

# A Leaders Worst Nightmare

by Alan Stewart

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*The sermon emphasizes the critical importance of maintaining God's favor and the dangers leaders face when they stray from His plan.*

**Duration:** 50:04

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 9:2, 1 Samuel 15:26, 1 Samuel 16:14, 2 Samuel 1:10, 1 Kings 11:14, Psalm 139:23-24, Matthew 22:37, John 21:15-17, 1 Corinthians 9:27, 2 Corinthians 4:2

**Topics:** "Leadership", "Revival"

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## Description

Alan Stewart delivers a powerful sermon titled 'A Leader's Worst Nightmare,' reflecting on the life of King Saul as a cautionary tale for leaders in ministry. He emphasizes the importance of maintaining God's favor and touch in our lives, warning against the dangers of mistrusting God's plan and misusing our positions. Stewart shares personal anecdotes and biblical examples to illustrate how leaders can fall from grace, ultimately urging the audience to seek genuine revival through a deep love for Jesus. He concludes with a heartfelt call for self-examination and repentance, reminding all leaders that their greatest fear should be losing their connection with God.

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## Transcript

Well, God bless you, and Brother Michael, thank you again for the invitation to be here and to speak here. Wow, the 747 is coming down, and the lights are on, and it's wonderful again to be here. And I just returned about a week and a half ago with Brother Bill from Budapest, Hungary, and there we had the opportunity to preach to pastors from all over Europe, and it was just an incredible experience.

But it's been wonderful for me to grow up and live near Bill Stafford most all of my life. And being from the Chattanooga area, I'm not sure what it's like where you're from, but in our area, one of the things that happens when a guy begins to get older, you'll find them sitting at the mall playing checkers together. And I've watched Brother Bill here in the last few years as he's beginning to slow down, and I know he's trying to stay home with Miss Sue and trying to take care of her and some of her health problems and all.

But I noticed something about Brother Bill here not too long ago. He was there at the mall, and he was playing checkers with a gentleman that was about 90 years old. And this 90-year-old guy was just complaining about everything under the sun.

His back hurt, his knees hurt, his head hurt, everything about him was hurting. And he looks over at Bill, and he says, Buddy, he said, you look to be about my age. Why don't you tell me how you feel? And Bill looked at him.

He said, I feel like a newborn baby. He said, now how in the world could you feel like a newborn baby? Bill said, no hair, no teeth, and I think I just wet my pants. Bill, I did not want to share that again.

I really didn't. I really didn't want to share that. I will say this about Brother Bill.

I want to say this. We laugh about that, and Brother Bill really doesn't. He can't even play checkers.

But the truth of the matter is, in my years of just living on Earth, when I was about five years old, Bill Stafford was one of the first men that I ever heard preach the gospel in my life. As a young boy, I got to hear him preach. Here I am at 42 years of age, and I still get to hear him preach.

And the thing that I want to say to you, Bill, and I mean this with all my heart, and I know that I stand in this crowd of people with the same heart toward you, the Lord Jesus has blessed you, He's anointed you, and your life and ministry have stood the test of time. Thank you so much. Thank you so much.

Brother Gary said something here yesterday morning. He said that our generation has no model to know what to follow when it comes to revival. I've been in the ministry for 22 years, not near as long as many of you that are here.

In 22 years of time, the first 15, I was an evangelist. I've seen a lot of great meetings. I've not seen revival.

I've not seen a revival that shook a continent. I've not seen a revival that shook a nation. I've not seen a revival that even shook a city.

I long in my heart to see God do that work again. But yet in our generation, I want you to think about some of the things that we've seen in our generation that we call revival. There has been what they call the laughing revival.

Now, there's nobody that loves to laugh any more than I love to laugh. I've pulled more pranks than I would want to be honest with you that I've pulled in my life. Love to laugh, but I've never experienced God in revival in a moment of laughter.

Then there was the anointed handkerchiefs revival. You know, I'd love to see some of those old glory boys that would use that exactly the way it is in the Greek text. It wasn't a handkerchief.

It was a nasty sweatband that the Apostle Paul took on. I wonder if they would like to find God in a nasty sweatband today. And then there are the revivals where they breathe on you.

Now, I know I'm just an old country boy. We can dress up nice and slick our hair back and look like gangsters, but we're still what we are at heart. I'm just a country boy.

