

The Consequence of Disobedience
Saul's disobedience leads to rejection as king
Invitation to Leadership Series - Part 8

1 Samuel 15:1-35
Jun 21-22, 2025

Introduction

- 2 Week Parade of Champion Pastors: Bishop Lovelace and Pastor Ed from House of Bread!!!
- King of All – it's a famous phrase... 'Either God is king OF all or not king AT all.' It means that either God is king or He's not. A king is someone in charge at all times. If we are picking and choosing what we will or will not do for God, then we do not consider Him to be our king.
- Jesus calls us out – in the Gospels it records Jesus challenging the integrity of His followers. He explains a bunch of commands and how they should be fulfilled. For example, He says:
 - Love your enemies, not just those who love you.
 - Don't judge other people or you will be judged with the same harshness.
 - Don't be a hypocrite and tell others to do what you are secretly doing.
 - A good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit. Don't pretend to be something you aren't or fool yourself by living a divided life.
 - And He drops this bomb toward the end:
 - Lk 6:46 - "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"
- Lip service vs. being a servant – I believe that human beings exist in at least 5 different dynamics: Physical, Emotional, Mental, Spiritual, & Social. We struggle with selfishness and sin in each one of these dynamics. But one of our worst areas in our social realities is our desire to manipulate through words. Words are super powerful for a bunch of reasons, but one vital aspect is that since human beings can't read each other's minds or hearts, we have to TRUST what each other says. Unfortunately, when we want to lie or manipulate we know that we can say words we don't mean but still get some of the benefit as if we do. [GIVE EXAMPLES].
 - Lip service vs. being a servant – We even use manipulation and lies to convince people that we are more spiritually mature than we really are. We can do things and say things that make people think we are better people than we actually are. The worst version of this is when we try to manipulate God this way. We do and say things religiously on the outside but then selfishly live our own way in the inside. Sometimes we even fool ourselves.
 - Would you Rather – would you rather have someone say they are trustworthy or be trustworthy? Would you rather have someone buy you presents but cheat on you or have no present and not cheat? Would you rather have someone steal all your money but buy you a car with some of it, or not have someone steal all your money in the first place?
 - God's Version...

God desires our OBEDIENCE more than our SACRIFICE

- Theme today - King Saul thinks he has a better way. When it really came down to it, he was willing to disobey if he thought he had a better idea than God. **How often do we do that?**
- Back on series
 - Where we are at – **A book about 3 key figures** in Israel's history: Samuel; Saul & David.
 - Saul was selected by God to be the first king – he was impressive looking, big and a warrior. **He led battles and usually won.** Unfortunately, it's **revealed time and again that he doesn't really have a relationship with God and is a bit of a paranoid control freak that uses religion as a control mechanism.**
 - God hinted He's moving on – at one point Saul disobediently waited for Samuel to offer the sacrifice to God and did it himself out of fear. Samuel rebuked him and said that **God is going to move on from Saul with someone else. Saul is treading on thin ice...**
 - Today = it's going to get personal for all of us. **We are going to watch Saul do something with serious consequences, that we have done many times ourselves.**

Lesson

- Judgment War
 - God calls for the judgment destruction of the Amalekites
 - **1 Samuel 15:1–3 – “And Samuel said to Saul, “The Lord sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel; now therefore listen¹ to the words of the Lord. ² Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘I have noted² what Amalek did to Israel in opposing them on the way when they came up out of Egypt.³ ³ Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.’ ”**
 - And Samuel said to Saul, “The Lord sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel; now therefore listen to the words of the Lord. – Samuel is reminding Saul that God has placed him in authority over Saul spiritually. God used Samuel to set Saul into place as king. Therefore Samuel is the liaison between him and God. God has something to tell Saul and he needs to listen.

¹ “The Hebrew emphasizes “I,” hence, *It was I whom* Samuel was the kingmaker appointed by God and therefore his instructions must be obeyed by the king, who rules over Israel, the covenant people of Yahweh.” NICOT, David Toshia Tsumura

² “For the expression *I have taken note of* (*pqd; or “I do remember”), see Ps. 8:5, where the word pair “be mindful of” (*zkr) // “take note of” (*pqd) appears; also note that “take note of” (*pqd) here is a variant expression of “remember” (*zkr) in Deut. 25:17: “Remember (*zākōi*) what Amalek did to you on the way when ...” The phrase *on the way* is an adverbial expression in both passages. 1 Sam. 14:48 was a link to this event (for the Amalekites, see on that verse).” NICOT

