

I SAMUEL 15

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to I Samuel chapter 15 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

If you remember from our previous studies, the Philistines were coming against Israel after King Saul's son Jonathan started attacking the Philistines. The children of Israel were outnumbered and outgunned and this caused Saul to be fearful and his men caught that fear.

Many of them fled away, hid in caves, and many joined forces with the Philistines.

But that did not stop Jonathan and his armor bearer. They went after the Philistines, defeated many of them and it caused such confusion in the camp of the Philistines that they started killing each other!

Not only that but when the children of Israel saw what was happening it encouraged them and there was a great slaughter against the Philistines.

But it was not complete because Saul made a foolish oath and said that his soldiers could not eat until the battle was complete.

Not only that but whoever did eat was in trouble, they were to be put to death!

Now Jonathan knew nothing about this oath and he had some honey that energized him, but the rest of the men were worn out, they had no energy.

What is tragic here is that these soldiers were so hungry that they slaughtered some animals and did not even drain the blood out as God had commanded them.

And Saul, he wants to know if he should continue on against the Philistines, so he inquires of the Lord, but the Lord is silent.

Thus, he comes to the conclusion that there is sin in the camp; not realizing it was his sin.

Saul wants to know who broke his oath and whoever did was to be put to death!

Well, as they sought the Lord it was revealed that Jonathan, his son broke this foolish oath and thus, Saul wants his men to put him to death.

Thank God they did not listen. But because of Saul's fleshly actions, the enemy was not defeated like God intended and we are told that, "**... there was fierce war with the Philistines all the days of Saul . . .**" I Samuel 14:52.

Now we are going to see Saul continue on with his disobedience to the Lord and this will be costly for him as disobedience to the Lord truly is!

Leadership is important and godly leadership is essential and for Saul, well he was not a good leader because his heart was not with the Lord because he was more interested in his popularity!

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

It is a common human experience to be disappointed by leaders. Leaders who fail are more familiar to us than leaders who succeed. Leaders so often prove to be inept or unwise. Leaders make bad judgments or fail to make need decisions.

At worst we find leaders who prove to be dishonest or corrupt.

Those leaders who do succeed, we cynically expect to do so only for a time.

But the cynicism is born of experience that warns us that even good leaders can let us down sooner or later – and they usually do.

Why is it so rare to find a competent, wise leaders who is appropriately decisive as well as honest and good?

In general terms Christian people will rightly answer that question in terms of the sinfulness of human nature. The human rejection of God has left us all morally weakened.

We would be very foolish indeed to expect any of our merely human leaders to *never* let us down . . .

The story of Saul in the book of 1 Samuel is a study in leadership failure.

- John Woodhouse, 1 Samuel – Looking for a Leader, pp. 257-258

We have to understand that we can't be leaders on our own, we must submit to our Lord who will guide us and direct us in what we need to do, how to deal with situations, what to say and so on!

Before we get to our text this evening, let me share this story with you that will show you how important obedience is to not only our earthly fathers, but also our Heavenly Father is.

Listen to what we are told,

In the Belgian Congo, the weather was hot and dank. No breath of air stirred; leaves hung from the trees as though they were weighted.

In the garden not far from the missionary home a small boy played under a tree.

Suddenly, the father called to him, "***Philip, obey me instantly – get down on your stomach.***"

The boy reacted at once, and his father continued, "***Now crawl toward me fast.***"

The boy again obeyed.

After he had come about halfway, the father said, "***Now stand up and run to me.***"

The boy reached his father and turned to look back – hanging from the branch under which he had been playing was a fifteen-foot serpent.

Are we always as ready to obey?

Or do we say: "***Tell me why?***"

“Explain to me!”

“I will after a while!”

Let it be, *“Speak, Lord, Thy servant hears.”*

- Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Timeless Illustrations for Preaching and teaching*, p. 170

And as we will see tonight, it is not only hearing but also obeying what the Lord is saying.

Remember how we closed out our last study here in I Samuel 14:52, **“Now there was fierce war with the Philistines all the days of Saul. And when Saul saw any strong man or any valiant man, he took him for himself.”**

With that said, let’s begin reading in I Samuel chapter 15 starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

I SAMUEL 15

VERSES 1-3

As we will see here in I Samuel chapter 15, this will mark the beginning of the end for King Saul.

