Lord, that's not just true before we came to faith in Christ, That's true ever since we have come to faith in Christ too. We are still sinners, We still get it wrong, We still, even through this week, Have had wrong thoughts about others and Yourself, Have said things that we shouldn't have said, And have acted in ways, Lord, we're ashamed of.

But we thank You that with You there is forgiveness. That's something that all through the Bible has been proclaimed and declared. Thank You that it's something that all Your people have known from creation onwards, That You are the God who forgives sin.

Not the God who excuses sin, Not the God who brushes sin under the carpet, Not the God who turns a blind eye to sin, But You are the God who has made forgiveness for sin, Through Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank You that, Lord, All those sacrifices in the Old Testament could never take away sin. They could only point to the wonderful sin-bearing sacrifice of Jesus.

[ 2 : 47 ] They could only show the need for blood to be shed, To make men and women right with God. Such is the awfulness of sin. Such is its terror that it is indeed that which is the life remover, The life destroyer, the death bringer.

Sin is not a joke or a jovial thing. It's not something light or fun. It is horrible. And when we look around us in the world, And we see the massacres in Munich and Nice, And we see, Lord, the awful atrocities and sadness and grief that fills our world.

Lord, we know there is but one cause. It is the wickedness of the human heart. It is the sinfulness of a heart in rebellion against God, Set against all that is right and good and lovely and pure.

And, O Lord, which manifests itself in these ways. O Lord, how we bless You that You are so patient with this world. Lord, when all that's going on, You could easily destroy the world as You did in Noah's day.

But, Lord, You've promised not to do that again. Rather, You've promised forgiveness. You've promised a change of heart. You've promised new creation to those who will come and trust in Jesus, Your Son.

[ 3 : 58 ] We thank You that for many of us that's what's happened. Lord, You have changed our hearts. You have given us new hearts. New hearts of flesh instead of hearts that were stony hard And set on our own purpose and course.

You've given us, O Lord, Your Holy Spirit to make us new creatures. So, O Lord, our desire is to live for You even though we still fail. We thank You, O Lord, that You have promised us eternal life.

Life now in its fullness and life beyond this life in eternity with You. We thank You that we are a people of hope in a dark world. A people of light. A people, O Lord, who have something to live for and to sing for and to shout about.

The good news of a God of grace, forgiveness and love. We pray that as we gather this morning that You would send Your Spirit upon us afresh. That we've lost sight, perhaps, of our salvation. Lost sight of the wonder of sins forgiven. That You would impress upon us more and more. That where, Lord, we become cold in our love towards You. Where we become indifferent, perhaps, even about being in church.

[ 5 : 05 ] Lord, we pray that You would set our hearts ablaze with a passion and a desire for You, the God who loves us. And, Lord, we pray that where we have burdens and concerns and fears and anxieties, that we might cast them upon You in faith.

And trust You, O Lord, that You are the God who does much more than we can ask or even imagine. By Your power at work in us. So, Lord, be with us now. And bless this time as we bring You our worship and our praise.

In Jesus' precious name. Amen. We're going to turn together in our Bibles. And if you have one of the church Bibles, one of the Red Church Bibles to hand, then you're going to need to turn with me to 1 Samuel and chapter 28.

And if you've got one of the Red Church Bibles, that's page 300. Page 300. Over the last several weeks and months, we've been looking at the life of the prophet Samuel.

And we've come to the very end of that this morning. It's the last one this morning. And as you see, as we read through, it's a very, very peculiar passage.

[ 6 : 17 ] And in that sense, that has become clear. Can I just remind you as well, if you are coming, I really, really, really would encourage you to come along this afternoon, if you can, at 4 o'clock at Westcliffe at the Thunken Gardens.

If you've got some chairs, bring some chairs. If you've got a blanket, blinker, blanket. But try and get there, if you can, before 4. Try and get there around about quarter to 10 to so we can try and start on the money at 4 o'clock.

Rain is possible. We're not sure. Do not cross your fingers. Pray about it, please. If I see any crossed fingers, they will be smacked. But pray about that, that the weather would be good and fine, that we can proclaim the gospel together.