³ “This verse refers to the Amalekite attack on Israel from behind at the oasis of Rephidim during the journey from Egypt to Sinai (Exod. 17:8–13) when the Israelites “were faint and weary” (Deut. 25:18). At that time the Lord swore to Moses, “I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven” (Exod. 17:14b). This became a command for Israel in Deut. 25:19: “you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.” If Saul is to lead the country as king under Yahweh, it is his duty to carry out Yahweh’s commands, particularly this command, *go and strike Amalek!* (v. 3).” NICOT

- Thus says the Lord of hosts, - In the Old Testament (and Old Covenant era) any time someone says, 'thus says the Lord' it means God told them directly and this is exactly what God is saying. God is never wrong. God is pure. God is exact. So, whatever is about to come out of their mouth BETTER be what God really. There were serious and possible life and death consequences if it wasn't right. It's a big deal to talk for God. In the New Covenant (New Testament era and beyond), we all have the indwelling Holy Spirit who is talking to us continually and talking through us fairly often and new structures were set up to learn how to speak on God's behalf. There is a lot more grace and structure to handle people being wrong. Nevertheless, I am extremely cautious of using the phrase, 'God said...'
- 'I have noted what Amalek did to Israel in opposing them on the way when they came up out of Egypt. – In **Exodus 17** we read about Israel just getting out of slavery to Egypt and struggling to live in the desert. **In that weakened state, the Amalekites** (likely named after their main forefather Amalek) **attacked them**. This was the famous story of how as Joshua fought, **Moses** was up on the hill and when he had his **arms raised they won and when he put his arms down, they lost** (so Aaron and Hur had to help him by holding his arms up). They ultimately won. **God was ticked off** and proclaimed a judgment on the Amalekites. God said that he would wipe them off the face of the earth and that war will be continually against them from generation to generation. So, as much as this was a beef between Israel and the Amalekites it was more of a fight between God and the Amalekites. God even reiterated the vow against them in Deut 25 saying that once they were settled as a nation they needed to wipe them out. This is that chance.
 - Ex 17:8–16 - *"Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. ⁹ So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." ¹⁰ So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. ¹¹ Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. ¹² But Moses' hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. ¹³ And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword. ¹⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven." ¹⁵ And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The LORD Is My Banner, ¹⁶ saying, "A hand upon the throne of the LORD! The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."*
 - Dt 25:17–19 - *"Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you came out of Egypt, ¹⁸ how he attacked you on the way when you were faint and weary, and cut off your tail, those who were lagging behind you, and he did not fear God. ¹⁹ Therefore when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your enemies around you, in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you shall not forget."*

- Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction⁴ all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.’ – When you know the background to this story it doesn’t sound so strange. It’s still brutal but it makes more sense. The Amalekites were supposed to be **wiped out COMPLETELY as a vow that God spoke against them for judgment**. So, here is God following through on His word: Kill them all and their animals. Burn it all to the ground. Leave nothing. It was **very clear**.
- Saul Smash!
 - Saul leads the defeat of the Amalekites
 - 1 Samuel 15:4–9 – *“So Saul summoned the people and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand men on foot, and ten thousand men of Judah.”*⁵ *And Saul came to the city of Amalek and lay in wait in the valley.*⁶ *Then Saul said to the Kenites, “Go, depart; go down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them. For you showed kindness to all the people of Israel when they came up out of Egypt.” So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.*⁷ *And Saul defeated the Amalekites from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt.*⁸ *And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive and devoted to destruction all the people with the edge of the sword.*⁹ *But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fattened calves and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them. All that was despised and worthless they devoted to destruction.”*
 - So Saul summoned the people and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand men on foot, and ten thousand men of Judah. – Saul rallied his troops in Israel (depending on the season major Israel was considered quasi-separate from the South/Judah section) to fight the Amalekites and came up with 210,000. That’s a HUGE army for Israel.
 - And Saul came to the city of Amalek and lay in wait in the valley.⁶ – Saul is a warrior and knows about strategy. There’s no indicator that God was calling the moment by moment shots in this war, so **it was an assignment**

⁴ “In the Bible, it denotes to devote or set aside something as Yahweh’s share or booty. Usually all living things — men, women, children, and livestock — were killed, as in this verse and Josh. 6:21; see also 1 Sam. 22:19. In Josh. 6:18–19, 24; 7:1, metal was “devoted” by being put in the Lord’s treasury — other objects were burnt. According to Deut. 20:10–18, when “distant cities that are at a distance from you ...” were attacked, people and livestock could be spared as a work force or as plunder, but for cities within Israel, all living things were devoted. The purpose was to prevent syncretism, that is, “lest they teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshipping their gods, and you sin against the Lord your God.” In the case in this chapter, the ban is based on Deut. 25:19.” NICOT

