**SERMON OUTLINE**

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| **SERMON TITLE:** | Games That Fools Play |
| **SERMON REFERENCE:** | 1 Samuel 26:21 |
| **LWF SERMON NUMBER:** | #0830 |
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1. INTRODUCTION
   1. 1 Samuel 26:21
   2. No one ever got a better start than King Saul.
      1. No one ever had a sadder finish than King Saul.
   3. When we first see King Saul in the Bible, he is handsome, winsome, courteous, humble and thoughtful.
   4. As we continue through the Bible, we find that Saul becomes a bitter, envious, murderous and wicked old man.
      1. King Saul died by his own hand.
   5. Pastor and theologian Sidlow Baxter wrote that Saul was both a hero and a renegade, a king and a slave, a prophet and a reprobate, a man God anointed and a man Satan possessed.
      1. What happened to Saul could happen to any person today.
      2. Saul gave himself over to certain influences, and the devil moved in.
         1. In Saul, we see the finished product of the devil’s art.
         2. In Saul, we see what Satan can do with a person who yields himself to the devil.
            1. At first, Satan moves in subtly, almost unperceptively.
            2. But when Satan moves in, he takes over, even in the life of a child of God.
2. Saul’s golden opportunity
   1. 1 Samuel 9:1-2
      1. This is where we first meet Saul.
   2. Scripture describes his manhood:
      1. 1 Samuel 9:2
      2. Saul was a handsome young man who was head and shoulders above everybody else.
      3. He was a manly man.
      4. He was the best of the best.
      5. He had health, height and handsomeness.
   3. We see his modesty:
      1. 1 Samuel 9:21
         1. Saul was saying, “Who am I that I should be the king of Israel?”
         2. He felt unworthy.
      2. Saul was a man who did not seek praise.
      3. He didn’t seek publicity; instead, He ran from it.
         1. 1 Samuel 10:22
            1. The time had come to crown him king.
            2. They wanted to honor him, but they couldn’t find him.
            3. The Lord told them that Saul had hidden himself.
      4. Saul was a humble, modest man.
   4. He had a magnanimous spirit.
      1. When they were taking Saul to make him king, there were certain vile people who ridiculed him.
         1. 1 Samuel 10:26
         2. A common king of that day would have put these men to death, but Saul held his peace.
      2. 1 Samuel 11:12-13
         1. The sons of Belial were wicked and carnal.
            1. They hated God’s man.
         2. According to the rules of that day, these men had blasphemed the king and deserved death.
            1. But Saul said no; he would not put them to death.
   5. We see his mighty anointing.
      1. 1 Samuel 10:1
         1. Saul was anointed of the Lord.
      2. 1 Samuel 10:6-7
         1. He was a transformed man because the Spirit of God came upon him.
         2. God was with him.
      3. He was a man anointed of God, and God made him into another man.
   6. We see his men.
      1. Not only was God with him, but there were a number of men with him.
      2. 1 Samuel 10:26
         1. The phrase “band of men” literally means “a host,” which literally means “men of valor.”
      3. Saul had some good, stout-hearted men who were with him.
         1. They followed Saul as their king.
         2. His battles were their battles.
      4. They were valiant and godly men.
   7. Saul had a mentor.
      1. He had someone to teach him and to guide him.
      2. 1 Samuel 10:25
         1. On through this Scripture, we read how Samuel was there to guide Saul.
      3. Saul had a pastor who was perhaps the best pastor in all the Old Testament.
   8. Saul had his monarchy.
      1. He was the king.
      2. 1 Samuel 10:1
         1. The Lord had anointed him to be captain over his inheritance.
         2. Saul was chosen to rule and to shepherd God’s chosen people.
      3. Saul had a wonderful opportunity to bless people.
   9. In all of the Old Testament, there was perhaps no other man who had a better start than Saul.
      1. God seemed to have poured on Saul blessing after blessing.
3. Saul’s tragic failure (1 samuel 26:21)
   1. 1 Samuel 26:21
      1. Saul admitted that he had erred exceedingly and played the fool.
   2. Through Saul’s example, we see some games that fools play.
      1. This is a solemn warning to us.
      2. The game that fools play is a game that we cannot win and a game where the stakes are so high.
   3. There are five steps that Saul took as he started down the road to self-destruction:
      1. Self-determination
         1. 1 Samuel 13:5-14
            1. God had told Saul that he was to do battle with the Philistines.
            2. Saul had already made a foray against the Philistines, whose anger is stirred and they attack.
            3. Saul’s men are hard pressed, but Samuel told Saul to wait on him and not to go into battle until he gave Saul the signal.

