

Exposition
of
1 Samuel 15

Sermon Title:
The Cost of Disobedience

First delivered on:

Christ Reformed Baptist Church
New Castle, IN

INTRODUCTION

2Ti 3:16 All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

This is why we are going to spend awhile in the Old Testament Scriptures learning lessons from the lives of various Kings which ruled over Israel. These lessons at times will teach us both tragic errors which we are to avoid and also holy achievements which we ought to strive for in our own spiritual walk and service before God.

We can at times have a mistaken attitude that the Old Testament and God's dealings under the Old Covenant with the Jews are somehow irrelevant to us who have the blessing of being under the New Covenant and in doing so we forfeit vital lessons and instructions. Just as Paul told Timothy all Scripture is profitable, that the man or God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

We start this sermon series here in 1 Samuel because after 450 yrs. under the administration of various Judges, this is where it is recorded that God raised up the first king of Israel (which the people desired to have over them and thus resemble their neighboring countries) a man named Saul.

But in what context of redemptive history is this all taking place? Well, Moses has long ago led the Hebrews out of the land of Egypt and pointed them to the promised land called Canaan which was inhabited and surrounded by many strangers and pagan rulers. After the death of Moses, God choose one of Moses's military leaders named Joshua to lead the Jews into possessing the promised land while conquering and capturing many enemies along the way.

Toward the end of Joshua's life the covenant made with Abraham was renewed (Jos.25), however after Joshua dies (as recorded in the book of Judges) there is a long period of sinful compromise on the part of the Jews and also gracious displays of God's covenant mercies by which He repeatedly delivers them from the consequences of their sins, in fact one way He did this was to raise up civil and sometimes military champions who led the people which were known as Judges.

The last Judge to lead the people was a Prophet named Samuel who will read about today. The appointment of Saul began the monarchy of multiple dynasties in the history of the Jews and so we come then to consider a lesson from the life of King Saul.

BODY

V.1 ANOINTED TO SERVE:

In this verse Samuel begins to utter what would be the final test for Saul, who (as stated here in v.1) had been anointed king at Gilgal.

1Sa 11:15 And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

Despite this great responsibility that had been placed upon him, Saul continued to show evidences of spiritual and moral decline which are seen in Chp. 13 & 14.

But here, in the long suffering of God...Saul is given an opportunity to be faithful and obedient to the Lord. Up to this point in the mind of Saul, 50% obedience was enough. So, far...I'm quite sure he reasoned with himself, my partial obedience to the Lord has been fine (nothing tragic has occurred, he is still on the throne and getting along fine).

What we see then here in v.1 is that his anointing had connected to it obligations unto obedience. We too, ought to seek the anointing of God...meaning the filling of His Spirit, which of course is understood in the same sense the apostle's sought to be filled by the Spirit, namely to enable them to obey the Lord in all areas of their lives and in particularly those areas that would require great courage to over come fears of the flesh and least we forget the times when humility is needed in saying "I'm sorry" when possibly the other party is the one who ought to really be the one apologizing. In addition, we should understand that by our very own conversion...the anointing of God upon our lives, by where through Christ he claims us as His dear children we are then to serve Him in whatever way He calls us to.

V.2 OBEDEINCE vs. REASON

Despite the growing military power of Israel and the apperant peace and restraint of the neghiboring enemies, the call of God is to go and destroy the Amalikites. Reason would have argued that things are at a time of peace and rest. Why not simply build up arms and prepare for future attacks.

However, this call to obedience in fact has nothing to do with the logic and reasoning of Saul, or any other military councellors, it was according to the remembrance and will of God for what the Amalakites did unto the Jews during their time under Moses in the wilderness.

In a similar way, we too will be called to obey the voice of God as revealed in Scripture even though it may seem to contradict our own logic or the perceptions of others around us. However, be certain of this...God's call to obey Him will always be a reasonable and not a foolish one. Understand it in this way...when we obey God's word we are first and foremost responding to the mind and will of God himself and not human possibilities.

V.3 OBECEINCE IS ACTIVE

The obedience which God required of Saul was the total annihilation of the Amalekites. This is made obvious to us from the phrase “utterly destroy”.

- But why destroy everything? It is a reflection of the pure and holy justice of the God.
- This demonstrates for us that God’s delay in the execution of justice does not in any way diminish its certainty.

Hbr 11:24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

The obedience that was required of Saul was an active one and not only active but a very challenging. This was no small call of obedience here that was laid before Saul and it goes to teach us that there will be times that God will call us out of our comfortable lives, out of our rigid routines, to take action in a particular sphere where his word calls you to.

~ Verses 4-9 record Saul’s victory over the Amalikites. And he was certainly very thorough in “smiting” or “crushin” them. In fact v.7 indicates that he smote them from the eastern part of their country to the far western part. So...from a human perspective Saul did a pretty good job of obeying God. But despite the thoroughness of his conquest, God does not judge him according to his military success, but rather by the standard of God’s command as delivered by the mouth of Samuel the Prophet.

FAILURE TO OBEY vv.9-19

Vv8-9 FAILURE AND DISOBEDIENCE

No matter Saul's good intentions and great military victory it was all marred by his disobedience to the command of God.

This teaches us, that we must be careful to obey that which God commands. Not add to nor take away. Unfortunately we are in living during a time of great doctrinal down-grade and often the believer is never called to consider their obedience to the commands and principals of God, in fact just a brief survey of most preaching and practices in modern evangelicalism will reveal that God's pattern and command's for worship, order and the pattern for evangelism has been greatly modified and with tremendous liberty the modern believer thinks himself obeying God's word and who are we to question it. Besides...it is all done in the name of Jesus.