I'm going to be honest with you here this morning. If somebody ever breathed on me and it knocked me out, they need a tic-tac. That's not revival.

Now, I'm going to be honest with you this morning. I'm not afraid of all those things. I'm not afraid of those things because I think that I know enough of the Word of God to know that these things are substitutes.

They're not real revival. When it comes to revival, I want to be honest with you this morning and tell you the thing that I'm afraid of the most, me. I'm afraid of me.

When I was in the fifth grade, I was running track preparing for the AAU Junior Olympics. And I remember I was running the anchor leg of the four-man relay. And I'm standing here looking at my opponent who's in the lane right beside me.

Again, I'm in the fifth grade. I stand and look at my opponent who's in the lane beside me, and he's already six foot tall. He's not only six foot tall.

I look over, and it's funny as a child and you're young, you pay attention to details. I look over and he's already got manly hair on his legs. I look over at him and I can tell he's already shaving because he's already got a mustache.

Now, for those of you that aren't familiar with Soddy Daisy, I'll go ahead and tell you probably this guy was 30-year-old and still just in the fifth grade. But there is no way I was going to beat this guy on that day. The first three legs of this race, the baton was handed off simultaneously, and they were running step for step.

When it comes to the anchor leg, we're both bent over. We received the baton at the same time. Ten steps into this final leg of the race, my opponent drops the baton.

I'm here to tell you I ran like I have never run in my life. Just steps across the finish line, I finished first and beat this guy. You know, the truth of the matter was this guy had more talent, more ability than I could have ever possessed.

He should have made it to the finish line much sooner than I did. But the problem is he dropped the baton. Do you realize that when God called each of us into ministry, he put a baton into our hands? He gave us a baton to run with, honor, dignity, grace to represent him.

Why don't you take your Bibles and turn with me to the book of 1 Samuel here this morning? In the book of 1 Samuel, I want us to look very quickly. It's the life of a man who had it all, had all the potential in the world, but he drops the baton. Just above my light switch in my pastor's study, I've had a little saying that I had framed and put on the wall to remind me every Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night as I turn the light switch off and I head to that pulpit.

Two words, remember Saul. I never want to forget Saul. David is my favorite character in all of Scripture, but Saul is the most intriguing character in Scripture to me.

In chapter 9 of 1 Samuel, I want you to listen to how Saul is described in verse number 2. He was a choice young man and a goodly, and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he. And from his shoulders and upward, he was higher than any of the people. When I read those words about Saul, I think here is a man with unlimited potential.

Here is a man who has got it made. He's going to be ready to be anything in this world that you could ever imagine. Here is a young man that we would say is going to be most likely to succeed in this world.

Over in the latter part of this chapter, then beginning in verse 15, Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear a day before, Saul came saying, Tomorrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out

of the hand of the Philistines. For I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me. And when Samuel saw Saul, the Lord said unto him, And behold the man whom I spake to thee of, this same shall reign over my people.

God has just put a word on this man's life. Potential. He's got all the skill, all the ability to be a great king.

No one in Israel stands any taller than Saul. But now I want you to turn over to chapter 28. Some years of time have now passed.

Saul is sitting in the house of a witch. He has lost the voice of God. God no longer speaks to him.

God is no longer giving him direction. Verse 15 of chapter 28. And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams.

Therefore I have called thee that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do. Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? And the Lord hath done to him as he spake by me. For the Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbor, even to David.

Because thou obeyest not the voice of the Lord, nor executest his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the Lord done this thing unto thee this day. Moreover, the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines. And tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me.

The Lord also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines. I want to title this message this morning, A Leader's Worst Nightmare. Let's pray.

Father, this morning I thank you for the wonderful call to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. But Father, in our frail humanity, God, sometimes we place our lives in positions that many forfeit the right to represent you in honorable places. And Father, we lose a touch that we desperately need today.

Lord, I want to be honest with you today. I am nothing and can do nothing without you. My heart has long begged and pleaded to see revival.

Not an emotional stirring. Not an in-gathering necessarily of people. But Father, my heart wants to be like the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration who when the cloud lifted and the dust settled, they opened their eyes and saw no man but Jesus.

Would you open the heavens today for Father, they are closed. But yet we still preach sermons. We still sing songs.