It's not like, if you've not been before, it's not like an open air, open air. It's very different to that. It's really a service in the open air. And I'll preach for about 20 minutes or so, and then we'll have testimony, song, and all sorts of things included in that.

So please, please pray for that. Please come if you can. So here we are, page 300, 1 Samuel 28. We're going to pick up the events from verse 3 and read through to verse 20.

[ 7 : 27 ] So verse 3 to verse 20. Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in his own town of Ramah. Saul had expelled the mediums and spiritists from the land.

The Philistines assembled and came and set up camp at Shunem, while Saul gathered all Israel and set up camp at Gilboa. When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid.

Terror filled his heart. He inquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him by dreams or urim or prophets. Saul then said to his attendants, find me a woman who is a medium, so that I may go and inquire of her.

There is one in Endor, they said. So Saul disguised himself, putting on other clothes, and at night he and two other men went to the woman.

Consult a spirit for me, he said, and bring up for me the one I name. But the woman said to him, surely you know what Saul has done.

[ 8 : 33 ] He has cut off the mediums and spiritists from the land. Why have you set a trap for my life to bring about my death? Saul swore to her by the Lord, as surely as the Lord lives, you will not be punished for this.

Then the woman asked, whom shall I bring up for you? Bring up Samuel, he said. When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out at the top of her voice and said to Saul, why have you deceived me? You are Saul. The king said to her, don't be afraid. What do you see? The woman said, I see a ghostly figure coming up out of the earth. What does he look like?

He asked. An old man wearing a robe is coming up, she said. Then Saul knew it was Samuel, and he bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. Samuel said to Saul, why have

you disturbed me by bringing me up?

I am in great distress, Saul said. The Philistines are fighting against me, and God has departed from me. He no longer answers me, either by prophets or by dreams.

[ 9 : 36 ] So I have called on you to tell me what to do. Samuel said, why do you consult me? Now that the Lord has departed from you and become your enemy.

The Lord has done what he predicted through me. The Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hands and given it to the one of your neighbors, to David. Because you did not obey the Lord or carry out his fear, wrath against the Amalekites.

The Lord has done this to you today. The Lord will deliver both Israel and you into the hands of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The Lord will also give the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines.

Immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, filled with fear because of Samuel's words. His strength was gone, for he had eaten nothing all that day and all that night.

If the children would like to go to Sunday school, to creche, please can they make their way now. Hopefully you'll have a Bible to hand at page 300, as we look at this very, very interesting event.

[ 10 : 50 ] Not in the life of Samuel, the last of the events in the life of Samuel that we're looking at together. Now, I don't know if you remember, several years ago, not all that long ago actually, the cost of petrol and diesel was extortionately high.

It was about 140 a litre. Thankfully it's dropped since then. But in those days when it was so expensive, I became very interested in alternative fuel, alternative source of fuel for my car, after seeing something on the local news.

I began to make my own biodiesel using cooking oil, which I collected from the local Chinese restaurant. And I bought a kit, which was basically a 40-gallon drum with a heater and all sorts of things, and chemicals to convert this old oil into biodiesel to run my car.

Unfortunately, after several months of running my car on this homemade concoction, it destroyed the fuel pump, which cost me £1,000, which is much more expensive than the fuel price I'd saved by making my own diesel.

So that was a lesson to be learnt. But it's not just alternative fuel. Of course, that is very much on the agenda at the moment. Alternative everything, it seems, is around about us.

[ 12 : 07 ] Alternative medicine is making a big come forward. Alternative energies, wind power, wave, and so on. Alternative comedy, alternative music, alternative lifestyles.

It seems, if anything is alternative, it must be good, it must be helpful, it must be more interesting than the status quo, the norm.

What is becoming very common, and is increasingly so, is alternative religion, alternative faiths. Many people in the UK, even today, if you ask them do they believe in God, will say they believe in God.

But many have been turned off, what they call organised religion. And so there have grown up within our society all sorts of alternative faiths, alternative religions.

And they vary in all sorts of kind. People are turning to Islam, or turning to Buddhism, or turning to mysticism, or New Age, turning to tarot cards, mediums, occultists, and so on.

