

When God Answers No More

by Jack Hyles

The sermon explores the tragic decline of King Saul due to disobedience and the loss of God's presence in his life.

Duration: 46:39

Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:22, Psalm 51:17, Proverbs 3:5, Matthew 7:21

Topics: "Silence Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Saul from the Bible. He starts by describing a blind and bound man grinding at the mill, emphasizing the importance of obeying God completely. He then highlights Saul's disobedience and lies when he spared some animals instead of following God's command to destroy everything. The preacher points out that Saul's sins led to a decline in his character, with pride, weakness, vengeance, and selfishness creeping in. Ultimately, God departed from Saul, and he spent the majority of his reign as king without God's favor.

Transcript

King Saul, in this passage, had gone to a fortune teller. That's right. I wonder how many of you have ever gone to a fortune teller.

Don't raise your hand. But did you ever go to a fortune teller? King Saul had gone to a fortune teller. Now listen carefully, I'll tell you the story.

Samuel was dead. Saul had lost his power. God had given Saul a new heart, the Bible says, and I don't mean a new heart for the good, I mean a new heart for the bad.

And five, the five Philistine kings came to attack Saul and his armies and his people. And Saul had lost his power. Saul couldn't get an answer from God.

God had departed from Saul. And so Saul decided to go to a fortune teller. And so he inquired among his men and said, anybody here know of anybody that has a familiar spirit? What he really asked was, anybody here know of a fortune teller? They called them witches in those days.

And so, anybody here know of a witch or a fortune teller? And somebody said, yes, over at Endor, that's E-N-D-O-R, over at Endor there's a fortune teller over there. And so if you'll go there. So Saul, King Saul, disguised himself.

Now I don't know how he did it. Maybe he got him a beard, maybe he got him a wig. I'm not sure what he did, but disguised himself.

And so here comes the king, all disguised into the place of a fortune teller. Well, the fortune teller is sitting there and she's got a round globe in front of her. This is all in Hebrew.

You won't find this in the English. This is a deeper Bible study. She's got a globe around her, around her, in front of her.

And she's got a robe around her, globe and a robe. And so King Saul walks in and she says, have a seat. And he, she says, what can I do for you, sir? And he said, I want to, he disguised his voice.

He said, I want to, I want to call up somebody that's dead. Well, she said that, that'd be very easy. I'll be glad to do that.

Now, who do you have in mind? He said, I want to call up Samuel. I want to call him up. And the fortune teller said, okay.

And she said, now hold it. She said, I know who you are. Said you're, you're the King and you're, you're going to call me some trouble.

He said, I promise you no trouble because I promise you if you'll just call up Samuel. So she says, Samuel, I'm not sure that's the way she said it. She may have said Culligan man.

I'm not sure, but she said Samuel. And so Samuel came up and it scared the fire out of her. You see, she'd never had any success before.

And, and she was amazed. Who is that? And Saul said that Samuel, and here's one of the sweet parts about this story. She said, he's got a mantle on.

What she really said was he has a coat on. Now to me, that's one of the sweetest things about the Bible. Don't you recall when Samuel was a child at the, at the, at the temple that his mother, Hannah had given him to God and his mother went, went once a year to see him at the temple.

And what did she take every year to Samuel? Oh, what kind of coat? A little white coat. And she took him a coat every year. And now Samuel's old Samuel dies.

He goes to heaven. And the Lord said, Samuel, you're so used to wearing a coat. I'm going to let you wear one in heaven.

And Samuel still has that coat. I'm not sure his mother went to heaven, brought him one every year, but he still has that coat. And so Saul said, that's Samuel.

And Samuel said, Saul, what's the trouble? And Saul said, the spirit of the Lord has departed from me. The five Kings of the Philistine armies have attacked me. And he said, he said, God, God has departed from me.

And he answers me no more. And that's what Saul, Saul is saying to me. It's one of the sad things in all the Bible.

Now you recall about King Saul, let's review a little bit about King Saul. King Saul was the first King of all of Israel. God had ruled his people heretofore by divine revelation.

We'd call it a theocracy. What does that mean? That means God himself rules his people by speaking to his men. God ruled Israel through Moses in the theocracy, through Joshua in the theocracy.

And even in a sense during the time of the judges, though there was no open revelation, even so there was not a King. Now God did not really want Israel to have a King. God knew that if Israel had a King, they had in a sense rejected his theocracy and God himself would not be as much the leader of the people.