And what Samuel tells Saul is very simple and what King Saul was to do was to **“heed the voice of the words of the LORD.”**

Now as you read this it seems that Samuel is very gracious in coming back to Saul and speaking to him.

Why do I say that?

Remember back in I Samuel chapter 13, when the Philistines were coming against Israel and Samuel told Saul to wait and he will come and offer the burnt offering, since he was a priest.

And things were getting bad, everyone was fearful, and King Saul was losing men, so instead of waiting, he offered the sacrifice, which he should not have done since he was not a priest!

As soon as he did, we are told that Samuel came on the scene, and this is what Samuel said to King Saul for what he did. We are told in I Samuel 13:13-14, **“But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.”**

So why did Samuel come back and speak with King Saul?

Because God is so good, He is so gracious, and He gave to Samuel the words to say to King Saul. I guess you can say it was a warning to not only listen to the voice of God but to obey it.

Now some may argue and say, ***“But God does not speak to us today like He did back then!”***

Are you kidding me!

There are 66 books of the Bible where God is speaking to us, that is not the problem. The problem comes when we refuse to listen, when we refuse to obey because we think we know better, or we just want to do what we want to do!

King Saul is going to find out that God wants our complete obedience!

And when we place ourselves in situations that are not good, many times God will send others to warn us, not because He hates us but because He loves us and wants what is best for our lives. The thing is, are we willing to listen!

What does Samuel tell King Saul to do?

The Word of the Lord to King Saul was to go and utterly wipe out, destroy the Amalekites. They were to leave no one alive, not even their animals!

Now what in the world did these people do that was so bad that God wants Saul to destroy them, even their children, it just doesn't seem fair?

In Deuteronomy 25:17-19 we are told what they did, **“Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget.”**

So as the children of Israel were leaving Egypt, as they were traveling to the Promise Land, the Amalekites would attack the weak, the young, the sick in the camp of Israel as they were traveling, and God is holding them responsible for their actions!

God was now going to use Israel as His instrument of judgment against them.

In fact, hundreds of years before this period of time, back in Exodus 17:14-16 the Lord said He was going to do this, **“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.’ And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner; for he said, ‘Because the Lord has sworn: the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.’”**

Now, even as we look at what they did, it does seem a little harsh, doesn't it?

That is because we do not have the full picture that God does and because He knows what these people were like and where they were headed, He was going to destroy them.

Some of their practices, besides attacking the weak in Israel, is that they committed child sacrifice and were into all kinds of demonic practices.

They were like a rabid dog that is going to die anyway.

The Amalekites were going to eventually destroy themselves by their practices, and instead of letting them continue on and infect those around them; God was going to destroy them.

Think about it, would you let your child play with a rabid dog?

I don't think so!

Our Heavenly Father feels the same way.

And the reality is, we don't know all the reasons, only God does and thus, we know the character of God and we know that what He does is right, it is just, even though we might not fully understand it.

In fact, Clarke puts it like this, *“Nothing could justify such an exterminating decree but the absolute authority of God. This was given: all the reasons of it we do not know; but this we know well, The Judge of all the earth doth right. This war was not for plunder, for God commanded that all the property as well as the people should be destroyed.”*

Exactly!

How does this apply to us today?

First of all, this does not mean we are to take up arms and fight to wipe people out, destroy them.

God *NEVER* tells us to do that in the New Testament, it was part of the Old Covenant, God was trying to preserve His people for the coming Messiah to be born from.

In fact, Jesus said in John 18:36, **“... ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.’”**

Then are we to do nothing and let sin just run rampant?

Not at all. Paul tells us in II Corinthians 10:3-6, **“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.”**

In other words, this is a spiritual battle we are in, and we will never win with physical weapons!

Paul was dealing with false teachers, and Paul was not going to get into a verbal battle with these false teachers and their false doctrine.

Was he just going to ignore them?

Absolutely not!

Then what was he going to do?

He was going to use the spiritual weapons that God had given to him.

What are these weapons?

Well, the two offensive weapons are the Word of God, which is the *sword of the Spirit*, and *prayer*!

Our defensive weapons are the *belt of truth* which holds us up and keeps us from tripping over our lies.