[ 13 : 14 ] Alternatives to God. Alternatives to Christianity. Well, that's nothing particularly new. It may seem to be new in our country, which has had a long Christian heritage.

But it certainly isn't new, because as we see right back here in 1 Samuel, chapter 28, and we're talking about probably 1,100 to 1,200 years before Christ, so 3,000 years or more ago, here we have a story about mediums, about a medium, an occultist, a spiritist, however you want to do them.

We see this man, Saul, who is king, king of the country of Israel, seeking out the advice and help of this alternative, this medium.

But, like those today who will turn away from the living God, the God and Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, he is somewhat dissatisfied, disappointed with this alternative.

The alternative is far less satisfying than the real thing. I'm sure you find that in all sorts of ways. Though supermarkets are getting better with their cans of beans and the cheaper brands, in the end, there are some things that you cannot have an alternative to.

[ 14 : 31 ] You have to have the real thing. The taste or indifference is too much to bear. And so in this closing event in the life of Samuel, I want us to think about this.

And as I've said, it's not really an event in his life, because as we see in verse 3, he's dead. He's died. And Samuel, someone who had served God from literally the cradle to the grave, from a young boy, served in the temple, been a prophet of God, led the people. God had blessed and used him in a wonderful way. Right up to his death, he had served and followed God. And back in chapter 25, his death was recorded there, and it's recorded here. And we're told that all Israel, all the country mourned. All the country were grieved. All the country were affected and saddened by the death of Samuel. If we were to try to liken it to our present day, then probably the same effect that happened to our nation on the death of Princess Diana in 97, when everybody, it seemed, was affected.

So it was in that sense, in that country, everybody was affected. Everybody knew. Samuel was such a big figure in the life of the nation. And yet, in spite of the fact that he is dead and that he has been buried, we're told there in verse 3 in Ramah, that was his home, here he is appearing for the last time, appearing as a spirit, a ghostly figure, sent by God to speak to King Saul for the last time. [16:02] Now, this certainly is one of the most difficult parts of the Bible. It's certainly one of the most difficult for us to interpret, most difficult for us to understand fully and completely.

That doesn't mean that we're to ignore it, which is why we're not ignoring it. But it is something that we must be very careful of, because it is a one-off event. There is never in the Bible another event like this.

It's a one-off. It's unique. We've got to be so careful we don't build a doctrine or a theology around this one-off event. We must be careful that we don't use this event to contradict another part of the Bible.

You see, the Scripture interprets Scripture. If we're not understanding anything in the Bible, then elsewhere in the Bible we have an explanation. Elsewhere in the Bible we have an understanding. And though we can understand this and we'll seek to understand this, we must be careful that we don't read too much into one event.

That's exactly what happens with cults, like the Mormons, if you've ever come across them. They are a cult who take one particular verse in 1 Corinthians 15, where the Apostle Paul mentions baptism for the dead, and they build almost the whole of their religion about that one belief, or that one verse, which they take and apply.

[17:17] And again, that's a passage which is difficult to understand. But we mustn't build a whole theology, religion upon that. Our belief, our faith is in the whole of the Bible, the whole of God's revelation, the whole of God's truth.

And it's good for us that God gives us hard bits, isn't it? Because sometimes people say, oh, the Bible, I've read the Bible, don't make any sense to me, I can't understand it, or it's just a bunch of stories or myths, whatever.

But the reality is the Bible is hard, and it's hard for a reason because we need God's help to understand it. We need the Holy Spirit of truth to make things clear to us.

There are things that are obvious, and there are things that we need His help for. So in this unique event, we need to look at what we can learn, which is clear, and in accordance with the rest of the Bible, and put aside those things that we don't yet fully understand.

But the wonderful truth is that in heaven, the Bible tells us we shall know all things, understand all things about life, not just the Bible, about why things happened, why there have been tragedies, and so on.

[18:19] So let's get back to this event, this final meeting between Saul the king and Samuel the prophet. What can we know and understand? Well, first of all, we need to ask ourselves, why did Saul go to a medium?