And but Israel clamored for a King. Other nations have a King, why can't we have a King? Young people, that's one of the sorriest reasons to want to do something is because everybody's doing it. Everybody else wearing long short dresses, why can't I wear short dresses? Everybody else wearing long shaggy hair, why can't I wear long shaggy hair? Everybody else drinks a little nip of liquor, why can't I drink a little nip of liquor? Everybody else smokes, why can't I smoke? Everybody else curses, why can't I curse? Anytime you get that philosophy, you're headed for the devil, just as sure as I'm standing here.

And so but Israel said, well, why can't we have a King? All these other nations, they have a King. We don't have a King. And so Samuel went to the Lord and said, Lord, they're clamoring for a King.

And the Lord said, okay, okay, let them have a King. And well, whom shall I choose? And the Lord said, I want you to choose Saul. And what a man he was.

My, my, my. He was the handsomest man in all of Israel. What a good looking fella.

He was a manly fella. He was so big the Bible says that he was head and shoulders above all the other people. He was the Prince of Israel.

But that isn't all. Saul was not only a good looking man, but Saul was an humble fella. Did you know after Saul was anointed King of Israel, did you know that he went ahead and took care of his own sheep? To me, there's something very sweet about that.

Saul wasn't, when he first was anointed, he wasn't a big shot. The Bible says he was little in his own eyes. Way outshone in the future when Saul got proud and cocky and away from God's will and God lifted his power, the Lord said, I loved you when you were little in your own eyes.

What a man. He was a big man, but he didn't know it. He was a mighty man, but he didn't know it.

He was a great man, but he didn't know it. He was a gifted man, but he didn't know it. He was the best man of Israel, but he didn't know it.

And see the King, outshone the man anointed King, outshone the taking care of his own sheep. But that isn't all. Saul won some great victories for God.

One time, oh, let's see, the children of Belial, the children of Belial, Saul had led Israel in a great victory over the children of Belial, and his men gathered around him and said, kill them all. And Saul said, no, no, this day of salvation come to the house of Israel. I'm not going to kill all the children of Belial.

Saul was a compassionate man. He was a humble man. He was a great leader.

He was a mighty man. And Saul was never retaliatory, never. When somebody, now in the early days, later he was, but in his early days, when somebody attacked Saul, Saul turned the other cheek.

When somebody slandered Saul, Saul didn't fight back. When somebody fought against Saul, he didn't retaliate. He realized that vengeance belonged to God.

What a man. What a man. Here is the greatest man in all of Israel.

But something happened. Something happened. Let me tell you what happened first.

God had always said to his people, I want the king to be in charge of the people, but I want the priest to offer the sacrifice. And so what happened? Saul decided he would enter into the priestly duties, perform the priestly duties, and offer a sacrifice. That wasn't pleasing to God, and Saul knew that.

In fact, Saul admitted that he shouldn't have done it, but Saul did. That's the first step downward. But that isn't all.

Did you know that one day Saul was given the victory by God over the Amalekites? And the Lord said, okay, whenever you take over the Amalekites, I want you to kill every man, every woman, every child of the Amalekites. And I want you to kill every head of cattle. I want you to kill every lamb.

I want you to kill the sheep. I want you to kill the oxen. I want you to kill everything that lives in all the Amalekites.

And so Saul destroyed the Amalekites. God gave the victory. But Saul decided not to kill Agag, who was the king.

He was a pretty nice fellow and pretty big fellow. And Saul decided not to kill Agag. But that isn't all either.

Saul decided to choose, say, the best lambs and the best oxen for himself. And so Samuel came and said, what? I hear the oxen, and I hear the lowing of the oxen, and the bleeding of the sheep. What is this I hear? And Saul said, I didn't kill all the lambs.

Listen to me. When God tells you to do all of it, you do all of it. When God tells you to give all of it, you give all of it.

When God tells you to go all the way for Him, go all the way for Him. You are in a dangerous state if God tells you to do something and you just do a partial something of what God has told you to do. Well, Samuel said, why do I hear the lowing of the oxen and the bleeding of the lambs? And Saul said, well, I just saved them to offer for sacrifices.

Notice, one sin leads to another. He first, he disobeyed God. Then he lied about it.

And so one sin brought on another sin. And then Saul said, I just didn't give it for sacrifice. Now, notice what's happening.

The halo is lifting. The power is leaving. The heavenly dove is about to fly away.

Here's a man who was an humble man, and I see pride creeping in. Here was a man who was a mighty man, and I see weakness creeping in. Here was a man who was a man who was not vengeful, and I see vengeance creeping in.