⁵ “Saul listens to the Lord’s order to *utterly destroy* the Amalekites and their belongings and puts it into action. He first summons and musters the soldiers at Telaim. Klein thinks that 210,000 is too large in comparison with Saul’s army, which “numbered anywhere from 600 up to 3,000 (1 Sam. 13:2, 15).” However, such a number is not impossible, since, as noted above, this chapter did not necessarily follow directly after that great victory over the Philistines (14:23, 31; see on 15:1); it may have been several years later, during which Saul’s army must have grown greatly. The point here is that Saul had enough manpower to outnumber Amalek. It may be that such a large army together with the divinely justified purpose and command (vv. 2–3) was a temptation for Saul not to trust on God’s help. Compare the view that *eleph* here should denote a “military unit” NICOT

⁶ “The term *wadi* probably refers to the Wadi/Brook of Egypt as in Ezek. 47:19; 48:28. It was the traditional southern boundary of the land, as in Num. 34:5; Ezekiel; etc. It is the Wadi el-’Arîshel, which flows into the Mediterranean about 50 miles south of Gaza.” NICOT

for Saul to handle. Go out there, come up with an army, get a strategy and take the Amalekites out. So that's what he did. He gathered everyone together and rallied at a hiding spot in a valley. He had one more thing to do.

- Then Saul said to the Kenites, "Go, depart; go down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them. For you showed kindness to all the people of Israel when they came up out of Egypt." So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.⁷ – The Kenite people were originally descendants from Cain. The name Kenite means 'smith' as in blacksmith. A forger. The connection to Israel is that Moses' father-in-law was a Kenite (Judges 1:16; 4:11). They were seen as friendly people. As a matter of fact, in the very story of why the Amalekites were such bad guys, we have the follow up story of Jethro (Moses' father-in-law) coming to help (compare/contrast). At this point in history the Kenites were nearby or connected to the Amalekites and Saul wanted to make sure they had a heads up of the coming attack so they could get out of the way. They did.
- And Saul defeated the Amalekites from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt⁸ – Saul did what he was good at. He led a successful war. He did a beat down on the Amalekites and in a wide territory (traditionally the Ishmaelite territory boundaries). **Big win.**
- And he took Agag⁹ the king of the Amalekites alive and devoted to destruction all the people with the edge of the sword. – Saul took the king of the Amalekites prisoner (Agag) and killed everyone else: Men, women and children. **So far it sounds good with one caveat:** What's the deal with a prisoner? Historically kings would be taken prisoner for either a ransom, a swap, a bragging right, or something of benefit. It's not clear why Saul wanted him alive.
- But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fattened calves and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them. All that was despised and worthless they devoted to destruction. – Saul and his team got rid of all the damaged flocks and herds and brought the best back to Israel's

⁷ "Saul shows favor to *the Kenites*, "a Midianite phratry," who were a tribe of metalworkers (the name means "smith") in the desert south of Israel and Judah. They lived among the Amalekites at the time of the Israelite settlement, according to the LXX of Judg. 1:16. The term *kindness* (*hesed*) means "loyalty, faithfulness, goodness" as expressed by a deed loyal or faithful to the other party in appreciation of the latter's goodness (see 2 Sam. 2:5). There is no biblical account of this "kindness," but Moses' father-in-law was Kenite (Judg. 4:11), and he came to meet Moses after the attack of the Amalekites (Exod. 17:8–18:12). Their "kindness" is sharply contrasted with the evil conduct of the Amalekites (see Deut. 25:18). David also did not raid them during his Ziklag period (1 Sam. 27:8–10; 30:29). However, there is not enough ground for postulating an actual treaty relationship or alliance between Israel and the Kenites. See on 2 Sam. 2:5." NICOT

⁸ "The location of *Havilah* (so MT, LXX; also in Gen. 25:18 with *Shur*) is unknown. *From Havilah up to Shur* is the extent of the Ishmaelite territory in Gen. 25:18. McCarter reconstructs "from the Wadi," for it was "at the Wadi" (see v. 5 above) that Saul *lay in wait* while warning the Kenites, but his emendation has no textual basis. *Shur* refers to a wilderness region in northwest Sinai, on the eastern border of Egypt; see 1 Sam. 27:8." NICOT