Saul had been appointed as the king of God's people, Israel, by Samuel. He had known God speaking to him. He had known, in fact, we looked just the other week, the Holy Spirit of God come upon him and cause him to praise and worship God.

So why did he turn to this medium? Well, he turned to a medium because he was in big trouble. In fact, as he says to Samuel later on, he says to him that, I'm in great distress, there, verse 15. Why have you disturbed me? I'm in great distress, the Philistines are fighting against me. The Philistines were another country nearby who always were at war with Israel, always at war with God's people.

And we're told earlier on that the Philistines had assembled and set up camp at Shunam, and Saul had gathered his army. But terror filled his heart. Now, he was a man who'd been in many battles.

He was a man who'd fought valiantly many times.

[ 19 : 27 ] But now he's scared to death, literally. He is shaking in his boots. He is terrified. He's in great distress. And the problem was that usually he could turn to God, turn to Samuel, turn to one of other God's people and say, what is it that God wants me to do?

How should I fight in this battle? What should I do? But God had cut him off. God had not answered him. God wasn't listening to his prayers. God had had enough of him.

And we know the reason for that as we've looked through. Saul had given this privileged position of being God's king, of being this privileged position of being the one who would lead God's people.

And God had said, therefore, you need to obey me.

If you're my king leading my people, you need to obey me. But Saul had decided he knew better than God. And so on a couple of occasions, he'd done things his way instead of God's way. That's basically what sin is.

Sin is not just the naughty, wicked things we do. Sin is basically saying, I know better than God. I'm going to live my life my way. I'm going to do it my way. And what happened with Saul was this. He lost his kingdom.

[ 20 : 33 ] And instead of it being passed down as our king and queen are, it was going to be lost to his generation. And David, somebody else, was going to take up the throne. And he himself was cut off from his relationship with God.

That's the terrible thing about sin. It destroys our relationships with others. But it destroys our relationship with God. But we continue to live our own way, follow our own path, disobey God. And Samuel made that very, very clear. Because you did not obey the Lord or carry out his fierce anger. Verse 18. Now, why do people turn to mediums and spiritists, tarot card readers, other religions, which are false and alternative?

Well, usually it's because they too feel a great need. They need to have an answers to life. They need, they have a need for problems that they have.

Often they are themselves distressed. People may go to a medium, and perhaps you've known people do that because they've lost a family member. They hope to contact them and find out if they're all right through this medium.

[ 21 : 37 ] Or they may have gone to a tarot reader. They're facing a big decision about marriage or about their career or about emigrating. And they want to be told what to do. It may just be that they're plain unhappy with life.

Disgruntled. Dissatisfied. And so they look to an alternative type of lifestyle in the new age or a new religion. Some will give them meaning and purpose. Ultimately, it's because people are seeking and searching for answers.

And the reason for that is because within every single human being, there is, because of sin, a vacuum. Because of sin, instead of God filling our life, which we were created for, there's a great big gaping vacuum, a hole in our lives, which we try to fill with all sorts of things that will, we hope, make us happy or satisfy.

It may be the career that we've always longed for. It may be the relationship that we desire. It may be money, cars, toys, whatever it may be. And we cram our lives with that as much as we possibly can.

But we find that no matter how much we pour into the vacuum, pour into the hole, and Billy Graham, the great evangelist, called it the God-shaped hole, we always find that basically it just falls through the hole and falls out.

[ 22 : 49 ] It doesn't fill. It doesn't make us complete. It doesn't satisfy. Because that hole which we have can only be filled by the living God, the true, not the alternative, the true, the real McCoy.

So people search. They search because often, sadly, they may have had some connection with Christianity or church in the past. But that has dissatisfied them.

They see how Christianity is displayed on television or in the media. They see all sorts of abuse and atrocities going on by people who claim to be Christians or church leaders. They may even go along to a church, their local church, and unless they're very, very fortunate, and there are some very good Church of England churches that preach the gospel, some very good Methodists and all sorts, but they are in the minority.

The majority of Christians, as we see on the media, speak about things which are very vague, very grey. They don't present the full truth about who Jesus Christ is.

