

Better To Obey



Sunday March 6th, 2022

In the previous lesson we saw Johnathan and his armor bearer going to the Philistine camp and God working the victory in battle. We saw Saul's failing leadership and oath to put to death anyone who ate till the battle was won, almost resulting in Jonathan's death.

Looking ahead

- we will see Saul's disobedience.
- we will see Saul's excuses and blame for disobeying.
- And we will see God's and Samuel's final rejection of Saul as well as Samuel's "farewell" to Saul.

- **1 Samuel 15:1-35 (NKJV)**

¹ Samuel also said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the LORD.

² Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'I will punish Amalek *for* what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt.

³ Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.' "

⁴ So Saul gathered the people together and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men of Judah.

⁵ And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and lay in wait in the valley.

- ⁶ Then Saul said to the Kenites, "Go, depart, get down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them. For you showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt." So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.
⁷ And Saul attacked the Amalekites, from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is east of Egypt.
⁸ He also took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.
⁹ But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all *that was* good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.

- ¹⁰ Now the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying,
¹¹ "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul *as* king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments." And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the LORD all night.
¹² So when Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul, it was told Samuel, saying, "Saul went to Carmel, and indeed, he set up a monument for himself; and he has gone on around, passed by, and gone down to Gilgal."
¹³ Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed *are* you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD."
¹⁴ But Samuel said, "What then *is* this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"

- ¹⁵ And Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed."
¹⁶ Then Samuel said to Saul, "Be quiet! And I will tell you what the LORD said to me last night." And he said to him, "Speak on."
¹⁷ So Samuel said, "When you *were* little in your own eyes, *were* you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the LORD anoint you king over Israel?
¹⁸ Now the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.'
¹⁹ Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the LORD?"

- ²⁰ And Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.
²¹ But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal."
²² So Samuel said: "Has the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *And* to heed than the fat of rams.
²³ For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from *being* king."
²⁴ Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.

- ²⁵ Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD."
- ²⁶ But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel."
- ²⁷ And as Samuel turned around to go away, *Saul* seized the edge of his robe, and it tore.
- ²⁸ So Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, *who is* better than you.
- ²⁹ And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He *is* not a man, that He should relent."
- ³⁰ Then he said, "I have sinned; *yet* honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD your God."

- ³¹ So Samuel turned back after Saul, and Saul worshiped the LORD.
³² Then Samuel said, "Bring Agag king of the Amalekites here to me." So Agag came to him cautiously. And Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past."
³³ But Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." And Samuel hacked Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.
³⁴ Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house at Gibeah of Saul.
³⁵ And Samuel went no more to see Saul until the day of his death. Nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul, and the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.

Comments

- God commanded, "Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.' "
- The Amalekites were old enemies of the Jews ([Exodus 17:8, 9](#); [Deuteronomy 25:17-19](#)). Saul should have known that these people were to be destroyed.
- Saul gathered an army of 210,000 men. He warns the Kenites to escape. (Jethro, Moses' father-in-law was a Kenite. They accompanied Judah in the inheritance of the Promised Land ([Judges 1:16](#)).)
- The Amalekites are smitten, but not totally as commanded.
- (An Amalekite eventually kills Saul ([2 Samuel 1:13](#)). So far, Saul's intentions are good. Saul started out well, but ends up failing.)

- The Lord informed Samuel of Saul's disobedience. Samuel was so disturbed by Saul's disobedience that he cried out to the Lord all night long.
- Saul in his own mind thought he had performed the command of the Lord.
- But on the way **to Gilgal**, Saul, filled with pride, stopped at Carmel and built **a monument to himself**, celebrating his victory.
- Samuel met Saul at Gilgal. Saul greeted Samuel with, "Blessed are you of the Lord" and told how he had obeyed. He claimed to be obedient when he really was disobedient and rebellious. Samuel knew he was lying because he could hear the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen.
- When confronted by Samuel, he turns to excuses blaming others instead of himself. "For the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed."

- [James 1:22](#)—*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*
- Saul was good at making excuses and blaming others. He has blamed Samuel, Jonathan, and now the people for his disobedience.
- Saul was on a downward slide and accelerating as he neared the bottom. No matter what he was given to do, he came short of complete obedience.
- God's longsuffering had put up with the people of **Amalek** for years, but His word against them had not changed ([Ex. 17:14-16](#); [Num. 24:20](#)). They were to be blotted out as punishment for their sin.
Believer's Bible Commentary
- When Samuel continues confronting him he turns his excuse to a reason that could sound “religious”, saying that they had spared the best animals for a sacrifice to the Lord!