⁹ "Saul captures the Amalekite king Agag alive; he may have thought kings should get special consideration, just as Ahab spared Ben-hadad as his "brother" (1 K. 20:30–34). *Agag*, mentioned only here and Num. 24:7, is either a name or a title, like "Pharaoh" or "Achish" (see on 1 Sam. 21:11). The fact that Haman in Esther is called the "Agagite" (Esth. 3:1; etc.) might possibly show that Agag had become almost "the type of the enemy of Yahweh and his people." NICOT

territory. The Bible is clear to explain that it was BOTH Saul and the people who made this call, but **since Saul was king and was the shot caller, he was ultimately responsible for the decision.** In any other war this is how you do it: you decimate the enemy, chase them out, take their good stuff and burn the bad stuff. Normal plan for a normal day. But this was no normal day.

- Christianity on autopilot – **how many times do we live our Christianity as if we know the plan and know what's right and wrong?** How often do we ask God or check in with Him for the day-to-day stuff? You can tell your posture on this subject by **how many times you pray to the Lord for direction and His opinion.** If you are always giving Him directives or requests then it's likely you think that you know what's best. If you ask a lot of questions it's clear you want His opinion.
- When God has a bad plan – Why did Saul keep the king and animals alive? Weren't the directions clear? Wipe it all out. Maybe. At first it seemed like a good idea to Saul and there shouldn't be any problem with that. The Amalekites were enemies after all. So, sure, wipe it all out. They were tough guys and could kill women and kids. But **somehow along the way some of the soldiers brought up some questions:** "Why in the world are we throwing away completely useful stuff? Don't we need more flocks and herds? What's the point of burning it all down? The sheep and cows didn't do anything wrong. They are just animals." And **the more Saul began to reason it out it seemed a bit weird to him too. He started thinking through the practicality of it all.** And that's where he made the fatal mistake. **He reasoned himself out of obedience.**
- Missed it by that much
 - God and Samuel call Saul on his disobedience
 - 1 Samuel 15:10–15 – *"The word of the Lord came to Samuel: ¹¹ "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments." And Samuel was angry, and he cried to the Lord all night.^{10 12} And Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning. And it was told Samuel, "Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself¹ and turned and passed on and went down to Gilgal."¹³ And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed be you to the Lord. I have performed the commandment of the Lord."¹⁴ And Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen that I hear?"¹⁵ Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the*

¹⁰ "Since the subjects of the two verbs are different in the expression *And Samuel was angry; and he cried out* (lit., "it burned to/with regard to Samuel and he cried"), the two actions are not sequential. Samuel was probably angry at Saul. What exactly caused Samuel's crying out *to the Lord all the night* is not certain. However, it suggests that as the prophet of the Lord he feels God's inner feeling, the divine *pathos*, violently." NICOT

¹¹ "Early in the morning Samuel rose and went out to meet Saul, but he was informed that Saul had gone to Carmel to erect a *monument* for his victory." NICOT

people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice to the Lord your God, and the rest we have devoted to destruction.”

- The word of the Lord came to Samuel: - this is God going direct to Samuel, His **point man**. It's going to be a big deal. It has a formal ring to it like it's going to be an official statement of importance.
- “I regret¹² that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments.” – God is saying: Saul was a bad choice as king. But who chose Saul to be king? God. So that's why I believe that it's translated as God saying, 'I regret the choice.' But this suggests that God didn't know what was going to happen (when we regret it almost always means we didn't think it through, and it turned out worse than we assumed). But God knows all things and doesn't make mistakes. So, what is being said here? I think this is important to understand although I'm grasping here. I think the point all along in God's mind was to **choose Saul as their first king to thoroughly explain why kings are a bad idea. I think the point was to fail.** I think that God picked the type of king they wanted, and it was necessary for Saul to fail because it would demonstrate that they didn't know what they truly needed. They needed God. So, did God make a mistake? No. Did He make a choice that He knew would turn out wrong? Yes. Did it turn out wrong? Yes. **Was that a bummer and was it going to cause His people pain? Yes.** Does that hurt His heart? Yes. And what is it that led Saul's downfall ultimately? Disobedience and lack of relationship with God. He had other priorities and agendas and therefore made the wrong decisions. His role was to do what God directed him to do.
- An emotional unshifting God – one of the challenging things to understand about God is that He is both emotionally connective and involved while still being the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is **simultaneously loving and compassionate and yet constant and faithful without being flaky.** We don't know what a purified version of that looks like. As human beings we can either do one or the other. We can either be emotional, and our version requires ebbing and flowing in passion, memory, strength, perspective, etc. OR we can be constant and reliable and steady. God can do both because it's purified in that way that emotion ties to solidity, only found in God.
- And Samuel was angry, and he cried to the Lord all night. – It's **not clear what part** Samuel was mad about. Was Samuel mad at Saul for blowing it? Was Samuel mad at the situation that it was a failure because he was the one who anointed Saul in public and that failure would be attached to