The *breastplate of righteousness* which protects our hearts.

Our *feet are firmly planted upon the Gospel of peace*.

Our *shield of faith* can quench the fiery darts that Satan will fire at us.

The *helmet of salvation* will protect our mind from the evil one.

And the *sword of the spirit* and this is speaking of the Word of God, and we use this as our offensive weapon!

We need to understand that these battles are spiritual, and Satan and his forces use people to carry out their work. Don't let Satan draw you into the wrong battle!

Now what about these Amalekites, is there a lesson that God has for us today?

I believe He does. You see, the Amalekites are a type of the flesh. And if the flesh is not utterly destroyed, it will rise up and destroy you.

Think of it as cancer and must be removed. If not, the cancer will spread quickly and choke out and kill the rest of the body.

Don't leave even a little left, for just a little leaven will permeate the whole loaf and just a little sin will permeate the whole body! If you don't kill the flesh, it will kill you!

So that is what King Saul was to do. Let's see what happens here.

VERSES 4-6

Saul does the right thing here. He spares the Kenites, who were descendants of Moses father-in-law. (Exodus 18:10, 19, Numbers 24:21, Judges 1:16, 4:11-17)

They showed kindness to Israel and now Saul is repaying them, in a sense for the kindness they showed.

As we read this, we see that King Saul was able to amass a pretty good-sized army, some 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men of Judah.

But again, it is not the size or the strength of this army, it is the faith of these men in the true and living God and He will bring about this victory!

And let's see how King Saul handles this battle, if he obeys what Samuel told him and really what the Lord told him to do through Samuel!

VERSES 7-9

First of all, when you look at the territory that this battle encompassed, it was a major military campaign.

Havilah is in western Arabia and Shur is located in the northeastern border of Egypt.

Thus, over 200,000 men were needed in this battle!

Now Saul does start out well, he does go to battle against the Amalekites, but he does not fully obey the Lord. He keeps Agag the King of the Amalekites alive and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings or young animals, the lambs, everything that was good they kept and everything that was bad they destroyed!

God gave Saul another chance and he failed once again.

Regarding this issue we are told, ***“Partial obedience is complete disobedience. Saul and his men obeyed as far as suited them; that is to say, they did not obey God at all, but their own inclinations, both in sparing the good and destroying the worthless. What was not worth carrying off was destroyed, - not because of the command, but to save trouble.”*** (Maclaren)

Now let’s think about this because some would not have a problem with what King Saul did. He kept all that was good and got rid of the bad!

Let me ask you this. Who decided what was good and what was bad?

King Saul did and thus, so did the people.

What is wrong with that?

Because it went against what God had told him to do. God already decided and King Saul thought he knew better, and, in the end, he will find out that he didn’t!

How true that is in our own lives. We have no problem giving to the Lord those things that we don’t want, that is easy but when God wants us to give to Him something that we treasure, that we think is good, well, that is another story!

God wants our full obedience, not because He is mean, but because He knows what is best for our lives! May we listen!

It is as Meyer wrote, *“But an even deeper reading of this story is permissible. Throughout the Bible Amalek stands for the flesh, having sprung from the stock of Esau, who, for a morsel of meat, steaming fragrantly in the air, sold his birthright. To spare the best of Amalek is surely equivalent to sparing some root of evil, some plausible indulgence, some favorite sin. For us, Agag must stand for that evil propensity, which exists in all of us, for self-gratification; and to spare Agag is to be merciful to ourselves, to exonerate and palliate our failures, and to condone our besetting sin.”*

For King Saul, this was not good, and this is an important lesson for us to learn and we are going to see that expounded on even more in the rest of this chapter.

VERSES 10-11

Now as you read this you may be wondering, *“If God is all knowing, why is He regretting that He made Saul King? Didn’t He know that Saul would not obey Him?”*

Of course He did!

Then what is going on here?

What we see here is what we call an *anthropomorphism* and what that means is that God is explaining Himself to man in human terms so we can understand His heart in this situation.

He knew that Saul was not the man and that He was looking for a man after His own heart. (I Samuel 13:14)

And I think the idea comes across when you see Samuel’s reaction to what the Lord is telling him. Samuel does not gloat or think, *“I told him he would fail.”*

No, he is broken over this and I think that is the heart of God being reflected in the heart of this man of God, Samuel!

