

GOING DEEPER (July 20, 2025) PERSONAL OR GROUP STUDY

If you could, would you want to see into your future? And if yes, how far into the future? Would you want to see the details of your final day, the day of your death? Would you want to know when ... and how?

This morning, we meet Saul, the first king of Israel, on his last day, in his last hours, at his final moment. The day before his death Saul, faced with a massive crisis, was desperate to hear from God. He asked for direction, for a word of hope, but heard nothing. Saul had repeatedly dishonored God. His relationship with God was big on lip service and short on heart service. At this critical point in Saul's life, God did not speak to him, guide him, counsel him, through dreams, visions, advisors, priests, or prophets.

A vast army had crossed into Israel. Saul, outnumbered and terrified, did not know what to do. He sought out a witch (a medium) and had her conjure up the great, dead prophet Samuel. (To explore that unusual story in the life of Saul I encourage you to listen to last Sunday's wonderful sermon.) Samuel's message to Saul ... you and your sons will die in battle and join me before the sun sets tomorrow. Saul was filled with fear. But, to his credit, Saul still led the men of Israel into battle, a battle he knew he would lose, a battle that would take his life and the life of his sons.

All of us know we will die. Most of us don't like to think about it. Many of us try to ignore that fact. We try to put off the inevitable as long as we can. That's understandable ... to a point ... but not healthy. There are those who obsess about death, surround themselves with darkness, with the morbid and macabre. That's not healthy either. Our main question this morning is, "How should a follower of Jesus view death, and face their own death"? In the story of Saul's death there is sorrow, a warning, and great hope.

Ordinary People Extraordinary Lives: The End of Saul (1 Samuel 31:1-7)
“31:1 Now the Philistines were fighting against Israel, and the men of Israel fled before the Philistines and fell slain on Mount Gilboa. 2 And the Philistines overtook Saul and his sons, and the Philistines struck down Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchi-shua, the sons of Saul. 3 The battle pressed hard against Saul, and the archers found him, and he was badly wounded by the archers. 4 Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, ‘Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and mistreat me.’ But his armor-bearer would not, for he feared greatly. Therefore Saul took his own sword and fell upon it. 5 And when his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell upon his sword and died with him. 6 Thus Saul died, and his three sons, and his armor-bearer, and

all his men, on the same day together. ⁷ And when the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley and those beyond the Jordan saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned their cities and fled. And the Philistines came and lived in them.”

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. What do these verses tell us about Saul? His armor-bearer?
2. What did Saul hear, related to this battle, from Samuel through the witch at Endor (chapter 28:15-20)? Do you have any positive feelings about Saul? Why or why not?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

3. What does, “and the archers found him” mean? (verse 3)
4. What does, “his armor-bearer would not, for he feared greatly” mean? (verse 4)

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

5. When you are reading a good book, or watching a good movie, would you prefer to know how it ends before the opening chapter, or the opening scene? Would knowing the end change how you experienced the story? Explain.
6. How is death portrayed in Hollywood movies? On TV?
7. What is the most accurate description of death you've read about in a book, or seen in a movie? Describe it.
8. If you knew the day you would die, how would that change how you lived your life?
9. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the most) how much to you think about death? About your own death?
10. Do you have any questions about death?
11. What does Christian faith believe about death?
12. What difference does it make that Jesus died?
13. What happens when a person dies?
14. What do you believe will happen when you die?
15. What Bible verses are most helpful regarding death?
16. What will you do, or say, when you are with someone dying, or someone who is afraid of dying?

As we spend time praying, remember that prayer is meant to be a natural part of our day. Prayer is a conversation: talking to God and listening to God. Thank God for the life He has given you. Ask God to help you trust Him more with your life, and with your death. Ask God to give you greater confidence in His love for you, and the eternal life He has promised you. God will help you, because He loves you.