¹² “The verbal phrase *I regret (nihamti)* is a performative perfect, and the Ni. pf. 1 c.s. of this verb appears one other place in a performative utterance with Yahweh as the speaker, in Gen. 6:7. In both places, Yahweh expresses regret for his previous actions, his making Saul king or his creation of man; the function of the language used here is thus *emotive* as well as performative. Yahweh's “regret” (or “repentance”) is anthropopathic; “yet it conveys an important truth about a God who is not impassive or static, but dynamic in his interaction with his creation.” The verb (Ni.) itself is a key word in this chapter and reappears in v. 35 as well as twice in v. 29 (“change one's mind”). It is also used in other passages when God is moderating his judgment (2 Sam. 24:16).” NICOT

him? Was Samuel mad about the ramifications of what would happen to the nation due to Saul's inability to be a man of God? It's unclear. Whatever it was, Samuel didn't like how things were falling apart, and he cried out to God in prayer all night. He was tore up. He relied on God and that's where his heart was planted.

- And Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning. – When I hear about someone doing things early in the morning it means there was **NO DELAY**. Samuel had talked with God all night and by morning he was only waiting for Saul to wake up. The decision was made. He knew what he had to do and he was going to do it. Samuel was obedient while Saul was not.
- Godly confrontation – **When is it proper to confront someone?** Isn't confronting unkind? Should Christians confront other people? It creates tension and can cause rifts in friendships. Shouldn't we always take the kinder, sweeter, avoidant, don't rock the boat, pathway to maintain relationship? No. We are not called to make people feel better as much as **we are called to love them**. Loving someone means a lot of things and what's loving depends on context. Sometimes gentleness and quietness is appropriate and most loving. Sometimes boundaries and confrontation is most loving. Sometimes laughter and deference is most loving. The goal is to do what is most loving in the context. Here it was doing what God said: confront and be immovable.
- And it was told Samuel, "Saul came to Carmel,¹³ and behold, he set up a monument for himself and turned and passed on and went down to Gilgal." – Samuel needed to find Saul and asked around. They told him that Saul was headed out to Gilgal, but first set up a monument of victory over the Amalekites. **Saul thought he nailed it**. He couldn't imagine how he could have done anything wrong. He crushed the enemy.
- And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed be you to the Lord. I have performed the commandment of the Lord." – Saul sees Samuel approaching and greets him lovingly and respectfully. Then he blurts out: I did great the other day. I totally did what God told me to do. He was looking for affirmation and accolades. He was **waiting for Samuel to praise him** for a job well done.
- And Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen that I hear?" – Samuel blows Saul's assumptions and expectations out of the water. He **blasts him with a very poetic rebuke**. He said in essence: If you did such a good job doing what God told you to do, then **why am I hearing animals** in the camp that were explicitly condemned to be burned? It sounds like disobedience to me.

¹³ "Carmel, not the mountain in the north, is a small town in Judah near Maon. The modern site is Tel el-Kirmil, about 7 miles south of Hebron. It was situated at a convenient place for Saul to stop on his return from the Amalekite expedition; Nabal and Abigail were from there (see 25:2a; Josh. 15:55)." NICOT

