

Sermon Mark S. Aites
PARTIAL OBEDIENCE

TEXT: 1 SAM. 15:1-29

INTRODUCTION:

1. In the August 12, 1985 edition of TIME magazine, a 28 yr old victim of aids made the following statement: "I'm very scared to die such a young man. I'd like a little more time. I lived in the fast lane. If only God will give me a break." (The Rebirth Of America, p. 109)
2. In essence, the man was asking God what men have asked for, for centuries: "Give me a second chance."
3. From Scripture, we find a man who wanted a second chance; His name was Saul, the first king of Israel.
4. Lessons to be learned from **1 Sam. 15**:

DISCUSSION:

I. PARTIAL OBEDIENCE IS NOT ACCEPTABLE.

1 Sam. 15:3,9 *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 donkey.*

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.*

- A. The command was to *utterly destroy* the Amalekites, a phrase which means, "to put under the ban."
1. The term is used generally of objects or persons which are under the judgment of God, and are to be destroyed or made the special property of God.
 2. It is also used in **Josh. 6:17-21**, where it is translated *accursed*.
 - 1) In that account it referred to taking valuables from the city of Jericho.
 - 2) To do so was to take that which was accursed which would bring a curse upon Israel.
 - 3) We know in that story that Achan did that very thing, and caused Israel to be defeated at Ai (**Josh. 7**).
 3. This same term corresponds to the radical removal of cancer by a surgeon to prevent malignancy.
 4. The idea here is that the Amalekites and their possessions were cursed in the

eyes of God.

- 1) The Israelites, under Saul's leadership, were to destroy them.
 - 2) And we can understand it in much the same way as a surgeon who destroys a cancerous growth.
5. God had made it known that they were not to save anyone or anything of Amalek.

B. Saul made the decision to obey God, but only partially.

1. We note that part of the command given to Saul was to *go and strike Amalek*.
2. Saul assembled his army and went to fight with Amalek as instructed; and he also struck Amalek as instructed.
3. In spite of his obedience to this part of the instructions, he failed to obey the Lord by completely destroying the Amalekites.

C. God had his reasons for wanting the Amalekites destroyed; and Saul was wrong for not carrying through with this order.

1. We find in **Lev. 18**, a list of the sins of the people in the land where Amalek was located.
2. They were wicked and warlike people; and they attacked the Israelites first at Rephidim (**Exod. 17:8-13; Deut. 25:17-18**).
3. At a later time they attacked Israel again at Hormah (**Num. 14:43,45**).
4. They made life miserable for Israel when they joined forces with Eglon, king of Moab in battle against them (**Judg. 3:13**).
5. We can include also when they joined with the Midianites in their raids on the crops and flocks of the Israelites.

D. By way of application:

1. One of my friends once wrote, and rightly so: "Some people do not know what obedience means."
2. Obedience to someone, or to obey someone, means to do all that they say.
3. Many people today assume that partial obedience to God is acceptable and pleasing in His sight.

4. Some will reason: "If I believe in God, and attend a church service once a week, then I have rendered sufficient obedience to obtain a home in heaven."
5. There are those who believe in God, have repented of their sins, and even have confessed Christ, but refuse to be baptized.
 - 1) They are like Saul, rendering partial obedience to the commands of God.
 - 2) Instead, they listen to the thoughts of men:

Acts 5:29 *Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.*

1 Pet. 3:21 *The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

6. Remember, Jesus became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him (**Heb. 5:8-9**).

II. WE CANNOT BLAME OTHERS FOR OUR SINS.

1 Sam. 15:13-15 *And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.*

15:14 *And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?*

15:15 *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.*

- A. It is common for people that have been caught in an unpleasant situation to blame their problem or dilemma on someone else.
 1. We remind ourselves that such was the case from the earliest moments of man's history (**Gen. 3**).
 2. It was Cook who observed that this was another indication of the continuing break-down of Saul's morality.
- B. The situation in which Saul had found himself had been coming on for some time.
 1. In **1 Sam. 13:8-14**, Saul chose to offer sacrifices at Gilgal without Samuel.
 2. It is apparent that Saul had been gradually drifting from being obedient to God.
 3. His gradual drifting from God placed him in an unpleasant situation so he blamed

the people.