But there is no you in our midst. I thank you that you indwell us with your Spirit. But Father, it is my heart's cry that you consume us with your glory.

Have we gone too far to see your hand at work in our country again? May your fire fall in this place today and bring us to the foot of the cross and remind us yet again what this call is all about. And I ask it all in the wonderful name of Jesus. Amen.

On the once bloody battlefield at Saratoga... Okay, boy, are we wearing them out? I'm just a country boy. But these things make me sort of feel like Garth Brooks a little bit when you put this thing on. On the once bloody battlefield at Saratoga, there stands a 155-foot-high monument, a monument that represents that battle where the British made their last stand over two centuries ago.

There on that monument, at the base of this monument, there are the names of four American generals who commanded there. Above each of those names are bronze figures that are sitting on horseback. As you look at the first name, you'll find the name Horatio Gates.

The second name, you'll find Philip John Schuyler. In the third, you find the name Daniel Morgan. But on the fourth side, it is strangely vacant.

The name appears, but the soldier is missing on the monument. Once you read the name, however, you're reminded of the man who sold his soul on the foggy banks of the Hudson and there forfeited the right to ever be remembered again. This brigadier general once commanded at West Point, and he distinguished himself in some very memorable battles, but his name has become synonymous with disgrace.

We know him as Benedict Arnold. Clarence McCartney said these words so eloquently, The empty niche in that monument shall ever stand for fallen manhood, power prostituted, for genius that was soiled, for faithlessness to a sacred trust. Again in this passage, we looked at the life of Saul in the very beginning.

Here was a young man who had it all. We would have said he's most likely to succeed. He's going to be something great in the sight of God.

His name will be written down in the history books. They'll sing songs about him. There'll be wonderful books that'll be written about his life.

But yet, over the course of time, here was a man who lost the touch of God, lost the blessings of God, who thought he was invincible, thought he was unconquerable. This once shy, timid, and backward man had his ego stroked, and he forfeited the right to be remembered as a great king. Many years ago, Vance Havner, one of his great sermons, one of his favorite sayings was, I want to get home before dark.

Already in 22 years of ministry, I have seen men, greater speakers than I'll ever be, orators that you and I would give our eye teeth to have their skills, men that could woo and wow the crowds, had charisma, seemed to have the anointing. But somewhere in their life, there was a moral hole, and they fell before they made it to the finish line. As you look here at Saul's life today, I want you to think with me, especially as pastors.

Now when I say a leader's worst nightmare, you may have said right then, wow, I'm not a pastor, I'm not a staff, so this message doesn't apply to me today. Let me say this to you. If you occupy any place of responsibility in your church, you're a leader.

And so it does apply to you. Now if you just sit in your church and you do absolutely nothing, perhaps it may not apply to you today. But I would say the majority of all of you that are here today, you do something for the Lord.

And I want you to think with me very quickly what things would be our absolute worst nightmare in the ministry. First of all, as you think of Saul's life, and notice with me, here was a man who was rejected of

God's trust. In 1 Samuel chapter 15, listen to verse number 26.

And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee, for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. Simply put, he lost the favor of God on his life. It doesn't take any of us long at all in ministry to realize you can't buy the favor of God.

There's not enough education, going to the right school, knowing the right people in life that will give you the favor of God on your life. The apostle Paul was afraid of losing this same favor in his life. You remember in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 when he says, I keep under my body, and bring it under subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Here the word rejected in the Hebrew carries the same meaning there as you find in your King James and the New Testament of being castaway. It means to be rejected, to be disapproved. It's a picture in the Greek language of metal that has been taken, placed into the fire, and it did not measure up to the test.

And it was cast aside as disapproved. It would be an absolute nightmare to lose the approval and favor of God in life. As you look at Paul's life and understand why he lost this trust of God in his life, first of all, he mistrusted God's plan.

You remember in chapter 13, Samuel tells him, I'm going to go away for seven days, I'm going to pray, seek God's face. Find out what his plan is for you. You wait for seven days.

One day passed, two days passed, three days passed, all the way to the sixth day there's no Samuel. Saul is now beginning to get fidgety. The seventh day comes and Samuel's not there yet.

And he goes and he offers burnt offerings. When Samuel arrives, he says, what is this you've done? And he says, I forced myself. God has a perfect plan and purpose for every one of our lives.