- Saul said, “They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice to the Lord your God, and the rest we have devoted to destruction.”¹⁴ – Saul defends himself immediately with two excuses: 1.) *The people did it, not me* (reminiscent of Adam and Eve blaming other people in the Garden for the Fall); 2.) *We were going to give the animals to God.* We got rid of the rest.
 - What did Saul do wrong? – He *disobeyed*. But *kind of*, right?
 - Partial obedience is disobedience – *If I told my wife that I would be faithful to her but only cheated some of the time, am I keeping my promise? No. One violation violates the agreement.* The agreement was fidelity. *Partial obedience is disobedience.* Just because Saul was going to throw stuff God’s way doesn’t negate that he disobeyed. Just because he got rid of most of it, doesn’t make it less disobedience. It’s an all or nothing endeavor.
 - Why did Saul do it? – *He came up with a better idea than God* (in his mind) and God should understand that. He’s calling the shots.
 - He can make up for it – if he got in trouble he could always sacrifice the animals to God which he was going to do likely anyway but this time he could use the animals from the Amalekites instead of his own. *He could justify his actions.*
 - *Do we make choices based on reason or obedience?*
 - *Do we live lives of actual obedience or ones that only LOOK obedient?*
 - *Religious excuses* - It’s very tempting to make religious excuses because we think it will manipulate the heart of God. That is incorrect.
- But...
 - Saul tries to justify his actions
 - 1 Samuel 15:16–21 – *“Then Samuel said to Saul, “Stop! I will tell you what the Lord said to me this night.” And he said to him, “Speak.”¹⁷ And Samuel said, “Though you are little in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? The Lord anointed you king over Israel.¹⁸ And the Lord sent you on a mission and said, ‘Go, devote to destruction the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.’¹⁹ Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord? Why did you pounce on the spoil and do what was evil in the sight of the Lord?”²⁰ And Saul said to Samuel, “I have obeyed the voice of the Lord. I have gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me. I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have devoted the*

¹⁴ “the animals were brought back to sacrifice to “the Lord *your* God,” and (b) in any case, it was the idea of “the people.” This was probably not completely false. Verse 9 says “Saul and the people spared,” and since they went to Gilgal, they probably intended to sacrifice at least some of the animals at this cultic center. However, sacrifice and the “ban” are not the same thing; the “ban” is the total destruction, devoting everything to Yahweh as his share, while sacrifice usually provides portions for men. God had not asked for a cultic sacrifice. Saul also was involved in the decision.” NICOT

Amalekites to destruction. ²¹ But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal."

- Then Samuel said to Saul, "Stop! I will tell you what the Lord said to me this night." And he said to him, "Speak." – Saul **stops the excuse train** and shouts: Stop it. Stop talking and making it worse. Stop making your own decisions. Stop being so arrogant. Stop thinking you know what's best. Stop it! Just shut up and I will tell you what's right and what God thinks about all of this. Saul finally humbles himself and says, 'okay, what?'
 - And Samuel said, "Though you are little in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? The Lord anointed you king over Israel. – God reminds Saul that **He made him king out of nowhere**. God did the impossible. Saul knew that he had no business being king and was a bit of an imposter. But God did it despite what everyone else would think about it.
 - And the Lord sent you on a mission and said, 'Go, devote to destruction the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.' Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord? Why did you pounce on the spoil and do what was evil in the sight of the Lord?" – Then God sent the very king that He built from scratch to go do an assignment and yet you botched it. You selfishly did it your own way. You disobeyed God. God told you to burn it all, but you didn't. **What in the world were you thinking?** How did you think it would be a good idea to disobey a direct order from God almighty?
 - And Saul said to Samuel, "I have obeyed the voice of the Lord. I have gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me. I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have devoted the Amalekites to destruction. – **Saul again tries to excuse himself and make justifications: I DID obey God**. I went out and beat down the Amalekites like I was ordered. I destroyed all the people. I have their king right here as a prisoner, to prove it.
 - But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal. – And sure, the rest of the army decided to keep a bunch of the animals but it was all going to go to the Lord anyway (maybe it was or maybe it was an excuse we don't know), so what's the big deal? God likes sacrifices, right? **We don't have to burn the good stuff, we can do something for God with it, right? This is a good thing.**
 - The good thing vs. the right (obedient) thing – **Our jobs as Christians is not so much to come up with other good things to do for God, as much as it is to be obedient to do the things that He told us to do.**
- Torn Away
 - God rejects Saul as King

- 1 Samuel 15:22–31 – *“And Samuel said, “Has 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 listen than the fat of rams. ²³ For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry.¹⁵ Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king.” ²⁴ Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned,¹⁶ for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. ²⁵ Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me that I may bow before the Lord.” ²⁶ And Samuel said to Saul, “I will not return with you. For you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel.” ²⁷ As Samuel turned to go away, Saul seized the skirt of his robe, and it tore. ²⁸ And Samuel said to him, “The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. ²⁹ And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret.”¹⁷ ³⁰ Then he said, “I have sinned; yet honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may bow before the Lord your God.” ³¹ So Samuel turned back after Saul, and Saul bowed before the Lord.”*
- And Samuel said, “Has 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 listen than the fat of rams. – Samuel, likely as a mature believer, prophet, and judge, explains what went wrong to Saul almost like instructing a child. He dumbs it down and explains: Do you really think doing something religious is better or more valuable than obeying God? Do you really think that giving God stuff is greater than adhering to his voice, rules, regulations, and agenda? NO! God just wants you to DO WHAT HE SAID TO DO! It’s not rocket science. **Your job isn’t to be brilliant, or more religious than God. It’s faithfulness. You aren’t in charge, dude. God’s in charge.**
- For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. – **God catches Saul in the lies he was telling himself.** God, through Samuel, explains that **any form of disobedience is ultimately both**