They don't portray the true truth about how you can be a Christian and right with God. They just say, be a nice person. Be kind to one another. And if you're good enough, you'll get to heaven. So people are looking, searching, seeking, but they're not seeking in the right places, and so they look for an alternative.

[ 24 : 09 ] Well, people might say, what's so wrong? What's wrong with somebody becoming a Muslim? What's wrong with somebody joining Buddhism? What's wrong with somebody seeking after a tarot car reader or a medium to give them some comfort in life, to give them some answers in life?

Well, there's a big problem. These things are all false. They're all untrue. But even then, people must say, well, even if they're not true, at least it makes them feel better to hear that their grandfather is in heaven and he's fishing by the lake where he always used to fish, or something like that.

Or to give them a reading in the tarot car and say, yes, you're going to meet a tall and dark stranger, and you're going to live happily ever after. Surely it doesn't really matter whether it's true or false. If it gives them some comfort, yes, it does matter if it's true or false. It matters exceedingly. It matters exceedingly to God because God has made it very plain and very clear that the alternative to worshipping him, to seeking after that which is mediums and spiritists and those sort of things, is detestable to him.

In the Old Testament, in Deuteronomy, in chapter 18, God says this to the people who are going into the land of Israel. When you enter the land the Lord your God is going to, do not learn or imitate the detestable ways of the nations there.

[ 25 : 25 ] Do not practice divination or sorcery, interpret omens, engage in witchcraft, or cast spells, or anyone who is a medium or spiritist who consults the dead.

Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord. In fact, God says, because of these same detestable practices, the Lord your God will drive out the nations before you.

In that country, before Israel, the people of God got there, all these things were going on, and God said, because this evil is so horrible and vile to me, that's why you're going in the land, and they're being pushed out.

It's not just the Old Testament. The New Testament as well makes it very clear that witchcraft and the occult are things which are sinful and wrong and contrary to the things that are good for us with God.

So I wanted to look at, just very briefly, this whole matter of the occult and look at what it is that people are searching for, but look at why it is so wrong, why it is so unhelpful, but ultimately, what is the truth?

[ 26 : 29 ] Where can we go to find the answers for life? Where is there one who makes sense of these things? So we've seen already that consulting a medium, as Saul does here, and this is the story, isn't it?

He's seeking this medium, is something which is detestable to God. And the reason it's detestable to God is this, because it is substituting God for something which is less than God.

Substituting God and replacing Him with something which is inferior. It's a problem that, sadly, not just Saul, but many other people in Israel had. Later on in their history, about 500 years later, we find that God has to send another prophet, Isaiah, to say to them just how wrong it is and what the consequences are.

In Isaiah, in chapter 8, this is what God says. When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God?

Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? Consult God's instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.

[ 27 : 39 ] Sorry, they have no light. Yeah, no light of dawn. They have no light in them. When you sign up for your insurance, for your house or for your car, often insurance companies will promise that they will replace like for like.

So if there's something which is value in the house, which is stolen, then they'll replace it like for like or give you the monetary equivalent. Imagine that in your garage, and some of you may not have to imagine this, is a Lamborghini or Ferrari.

Your pride and joy. You polish it every day, but not on a Sunday, and you take it out for a drive. One day there's a fire or something else like that happens, and the garage is destroyed, the car is

destroyed, and your company have promised like for like.

And so they promise to give you a car which is just the same, just as suitable, and you can't use jokes about Skoda anymore, can you? Because they've got quite nice cars now.

We used to be able to use them a lot, but you can't. Well, imagine they put a Reliant Robin in your garage for you. And so we're giving you like for like, it's got an engine, it's got wheels, only three perhaps, but surely it's just the same.

[ 28 : 53 ] You say, no, it's not the same, it's not like for like, it's inferior, it's less valuable, it's less enjoyable, it's not the same thing at all. That's exactly what it is when we seek an alternative other than God.

When people seek after something which is alternative than the living God, they are turning away from light to darkness. They're turning away from good to evil. They're turning away from truth to lies.

They're turning away from that which is living, the living God, to that which is dead and useless. And it's therefore idolatry. Idolatry. Idolatry is to set up an idol in place of God, to replace God with anything or anyone else.