And when God's favor is on your life, it flows. But when we lose the favor of God, you can mark it down, we begin to force our way through life. There are preachers all over America who are striving every single day in ministry.

Why? Because they don't trust God's plan. They've got to have a certain platform, be in a certain place. A strategic pulpit is the only place they can preach in America and they are forcing themselves.

Now think of the life of Moses. Moses had to learn this lesson the hard way. You cannot do God's will your way.

Moses was a man who was a statesman. He was a scholar. He was a soldier.

But he could not rely on all the skills and education he had. It had to be the hand of God on his life that he trusted. It's interesting, Moses, when he was just with Moses, he couldn't even bury one Egyptian.

But when he had God on his side with God's favor, God buried an entire Egyptian army. With God's favor, we can accomplish things that we could never accomplish for the glory of God, but only with His favor. Here's what Saul was just going to be asked to do.

He was only going to be asked to stay the Philistines and bring back the Ark of the Covenant. If Saul had just waited and done those two things, his kingdom, Samuel said, was going to be established forever. When David became king, these two things were the only things God asked him to do when he became

king.

His kingdom was going to be established, but he lost it because he mistrusted God's plan. Not only did he mistrust God's plan, he misused his position. In verse 12 of that 13th chapter, he says, I forced myself and He offered burnt offerings.

That doesn't sound like a terrible thing to have done. He comes and he's trying to make a sacrifice unto God. He's trying to do an honorable thing, it appears.

The only problem is, this was something God had said only the priest would do. Not a king. Not Joe sitting out in the congregation.

He said, it's going to be my priest. You know, it's interesting. If there's anything that I've learned at all in my walk with the Lord, when sin moves in, sanity moves out.

Did you ever notice in Scripture from the life of Aaron, Aaron and Miriam speak against Moses, but yet God strikes Miriam with leprosy, and Aaron appears to walk away scot-free. Then Moses is on the mount, and guess who it is that engineers the structure of the golden calf. Boy, Aaron was a great Baptist.

We just put it in and look what came out. Thousands died. Again, Aaron appears to walk away scot-free.

And then when you come to Numbers 20, it's the place where Moses strikes the rock, and he should have spoke to the rock. The implication that is there in the Hebrew language is that Aaron consented to the disobedience. When God speaks to them, he speaks to Moses and to Aaron.

But he tells Moses, you're not going to leave my children in the promised land. Again, it looks like Aaron is walking away scot-free. But then the day comes.

God says to Moses, I want you to get Aaron and bring him up to the mountain. Took Aaron to the mountain, and there at the mountaintop, God commands Moses, strip him of his priestly garments. The moment that the priestly garments come off of Aaron, he died.

Listen, there are things that it may appear as ministers of God that we have gotten away with in life, things that are hidden beneath the priestly garments that we wear, but my friends, one day, God is going to strip even the priestly garments off of his men who preach his word, and we will stand before God and make accountability for all the things of our life. He misused his position, but he misled God's people. In chapter 14, he pronounced death on anyone who would not fast until evening.

But news comes to him, your son broke the fast. And so he backs up and he changes the rules when he realizes his son would be the one that dies. Here's what he taught the people of God.

It's okay to change your convictions based on the circumstances. Then in chapter 15, he has been commanded to utterly destroy Amalek, but he keeps the king, the best of the sheep and the oxen, and he says, I have performed the commandment of the Lord. He taught the people of God that God accepts partial obedience as total obedience.

There's a verse of Scripture that's in 2 Corinthians 4. I want you to listen to this. Therefore, seeing we have received this ministry as we have received mercy, we faint not, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully. Negligent.

You see what he's reminding the readers there, and he's reminding you and I of here today, that if there are hidden things of sin that are in our heart, mark it down, there is coming a day, there is coming a place, there is coming a moment in life that you as a person who handles the word of God, you will be negligent with the word of God. It's difficult to go bring church discipline on someone who is doing the same thing you may be doing in secrecy. You lost the favor of God.

But I want you to notice secondly, it is a leader's worst nightmare to not only see the rejection of God's trust, but to see the removal of God's touch. In chapter 16 of 1 Samuel, listen to verse 14, But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. In a word, he lost the touch and anointing of God on his life.