What a great lesson that is for us. Where are you in regard to your feelings when a brother falls?

You see, as we walk with God the things that grieve the heart of God will grieve our hearts as well, and the things that please the heart of God will please our hearts as well.

Where do you stand?

VERSES 12-13

Samuel had to go and discipline Saul, and he rose early and obeyed the voice of the Lord.

For Saul, he was so full of pride, so full of himself that he built a monument to himself and his great accomplishment. There is no recognition of God here nor is there any remorse or repentance for his failure to fully obey the Lord. He is boasting and on his own spiritual high even though he is not walking with the Lord.

My, how we can deceive ourselves!

We see our partial obedience or what we want to do as obedience and we can justify our actions before others, but not before God!

And we see here that King Saul even goes out to greet Samuel and bless him as he says, **“Saul said to him, ‘Blessed are you of the Lord! I have performed the commandment of the Lord.’”**

And listen to how The Living Bible puts these words, **“Saul greeted him cheerfully. ‘Hello there,’ he said. ‘Well, I have carried out the Lord’s command!’”**

Did Saul really believe he was obeying the Lord?

I think so. You see, he was so self-deceived that he saw his disobedience as an act of obedience.

I hate to say this but folks, we still do that today!

If Saul was humble, if he was walking with the Lord, he not only would he have obeyed the Lord and destroyed the Amalekites and their animals, but he would not have boasted about it.

How tragic it was to see lives lost because of sin. He should have been broken over the devastation that sin has caused, but instead, he is boasting about himself and what he has done!

VERSE 14

Samuel, this poor man had not finished reading one of the most popular self-help books around, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie!

No, Samuel called Saul on this one and he was not interested in winning a friend but saving a soul!

Thus, Samuel basically tells Saul, *“Look Saul, if this is true, that you have fully obeyed the Lord, then why do I hear this bleating of sheep in my ears and the lowing of oxen?”*

I don’t think that Saul was lying here, I just think that pride and disobedience made him blind and deaf to his sin and the same is true in our own lives.

May we be like David who said, **“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.”** (Psalm 139:23-24)

And The Living Bible puts it like this, **“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test my thoughts. Point out anything you find in me that makes you sad, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.”**

We need to be seeking the Lord to try our hearts to show us what is in there or He will use others to expose those areas we refuse to deal with!

How will King Saul answer Samuel's question?

He has a chance to come clean! What will he do?

Let's read on and see.

VERSE 15

Saul does have an excuse for this little problem; ***"It's the people's fault, they did this. They wanted these animals to sacrifice to the Lord, even though I told them not to do it. You know these people, they are stiff-necked!"***

Wrong, but that is what Saul basically says, he blames them, but he also takes credit in the obedience part, **"and the rest we have utterly destroyed."**

But again, this was not true, because there were Amalekites that were left alive. Yes, King Agag he did not kill, but there were many other Amalekites that he also did not kill!

How do I know that?

Because an Amalekite will kill King Saul. (II Samuel 1:8)

Not only that, but David had to deal with the Amalekites. (I Samuel 27:8, 30:1, II Samuel 1:1, II Samuel 8:12)

And Haman was an Amalekite who tried to wipe out the Jewish people. (Esther 3:1)

And what we see here is that King Saul shows no signs of repentance, remorse and thus, God will not honor that!

How do I know that God did not accept what Saul was saying?

Let's read on and you will see!

VERSES 16-19

Samuel does not want to hear any more excuses and thus, he tells King Saul to shut up, to be quiet, enough with these excuses, it is now time to hear what God has to say!

And guess what?

King Saul can't shut up, he has to speak on, he has to be in control, and he tells Samuel to, "**Speak on.**"

Like Samuel needed permission from King Saul to speak, he was a prophet of God and like it or not, he was going to speak!

And Samuel reminds King Saul what he was like when he first started. He tells him that at one time he was small enough to be used by God but now he is too big to be used by God.

And what was going on with King Saul could happen to us, it is called pride!

And Samuel is asking Saul why he would do such a thing, why would he disobey the Lord and not utterly destroy the Amalekites?