That's why it's so detestable to God. See, God is a God who made us, created us, who gives us life, who has blessed us with breath every day. He deserves and requires our worship, our trust, our love, our adoration.

If we give that to anyone else or anything else, then we are worshipping a false God, what a false idol. We're turning away from Him. Here's what Paul wrote to Timothy.

[ 29 : 59 ] He says this, the Holy Spirit says clearly that in later times, some people who abandon the faith, that's the true Christian faith, and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

One of the hardest things to acknowledge and accept, and this is something which is anathema, we're not allowed to say it, but I'm going to say it, is this, is that anything which is alternative to God is demonic.

Anything which is alternative to God is from the devil. Any religion, any faith, anything that does not have Jesus Christ as the center and the living God as the one that we worship is not good, it is utterly wrong, false, and from Satan.

Now that's the Bible's teaching, and that's something that we need to realize and understand. But the trouble is that with mediums, with the occult, with these alternatives, it's not just that they are hideous and detestable to God, but also they are damaging, severely damaging to those involved. When God writes as well, later on in Leviticus in chapter 19, after he says this, do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for by them you will be defiled, you'll be made unclean, you'll be corrupted.

[ 31 : 15 ] You see, the problem is, is that those alternatives to the living God are very harmful to those engaging them. The practices that are involved in the occult create all sorts of psychological distress.

They incur financial loss, cost a lot of money, and worse of all, they give people a false reality about God and life, about heaven and hell.

They don't tell people how they can have that hole filled. They don't tell people how they can have that peace with God, how they can have that life. They lock people into a system which destroys and wears them down, fills them with fear.

You see, there's two types of occult practitioners. There's two types of people out there in the world. There are those who are the charlatans, the fakers, the con people. Harry Houdini, the great escapologist, 100 years or so, spent the majority of his time tracking down charlatan mediums and spiritists.

It was a big thing, particularly in America at that time. And there are people who are like that. They know it's just a con. They know it's not real. They just do it for money. It's just something which they do, a confidence trick.

[ 32 : 29 ] But then there are those who believe themselves to be real mediums. There are those who believe that they are contacting the spirit world and bringing the dead. And they probably think that they're doing good by it.

The sad truth is that they are deluded. And they're deluding those who they are seeking to help and opening them up to the devil, to demonic forces.

You see, there is a real spiritual world. A real spiritual world. Just as there is a real physical world, there is a real spiritual world. Just as there is a real God, there is a real devil. He's not just a cartoon pantomime character.

And his work, we thought about this last Sunday night, is to destroy people, to devour lives, to ruin life. That's why he tells us all these things, pleasing yourself, serving yourself, living for money, all these things are going to make you happy when he knows they will lead to disaster.

There are those people who are indeed demon-possessed. Those mediums who actually are being used by the devil to give fortunes and so on.

[ 33 : 35 ] Here's one. We read about it in Acts, in chapter 16. You don't need to turn there. This young girl who Paul met with when he was in Philippi. We're told this. Once we were going to the place of prayer, we met a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future.

She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. We'll hear later on what happened. She kept on following Paul and the others. And so he turned to her one day and he said to her, in the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to come out of her.

At that moment, the spirit left her. It wasn't a holy spirit or a good spirit. It was a demonic spirit that had given her this ability, this power to predict the future. So when people go to a medium, when they go to find how is my great-great-granddad, is he in heaven?

They will find that they are being not spoken to by someone who has died, but by a demonic spirit. It is evil. It is destructive. It is harmful. It is utterly wrong.

That is why I think when we come to the story itself, we find that when Samuel does appear, as I say, a unique event, a one-off event, she is shocked and she screams.

[ 34 : 52 ] It is not what she expected. It did not expect a spirit to come up from the earth. It did not expect this to be Samuel. It is something completely different. In this incident, God is in control.

God is doing something special. Particularly because of Samuel and particularly because of Saul and his people. And so we see that it is detestable to God.

We see that it is damaging to people. We see as well that it is deceiving. Deceiving and disappointing. Saul came to the medium, didn't he, hoping to have some guidance from Samuel. Words that he wanted to hear. Words that you're going to tell him. Things are going to be okay. You're going to win the battle. You're going to be okay. But rather when he hears from Samuel through this medium, what does he hear?

