

Saul's Disobedience

1 Samuel 15

Introduction

1. Saul is sent by God on a mission against Israel's long standing enemy (vs.1-3).
 - a. The mission and Saul's orders were to engage Amalekites in battle and to destroy them all and all they possess by putting death all human and animal life.
 - 1) The phrase "utterly destroy" is derived from the Hebrew *Charam*, which means 'to ban, devote...dedicate to destruction (cp. Lev.27:28-29; Deut.7:2; Jos.6:17-19)
 - 2) "When a city or people were thus made *cherem*, everything living was to be destroyed, and no part of the spoil to fall to the conquerors" (Barnes).
 - b. The Amalekites had been bitter enemies of the children of Israel since their flight from Egypt, for well over 300 years, constantly harassing and plundering their land and property. But the sin for which they are now punished was their attack on Israel as they fled Egypt (Ex.17:8-16; Deut. 25:17-19; Num.14:45; Jdg. 6:3 1 Sam.14:48).
2. Fully aware of his mission, Saul leads Israel to victory over Amalek but disobeys the command of God (vs.4-9).
 - a. Saul's failure is denounced by God as having "*turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands*" (vs.11) – partial, incomplete, disobedience (cp. Num.14:24, Caleb).
 - b. Confronted by Samuel, Saul first denies his unfaithfulness, and then blames the people, before admitting his responsibility and failure to fully follow God's orders (vs.12-23: especially vs.13, 15, 20-21, 24).

Discussion

I. The End Does Not Justify the Means

- A. Saul thought his offer of worship was justifiable grounds for disobeying God's direct command to destroy all life and somehow excuse his disobedience. He was wrong (vs.22).
 1. This tendency to believe that worship is a substitute for obedience was a constant problem among faithless Israel (Ps50:8-15; 51:16-17; Jer.7:22-24. Hos.6:6).
 2. God will not overlook the sin in our lives simply because we offer Him worship (cp Heb.10:22; Jas.4:8-10).
- B. Both in terms of our worship and our moral behavior we must avoid the attitude that the good we achieve justifies disobedience to God and acting by God's authority (Col.3:17).
 1. For example, the use of instruments in worship and sponsoring churches (Eph.5:19; Acts 11:29-30).
 2. The good we do or think we might achieve is no justification for acting contrary to and not in accordance with God's word (Gal.6:1 cp. Rom.3:8; 6:1).

II. Negligence Is Plain Disobedience

- A. Saul viewed his total victory over the Amalekites as mission accomplished dismissing other aspects of his mission as inconsequential. His failure to fulfill every aspect of God's command constituted outright disobedience (vs.24).
 1. Similarly, we are wrong to think that God will view us obedient despite our disobedience. This is an attitude that both Jesus and the apostles condemned (Mt.5:18-19; 23:23; Gal.3:10; Jas.9-10).
 2. There are denominational practices and teachings that clearly demonstrate this characteristic of observing aspects of God's word to the neglect of others that are equally important:
 - a. Partaking of the Lord's Supper on a day other than that specified in Scripture (Acts 20:7).
 - b. Teaching that one can be saved, without baptism (Mark 16:16).
 - c. Are we neglecting certain Christian responsibilities – worship, teaching the lost etc (Heb.10:25; 1 Pt. 3:15)

Conclusion

1. This account of Saul's disobedience, like other accounts of disobedience, was written for our learning and admonition, so it's vital that we pay heed to the things it teaches us, on the importance religious and moral faithfulness (1 Corinthians 10:11; Jude 5-7; James 1:17 cp. Malachi 3:6).
2. It is only by doing only and all what God requires of us can we be assured of His blessing, and finally, a place in heaven (1 John 3:21).