Here was a man who gave everything to God, but I see selfishness creeping in. And so something is happening. And the Bible says that God gave him another heart.

And for 30, by the way, he was only a good king for two years, for two years. And for 38 years, he went through the motions. For 38 years, he was the king of Israel, but God wouldn't answer him.

And God had departed from him. And did you ever read the story in the book of Kings? I forget what, I think it's second Kings five, I'm not sure. But the story about the fellows who were building a dormitory for the ministerial students, the college.

And so everybody got him, said, oh, you preacher boys, get you an axe and go chop down a bunch of trees now. We're going to build a dormitory for the sons of prophets. And so one fellow got him an axe, and he began to chop and chop and chop away.

And all of a sudden, hey, he got him, he got him an axe, and he began to chop at the tree. And he turned this one off, fellows, if you would please. I'm about to chop a pulpit down here.

And he began to chop, and he chopped, and he chopped. And finally, the axe head fell off, but he just kept on chopping. I mean, just kept on chopping.

You don't get any chopping done without the axe head. You can't do, anybody here ever chop wood? You young folks don't even know what chopping wood really is. I can recall when I was a kid, I used to have to chop wood.

Personally, I'd rather stay cold than chop wood. But I'd go out and chop wood. My dad brought home one time a cross tie off a railroad.

It took us a long time to chop the wood, but a longer time to dig up the tracks and get the cross tie out from under the railroad, but it tracked. But anyway, and it was my job to chop the wood. And these fellows were chopping wood, but all of a sudden, an axe head fell off, and it fell in the water.

And this fellow just kept on chopping, kept on chopping. You know, that's what Saul was doing. There was once a day when the breath of God was upon Saul.

There was once a day when this mighty leader of Israel knew what it was for the Spirit of God to come on him. But like a dove, the Spirit of God had flown away and taken its flight, and now Saul sits on the throne, but the power is gone. Saul is the king, but the power is gone.

Saul is the general, but the power is gone. Saul is the leader, but the power is gone. Saul fills the office, but the power is gone.

Saul has his people, but the power is gone. Saul has his kingdom, but the power is gone. Saul is obeyed, but the power is gone.

And there's the king. Oh, you know, last week, forgive me for putting it this way, but my dear pastor, Kufar, as a younger man, he didn't have a great, huge church like this one. And he saw more folks baptized last Sunday than he saw any complete year in his whole ministry while he was pastoring.

But he was a smart man, and he was a brilliant man, and a great Bible student, and a quick mind. I recall one time in our church that 12 ladies decided they were going to give the pastor some trouble. A little old

bitty run of a fella, you know, and they decided they were going to give the size more some trouble.

He preached a sermon the next Sunday morning on the dirty dozen. And, oh boy, I mean, he raked those ladies over the coals. Oh, brother, he healed the dead, cast out the sick, and raised the devils, I'll tell you for sure.

And, and, but just to see him, and, and though maybe you didn't notice it, he's not as quick as he, as he used to be. And his memory, Brother John noticed that he drove, Brother John, and he noticed him, and his memory is not, it fails him. And he says the same thing over again a little bit.

And to see him up here trying to think of something to say, when I used to see him as he'd take the word of God and try to think of what not to say when it just rolled out, there's something sort of sad about that to me. And I realized that someday if the Lord cares, and if I live as long as he's lived, maybe I won't be the quick, witty, Dr. Billings is half of that, but, won't be the, but you know, there's something sad about that. There's something, so you see somebody who, who had a great church and built big buildings and raised a great money and had lead, led the church, was a great leader.

And then you see him when he's in his 80s and there's something missing, and his mind isn't as sharp, and his memory has failed him some. And I know my mother came up over here to meet him, and he pastored my mother for years, but he didn't recognize my mother at first. And, and there's something sad about that to me, but not as near as sad as it is to see someone upon whom the breath of God is settled, and the power of God is anointed and the, and the blessings of God have, have been given.

And oh, the crowds come and the people are saved and the blessing of God is there. And then see that someone can lose what God has done. I'd rather die.

I'd rather die. Don't you recall the story of Eli, the high priest, who was about a hundred years of age, and his, his own wicked sons caused this downfall. And somebody came and said, Eli, the Philistines have stolen the Ark, the Ark of the Covenant's gone.

They've stolen it. And Eli, they, they, Eli's son, Phinehas, had a wife who was expecting a baby, and she went into premature labor, and she had a baby because of the Ark of the Covenant was gone, the power of God was gone. And, and they called the child Ichabod.

