

Life Lesson 62
Saul's Disobedience
Text: I Samuel 15

Introduction

Is obeying part of the time good enough? I doubt your teacher would think it was okay if you only did the part of your schoolwork you wanted to do. Your mom would probably object if you just did your chores when you felt like it. We'll see in our story today what happened to a man who thought obeying God halfway would do.

The Story

"God has given me a message for you," Samuel told King Saul. "The Amalakites have sinned against the Lord. God told them long ago He would punish them for their sin. Now it is time. You must attack the Amalakites and totally destroy them. Don't save anything alive. Every single person and animal must be killed."

King Saul obeyed God's command and led his army against the Amalakites. They won a great victory, but then King Saul made another big mistake. How many of the people was Saul to destroy? *All* of them. How many of the animals? *All*. King Saul destroyed *most* of the people, but he kept the king, Agag, alive. He destroyed *most* of the animals, but kept the best alive. He just killed the crippled and old animals. King Saul obeyed God part of the way. When God's command interfered with Saul's judgement, Saul chose to go his own way. Partial obedience isn't obedience at all. It is disobedience.

Samuel came to see Saul, and Saul went out to meet him.

"I have obeyed God's command," Saul told him.

"Then what's that I hear?" Samuel replied. "It sounds like sheep bleating and oxen lowing."

"Oh, the people saved the best of the sheep and oxen of the Amalakites," Saul said.

"They are going to make a sacrifice to the Lord with them."

“Listen,” Samuel said. “I’m going to tell you the message God gave me for you last night.”

“Go ahead,” Saul said. “I’m listening.”

“When you were unimportant in your own eyes, God blessed you and put you in charge of all His people. He made you the ruler of all Israel. So, why didn’t you obey God when He gave you a command? Why did you try to keep some of the spoils of the battle for yourself? Didn’t you know that God saw you?”

“I obeyed God,” Saul said. “I destroyed everyone but Agag. The people kept alive the animals for a sacrifice, but I didn’t do it.”

Samuel wasn’t going to let Saul get by with foolish excuses. “Which do you think is more important to God?” Samuel asked. “Burnt offerings or obedience? I will tell you. Obedience is better than any sacrifice. Rebellion – obeying your own will instead of God’s will – is just like the sin of witchcraft to God. To be stubborn is like worshiping an idol. You have rejected God’s Word, and so God has rejected you from being the king.”

Saul at last admitted his sin.

“I disobeyed God because I was afraid to argue with the people,” Saul said. “Pardon my sin now and come back with me and I will worship the Lord.”

“Just being sorry won’t fix the mess you have made,” Samuel told him sternly. “You rejected God. Now He has rejected you.”

Saul was so upset that he grabbed Samuel’s mantle as he turned away. It ripped in two.

“The Lord has ripped your kingdom away from you,” Samuel told him. “Just as you have ripped my mantle. He has given the kingdom to someone better than you. It’s no use wailing about it. God isn’t like a man. He won’t lie and He won’t change His mind.”

“At least stay and honor me in front of the people,” Saul begged.

Poor Saul! He still hadn’t learned that it isn’t important what people think. Only what God thinks truly matters.

Samuel stayed and offered the sacrifice. Then he called for King Agag to be brought before him. King Agag came quite cheerfully. He was sure he was safe. “Because of you many mothers have lost their children,” Samuel told him. “Now your mother will lose her son.”

Samuel did what God had commanded Saul to do. He killed King Agag. At last the judgement of God was carried out on this sinful man. Samuel then went home. He never saw King Saul again. He didn’t forget Saul, though. He mourned him for a long time – crying and crying because Saul had turned away from obeying God.

The Life Lesson

None of you, I’m sure, would ever be so foolish as to be involved with witchcraft. Witchcraft is the worship of the devil. That would be pretty stupid, wouldn’t it? Yet, did you know that what Samuel told Saul is true for you, too? When you disobey God, it’s like the sin of witchcraft. When you don’t follow God, who are you following? The devil. You think you are being your own boss and going your own way, but really you are being led around by Satan.

None of you would be caught dead bowing down to a silly statue. But when you are stubborn and demand your own way, it’s like the sin of idolatry. Why? Because you are worshiping something other than God. You are worshiping yourself. When you give anyone or anything first place in your heart, it becomes an idol to you. So, you see, stubbornness is as the sin of idolatry.

Perhaps you think you can partly obey God. Maybe you come to church when it’s convenient, but not when you have something you would rather do. Is that obedience? No, when you obey only when you feel like it – that is disobedience.

How about if you read your Bible when there is nothing else to do? No, God wants you to obey and be faithful when you feel like it and when you don’t. Anything less than total obedience isn’t good enough for God. Total surrender – obeying God completely – that is what salvation is all about. God wants your whole heart!

Review Questions

What did God command King Saul to do?

Kill all the wicked Amalakites and all their animals.

Did Saul obey?

No, he kept the best of the animals and King Agag alive.

Samuel told Saul that obedience was better than what?

Sacrifice

Rebellion is like what?

Witchcraft

What did Samuel do to wicked King Agag?

He executed him.

Did Samuel ever see Saul after that?

No

How did Samuel feel about Saul?

He was sad and mourned for him.

Does it please God when we obey only when we feel like it?

No