There was to be a seven-day waiting period.

Saul was to wait on the Lord.

* + - * 1. But Saul took matters into his own hands.
        2. Saul offered the burn offering.

This was not Saul’s job to take the priest’s prerogative.

Saul was king, but he was not the priest.

Samuel was the priest and prophet.

* + - * 1. Had Saul waited on God, God’s man would have been there and God’s plan would have been done.
      1. Samuel could see in Saul a character flaw.
         1. The seeds of his self-destruction were there.
         2. He knew that sooner or later, Saul would come to an untimely end because he was a man who would play the fool.
      2. What Saul did was to offer sacrifices to God, which sounds good; but he was running ahead of God.
         1. He was acting by self-will.
         2. He was acting by self-determination.
         3. He was not acting on the Word of God.
         4. He was not waiting for the will of God.
         5. He did that which seemed good to him rather than getting a word from God and obeying God.
      3. Saul was a self-willed, self-determined man.
    1. Stubborn disobedience
       1. A self-willed person not only runs ahead of God, but he will start going in the opposite direction from God.
       2. 1 Samuel 15:2-3
          1. God commanded Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites.

God was not being cruel; God was being righteous.

God judged the Amalekites because they were a people who loved to slaughter.

They tortured others for the mad joy of destruction.

For 500 years, they had left a trail of blood.

They delighted in wars of ambush against the weak, aged and helpless.

They were especially cruel to the people they captured.

* + - * 1. The Amalekites corrupted other people, and God was saving millions from their idolatrous influence.
      1. 1 Samuel 15:20-24
         1. Saul did not destroy everything as he was commanded to do.
         2. Saul gave a half-hearted apology.

It was an apology with an explanation.

It was an apology with a blame on someone else.

It sounded reasonable, logical and economical.

* + - * 1. Saul had it all reasoned out.

He had an excuse.

He was going to do wrong that he might do right.

It is never right to do wrong in order to get a chance to do right.

* + - * 1. He somehow had the idea that the end would justify the means and that he could stubbornly rebel against God.

He was a stubbornly rebellious man.

* + 1. Swift degeneration
       1. The pace begins to quicken.
       2. 1 Samuel 16:14
          1. Sin is sweeping him along.
          2. God’s Spirit has left him, and an evil spirit has come upon him.
       3. Ephesians 4:26-27
          1. When we have unconfessed, unrepented of sin in our lives, we have given the devil a place in our lives.

This is what Saul did.

* + - 1. The Spirit of the Lord was upon Saul; but he started out with his self-determination, then his stubborn disobedience, and then his swift degeneration was such that God’s Spirit left him.
         1. In that vacuum, an evil spirit possessed him.

It is unclear whether or not this was a demon spirit.

* + - * 1. In the Hebrew way of thinking, everything that happens does so because God has allowed it to happen.

Therefore, this simply means that in 1 Samuel 16:14, God allowed judgment to come upon Saul, very much in the sense of 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11.

* + - * 1. The evil spirit mentioned in 1 Samuel 16:14 could be referring to a malevolent spirit, such as a demented mind (like a man who lost his sanity).

It could also mean a destructive spirit.

* + - * 1. It was God’s righteous and just judgment that this thing happened to Saul.
      1. Saul has gone from ignoring God to disobeying God, and not he begins to fight God.
         1. About this time, Saul is getting jealous of David, and he starts to fight David.

David was God’s anointed; thus, when Saul was fighting David, he was fighting God.

* + 1. Spiritual depravity
       1. 1 Samuel 28:7
          1. Saul is now a bitter, confused old man.
          2. He wants some information about a battle, and he goes to a witch for the information.

He begins to traffic with evil spirits.