But why? Ichabod means the glory is departed. How'd you like for somebody to name you Ichabod? And name you lcky for short, you know. And, and the glory is departed, Ichabod.

And what happened? Eli was sitting there on the fence, and the word came, Eli, this old blind priest, and end up in years, and Eli, the man of God, they said, the Ark is gone, the glory of God is gone, the Shekinah is gone. And Eli fell over and broke his neck and died. He, what he was saying was, I'd rather die than lose the power of God.

Oh, I want us to have 7,827 in Sunday school, but 10,000 times more than that, I want God to speak to people when they come, that crowd comes. I saw the man out there this morning, tonight, no, this morning after the service, the, the fellow who was an atheist, Mr. O'Brien, told you about this morning. Mr. O'Brien went by and visited him, visited somebody's home, and she asked him if he were saved.

I'm an atheist, I'm an atheist, I don't believe the Bible. And she said, she said, well, you ought to be saved. I don't believe it, I'm an atheist.

He said, all the preachers I care for is Billy Graham. She said, if you like Billy Graham, you'd sure like Highcraster. You're not any better than you were this morning, are you? But, but anyway, she said that, and so, it's okay, I'll come.

And he came, and the blessed breath of heaven settled on him. And that man who was an atheist and didn't even believe the existence of God came down the aisle and got saved. I think he's going to testify on a nationwide broadcast about what God has done for him in saving him.

Oh, that's what I want, that's what I want. I thought last Saturday night, we go last Saturday night, this past Saturday night, I thought, okay, 47,000 folks do come, and the breath of God is not here, the power of God does not come, and conviction doesn't settle. What good is it, is it, if we bring 7,800 people in here, and the Lord is departed, and the breath of God is gone, and God doesn't answer us.

And so the Bible says, God gives Saul another heart. Look at him. Now, now, listen, think about this.

Look at him. Look at that crumpled piece of flesh. Look at that worn, torn, stooped, wrinkled wretch.

Look at him, disguising himself, walking in, knocking on a door. A little old witch comes through a fortune teller. She was a gypsy, I imagine, or a Bedouin.

And she comes to the door, and she says, yes, can I help you? And Saul says, yes, I've just come to ask you a question. I want to call up a familiar spirit. Can you feature that being the king of Israel? Look at him, hiding himself, and disguising himself, and begging for help from a fortune teller.

He who sat on the throne of Israel, he who marshaled the armies of God, he who led the greatest nation on earth, he who was led of God, he upon whom the power of God had come, he who was filled with the Holy Spirit of God, he who was head and shoulders above all the people, he who was the mightiest man of all the people of God. Now look at him. Look at him, all stooped and wrinkled and beaten.

That's Saul. Hey, that fellow knocking on the door there, of that fortune teller, you know who that is? That's King Saul. There was a day when God was on him, but no longer.

There was a day when God was with him, but he's not with him anymore. Oh, there was a day when God answered, when King Saul would look up and say, what's the answer? And God would speak at the question, and answer at the question given by this man. But look at him.

God has departed from him, and God answers him no more. Househead, I'm talking to somebody tonight who knew what it was to walk with God once. I'm talking to someone tonight who knew what it was.

A man came to my office last Wednesday night after the service, and I knew him immediately. I knew him. He told me his name.

I knew him well. The man used to drive a bus here, a faithful bus worker, a wonderful Christian, a loyal man, a faithful church member, and God blessed him. And he brought his family, and they got saved, and he brought friends, and some of them got saved.

And then he drifted away, and the freshness was gone. And one Sunday, somebody said, the bus route didn't run in a certain, certain place. And I checked and found it didn't run.

And we called and asked what's wrong, and the next Sunday word came back, same bus route didn't run. And I can recall how we wondered why that bus route didn't run. And the next Sunday, the bus route out there didn't run again.

We wondered what happened. I got on the phone and called him, and I said, I want you to come back to God. I want you to serve God.

I don't want you to drift away. God knows the pastor has no heartbreak in the world as great as when one of his people whom he loves and whom he's tried to help and nurture goes back on God. And I said, I want you to serve God.

I don't want you to go into sin. I want you to get back. He wasn't interested.

He almost hung up on me. And I begged him and begged him to come to see me. And he wasn't interested in getting right with God.

And last Wednesday night, I opened the door, and there he stood. And he said, I've got to get back where I was. I've got to get back where I was.