And Saul will answer him but once again he is deceived and making all kinds of excuses for his behavior instead of repenting and getting right with God.

And we will see that as we read on.

VERSES 20-21

Do you see how Saul is speaking out of both sides of his mouth?

He is very confused in his response to Samuel.

First of all, he says that he has obeyed the Lord.

Then he says that he brought back Agag, an Amalekite.

And then he says that he utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

If that were true, and it is not, then why in the world did he spare Agag?

You see, there is no repentance here. He is trying to justify his actions and if Samuel doesn't buy it, then he blames the people, they took the plunder and it was not his fault, he did not do it!

Now think about this for a minute.

Back in I Samuel chapter 14 Saul was willing to put to death anyone who broke his command regarding eating anything on the day of this battle against the Philistines. And when Saul finds out that it was his own son who had done this, even though Jonathan knew nothing about this command, Saul was willing to put his own son to death. But again, the soldiers of King Saul refused to obey him because they knew that Johnathan was a godly man and Saul was not!

Now, with these Amalekites he is not willing to put them to death, but he is willing to spare some of them!

Why is that?

Because when it came to his own will Saul was willing to bring forth his full obedience, he had much zeal for his will being done.

But, when it came to the will of God being fulfilled, he was not so zealous!

I wonder how often we do the same thing.

When our will needs to be done, when there is something that we want to do, we have much zeal. But when God tells us to destroy the flesh, something we want to hold on to, we are not as zealous, and we are not as obedient!

What does God want?

Samuel is going to tell King Saul and us, and it might not be what you think. Listen to what Samuel said.

VERSES 22-23

Now this is tough for many people, that God is not interested in our sacrifices, the work we do, but in our obedience to Him!

But think about this. If you say that you really love the Lord and you are serving the Lord and yet you are not doing what He has called you to do, do you really love the Lord?

Samuel is saying that you don't really love the Lord if that is what you are doing, and He will not accept it!

Does God need our sacrifices?

Absolutely not for we are told in Psalm 50:9-12, **“I will not take a bull from your house, Nor goats out of your folds. For every beast of the forest is Mine, And the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the mountains, And the wild beasts of the field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you; For the world is Mine, and all its fullness.”**

In other words, God does not need anything from us because He owns it all, it is all His!

Then what does God desire from us?

Listen carefully to what David said after he acknowledged his sin with Bathsheba before God in Psalm 51, **“For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart - These, O God, You will not despise . . . Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, With burnt offering and whole burnt offering; Then they shall offer bulls on Your altar.”** Psalm 51:16-17, 19.

What is God looking for?

God is looking for a broken spirit and a contrite heart. He is looking for a person who is willing to repent of his sin and it is out of that we see that God is pleased and it is after a person is repentant that God will accept our sacrifices to Him!

Thus, God is looking for repentance, a turning from sin and towards Him and not excuses for the sin! But if you refuse, then this rebellion is just as bad as witchcraft.

Now I realize that not many of us think of rebellion that way, but God does!

In regard to our stubborn hearts, God sees it as bad as idolatry.

Why is that?

Because if we are stubborn to the things of God, we are worshiping someone other than God, we are worshiping ourselves!

And here is the tragedy of all of this. The end result for Saul is that he would be rejected as King. You see, he did not have a heart after God but after his own desires and thus, God would reject him just as he rejected God!

Now in saying that, it still would be some thirty years before Saul is removed and David made King, or I should say placed on the throne.

He will be anointed as King shortly but will not come to the throne for many years!

This is a great lesson for each of us, that we need to obey the Lord, not when we want but all the time.

In regard to this incident with Saul, Erdmann makes these comments. He wrote,

In the following words: **To obey is better than sacrifice**, the thought takes a new turn: apart from what alone is well-pleasing to God, only an obedient disposition of mind is in itself something good, the offering, without such a disposition, is not a good thing, has no moral value.

So disobedience and the thence-resulting rebellion and defiant self-dependence is similar in essence to, stands on the same moral plane with the outward wickedness of *witchcraft*, that is *“divination in the service of anti-godly demonic powers”* (Keil), and of idolatry.