Now there are probably scholars here in this audience that are much more intelligent than I am in the word of God, and you would probably say to me, Now pastor, listen, this term anointing that's used by all the charismatic guys today, that's an Old Testament word. We live in the New Testament age, and we don't use the word anointing much in the New Testament. Again, I'm not the smartest guy in Scripture, but I would say this to you.

The word anointing that we find so much in the Old Testament is the New Testament equivalent of being filled with the Spirit. It is to be consumed by His presence. It is like Jesus in the upper room when He breathed that life into the hearts of His disciples.

You see, what's missing in our lives today is this touch, this breath of God on our life again. Saul lost the touch of God. When he lost the touch of God, he became an absolute coward.

He became afraid of Goliath. He became afraid of David. Everywhere he looked, he was afraid of the circumstances around him.

You remember when the children of Israel are now right at River Jordan, and Moses is ready to hand off the baton to Joshua? And there on the well-watered plains of Moab, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad make a decision. We're herdsman. We have cattle.

It is a well-watered plains. We're just going to stay right here. Do you know where a lot of pastors are at today in their ministry? They've reached a place where they don't want to go any further.

They've fought enough battles. They don't want to go any further. They don't want any more difficulty.

They just want to coast to the finish line. Saul, when he loses this touch of God, he loses instincts. He lost the responsibility of his life.

He became indecisive. He was ineffective. If there is a lesson that we ought to all learn here this morning, lost anointing is a painless thing.

There's never like one morning that we wake up and, oh, we just ate because we don't feel the touch of God again. There are no warning flags. There are no buzzers.

There are no signs that fly up to remind us we're losing that touch of God. In fact, I would say here this morning, of all of us that are in ministry, here is a sad reality for all of us. I could give every pastor that's in this room this morning a passage of Scripture, give you five minutes outside this room, and you could come back in here and at least give us three or four points about that passage of Scripture.

We're mechanical. We've been taught how to do it. We know how to take a passage, get a few points.

Stand up and say a few things. We know how to stand and sing our songs and go through all the motions, but where is the power of God? The power of God is not in our pulpits in America anymore. That's why we don't have revival.

We have men who speak, men that fall back on their giftedness. We have men that have charisma, and we've mistaken the charisma for the anointing of God. The fire of God is not in our pulpits anymore.

We've lost this touch of God. You remember when David, son Absalom, woos the heart of Israel and he takes the throne away from his father? When he does so, David, rather than fighting with his son and seeing a lot of innocent people killed, David just decides, I'm going to pack up and I'm going to leave. As they are leaving out of Jerusalem, Zadok and Abiathar are going to stand with David and they're carrying the Ark of the Covenant out of Jerusalem.

You remember in the Old Testament, the Ark of the Covenant was symbolic of God's presence among His people. Isn't it interesting that the Ark of the Covenant, symbolic of God's presence, was moving out of the town and no one even noticed? I wonder what day, what year, that God began to move back from the churches of America. I wonder when that day was that His presence began to move back, the sinfulness that was in the land, the pulpits that were filled with compromise.

You see, the one thing, when we talk about a laughing revival, I want to tell you why no one's going to laugh in the presence of God, because He's a holy God. And any time we ever are in the holy presence of God, we are consumed with our hellishness. When the light of His presence is shone upon our heart, we see the filthiness of who we are.

There's no laughing in the presence of the holy God. In fact, where are the days, where are the days where the glory of God was so mighty that even the preachers couldn't stand because of the glory of God? Oh, we stand in the limelights. We have our names on the marquee.

We are in the brochures. We do all the big things. We fight for the strategic places to preach.

But where, oh where, is the glory of God? Saul was once humble and loving and tenderhearted in his youthful years, but he began to eye David, and he began to hate David. You see, when a man loses the anointing of God, he may still occupy the platform of influence, the platform of authority, the platform of power, but he's always looking over his shoulder at somebody else. There's a passage that really concerns me in I Kings 11.

Solomon, the wisest man the world would ever know. Again, when sin moves in, sanity moves out. He's beginning to roam with thousands of women.

I can't hardly live with one. I don't know how in the world he had thousands, but God became displeased. He's losing the trust of God.

He's losing the touch of God. Verse 14 of I Kings 11, it says, The Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon. You know, this is a hard pill to swallow this morning, pastors.