~What does God think of this modification of what He called Samuel to do?

v.10-11 RESPONSES TO DISOBEDIENCE

1. God's response.

'Anthropomorphism' Human emotion figuratively applied to God to help us understand His infinite wrath against sin. (Isa.63:10, Gen.6:5-7)

2. Samuel's response. 'grieved' in the Hebrew implies anger, in the sense of anger in the midst of grief.

This response of Samuel is not unlike our own reactions when we learn of the great disobedience of a fellow Christian.

The lesson we gather from this verse is two-fold.

1. Saul's 50% obedience to what God called him to do created a negative course of action against himself from the mind of God and:

2. His actions had far reaching effects upon the man who had done so much to help and guide him. Saul's disobedience effected more than just himself.

~ Next in verses 12-18 we witness the beginning of Samuel's confrontation with Saul.

vv.12-18 DISOBEDIENCE CONFRONTED & HUMAN INVENTION DISCOVERED

v.13 Notice the shallowness of Samuel. Possibly he truly had deceived himself in thinking that his version of obedience was in fact acceptable and totally pleasing unto God.

v.14 Samuel has to bring into the forefront the bold reality of what has actually happened.

v.15 Notice the tone of justification for 50% obedience and human invention "the rest we have utterly destroyed".

v.17 This verse is very telling. Samuel leads into the charge against Saul by first reminding Saul of his initial 'humilty'.

And by contrast now Saul had become proud and attempts to cover his disobedience by blaming others and by the fact that he was going to make sacrifices unto the Lord with the best of the captured animals.

This all of course reveals to us the importance of humility. Pride, the sin that easily could be called the chief of all other sins must be hated and despised within us. We must always be on watch for this cunning and deceitful vice of Satan and the natural weakness of our flesh from taking root in our hearts and minds.

Let us daily be reminded that apart from God's grace we are nothing. Boys and girls, if you have a tendency to talk down to each other, or perhaps you tend to desire the preeminence over your peers be very careful and recall here Samuel's words to Saul "When thou was little in thine own site..." this is the great

principal of Christ when he said unto the disciples “If any man desire to be first, [the same] shall be last of all...” Mark 9:35.

Though Saul’s intention to sacrifice the best animals unto the Lord was worthy, even religiously correct to do, it could not compensate for his pride and disobedience.

Our best of human intentions cannot replace the requirements of genuine humility and child-like obedience to the will of God.

~ This is the theme of that is expanded upon here in v.19

v.19-21 FALSE OBEDIENCE DEFENDED

Samuel in v.19, applies the standard of God’s command (the true test and measure for obedience) upon the situation and it tellingly reveals the failure of Saul. The word ‘FLY’ in the Hebrew refers to violent birds of prey who swoop down upon their victims.

v.20 Saul’s claim to obedience. But either blinded by his own rebellion and pride, or simply attempting to appease Samuel for the sake of self-preservation his claim was to a false and modified obedience, not to what God had commanded.

There were, yes, some elements of obedience...but again, the standard which was to govern the action and obedience of this anointed one of God was not what Saul thought, not what others in his courts thought, it’s never what we think...it is what God says.

As we just saw in v.13 & 15 human justification for rank disobedience can take on many forms. The irony is that often times in rebellion and blindness against what God plainly has communicated in His word, we can feel as though our personal explanations and rationalizations for disobedience somehow still satisfy God (this is, in large part Saul’s problem).

The test for Saul wasn't the standard of God's plainly communicated command but his own adaptation and modified application of the command.

Often our temptation is to believe that our human explanation of not obeying God's word is equal or equivalent to God's approval of our invented/make believe obedience...but on the contrary the reality of disobedience and the standard of God cannot be explained away just because an individual can think of a humanly 'logical explanation' for their lack of conformity to God's command.

Saul, in his own logic thought God would approve of his modified/invented obedience however as we see here in v.19 his actions were tested under the criteria of God's original command.

2Cr 10:12 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

Saul was not just going along with everyone else, he was the one leading them. Instead of comparing his obedience with God's command he was comparing his obedience with the those around him.

Our obedience does not depend upon any other standard than God's word.

v.22 THE PRIORITY OF OBEDIENCE

- The word 'delight' in the Hebrew. Bending toward or inclined toward – God is not pleased with and will not respond to hypocritical worship and worship becomes hypocritical when offered up from a disobedient heart. On the other hand God does incline Himself toward the worship and prayers of a faithful and obedient heart.

~ The remaining verses illustrate the cost of disobeying God.

v.23 THE COST OF DISOBEDIENCE

Here, in v.23 Saul's rejection of obeying God as He desired results in God rejecting him as king. Furthermore what is perhaps most striking is that the rebellion of Saul (50% obedience/modified obedience) is equated to complete paganism and unbelief. This is very stern and sobering when reflected upon because it implies that when at anytime man offers any obedience in any form or fashion not as commanded by God it is not accepted and furthermore it's frowned upon as idolatry and is judge with righteous rejection.

Amid the very loose and liberal approach of invented and modified obedience which is practiced among modern churches throughout the world one must stop and ask: are they considered in the eyes of God churches at all or temples erected unto a "Christian" idol?

Notice here that Saul is not disqualified from being king because of poor performance, meaning not fulfilling the all the duties of a strong king...no, in fact in a strictly carnal perception, Saul was quite a successful king. Saul was disqualified because of his disobedience to the command of God.

CLOSING

In closing let us recall that the saving work of our Lord Jesus Christ can be characterized by His unreserved obedience to the Father. When Christ defined His purpose for coming, our Lord said "I cam down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." John 6:38

Our Lord's supreme act of obedience upon the cross affords us the blessed participation in all the benefits of such a wonderful salvation and adoption into God's family and this friends calls us to a life of obedience – a life free of pride, pretext, and deception a life devoted to holiness of heart and mind and the truth of the gospel.