And oh, I put my arm around him and hugged him and blessed God and said, that's wonderful. He came to my office Thursday night, and on our leave, we went, and he came back, and I believe God's going to use him again. Am I talking to somebody like that tonight? Am I talking to somebody who once loved this book and dwelt in this book, but it means not much to you anymore? Am I talking to someone who once knelt beside your bed and called on God and walked with God, and yet you don't know what it is to pray to God anymore? Am I talking to somebody who used to work in a bus ministry, but you drifted away, and God departed and doesn't answer you anymore, and the joy is not there? Am I talking to somebody who used to hunger and thirst after righteousness, when the Sunday morning came, you said, blessed be God, it's time to go to church again.

Hallelujah! It's church day! And now you say, oh my, I wish you wouldn't preach the 915. Good night. I wish you'd get through up there hollering and hollering and screaming.

And I'm not talking to somebody who would have to say, the Lord has departed. The Lord has departed, and he answers me not. Look at that fellow.

Hey, look at that next fellow. The one grinding at the mill. I want you to notice that fellow.

He's a big fellow. If you look carefully, you'll find that he has short hair, but it's not cut very well. Looks like to me that not a union barber did that job.

And by the way, if you notice carefully, he has big muscles. He's a pretty strong looking fellow. But I think I noticed something about him.

Hey, fellow. Hey, look here. Hey, look here.

I can't look. I can't see. I'm blind.

I'm blind. Well, come over here. I can't come over here.

I'm tied to this wheel. I'm tied. I can't see to push, and so I'm tied.

And I look at him, and he's grinding at the mill. And he's blind, and he's bound, and he's grinding. Notice the binding and the grinding and the blinding of sin.

Hey, what's your name? You know who that is? That's lifted up a whole house. That's the strongest man in all the world. That man is a man who the Bible says the Spirit of God came upon him more than it says about any man in all the Bible.

That's Samson, the great judge of Israel. Look at him now. Oh, there's something so sad about that.

I wish Samson had died before that. I wish God had taken Samson. But you'll notice there he is going round and round, and he can't see a thing, and he's bound to the wheel.

And round and round he goes, and the routine of life and sin has bound him, and sin has caused him to grind, and sin has blinded him. And that's Samson. Oh, there was a time when that man was the greatest Christian in all of Israel.

There was a time when if Israel got in trouble, that man was called. That man had the power of God on him, but he's gone. Oh, what a sad, pitiful sight.

One day in Dallas, Texas, I went to hear a great evangelist. I'd heard about him. He once had the greatest revivals, some of the greatest revivals in this country.

And I heard about him. But he went into sin, and he got away from God, and the blessing of God was taken from him. And he tried to make a comeback.

And I went one night to hear him preach in a great auditorium that seated about 15 or 100 or 2,000 people. And about 100 people came. And he stood up, and he tried to preach, but nothing happened.

And he used the same old illustrations, but nothing happened. There was no breath of God. There was no breath of heaven.

And I sat there and put my head in my hands, and I said, God, kill him. God, kill him! Kill him! And somebody was with me, and they asked me, one of the preacher friends said, Why did you ask that? And I said, I don't, I can't stand to see it. I can't stand to see it.

That man used to preach to great crowds of people, the greatest of the great revivals in our nation. And look at him now! I said, Oh, God, kill him. The Lord didn't answer my prayer, but God in his mercy did kill him before long.

And he went on to heaven, and I'm glad he did. I'm glad he did. Oh, there's nothing quite so sad as to see a Saul going to the witch's house begging for her to call up Samuel, or to see a Samson grinding at the mill, going around and around, his eyes gouged out, his powers gone, his hair, his powers been gone, and the clipping of his hair, but it lined up.

And Sam is come, and Samson's lost his power, and Samson could have said, The Lord is departed from me, and he answers me no more. Oh, how pitiful. Look at him.

Look at that fellow. If you notice him very carefully, he is out at the edge of a little town. He's playing with a couple of kids.

And I said, Hey, fellow, what's your name? He said, My name is Blot. What town is this? I said, The town is Zoar. Not many folks live there.

It's a little city. Where are you from, Blot? I used to live down in Sodom. And a quiver, you can see a quiver on his lip, and maybe you see a moistening of the eye and a tear running down the cheek.

And I said, Blot, what happened? Hey, hey, you got some pretty little grandkids here. Hey, what's your name, fella? My name is Ammon. Hey, that's a pretty name.