Sometimes, not all the time, sometimes the enemies that raise up in our church are God-ordained to call us back to Him. He stirs up an enemy when our hearts are not right. You ever notice that when

something's not right in your walk with God, some of the people that have stood beside you, been supporters of you, suddenly they become an enemy to you.

It's interesting, the Word of God tells us that when a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even His enemies to be at peace with Him. But when a man loses the touch of God, God stirs up enemies. I want you to notice with me lastly here today, it is a man of God's worst nightmare to be replaced at God's past.

Again in chapter 28 there, He says these words in verse 17, The Lord hath done to him as he spake by me. For the Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand and given it to thy neighbor, even to David. Someone has said these words, When God is using a man, there's not an army that can kill him.

But when God is finished with a man, there is no team of surgeons that can keep him alive. In 1 Kings chapter 19, you know the story, Elijah running from Jezebel. Boy, if there's ever a time to run, it's when a woman's chasing you in the ministry.

Sitting underneath a juniper tree, crying, asking God to kill him. You notice how many times the angel of the Lord says to him, Finally, the angel feeds him, gives him some night's rest, and the next morning tells him what his task is going to be. You're going to go and you're going to anoint two kings to be kings.

But there's one other interesting thing that he's told he's going to do. You're going to go find Elisha and anoint him to be prophet in your place. Don't know what happened there underneath the juniper tree.

Don't know all the things that Elijah may have said. Did you ever notice in Scripture, in Hebrews 11, Elijah's name is not listed there among the heroes of faith? There are some miracles that Elijah done and some miracles are referred to there. Maybe it was referring to him, but his name is not called specifically.

In the book of Esther, you know the story, Esther afraid to stand up, be a woman of conviction. Mordecai comes and he tells her, if you don't stand up, God will bring deliverance from another place. If there's a fault that I want to put in each of your hearts here this morning, and may God remind you, none of us are irreplaceable.

The kingdom of God does not rise nor fall on the shoulders of our own strength. In fact, if he carries the coming of his son long enough, there'll be other men that'll stand in my pulpit and there'll be pastors of the church where I'm at today. The kingdom of God is not dependent on he and me.

We are dependent upon God. You know the story of how Saul's life ends. He's on the battlefield.

The enemies are surrounding him. He takes the sword and he falls on his sword. What a picture of a man who fell on the sword of his own character and integrity.

But do you remember something in that story? He falls on his own sword, but he don't die instantly. He looks up and the Philistines are beginning to assemble themselves and he sees a servant that is standing there. And this moment is recorded then in 2 Samuel 1. Because this servant comes back and tells David what happened on the battlefield.

Saul had fallen on his sword, but he didn't die instantly. And he looks up at this servant and he says, Please go ahead and kill me. This is Stuart's unauthorized version here.

Go ahead and kill me right now before the enemy comes and does the damage to me. But he looks up at the servant and he says, Who are you? And the servant looks down at Saul in his dying moment and says,

I am an Amalekite. Don't you know in his dying moment how a dagger was drove into his heart years ago? God commanded me to utterly destroy the Amalekites.

The very thing God asked me to kill and to remove has come back and it takes the crown off my head, takes the bracelet from my arm, and takes my life in the end. If there is an Amalekite anywhere in your life today, you better kill it. If not, my friend, you mark it down.

There is coming a day, it may be 5, it may be 10, it may be 20 years, it will find you. It took his life. But it didn't end there.

The Philistines take his body. They strip off his armor. They take him back to their homeland and they nail his body to the wall of shame.

God has his hall of fame. The devil has his wall of shame. There was a guy in my church that many years ago, he used to preach in some of the grandest platforms all over America.

He preached in conferences. I remember him telling me stories of preaching on the cruises with Adrian Rogers. Boy, I thought, man, that would be every young preacher boy's dream.

He had it all. But today, his life has been one of those lives. He fell on the sword of his own character and integrity.

His life has been pinned to a wall of shame. He sits on the front row of my church and listens to me preach every single day. Sometimes I look down and I'll see him, tears just streaming down his cheeks.

I thought I was just preaching a bad sermon. And he tells me afterwards, you don't know what it's like for me to sit there and watch you do the thing that my heart longs to do, that God called me to do, but I forfeited that right. Fell on the sword of his own character and integrity.

Well, there's good news here this morning. Maybe you're here in this place and, yeah, you can still put the sermons together. You still stand in the pulpit.