Saul, who had once had the Spirit of God upon him and had such a wonderful commission from God, is now trafficking with the demon spirits of Hell.

* + - 1. Saul had gone from ignoring God to disobeying God, from disobeying God to fighting God, and from fighting God to cooperating and fellowshipping with the devil.
         1. Samuel knew it would happen, which is why he had warned Saul of witchcraft.

1 Samuel 15:23

* + - * 1. When a person is rebellious and disobedient, he commits the same sin that the devil did.

He puts himself in the company with the devil and opens himself to the occult.

* + 1. Self-destruction
       1. 1 Samuel 31:4-6
          1. King Saul is on the battlefield.

His men have fallen by his side, and his army is in retreat.

Jonathan and his other sons have been slaughtered by the Philistines.

* + - * 1. He knows his end is coming, and he doesn’t want to die by the enemy’s hand.
      1. Saul died by his own hand.
         1. He died defeated.
         2. He died intimidated by the enemy, the Philistines, who were a demon-possessed people.
         3. He died in such a way as to bring shame upon the nation that he was meant to be king over.
      2. No one ever had a better start, and no one ended more tragically than Saul.

1. CONCLUSION
   1. There are some applications we can make to our own lives from the life of Saul:
      1. Circumstances cannot make you, and they cannot break you.
         1. Don’t complain when you think that other people are wealthier than you or have better opportunities than you.
         2. Sometimes a person has opportunity, but he doesn’t have ability.
         3. Sometimes a person has ability, but he doesn’t have opportunity.
         4. Saul had both ability and opportunity, yet he failed humiliatingly and shamefully.
         5. David did not have the kind of opportunities that Saul had.
            1. When they were looking for someone to be the next king over Israel, no one even thought of him.

He was insignificant.

* + - * 1. He wasn’t head and shoulders above everyone else like Saul, but he became Israel’s mightiest king because he had a heart for God.
      1. It is better to have a heart for God than to have all of the opportunities, wit, wisdom, beauty and wealth put together.
      2. A person may have every advantage in this world and play the fool.
      3. A person may have few advantages and be used of God.
         1. 1 Corinthians 1:27
    1. Whoever you are and wherever you are, you cannot be successful without obeying God.
       1. No one is smarter than God.
       2. Don’t run ahead of God.
       3. Do not stubbornly disobey God.
       4. When you disobey God with your eyes wide open (when you commit presumptuous sin), you put yourself in danger of being possessed by an evil spirit.
          1. A Christian cannot be demon possessed.

The devil can never possess that which belongs to God.

* + - * 1. But a Christian might possess a demon.

God’s people can open themselves to demonic influences and can be harassed, obsessed and perplexed by demon spirits because they have given a place to the devil.

* + - 1. In God’s work, there is no substitute for obedience.
    1. There is the horrible power of sin.
       1. Don’t think of sin as a small thing.
       2. Sin will take you further than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and will cost you more than you want to pay.
       3. Have a holy fear of sin.
       4. Saul at first dabbled in sin, and then he was destroyed by sin.
          1. He started down a road that seemed so small and insignificant.

He was not waiting on God and ran ahead of God, then he ran against God and fought God.

Then, he cooperated with the devil and was destroyed by the devil.

* + 1. Just because you’re successful now does not mean that you will always be successful.
       1. Saul was successful for a moment.
       2. He had times of glory.
          1. But the seeds of destruction were there.
       3. 1 Corinthians 9:27
          1. The term “castaway” here means something that is useless, something that cannot be used; a relic.
       4. Saul was a man who had an experience with God, yet he dabbled with sin and was destroyed by sin.
    2. None of us are immune to the deceiving power and the deadening power of sin if we are self-willed rather than Spirit filled.
  1. We need to get clean and stay that way.
     1. We need to get on our knees in prayer.
     2. We need to get in the Word of God.
     3. We need to open our hearts to the Lord and ask Him to keep us and guard us.
  2. If you are not a Christian, the first step to avoiding the deceiving and deadening power of sin is to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.
  3. Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
  4. Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
     1. Romans 3:23
     2. Romans 10:9-10
     3. Romans 10:13
     4. Acts 16:31
     5. John 3:16