- Christian F. Erdmann, The Books of Samuel,
in Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures,
Critical, Doctrinal and Homiletical, III:209

VERSES 24-25

Now on the surface it does seem like Saul is repenting, but in all actuality, he is still blaming the people for his sin instead of being responsible and he wants Samuel to go with him to worship the Lord.

Why did King Saul respond like this?

Because he was going to lose his kingdom and it was really all about him and not about the Lord and thus, not true repentance!

Not only that, but I see Saul wanting to look good in front of the people, he is not broken, he remains prideful and wants to continue on and that is never a good thing!

Yes, Saul is regretting what has taken place, but he is not repenting before the Lord!

Saul, instead of fearing the people should have feared the Lord more, but he was more interested in his reputation than with his relationship with God and thus, his actions paint that picture for us!

VERSES 26-28

This may seem harsh on Samuel's part but what else could he do but leave. If Saul did not want to deal with his sin, there is nothing more that he can do.

And folks, we may have family, friends like this. They refuse to deal with their sin, you have spoken to them, and they still ignore what God desires, and there is a time to walk away as Samuel was doing here.

But Saul is desperate here and he grabs a hold of Samuel's garment, and he rips it.

Why did he do that?

Because, for King Saul, image was everything, and he was trying to hold on to his power, his influence, his kingdom but what he ends up doing is giving a vivid object lesson of what is going to happen to his kingdom.

It will be torn from him, and it will be given to his neighbor. You see, David came from the tribe of Judah, which was located next to the tribe of Benjamin!

And it will be David who has a heart after God and not Saul!

David will be the next King in Israel, and I believe it is David that the Lord wanted all the time. But it was the people who wanted a King like the other nations and God gave to them Saul because David was not ready yet!

VERSE 29

Samuel now speaks of "**the Strength of Israel**" and Saul probably thought that he was the strength of Israel at one time, and he is still trying to hold on to that strength.

But Samuel wants Saul to know that this strength in Israel is not a man, it is God, and it is the Lord who determines who will sit on the throne in Israel and not man!

Now compare Jesus to Saul.

And to do that we are going to look at Philippians 2:6-11, and this is from the J. B Phillips translation, **“For he, who had always been God by nature, did not cling to his prerogatives as God’s equal, but stripped himself of all privilege by consenting to be a slave by nature and being born as mortal man. And, having become man, he humbled himself by living a life of utter obedience, even to the extent of dying, and the death he died was the death of a common criminal. That is why God has now lifted him so high, and has given him the name beyond all names, so that at the name of Jesus ‘every knee shall bow’, whether in Heaven or earth or under the earth. And that is why, in the end, ‘every tongue shall confess’ that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”**

In other words, Jesus was willing to empty Himself; to let go and He was obedient to the Father even to the point of death.

On the other hand, we see Saul who was not willing to let go of his sin, of his position, he held on for dear life and as he lifted himself up, God is going to bring him down!

Saul lost it all and Jesus gained it all!

The question for us is, *“Who are you going to follow after?”*

Remember what James said, **“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”** (James 4:10)

VERSES 30-31

Is Saul concerned about his relationship with the Lord or with the people of Israel?

As you can see, he wants to look good in front of the people. To do that he wants Samuel to make him look good before the people and for that short time of glory he has an eternity to think about the mistake he made.

It is as Poole wrote, ***“Here he plainly discovers his hypocrisy, and the true motive of this and his former confession; he was not solicitous [concerned] for the favour of God, but for his honour and power with Israel.”***

Now let me ask you this. Why did Samuel go back with Saul to worship the Lord?

It seems that he is feeding into his ego, his fantasy that everything was okay?

I think Samuel, like our Lord, gives Saul every opportunity to return to the Lord, to turn to Him.

Yes, the Lord rejected him as King, but he still had every opportunity to turn to Him and repent of his sin, but we do not see that here.

The lesson for us here is that we need to let grace flow from our lives as Samuel did. We need to give people opportunities to turn to the Lord and not cut them off even if it does seem hopeless.

Yes, there are times we need to walk away, but God will show us for only God knows when they have passed that point of no return or for the Christian, to be buffeted by Satan.

Again, as Poole wrote regarding this situation with Saul and why Samuel did not just right him off, ***“That people might not upon pretense of this sentence of rejection immediately withdraw all respect and obedience to their sovereign; whereby they would both have sinned against God and have been as sheep without a shepherd.”***

In this situation, there was no other King to be raised to that position yet, and to lose the leader would have brought about anarchy to the nation.

