



[1 Samuel 28:15](#)

(15) Now Samuel said to Saul, 'Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?' And Saul answered, 'I am deeply distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God has departed from me and does not answer me anymore, neither by prophets nor by dreams. Therefore I have called you, that you may reveal to me what I should do.'

New King James Version

We must consider King Saul's state of mind. Early in his reign, under the tutelage of Samuel, Saul had been the great champion of Israel, pushing its enemies back and making good progress in forging a nation out of the twelve tribes. Yet, just about the time [David](#) came on the scene, he began to display severe emotional problems, exacerbated by "the Spirit of the LORD depart[ing] from Saul" and "a distressing spirit from the LORD troubl[ing] him" ([1 Samuel 16:14](#)). Evidently, [God](#) allowed a demon to cause Saul distress—perhaps severe melancholy and fits of sullenness and anger—and only David's playing of his harp drove the demon away (verse 23).

Once David had slain Goliath and begun to receive acclaim from the people, Saul became murderously jealous of his young servant. Saul's distress soon warped into real anger ([1 Samuel 18:8](#)) and suspicion (verse 9), and the next time David came to play his harp for Saul, the king cast a spear at him, shouting, "I will pin David to the wall!" (verses 10-11). The younger man escaped, only to have the scene repeated sometime later ([1 Samuel 19:9-10](#)). Not long thereafter, David had to flee and hide in the wilderness.

We see, then, that Saul was highly susceptible to demonic influence and emotionally unstable. The distressing spirit that God allowed to torment him had played with his emotions for years, and it is likely that as he aged, as David eluded capture, and as the Philistines grew in strength, Saul only became more depressed and fearful. By the time he was camped on the slopes of Mount Gilboa, brooding over the advance of the Philistine army into camp on the opposite hillside, he was in a state of severe misery

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for 1 Samuel 28:15 (<http://www.theberean.org>) and near-terror, knowing that no happy ending awaited him the next day.

These three factors provide the background for the story in I Samuel 28: God is always against those who practice sorcery; [Satan](#) and his demons can appear as ministers of righteousness; and Saul himself, emotionally unbalanced, was predisposed to the sway of a demon. Knowing these things makes all the difference in how we understand the events at En Dor.

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[What Happened at En Dor?](#)

Related Topics:

[King Saul's State of Mind](#)

[Sorcery](#)

[What Happened at En Dor?](#)

Commentary copyright © 1992-2016 [Church of the Great God](#)
New King James Version copyright © 1982 by [Thomas Nelson, Inc.](#)