Hey, Blot, your grandbaby? No, no, he's not my grandbaby. Oh, hey, hey, what's your name, fella? My name is Moab. Hey, you're a good looking kid.

Hey, one of your grandkids, Blot? No, no, he's not my grandkid. Well, Blot, what are these kids to you? Well, I'm their, I'm, I'm their father. Oh, where's Mrs. Blot? Well, she's dead.

Oh, you married again? No, no, I'm not married again. Who's the mother of the kid? And Blot says, my daughter, my daughter. Blot, do you mean? Yeah, yeah, she got me drunk.

I'm a righteous man. I've been saved. And I, I grew up in the house of Abraham.

He was my, he adopted me, my, he was my uncle, but he adopted me and I grew up in his house. I know what it is to be around a great man of God. Well, Blot, what happened to you? Well, I went to Sodom.

I chose the well-watered plains towards Sodom. And I, I got in the world and I live like they live, but I was saved. Now, follow me.

Blot, how many folks are here? Just me and my two daughters and these two kids. Oh, the memories. Oh, the memories of Abraham.

Oh, I can recall, says Blot, I can recall when we left the Ur of the Chaldeans. I can recall. I can recall my uncle Abraham.

Boy, what a man he was. I grew up with Abraham. I can recall, went down to Egypt with him one time.

Oh, what a man. But we got in a fuss. Oh, Christian people don't fuss with each other.

We got in a fuss. And it wasn't long till I chose Sodom and I got famous. I got elected to office.

And I made the social circles, made the rounds. I'm over, Blot, that's awful. I know it was.

Well, what happened to your wife? Well, said God came and said he's going to destroy the city. And I went to my sons-in-law and said, hey, fellas, get out of here. God's going to destroy the city.

And they didn't believe me. I live such a wicked life in front of them. And they mocked me.

They said, hey, get out of here. God's going to destroy the city. Yeah, sure, sure.

Look who's getting religious. Look who all of a sudden is talking about God. Oh, wicked lot.

And they wouldn't go. And they're deep and destroyed. And my wife was turned to a pillar of salt.

That's a lot. Breath of God gone. Oh, ladies and gentlemen, God is not indebted to any man.

And God is not indebted to any church. Am I talking to a lot tonight? Am I talking to somebody who grew up in a good home? Am I talking to somebody who grew up at the knees of a good father? Am I talking to somebody who grew up at the knees of a godly mother? Am I talking to somebody who knew what it was to go to church and Sunday school and prayer meeting and read your Bible and pray and walk with God? But you've drifted away from God. God has departed from you.

And he answers you no more. Look at him. Look at him.

I could tell you some things about that fellow. That fellow one time committed an awful sin with Uriah and Bathsheba. He was the greatest king that ever sat on the throne of Israel.

He was the man after God's own heart. He was the sweet psalmist of Israel, the heart player, David himself, man after God's own heart. What happened? God lifted his power and blessing from him.

A little baby born dead. Followed the baby out to baby land, put his body away. But that isn't all.

It wasn't long till one of his sons raped one of his daughters. Oh, how awful. How awful.

Amnon raped his sister Tamar. Amnon, the son of David, raped his own sister, daughter of David. And Absalom heard about it.

Absalom had a party in the honor of Amnon and deceived him and killed his own brother. Look at him. Out in Maanaum, a little baby has been killed and his daughter has been raped by his own son.

And one son has killed another son. And now his son Absalom has rebelled against him and he's out in Maanaum. How pitiful.

How pitiful. How pitiful. How pitiful.

I don't know anything. Somebody said recently about a man who drifted away from God, said, Do you think you'll come back? I said, I think you'll come back to God. Yes, I do.

You may stumble into a rescue mission one night, but I think you'll come back to God. Oh, let me say, my young friends, I thank God for these rescue mission men, but I don't want a single one of you to be a rescue mission man. I recall my phone rang just now.

I told some of our kids about this. My phone rang one day. I answered it.

And the voice on the other end of the line said, My name is so-and-so. Called his name. He said, Hey girl.

Hey girl. Hey little girl. Sit up there.

Hey, sit up there while I'm preaching. Don't you listen to me. And he said, Brother Hiles, I want to talk to you.

He came to my study. He said, Do you know me? And I said, Yes, I do. He said, When I was a little boy, six years old, you were my pastor.

No, no, no. He was older than that. But he said, You were my pastor when I was a kid.

My pastor in Texas. And I said, What are you doing now? He said, Just going around the country from rescue mission to rescue mission. One of my boys.