VERSE 32

We don't know what Saul said to Agag but whatever it was, however Saul treated him, Agag did not expect to be put to death and thus, he confidently comes before Saul.

I like the way The Living Bible puts this verse regarding Agag, “**... Agag arrived all full of smiles, for he thought, ‘Surely the worst is over and I have been spared!’**”

And Poole expounds on this by saying, “*I who have escaped death from the hands of a warlike prince in the fury of battle, shall certainly never suffer death from an old prophet in time of peace.*”

I wonder how the enemy feels about us?

I wonder how prideful you might say our flesh is, thinking we will not put it to death, but we will let it control our lives?

This is Agag and truly this is our flesh!

VERSE 33

Samuel needs to lay off the caffeine, he is a little on the edge don't you think?

No, Samuel saw the reality of this man and what he has done in his life, the evil and he knew the command of God, he knew that the Amalekites were to be wiped out.

And for Samuel, he did not even hesitate but cut Agag in pieces.

Now who did Samuel do this before?

Some would say before King Saul, and yes, he was a witness to this.

But for Samuel, he did not do this before man, but he did this before the Lord. He was not doing it to impress Saul but to be obedient to the Lord, something that Saul did not do!

We too are to crucify the flesh, and we don't do it to impress people or show how spiritual we are. We do it to honor the Lord and be obedient to Him!

Before we move on I want to deal with this issue of the flesh.

Interestingly enough, the name, "**Agag**" means, "*I will overcome*" or "*I will topple.*"

That is the flesh in a nutshell!

It never gives up. It tries to not only destroy our lives but to destroy our relationship with the Lord!

Folk's, the way you deal with the flesh is that you crucify it, and you crucify the flesh by starving it to death. You don't give it room to grow. You don't play with the flesh.

You draw close to God; you fill yourself up with the things of God and the flesh will not have room to grow.

But you need to deal with this on a daily basis because if you don't kill the flesh then the flesh will kill you!

Let me give you a few Scriptures to show you what we are to do.

In Romans 13:14 Paul tells us, "**But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.**"

Listen to how The Amplified Bible puts this verse, "**But clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah), and make no provision for [indulging] the flesh [put a stop to thinking about the evil cravings of your physical nature] to [gratify its] desires (lusts).**"

You see, what you fill yourself with is what will flow from your life!

And listen to what Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:15-21, **“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.”**

Again, what are you filling yourself up with?

And lastly, in Galatians chapter 5:16-25, Paul tells us, **“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. *And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*”**

May we crucify the flesh, put it to death or it will overcome us and destroy our relationship with the Lord. Make no provision for it!

VERSES 34-35

Now Samuel puts things in Saul's hands. Samuel would not go to see Saul anymore, but I believe the door was open for Saul to come and see Samuel if he repented before the Lord, but that is not going to happen.

Yes, Saul could have been restored, but his kingdom would not have been restored to him.

But in the big picture, as you look at things through the eyes of eternity, the kingdoms of this world do not matter, it is only the Kingdom of God and that we have come before Him and repented of our sins and thus, we will enter into that eternal life with Him by the shed blood of Jesus cleansing our lives!

What kingdom are you going for?

And I want you to see the heart of Samuel for Saul.

He could have just said, ***"What a loser. I am done with him!"***

No, Samuel loved him and was saddened over the decisions he had made.

I think Trapp rightly sees the heart of this man Samuel and why he mourned for Saul. He wrote, ***"For the hardness of his heart, and the hazard of his soul."***

May our hearts be soft and crying out for the lost as Samuel's was!

At this point Saul has been King over Israel for some ten years and he would rule Israel for forty years. That means he has some thirty years or so to go, and in that time, there is nothing that significantly happens in his life, in this unrepentant life!

Author Phillip Keller sums up the career of King Saul as he wrote, ***"He was forever a man determined to protect his own self interests. Ultimately he simply became a pathetic castaway. His end was a dreadful alienation from God."***

As we will see next time, Saul's replacement enters the picture as we get to I Samuel chapter 16 but there are still some thirty years before David sits on the throne in Israel!