¹⁵ “In other words, Saul’s disobedience to the word of the Lord is as wicked as idolatry or divination, which seeks the will of no-god.” NICOT

¹⁶ “This verse is crucially important in this chapter since here Saul shifts from saying he obeyed God to saying he disobeyed God because he obeyed the people. However, he seems not to understand the seriousness of the situation. Sadly, a person who has lost contact with the word of God would not be able to perceive his own condition before God. In order to know himself, one needs to know God.” NICOT

¹⁷ “The verb “to change one’s mind” (*nĥm) appears also in vv. 11, 35 (“regret (ted)”); see on v. 11. Scholars who sees a contradiction between “I regret” in v. 11 and the statement here suggest that this verse is a gloss (e.g. McCarter, p. 268). However, in this verse, which is about the future, the main point is that God will not reverse his decision. A similar motif appears in a Sumerian lamentation in which the god Enlil is said “never to alter the word he utters” (CS, I, p. 536). However, one should note that the meaning of a word or phrase is decided according to the context in which it appears and the speaker who uses the word; while *nĥm (Ni.) certainly means “to change one’s mind” in the present context, the same verb in vv. 11 and 35 refers to God’s “regret.” While in the former the word is paired with the term “to deceive” and is used relationally, in the latter it functions emotively, expressing God’s inner feeling.” NICOT

presumption (pride of thinking you can disobey in the first place), and rebellion against the Almighty. Those are HUGE crimes.

- Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king.” – And then comes the punch in the gut and the bottom line: “Because you have (and this is a play on words) rejected God’s commands, He has rejected you as His king.” Bam! It’s the confirmation of what God said earlier when Saul disobeyed: You’re done. You are not going to be the long term king of Israel. You will not have lineage on the throne. You will not be under God’s power moving forward.
- Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. – this rebuke finally crushed the hard shell of insecurity and pride around Saul’s heart and he realizes what he’s done. He confesses. ‘You are right, I have sinned. I broke the direct commandment of God.’ And if he would have stopped there it would have been significant and good but he keeps going... ‘BUT, I only did so because I was afraid that the people wouldn’t like or respect me if I did what God said. I was more concerned about them than God.’ This may be true. It may have been more insecurity that led him to disobey, but he chose to disobey and the sin is the same. No excuses are going to help. It still seems to have the hint of shifting blame as if he’s saying, ‘if they wouldn’t have said anything, I totally would have obeyed the whole thing, but they made me.’
- Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me that I may bow before the Lord.” – Saul is begging Samuel to help him reconnect with God and make up for his mistakes. He wants forgiveness and things just to go on like they were.
- And Samuel said to Saul, “I will not return with you. For you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel.” – Samuel says, ‘nope. You sealed your fate, my man. Nothing I can do here.’ You rejected God and He rejected you as king. Case closed.’
 - Ramifications – One huge mark of maturity in human development is the ability to consider ramifications or consequences for our actions. It’s thinking ahead and asking, ‘if I do this...what will happen and do I want that to happen. If not, I shouldn’t make this choice today.’ That’s a human development that should happen in childhood but I know adults that are still struggling with that concept.
 - Apology doesn’t mean no consequence – one of the things that we must realize as well is that just because we say sorry doesn’t mean there aren’t consequences to our actions. Not only are there consequences for the violation that we are apologizing for, to others, but there are going to need to be consequences for us as well. They

may be less or different but there needs to be ramifications due to choices for us to learn.

