

1 Samuel 15

(title) In 1 Samuel 8 we find an incident that forever changed Israel's course – and it was a change for the worse. In 1 Samuel 8:1-7, the people rejected God as their King and wanted to be like the nations around them. They were warned by Samuel, the nation's judge, in vs 18-19 of the results from this kind of rebellion, but Saul was chosen to be their first king. Saul's reign was filled with one indiscretion after another; however it was King Saul's error in 1 Samuel 15 that became the straw that broke the camel's back. This incident caused rejection by God.

Samuel began giving the Lord's instructions to Saul by reminding him where his kingship came from and that his total loyalty should belong to God. *1 Samuel 15:1-3 Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD.* Then he gives him plain instructions on what the Lord wants him to do. (2) *Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt.* (3) *Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.*

Samuel tells Saul how the Lord remembered the Amalekites' evil deeds toward Israel, and now He wants them exterminated. So in vs 4-5 we see King Saul making ready for the battle. Saul gathered 210,000 men to battle and laid in wait in a valley outside the city Amalek. The battle occurs in vs. 6-9, but not as ordered. Saul and company came and smote the Amalekites as commanded, but notice *1 Samuel 15:8-9 And he took Agag the 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, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.* Saul won the battle, but he didn't do everything the Lord said. He decided he would do it his way. God declares Saul's disobedience to Samuel (vs. 10-12) and tells him that He is very grieved with the fact that Saul, whom He appointed king, would not follow Him. Saul was disobedient.

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Some might say, “*The ends justify the means,*” but God says it is simply disobedience. This grieved Samuel and he cried in prayer unto the Lord all night. Why have we done this? Finally Samuel rises up to meet Saul down in the valley city of Gilgal. In vs 13-14, Samuel confronts Saul about his disobedience.

**FIRST**, notice the lies that are told by Saul in verses 13-15. *And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD. (14) And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine 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 of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.* After listening to the lies told by Saul, Samuel proceeds to rebuke Saul for not obeying the commands of God. Samuel in essence says, after all God has done for you, why have you committed evil in the His sight?

Notice Saul’s reply ... *1 Samuel 15:20-21 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. (21) But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.* He lies to himself and blames the people. Samuel then in verses 22-23 responds to Saul’s lies/excuses after which Saul pleads for mercy/pardon (vs 24-31). Let’s notice some of what Saul said.

1. Saul begins his plea for mercy. *1 Samuel 15:24 And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.* It’s not my fault; the people made me do it. Many people today want to pass the buck instead of assuming responsibility for what they have done.

2. Saul begs Samuel to stay and help him go to the Lord to ask for forgiveness. *1 Samuel 15:25 Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD.* But Samuel said NO; “*You rejected God, now God rejects you*”

3. Consider what is said in verses 27-28. *And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. (28) And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou.* God has rent the kingdom from Saul just like Samuel's coat was torn and God will not change in this matter.

Let us now consider some of the valuable lessons we learn from the disobedience of Saul.

#### **A. SAUL BLAMES THE PEOPLE** 1 Samuel 15:14-15, 20-21

The Lord told Saul in 1 Samuel 15:3 what was required of him, and when he was confronted about his disobedience - he blamed the people. This is an age old problem: "Passing the Buck." It is the "I am never to blame attitude" This problem first occurred in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 3 the serpent tempted Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit - she did and gave it also to Adam. As a result their eyes were open to their nakedness, and they hid from God. Notice what happened in *Genesis 3:11-13* *And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? (12) And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. (13) And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.* Adam blamed Eve and God and Eve blamed the serpent.

People "pass the buck" today. They blame others for their not coming to worship, etc. Blame others for what is not being done, when they themselves are doing little or nothing by always passing responsibility on to someone else. In the Day of Judgment there will be no "passing of the buck." *2 Corinthians 5:10* *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

#### **B. NEGLIGENCE IS DOING EVIL** 1 Samuel 15:19-20

Saul evidently thought that doing only part of God's command was alright. Samuel informed Saul that to do a part of God's will to the neglect of other commands is doing evil. There are many today that are only partially obedient and while they do some good in some areas, they are negligent in other areas. Many are right on target in some doctrine but miss the mark on other areas; for example:

- 1) Neglect to teach God's complete plan of salvation
- 2) Neglect to worship as God has authorized
- 3) Neglect to have the proper organization within the church

There are many that are involved in "*cafeteria style religion.*" They pick out the parts of the Bible that they like and discard the parts they don't like. We learn from the example of Saul that doing some good things and ignoring others is not enough.

Remember the parables in Matthew 25 – They deal with the lost and they were all lost because of something they neglected to do. Are we obeying parts of God's law to the neglect of others? We can be negligent by:

- a. Not telling others of Christ and His church?
- b. Not encouraging one another
- c. Not giving as we have been prospered
- d. Not attending faithfully? etc.

From this story we see God's attitude toward negligence.

**C. | GOD DESIRES OBEDIENCE RATHER THAN SACRIFICE** 1 Samuel 15:22-23

*1 Samuel 15:22-23 And Samuel said, Hath 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 hearken than the fat of rams. (23) For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.* Saul disobeyed God, but thought it was alright since it was done to worship Him. The sheep and oxen were to be used to worship God, but God said destroy all. From this we see that simply worshipping is not enough. It must be done in obedience. Worship not prescribed by God is rejected. (John 4:24)

**D. SAUL FEARS THE PEOPLE AND NOT GOD.** 1 Samuel 15:24

This is one of the reason there is so much error in the world today – because man fears man instead of God. Saul blamed his error on fearing the people and the same is true today. People are afraid to obey the gospel because they are afraid of losing friends, or not being popular. They are afraid of losing social status, or a job promotion. This was the case even in Jesus day. *John 7:13 Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.* On another occasion John would write. *John 12:42 Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.*

What/who causes this fear within people? It's not God. *2 Timothy 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*

There may be some here that need to make things right in their life. Perhaps they need to return back to their spiritual home like the prodigal in Luke 15 or maybe obey the gospel like Saul of Tarsus did in Acts 22. Don't let fear stand in your way. Fear is an obstacle of Satan. Business man and author W Clement Stone once said, "*Thinking will not overcome fear, but action will.*" Let me encourage you to muster up the courage to do what you know you need to do.

Invitation.