

4-23-23

1 Samuel 15.

Today we are going to touch on one topic that we can all speak with experience – disobedience.

Whether it's disobedience to parents, to authority, or to God. We know what it is and how difficult it is, sometimes.

To obey is not easy. It takes trust, it takes faith and humility.

Saul was put to the test in the war against the Amalekites.

A crisis is an opportunity for us to show God WHO we are. Can we really trust God enough to obey Him?

Read 1 Sam 15:1-23. (Slides 2-13)

Saul's experience is not unique. It can happen to any one of us.

God did not set him up in a difficult situation only to see his downfall. God prepared him for this kingship. God does not prepare someone to fail.

Saul's experience can teach us important lessons about obedience to God. This incident wasn't recorded to frighten us but to teach us. We can all avoid the same pitfalls and learn to trust God.

The setting is crystal clear. God gave a very clear and direct command:

1 Sam. 15:3, 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.” (Slide 14)

We do not know the entire context well enough to understand the rationale for this command. They are like the ISIS of today and the world is fighting them. Centuries after, people may question why we are so aggressive against ISIS.

We don't have the full picture, only God knows, and He has stated His will very clearly.

That's the test – Can you trust God's Word for it? (Slide 15) Can you trust that God's way is different from ours because He sees and knows more than we do?

First temptation is to:

1. Rationalize it. (Slide 16)

- We want to understand the reasons and know the logic behind it. We want to know why.
- There is nothing wrong with asking – God gives us a mind to think - but at the end of all the asking, we need to submit to His will. There is nothing wrong with asking, but God is under no obligation to tell us why.
- Our thoughts are not His thoughts, neither our ways His ways. His ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. 9 “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:8-9 (Slide 16A)

- We need to know where we stand. We are not on par with Him, sitting at the same table negotiating terms with Him. He is God and we are not. **(Slide 17)**
- Can God trust Saul to obey Him? Can Saul obey God even when it does not make good sense - destroying all the good flock? (It is the same for us, will we trust God when it doesn't make sense or we cannot see clearly the path ahead.)
- Obedience is the acceptance of the authority and will of God. **(Slide 17A)**
- It means submitting to Him and expressing that submission in actions, words, and thoughts. To be obedient is "to be in agreement" with God. **(Slide 17C)**
- Saul's first response to Samuel was: **"I have performed the commandment of the Lord." (15:13)** - not entirely but generally. **(Slide 18)**

The second temptation is:

2. Downplay it. **(Slide 19)**

- When confronted by Samuel, Saul says, "I've done what the Lord says, at least, to a certain extent. I did what was necessary." **"Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of the Lord! I have performed the commandment of the Lord." (v.13)**
- But Samuel said, **"What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" (v.14)**
- Saul was caught, **"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." (v. 15) (Slide 20)**

The third temptation is to:

3. Blame Others. **(Slide 21)**

- "It's not my fault!"
- In **1 Samuel 15:9**, Saul was given instructions and he didn't follow through.
- In **verse 15** Saul used **"they"** and in **verse 21** Saul said, **"But the people..." (Slide 22)**
- Saul gives a plethora of excuses and shows his true heart in his response to Samuel. **"...to the Lord YOUR God..."**
- **"I kept them for YOUR God..."**
- To which Samuel tells him, **"Be Quiet!" (v.16) "...I will tell you what the Lord said to me last night." (Slide 23)**
- Saul was unrepentant. He repeated his excuse again, with almost exact words. He was in denial.
- **"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." (v.22)**
- Saul's attitude was saying that, God is happier seeing him offer these good flock as sacrifices to Him, than to have him obey His commands." (Saul thought he knew better!)
- Can we compensate our disobedience to God by more sacrifices, more giving, more serving, or more churchgoing? Can we really MAKE UP for our sinful disobedience?
- Doing penance cannot resolve the problem of disobedience. What can? Repentance. The one thing that Saul lacks.
- No good deed can buy God's favor. No sacrifice can earn God's forgiveness.

