

1 Samuel 15

by Robert F. Adcock

The sermon emphasizes the critical importance of complete obedience to God's commands as demonstrated in the story of Saul and the Amalekites in 1 Samuel 15.

Duration: 38:53

Scripture: Exodus 22:18, Deuteronomy 28:1, 1 Samuel 15:22, Proverbs 28:14, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:1, James 1:22

Topics: "Obedience To God", "Consequences Of Sin"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of obeying God's commands and not taking them lightly. He uses the example of Saul, who was given the task of executing justice on a group of people with a bad reputation. However, Saul failed to fully obey God's command and suffered the consequences. The preacher warns that disobedience to God's will can lead to condemnation and judgment, and urges listeners to share this message with others who may be on a destructive path.

Transcript

Well, we'll see how long it takes. We'll try to cooperate. I'd like for us tonight to look in 1 Samuel, chapter 15.

You know, sometimes there are thoughts that, of course, fill your mind, things that are important, things that need to be emphasized and re-emphasized, and uh, in thinking about this during the week and went over it several times and read it and re-read it, and obeying the Lord is very important, isn't it? I thought about our own experience with children, and, you know, when you reflect back upon your own experience as a child, I recall that I wasn't an obedient child. I didn't take very seriously what I was asked to do, and very often I had to pay for it. But it reminds me of this.

In dealing with the Lord, if you don't take very seriously what the Lord says and you disobey, you won't like the consequences. And certainly this man that we're about to look at tonight, I think he's a classic example of someone that did not take very seriously what the Lord had asked him to do, and the consequences were not very pleasant. He paid a high price for disobedience to the Lord.

To obey is better than sacrifice. That's what we discover in our reading that we'll have in just a moment, but I'd like for us to just summarize briefly that in 1 Samuel 8, the children of Israel said, Make us a king to judge us like all the other nations. Children of Israel had grown weary of judges and those that had the rule over them.

No doubt they had looked around and looked at how other nations carried on their affairs, and they liked the setup where they had a king over them. So they go to Samuel and they make the request, and that request is granted. Saul is chosen to be their king.

That's what we discover in chapter 9. And in chapter 10, Saul is anointed as their king. So now everything's set up and everything is in order, and we discover that with Saul, he lacked something that, again, is so essential. In dealing with the Lord, we have to be very careful that we take very seriously what he says.

I'd like to read from this 15th chapter. We're not going to read all of it, but a part of it, and make some comments regarding this very careless attitude that he had about obeying to the letter what God had requested for him to do. Beginning at verse 1 of 1 Samuel, chapter 15, Samuel also said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people over Israel.

Now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt. 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 ass. Down to verse 9, But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlins, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them, but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly. Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king, for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments.

And it grieved Samuel, and he cried unto the Lord, all night. Verse 13, And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord, I have performed the commandment of the Lord. And Samuel said, What meaneth then the bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowering of the oxen which are here? 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.

Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel? And the Lord anointed thee king over Israel.

And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and did evil in the sight of the Lord? 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 I have brought Agag, the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

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. And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifice, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. 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. So we will just look to the Lord again in a word of prayer. Father in heaven, we are so thankful for this, the Lord's day, and the privilege of gathering with your people.

We thank thee for this privilege and for all that the Spirit of God is able to enlighten these darkened minds of ours to truth that is so important. Speak to our hearts, we pray thee, Lord. Grant to us that wonderful experience of knowing that you have spoken to us.

We have heard your voice today. We have offered up out of our hearts praise and worship to thee. We would pray even now, having to consider something that we find in Scripture that is indeed an embarrassment to those that have been chosen of God to take positions of responsibility and places of service before thee, Lord.

Oh, we pray thee that not one of us would be in that place of Saul in thinking that something we can do, that we could in any way improve upon the plans and purposes of God as they are given to us to just obey. Do receive our thanks, and may to this end the Lord Jesus Christ be glorified in our midst, we pray in his name. Amen.

When you look at this passage and you have in your mind that thought of how important it is to obey, something came to my mind. It was about Caruso, the great opera singer. And as I recall this story, he was given the responsibility or invited to go and to put on a performance for a group of servicemen.

And the officer that had invited him said, These are just soldiers. They are just servicemen. You don't have to do your best.

And they were already excited about hearing Caruso sing, so you don't have to do your best. He didn't know Caruso. He said, Caruso always does his best.

Caruso always puts forth the very best that he can present. In thinking about that, that really spoke to me. This man could have done a lot better than he did, and I'm not going to stop with him.

I went to me, and I'm thinking about you. Do you do the very best that you can do for the Lord every time you're up to bat? Do you do your very best? Are you satisfied with something less than your very best? I think it's to our shame if we do. After all, remember, we are ambassadors for the Lord Jesus Christ.

We represent him, and we should be those that are characterized by obedience to what our God has instructed us to do. You say, why all of this concern about these Amalekites, and why is it so important to the Lord to go out and to have Saul take his army, his men, and destroy these people? I could just simply say, because God told him to do it. That's all.

The Lord said, Go do it. But there was a reason. There was a reason for it, and we read about it.

These Amalekites were a wandering nomadic type of people found in that part of the world, wandering across the desert spaces. Sometimes they were just looking for someone to exploit, someone to take advantage of. They did that to the children of Israel.

They were a cowardly thing, kind of coming up from the rear and taking advantage of those that were weak, those that lagged behind. They were vulnerable. They took advantage of it.

God wrote all of that down in his book. I mean, sometimes people, they just don't get the idea that God takes very seriously what he says. God wrote it down.

Brother, he's writing things down today. He is omniscient. He knows all.

He keeps very accurate records. You begin to guard, say guardedly, what you will do for God. Promises that you make.

Make a promise, keep that promise. If you make a commitment to some service, do your very best. