

## Obey (1 Samuel 15:11-23)

### 1. Samuel's Anger (v.11)

Angry: to “kindle” or “to burn.” It is the same verb that describes Cain’s anger toward Abel (Gen 4:5-6), Potiphar’s rage toward Joseph (Genesis 39:19), and the anger that Joseph’s brothers would have had toward themselves once Joseph revealed who he was (Genesis 45:5). Who or what is Samuel angry at?

#### A. Situation:

- He has walked with the LORD all of his life (12:3). In his youth, he served under Eli’s priestly functions at Shiloh. Despite the ungodliness of Hophni and Phinehas, he grew in stature and favor in not only man but also the LORD (2:26).
- Once Hophni, Phinehas, and Eli died, he was the leader of the nation. From his 20s through his 50s, he was the mouthpiece of the LORD to the people.
- When the elders demanded a human king, he was so distressed that he not only prayed to the LORD but had to be reminded three separate times to obey the voice of the people (8:7, 9, 22).
- Samuel hears these words from the LORD: “I regret that I made Saul king.”

\*Samuel is angry that despite his strong personal opinion (including his own doubts on the matter) he yielded to the LORD’s command. He is angry at the continued leadership failures of Saul as king (10:22; 13:9-13, 14:2, 24, 32, 37, 42, 45; 15:11). He is also trying to reconcile the LORD “regretting” (15:11) and at how often he has to rebuke Saul for disobedience, despite all of his warnings and teachings (9:27; 10:15, 25; 11:15; 12:12-16, 20-25).

#### B. Solution:

- He “cried out.” This same verb is used to describe the Israelites “crying out” in their distress as slaves in Egypt (Ex. 2:23). It is also used to describe the “distress” of the Israelites in their idolatry during the time of Judges (Judg 3:9, 15; 6:6-7; 10:10, 14).
- This “crying out” was all night. What was said, what was done, we can only speculate. However, when dawn came, Samuel moved forward in faith.

### 2. Saul’s Deception (v.13-23)

Samuel knows that Saul has rejected the LORD’s commandments (15:3) but does not know any more details, nor where Saul has gone. He is eventually informed that Saul has set up a monument after himself at Carmel and is on the way to Gilgal (v.12).

#### A. Salutation (v.13):

- Saul greets Samuel with a blessing as though nothing is wrong. Saul has performed the commandment of the LORD! (v.3)

#### B. Recrimination, Deflection, and Argumentation (v.13-15):

- Samuel hears the sheep bleating and oxen lowing as asks a rhetorical question: “Why do I hear the sound of animals?”

- Saul assumes full ownership and praises in matters of obedience (v.13) but deflects in blame to others when disobedience ensues (first and third person singular and plural pronouns from v.13-15).

#### C. Position, Mission, and Vindication (v.16-20):

- Samuel has enough of the clamoring and tells Saul to stop. It is time for Saul to be quiet and listen to Samuel. Saul was humble, and/or came from humble beginnings (9:21).
- Saul positionally was the king and should be able to command his own troops. Instead, he is passive. Externally, he is a handsome and impressive man (9:2; 10:24). Internally, however, he is not remarkable.
- He was given one mission: destroy the Amalekites completely (15:3).
- Saul vindicates himself and the soldiers again, but only in the realm of partial obedience. He then disassociates himself from his soldiers (v.15) claiming that they had a noble motive; he minimizes not only his disobedience but also that of his soldiers, he shifts blame to the soldiers (they did it), downplays the disobedience (it was to sacrifice), and then claims to obey for the second time.

#### D. Deception and Intention (v.12, 20-21)

- Saul finally decides to inform Samuel that he kept the Amalekite king alive (Agag). Saul inserts this in between his obedience and the people’s desire to sacrifice to the LORD.
- Why did Saul keep Agag alive?
  - i. He is prideful: Victors would oftentimes spare the King of the enemy and march triumphantly throughout the land
  - ii. He wants a strong political and military alliance with Judah: Since the Civil War (Judg 19-21), there has been residual tension between Benjamin and Judah. The Amalekites would oftentimes raid villages and towns in Judah. In order to curry favor, he not only kept Agag alive but built a monument (v.12) after himself in Judah as a reminder of what he did.
- Saul is either a masterful manipulator or an exceedingly deceived and ignorant man. He may truly believe that he has obeyed and has a clear conscience. A clear conscience, however, is no guarantee of innocence.

#### E. Rebellion (v. 22-23)

- Obedience is better than sacrifice (Ps 50:9-11; Isa 1:10-17; Jer 7:21-26; Hos 6:6; Amos 5:21-24; Mark 12:28-34). Divination is prohibited in the OT (Deut 18:10-14).
- Sacrifices that are not done out of a heart of obedience to the LORD are no different than pagans who sacrifice to other gods; it is likened to the teraphim, or household gods (Gen. 31:31-35; Judg. 17:5) and is idolatry.
- The LORD is pleased in obedience and sacrifice. Sacrifice without obedience is arrogant and rebellious. Saul is not justified in his disobedience, regardless of his intentions to sacrifice.
- God wants a heart of worship, not just an outward act of worship. For this reason, Saul’s kingship will be torn from him, and the soldiers’ sacrifices will not be acceptable to the LORD.