- As Samuel turned to go away, Saul seized the skirt of his robe, and it tore. And Samuel said to him, “The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. – As if God wanted to make a grand statement that no one could miss, he allowed Saul to instinctually reach out and grab Samuel’s robe, **in attempt to control the situation, and it ripped**. God then spoke through Samuel again and said, ‘just as you ripped this robe, so has God ripped the kingdom/kingship from you and given to another who is BETTER than you.’ Ouch!
- Better people? - it sounds offensive for God to say (or Samuel to say, depending) that you messed up and there’s **a better person than you to be king**. It sounds like an insult. Well, it kind of is, but it’s more practical statement: There is a **better suited person to do this assignment as king than you**. God wants someone who will obey and that’s clearly not you. There’s someone who will obey MORE than you, therefore is BETTER for the role.
 - Grasping for Power – there could be no greater tangible illustration of trying to grab and force something that God doesn’t want for us. Saul was **desperate so he tried to force it and control it. Saul was insecure and it was slipping away** from him so he did what he knew to do: physical aggression. Samuel wasn’t listening so Saul was going to make him.
 - Are we? – are we doing the same thing? **What about how we are treating our marriages, our jobs, our friends, our fears?**
- And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret.” – this is a super weird statement without explanation specifically due to the statements made prior about God literally REGRETTING making Saul king. So let me explain: It’s a concept (regret) that can mean a bunch of things. It meant prior that God worked out a plan that was going to fail and He knew it but did it anyway and was bummed that it had to go that way. But here Samuel is explaining that **God doesn’t do regret the other way, where He is flaky and shifts His opinions based on mood**. The term ‘Glory of Israel’ means God. God isn’t like a man who makes stupid decisions and then regrets them. God isn’t like a man that can’t seem to be consistent.
- Then he said, “I have sinned; yet honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel,¹⁸ and return with me, that I may bow before the Lord your God.” – Saul is now crushed into acceptance of his judgment. He admits that he is fully wrong and realizes that he can’t get back good with God to be anointed again, so **he shifts to his next most important**

¹⁸ “Instead of honoring God, Saul is concerned with honoring himself. He was unwilling to lose face before the people.” NICOT

concern: Looking good. He wants Samuel to show up with him publicly so that everyone will pull together with solidarity.

- So Samuel turned back after Saul, and Saul bowed before the Lord. – interestingly Samuel goes back with Him Saul and partners with him to publicly offer sacrifice to the Lord as king.
- That Turned Dark Quickly
 - Samuel goes off and Saul mourns
 - 1 Samuel 15:32–35 – *“Then¹⁹ Samuel said, “Bring here to me Agag the king of the Amalekites.” And Agag came to him cheerfully. Agag said, “Surely the bitterness of death is past.”³³ And Samuel said, “As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women.” And Samuel hacked Agag to pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.³⁴ Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul.³⁵ And Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the Lord regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.”*
 - Then Samuel said, “Bring here to me Agag the king of the Amalekites.” And Agag came to him cheerfully. Agag said, “Surely the bitterness of death is past.” – This seems to be **going back in time** to when Samuel was still in Gilgal. Samuel calls for them to bring the Amalekite king before him. The Amalekite king assumes at this point that if they were going to kill him they would have killed him already so he’s feeling pretty good about himself.
 - And Samuel said, “As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women.” And Samuel hacked Agag to pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. – **Samuel finishes the job that Saul was supposed to do and calls it out publicly.** He explains that this is a judgment slaying by God and just as Agag has killed so many and lived by the sword, now he’s going to die by the sword.
 - Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul.²⁰ And Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. – Then they **both went back home.** Ramah is Samuel’s hometown and Gibeah is Saul’s hometown. It’s mentioned that they stayed apart until Samuel died. But even though they were apart Samuel seems to really have either cared about Saul and was disappointed in how it all went down, or he was super angry and sad about Saul’s choices for the nation. It’s not clear.

¹⁹ “This episode refers back to the incident while Samuel was still at Gilgal (see v. 33). Until v. 31 the narrator dealt with the relationship between Samuel and Saul all the way through to their departure. Now, he comes back to Samuel’s dealing with Agag, which must have happened chronologically sometime before Samuel’s departure from Gilgal. Such a narrative technique of “dischronologization” is due to the nature of language, which is mono-dimensional, that is, linear, while the actual world events proceed multi-dimensionally. In other words, both Samuel’s dealings with Saul and with Agag happened before he left Gilgal.” NICOT

²⁰ “After completing the ban on the Amalekites at Gilgal, Samuel goes back home to Ramah, while Saul goes to Gibeah. The distance between Ramah and Gibeah is less than 10 miles.” NICOT

- And the Lord regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel. – And it mentions again that God was **bumped out** that it had to be this way and go this way (but that's the way it had to go).

Conclusion

- Next Week – we meet the **new guy** who will be in line to be king. Who's that going to be?
- Excuses for Disobedience (grace/works) - **There's a temptation to use grace as an excuse for disobedience. There's also a temptation to use spiritual or religious work and good deeds to justify why we can disobey God and He should be good with it. But at the end of the day do we really think that God is that easily manipulated?**