He said, I want to settle down here in Hammond. And I want to be close to you. He said, I could borrow some money.

I said, Yes, here's \$20. I gave him \$20. I never saw him again.

One of my boys. I thank God for the wonderful testimonies of the rescue mission. That's not what I want for you.

Oh, you young people at 16 and 17 who are soul winners. I want you to be soul winners at 60 and 70. I don't want you ever to drift away from God.

I want in God's dear name. I don't want you to taste the awful dregs of sin. I don't want you ever to have to say, God delivered me from.

I want you to say, God kept me from. That's what I want for you. You don't realize, you don't realize how many times we weep and say, Oh God, bless this one.

And oh, bless this one. And oh, save this one. And oh, keep this one from sin.

You don't know. You don't know. You don't know.

How many times we cry and say, Oh God, watch him. Watch him. Oh God, don't let him do wrong.

Don't let her do wrong. And so Saul, God bless him. Now what caused Saul to be in this shape? What caused him to be, what caused Saul to walk up there and the witch of Endor to call up Samuel? What caused it? First step in his downfall was jealousy.

That green-eyed monster that's wrecked many a choir. That green-eyed monster that caused many a pastor to lose his blessing. That green-eyed monster that causes gossip.

That green-eyed monster that causes slander. That green-eyed monster that breaks homes. That green-eyed monster that ruins lives.

That green-eyed monster that stops success. That green-eyed monster that causes murder. That green-eyed monster that causes hate.

That green-eyed monster that wrecks lives and futures and tears down the most beautiful air castles. That green-eyed monster, jealousy! A little while ago, David, young David, had killed Goliath. The ladies began to sing, Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.

And like an arrow, Saul's heart was pierced with jealousy, and Saul said, I'll kill him. He's stolen the hearts of the ladies. Oh, that's the thing that'll kill you.

Jealousy. Jealousy. Jealousy.

Two men sat in my office last, what was it, in the waiting room last Friday, I think it was. Two missionaries. One missionary to the Mormons in Salt Lake City, and one a missionary to Sweden.

And they wanted to come and see our church. They'd heard about the church. They wanted to meet me.

They came, and I went out in the waiting room and talked to them for a while. And one of them said, how's Jerry Falwell doing? And Jerry Falwell's been in a great church, the church Brother Vineyard came from, when he got promoted. And I said, he's doing fine.

And the other one, the one from Sweden said, who's Jerry Falwell? And the fellow of the missionaries said, he's Dr. Howe's competitor. And I snapped my finger and said, don't you say that. He said, I said, don't you laugh about it either.

No, ten thousand times no. I wish we had a country full of Jerry Falwell. I wish we had a nation full of churches that were growing and reaching folks for God and believe God and get the gospel spread across this country.

We don't have time to be jealous of each other. We don't have time to worry about somebody else's success. We ought to stand on the sideline and say, go Lee Roberson, go Jerry Falwell, go Dallas Billings, Charles Billington, go John Rawlins, go Bob Gray, go let all of us go cheer each other.

No room for jealousy or envy in the work of God. And Saul's jealousy ruined his life and started his downfall. But there's something else, incomplete obedience.

Well, Samuel, I killed almost all the oxen. God didn't say almost all, God said all of them. Well, I killed almost all the Amalekites, God didn't say almost all, God said all of them.

But I only let one live, God said kill them all. But I kept the best of the oxen, God said kill all the oxen. But I kept the best of the sheep, God said kill all the sheep.

Nothing that'll ruin a person like holding back from what God demands of you. God says He wants the tithe and the offering. God says He wants one dime of every dollar you make, and nine cents won't do.

Wants it all. Incomplete obedience. God says go to college and prepare yourself for the ministry, and you go to some night school somewhere and take fifteen years to get out.

That's incomplete obedience. God says preach. You say, well, I'll just preach around somewhere to rescue missionaries once in a while.

That's incomplete obedience. God wants complete obedience. Look at him.

Disguised. Maybe a long beard, maybe his coat pulled around him. Maybe this is the king dressed as a peasant.

Knocking on the door of some wicked fortune teller. Stooping so low as to try to get some fortune teller to bring up a departed spirit, a familiar spirit. Look at him.

Dejected wretch. Look at him. Old Enrico.

Look at him. He who once stood with shoulders back now stands with shoulders broke. He who once marched in cadence now feeble along and hobbles along.

He who once commanded an army now he begs mercy from a fortune teller. He who once was the greatest of all of Israel now is the least of all the people of God. He who once was on the throne now

knocks at the door of some wicked fortune teller.