- Saul needs to CONFESS and REPENT, like King David did when Prophet Nathan confronted him.
- This is what separates the TWO – a repentant heart! It is still the same today; a successful Christian is one with a humble and repentant heart.
- Look what David had learned.

Psalm 51:16-17, For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise.” (Slide 24)

- When Saul was finally forced to admit, he gave another excuse. **“...I feared the people and obeyed their voice.” (v.24)**

The fourth temptation is:

4. Pleasing Man over God. (Slide 25)

- How do we know that Saul was keen to please only himself?
- One, his rush to build a monument in his own honor **(15:12)** after the battle.
- Two, his denial of disobedience to God even with much clear evidence.
- Three, when Samuel turned to leave, **15:30 “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.”**
- Saul disobeys because self-will dominates. He wants to do what he likes.
- There is no limbo state - if we are not following God’s will, then we are following someone’s will. Saul failed God because he has chosen to follow his own will.
- When we get our heart right, our actions will be right. But not the other way around - making the right sacrifices will not make your heart right.
- The Pharisees are examples of this in Jesus’ days. They’ve all the right sacrifices but Jesus says their hearts are far from Him. They are hypocrites.

Matthew 23:26, “Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.” (Slide 26)

When things don’t make sense or we totally disagree with the direction, will or plan of God we must be careful that we don’t fall into sinning against God. We need to make sure we don’t end up like Saul. Avoid rationalizing it way, downplaying it, blame others, and don’t please man over God.

Contrasting again Saul, man’s choice for king to David, God’s choice for king. David blew it multiple times, bigly. But when confronted with his sin David didn’t respond the way Saul did. Saul rationalized it, downplayed it, blamed others, and aimed to please man over God.

Turn to **Psalm 51**.

Notice...

- 1. David’s Conviction.**
 - **Read verses 1-2.**
 - **“Have mercy up on me, O God...”**

- **“Wash me...cleanse me from my sin.”**
- **Read Luke 18:9-14.**

Luke 18:13, And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’

- **Read verse 3.**
- **“For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me.”**
- The word for “acknowledge” refers to intimate knowledge and the phrase “always before me” shows us that his sins are constantly and continually right in front of him. He can’t escape his iniquity. Listen. There is no getting right until we admit how badly we have done wrong.
- Don’t we tell our kids this? “Are you sorry or just sorry you got caught?”
- Saul wanted to brush aside his sins, justify them. David shows us it is righteous to own them and admit them.

2. David’s Confession.

- **Read verses 4-6.**
- **Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight...”**
- Too many of us put our own spin on sin but we must come clean without conditions. Those of us who play the Blame Game have a motto: “Don’t blame me, I’m not my fault.” We must beware that we don’t fall into a victim mentality.
- Let me ask you some questions. Have you been blaming others for your behavior? Do you secretly believe that you are not responsible for your attitude and your actions? Have you said things like, “You’d sin too if you were married to my spouse,” or “You’d do what I’ve done if you had been raised in my family?” Be careful...be very careful. Especially if you are a believer, follower of God. You no longer live in that space; you have been redeemed and set free. You are no longer a victim, you are a conqueror.
- God also wants us to confess as a church, a community, and a country.

2 Chronicles 7:14: “If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

3. David’s Cleaning.

- **Read verses 7-12.**
- David experienced cleaning in four ways: Rejoicing (v.8), Renewing (v.9), Reconnecting (v.11), and Restoring (v.12).

4. David’s Consecration.

- David has been convicted and so he confessed. Now that he has been cleansed, he consecrates himself to live on mission. He knows that he has been saved in order to serve.
- **Read verses 13-15.**
- David understands that he is to witness to others, **“I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.”**

- Also, he rededicated his worship of God. **“And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. O’ Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.”**
- **Read verses 16-17.**
- David reminds everyone who that God desires obedience and a pliable heart.

Conclusion

Psalm 51:10-12, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.” (Slide 27)

During the civil war Abraham Lincoln met with a group of ministers for a prayer breakfast. One of the ministers said, “Mr. President, let us pray that God is on our side”. Lincoln’s response showed far greater insight, “No, gentlemen, let us pray that we are on God’s side.”

Salvation Slide (28).