He says he is, that he's going to lose the battle. The army is going to be defeated and he and his sons are all going to be dead by tomorrow. Verse 19. That's what Samuel means. The Lord will deliver both Israel and you into the hands of the Philistines.

[ 35 : 52 ] Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. No horoscope, no spiritist, no tarot card reader, no medium will ever tell one of their customers, paying customers, that tomorrow you're going to be dead.

They wouldn't get a lot of business, would they? They wouldn't get a lot of people coming to them if they told the real future, if they told the realities about where their loved ones were when they had died.

Their words are false and therefore the comfort they give is false. They deny the truth of heaven and hell and future judgment. They quieten people's consciences so they think they don't have to worry about getting right with God.

They deceive them into thinking because granddad or great-granddad is in heaven so the medium tells them then they shall be in heaven one day too and everything will be fine for them. It stops them from fearing God and getting right with him and turning to Christ for their salvation.

It's an awful deception. And what is so bad, isn't it? Of course, as we saw at the beginning, many of those people are turning to them because they are looking for peace, for hope, for comfort in times of great distress.

[ 36 : 59 ] There is one medium who we can trust. There is one medium who we can turn to for the truth and that medium is the Lord Jesus Christ because he is the mediator between God and man.

A medium is someone through whom you go. Christ is the one through whom we come to God and know God. He is the one who gives us real hope and real peace with real words of truth in the reality of the world in which we live.

In 1 Timothy 2, we are told there is one God and one mediator between God and man. In other words, there is only one way we can get to God through the Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself as

a ransom for all people.

Jesus Christ came into this world from heaven to earth for you and for me that through him we can know God and go to be with God one day too. In his life, in his death, in his resurrection, we know that he showed himself to be the true mediator, the true son of God, the living God in this world and that all who put their faith in him will not be disappointed.

All who put their faith in him will not be lied to. Rather, when he speaks, he speaks the very words of God. Jesus himself says in John 14, don't you believe that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me?

[ 38 : 21 ] The words I say to you, I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father living in me who's doing his work. That's clear by the fact that Jesus raised the dead.

Clear by the fact he made the dumb to speak, the blind to see, the lame to walk, feeding the 5,000. It's clear that those who put their faith in him are putting their faith in someone trustworthy and dependable.

Not an alternative, not a substitute, but the real thing. And those who receive his words receive the words of life. Peter, one of the apostles, when he was speaking about Jesus, people were leaving Jesus and going to find an alternative, if I'm put it that way.

And then Jesus says to him, Peter, are you going to leave me? He says, no. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. So let me ask you as we close, have you got the real thing? Have you got the real God? Have you got the real faith? Have you got the real hope, the real comfort, the real assurance? Or are you trying to make do with something which is a substitute?

[ 39 : 29 ] It may not be a substitute religion, it may just be a substitute way of living, a substitute faith, a substitute hope. And you say, well, that's good enough. That'll do. But it won't do. It's going to leave you flat on the day of death.

It's going to leave you flat when life really gets tough. It's going to leave you flat when the rubber hits the road. It's going to leave you with emptiness. And as long as you continue to still cram that gaping hole in your heart and life with those things that are alternatives, then you are going to find that you shall always feel empty.

Let me urge you, let me encourage you, let me stress to you the importance of coming to Jesus Christ, the living God, who is able to forgive sins, set free from fear and anxiety, to give comfort and peace and to give hope and assurance in these days and days to come.

It's a very simple thing, simply coming to him in your heart and life, simply saying, Lord Jesus, I need you. I need you. Please come and rescue me.

O O O O O of your guilty fears, the bleeding sacrifice in my behalf appears.

[ 41 : 16 ] Before the throne I sure descend, my name is written on His cross.

He ever lives above for ye to intercede. His all-redeeming love is precious blood to lead.

His mother took all His son-raised and swinkles down the throne of grace.

My God is reconciled, His running voice I hear.

He don't speak for His child, I can no longer fear. With confidence I now draw and the God of hope and the Father of God.

[ 42 : 34 ] May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.