- God never leads us to contradict and disobey His Word! How could God bless a sacrifice that He had condemned?
- God wants our obedience, not our sacrifices.
- Saul did not have a broken heart . It was filled with rebellion which God considered to be like witchcraft.
- Saul is rebuked by Samuel and is informed he has been rejected from being king by the Lord. Only then did Saul say, "I have sinned."
- Even though Saul confesses his sin and his desire to worship, the decision of God is final. The Lord has rejected Saul because He knows what is in Saul's heart. Saul is going to reap the consequences of his sin.
- At the Great White Throne Judgment, unbelievers will be sorry for their sin and want to be saved, but it will be too late. They will spend eternity in Hell!

- Many today make bad choices that affect the rest of their lives and even eternity.
- [Proverbs 28:13](#)—*"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy"*.
- [Hosea 6:6](#)—*For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.*
- [Micah 6:7, 8](#)—*Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

Results of his Sin

- Saul had spared Agag and kept spoils of battle. He didn't think anything was wrong with this but God sees it as rebellion. Saul loses his character, his crown, and the blessings of God upon his life.
- Because Saul failed to wipe out the Amalekites as God commanded, Israel has to deal with an Amalekite in the future whose name is Haman. It was this man who is spoken of in the book of Esther that spawns a law that would have wiped out all the Jewish people in the Persian Empire if it were not for God's intervention and the courage of Esther and Mordecai.
- Samuel slays Agag and he mourns for Saul. Samuel no longer gives Saul any attention, takes heed to him, or regards him with any more interest.

- Bible Believers Commentary - Saul was constantly redefining the Lord's commands, doing what seemed best to him rather than what God said was best. He made a show of repentance and pleaded with Samuel not to abandon him. He even **tore** the prophet's **robe** when he tried to leave. This too was a sign that **the kingdom** would be **torn... from** Saul and **given... to** another man.
- After accompanying Saul to **worship the LORD**, Samuel called for **Agag** to be brought forth. Thinking that he might be spared, **Agag came to him cautiously** saying, "**Surely the bitterness of death is past**" ([v. 32](#)). Samuel then **hacked him in pieces** with the sword. The aged judge carried a burden the rest of his life because of Saul's failure. In one sense even God **regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel**.
- We should memorize verse [22](#). It is one of the classics in the Word of God. Obedience first, last, and always. It is the watchword of those who would serve and please the Lord.

- **To obey is better than sacrifice**, disobedience and the thence-resulting rebellion and defiant self-dependence is similar in essence to the outward wickedness of *witchcraft*, that is, "divination in the service of anti-godly demonic powers", and of idolatry.
- Verses [29](#) and [35](#) seem to be contradictory. The first says that God does not change His mind or **relent**, while the second says that He **regretted** making **Saul king**. Verse [29](#) describes God in His *essential character*. He is unchanging and unchangeable, the immutable One. Verse [35](#) means that a change in Saul's *conduct* required a corresponding change in God's *plans and purposes* for him. To be consistent with His attributes, God must bless obedience and punish disobedience.

- It is sad to read the biblical account of Saul's disobedience. His concern is not that he has sinned against a righteous God, but that his public image will be damaged if Samuel openly severs his relationship with Saul. He lacks a deep conviction concerning the vileness of his sin; he only fears that he will look bad if the situation is not handled properly.
- We are not informed that Saul ever truly grieved over his sin, or even this final separation from Samuel. But God was grieved that He had ever made Saul king. Even though Samuel never goes to see Saul again, he continues to mourn for him. The cost of Saul's disobedience will continue to be felt for the rest of his lifetime.

- The plight of Saul in this passage is a reminder of the danger of stratifying sins. Many people tend to strongly condemn sins that don't pertain to them, while downplaying their own transgressions. To know what God commands, and then to disobey, is to willfully rebel against Him—regardless of the “level” of the sin. Saul's story also reminds us that we must first and foremost be followers of God, determined to please Him before worrying about whether or not they are pleasing other people. Layman's Bible Commentary
- **1 Samuel 15:22 (NKJV)** So Samuel said: "Has the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *And* to heed than the fat of rams.

Like Christ Jesus

- **Philippians 2:5-11 (NKJV)**

⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.

⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

¹¹ and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.