C. The application for us:

1. It is popular to blame someone else when we are in trouble.
 - 1) A man troubled by Alcoholism blames it on his wife and says, "She drove me to drink."
 - 2) The student fails a test and blames it on the teacher saying, "The test was too hard," but others in the class didn't have any trouble.
 - 3) Couples end up in divorce court and tell the judge it was the other mates' fault, and that they were completely without fault in the matter.
 - 4) A man gets behind on paying his taxes and blames the IRS for being too cruel.
 - 5) A young boy lies to his mother and when caught in that lie blames it on his friend who lives across the street.
 - 6) The list can go on and on.
2. Christians who get caught in sin will frequently blame it on someone or something else.
 - 1) For example, A Christian forsakes the assembly and blames it on the elders for choosing to have worship services the same night as their favorite TV show is on.
 - 2) We live in the day of rationalizing things, and when things don't go our way, someone or something is to blame.
3. Who are we going to blame on judgment day if we are lost?
 - 1) In **Rom. 2:6**, Paul talks of the righteous judgment of God, *who will render to every man according to his deeds.*
 - 2) The same thought is echoed in **Rev. 20:13** *And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.*
 - 3) If we are going to be judged by what we have done in this life, then how can we blame it on someone else if we miss heaven?
 - 4) Jesus tells us that by our words we will either be justified or condemned (**Matt. 12:36-37**). Can we blame someone else for the words that we have spoken?

4. We must learn that the one to blame for our sins is ourselves.

III. "TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE".

1 Sam. 15:20-23 *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.*

15:21 *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.*

15:22 *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.*

15:23 *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.*

A. Saul sought to hide his disobedience under the guise of religion.

1. He opened his argument to Samuel with a misleading statement: *I did obey the voice of the Lord.*
2. He claimed that what they took from Amalek was the choicest of the spoils, and that the people took these spoils and the sheep and oxen to sacrifice to the Lord at Gilgal.
3. His statement sounded good; it sounded as though he had these good intentions to sacrifice to the Lord, but his effort to hide behind his religious efforts had failed.

B. Samuel gives his indictment of Saul.

1. In effect, Do you really think that the Lord is more impressed with your burnt offerings and sacrifices than obedience to His voice?
2. Rebellion is as bad as the sin of witchcraft (or divination).
3. Your insubordination (disobedience) is as bad as sin and idolatry.
4. Therefore, he informs Saul that because of his disobedience, God has rejected him from being king.

C. Application for us:

1. We cannot hide our disobedience under the guise of religion.
2. To worship God and fail to live according to His will in obedience is a waste of time.

3. He is not saying that worship is not important, but rather is pointing out that obedience is necessary to make your worship acceptable.
4. Those who claim to be religious with their fancy cathedrals and organs and choirs, and yet do not follow the teachings of the Scriptures, but rather follow the traditions of men, cannot then be pleasing to God.
5. Many people have good intentions but fail to obey the voice of the Lord.

Matt. 7:21 *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

IV. WE WILL NOT ALWAYS GET A SECOND CHANCE.

1 Sam. 15:24-29 *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.*

15:25 *Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD.*

15:26 *And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.*

15:27 *And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent.*

15:28 *And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou.*

15:29 *And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent.*

- A. Saul finally confessed that he had sinned, but his confession did not appear to be sincere, for as you read on in **vs 30**, we find that he was more concerned about his reputation with the people and not genuinely repenting of his sins before God.
- B. We note that he asked Samuel to pardon his sin and he assumed that this would take care of it.
- C. Samuel informs him again that God has rejected him from being king, and Saul either in anger or desperation reaches for Samuel and tears his garment.
- D. He is told that someone else will be king, and then makes a statement of great significance: *God is not a man that he should change his mind.*
- E. Application for us:
 1. Confessions forced by difficulty are of no avail: God looks at the heart.
 2. Calling on God only when you are in a bind is seldom of any permanent quality.

3. Saul assumed that he would get another chance, which is certainly common with us today. Like those who blame others:
 - 1) The convict stands before the judge and begs for a second chance.
 - 2) The speeder pleads with the policeman for another chance.
 - 3) Many times those in broken marriages plead with their mates for another chance.
 - 4) The student after realizing that he has failed begs the teacher for a 2nd chance.
 - 5) The man who is fired from his job begs his employer to give him another chance.
 - 6) Young people experiment with sex and contract an unwanted disease and then cry to the doctor for a second chance.
4. Perhaps that is what is wrong with so many who spurn the invitation to become a Christian, they assume that God is like man and therefore will give them another chance.

Isa. 55:8-9 *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.*

55:9 *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

5. Your chance, or your opportunity, is now!
 - 1) You have no promise of tomorrow.
 - 2) And most important realize that you won't get a second chance.
 - 3) In the account of the rich man and Lazarus, we learn that the rich man found himself in torment, and did not get a second chance (**Luke 16:24ff**).

CONCLUSION:

1. Today is the day of salvation.
2. Don't make the mistake Saul did; don't assume that you will get a second chance, and that all will work out:
 - 1) You are getting your opportunity now.
 - 2) **Prov. 27:1** *Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*