Why? God answered him not. God answered him not. For something else caused his downfall, and that was pride.

Pride. Listen to me for a minute. Pride is the exact opposite of praise.

Whatever of your life praise fills, pride cannot fill. There is so much room for praise in your life. If you fill that praise room, you will have no pride whatsoever.

If you fill that same room with pride, you will have no praise whatsoever. You want to find out how much pride you have? Take the sum total of that place in your heart. Take the sum total of it.

Subtract how much praise you have. That's how much pride you have. Subtract how much pride you have.

That's how much praise you have. And Saul lost his pride. Don't you recall when God came to Saul and said, I want you to be king of Israel? Samuel came.

Saul said, who me? It's a wonderful thing about the men of God. Almost all of them were that way. God came to Jeremiah.

Jeremiah said, but I'm a child. God came to Isaiah. Isaiah said, oh, it's me.

God came to Gideon. Gideon said, oh my Lord. God came to Moses, and Moses said, I can't talk very well.

God came to Saul, and Saul said, who me? The pride came in. Proud of himself. Proud of his achievements.

Hello there. My name is Joe. Joseph.

I want to call up a familiar spirit. Oh no, you're not Joseph. You're the king.

You're King Saul. You're trying to trick me. You'll have me killed.

No, I won't. No, I want to call up Samuel. She didn't call him up, but God did.

And up came Samuel. And Saul said, Samuel, Samuel, I recall the day you took the horn of oil and anointed me. Samuel, I recall the day you came and said I was going to be the king.

I couldn't believe it. The power of God came on me, and the spirit of the Lord came on me. But now, Samuel, the five kings of Philistia have come to attack me, and I don't have any power, and the Lord has departed from me.

What can I do? What can I do? Nothing, Saul. It's too late. Soon he was dead.

Soon he was dead. One Saul said as he died, the Lord has departed from me, and he answers me no more. Hundreds of years later, another Saul said when he died, I have fought a good fight.

I've kept the faith. I've finished the course. I want to be like the last Saul, and I want you to be likewise.

Let us pray. Our Heavenly Father, what a sad story this is. What a good beginning.

What a tragic ending. God present it in the lives of these dear people, in the life of this preacher. Oh, God in heaven, don't depart from us.

Oh, may that sweet spirit that has prevailed for these thirteen years ever prevail in this place. And may that, those sweet answers to prayer that have gotten almost commonplace, may they ever be so. Lord, we say with David, take not thy Holy Spirit from us.

Our heads are bowed in prayer, and our eyes are closed. How about you? No, not your neighbor. I'm thinking about you.

Hey, you say, I've got somebody on my mind right now. I sure need to get that sermon. No, I'm talking about you.

You. How about you? The Lord hath departed from me, and he answers me no more. How about you? Have you seen better days? Huh? Jealousy? Is that kept in? Huh? Incomplete obedience? Maybe you don't give all the time.

Maybe you're tired when you can afford it. Maybe God has said, I want you to do so and so, as He did to Ananas and Sapphira, and they didn't give all that God wanted them. God took their lives.

Incomplete obedience or pride? Huh? I wonder how many would say, Brother Hiles, I'm not what I used to be for God. I'm not what I used to be for God. That's what a backslider is.

A backslider is one that is less than what he was at his best for God. A person can backslide and be the best member of the church. A person can backslide and be better Christian than anybody else in this church, if he's not the best that he ever has been, if he's slidden back.

I wonder how many would say tonight, Brother Hiles, I'm not what I used to be for God. And I'll admit it. And I don't want God to depart from me.

Well, I don't mean I'll be lost, but I mean, I don't want God to lift His blessing. I want God to hear me and answer me when I pray. I'm less than what I once was.

Pray for me. Would you lift your hand, please, all over the building? All over the building. Would you keep your hands up? Are there others? Are there others? Oh, God, help us.

Help us. Help us. Help us.

Forever press on the upward way. New heights to gain every day. Still praying as we onward bound.

Lord, plant our feet on higher ground. Bless these dear ones. Oh, God, do it.

Our heads are bowed. Maybe you ought to make a holy vow to God tonight. Maybe you ought to come down and kneel here at the altar and say, Dear God, oh, God, forgive me.

Oh, before I have to say He answers me no more, I want to come back to Him. You just come and kneel here at the altar and tell God about it. Wait a minute.

How many of you have not been saved? You don't know that you're saved, but you wish you did know.

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