You've got the platform of honor and authority in your life. But you know that the touch of God is gone. God doesn't seem to open doors for your life anymore.

You seem to have lost that trust. What do you do here this morning? I'm going to just be as transparent as I know to be. Most of you don't know me and may never see me again.

About 18 years ago, probably the darkest place of my ministry, still early in ministry, I'm young, dumb, feel invincible. Again, I wanted to do God's will my way. I'd listen to all the garbage that some of the guys told me how you make it in the ministry is just garbage.

If Jesus wants you somewhere, he'll put you there if he wants you. If he don't, be trustworthy where you are. I was disobedient, living disobedient, and I lost the touch of God in my life.

I remember going to pulpits and preaching in revival, and I didn't have it. Man, I could kick up a dust storm. I could shout the stars down.

But I knew it was gone. For a period of about a year and a half to two years, I still put sermons together, I still walked to those platforms, and I was as empty as empty could be. Finally, laid down in my bedroom

floor, and I just began to pray, God, am I ever going to know your touch again? But God, I know that I've got to repent.

I've got to learn to live obedient, and whatever you say I've got to do in my life, God, please give me your touch back. The Lord reminded me of the passage of Scripture, the life of Samson. Boy, the man who had it all, had the strength, his hair was cut and he lost the power of God in his life.

Thrown down in the devil's dungeon, grinding at the mill. Then, you know the story, they poke out his eyes, but then a little boy comes and takes him up top, and there in the Coliseum he puts his hands between the pillars, and he pushes the pillars down. He fulfills God's ultimate plan for his life, but to do so he had to die first.

You say, Brother Al, are you telling me today that I've got to die to get the touch of God back on my life? Absolutely. Absolutely. You've got to die to yourself.

You've got to die to some sin. You've got to die. Looking back as I think back on that season in my life, I was just like Samson.

Man, I remember when I first started preaching, people would pay you all kinds of compliments. You know what they did? They lied to you is what they did. They lied to you.

They tried to be nice, they lied to you. You begin to think you're invincible, just like Samson. I remember in that season, it was like having your eyes poked out every day is a dark day.

Being in the devil's dungeon, you feel absolutely forgotten by God. Grinding at the mill. It was a grind to get up in the morning.

It was a grind to go through the day. It was a grind to put a sermon together. It was a grind to stand in the pulpit.

It was a grind. But I simply had to come to the place and say, God, if you could just get my hands between the pillars one more time. And I'll close with this illustration.

The life of Peter. Boy, if there's anybody in the New Testament I'll remind myself of, it's Peter. Everybody else Jesus may deny you, not me.

Don't ever have to mention Jesus. Peter does the unthinkable. You remember the moment that in the Rooster Crows for the last time, one of the gospel writers says, Jesus turned and he looked on Peter.

And Peter ran away and he wept bitterly. Can you imagine what it had to be like then as he goes out fishing on the sea? All the thoughts that were in his mind of how the good old days and what God had done in his life in the past, and it's all gone. He thinks his best days are behind him.

Thank God that John chapter 41. Somebody looks up and says, I think it's the Lord. Peter wasn't going to roll the boat.

Peter was going to get there before everybody else, jumps in the water, swims to Jesus. Here's the moment. He's sitting on the other side of the fire, looking over into the eyes of the one that he has absolutely broke his heart.

Here is Jesus' chance to nail Peter to the wall. As you remember as much as you remember about this moment in Scripture, Jesus looks across that fire to Jesus and says, Peter, are you ashamed for what you've done to me? Peter, you're an embarrassment to the convention. I'll never recommend you to ever speak at the pastor's conference, Peter.

Peter, you'll never be a missionary. You'll never represent me and be my ambassador. Peter, you're through.

Your best days are behind you. Jesus simply said, Peter, do you like me? Do you know what revival this morning I believe with all my heart is dependent upon? There's nothing we can do to create revival except love Jesus. But can I confess to you this morning, I'm probably nowhere that I need to be for God to trust me and my church with revival.

I wish I could tell you that I am. But today I'm like Peter. I'm dependent on Jesus coming and finding me.

Revival is never going to start in my church or your church until it starts with us. Again, there's a lot of things I may be afraid of in life. But the thing that I'm afraid of when it comes to revival the most is me.

I'm afraid of me. Just how much this morning do you really love Jesus? This morning.

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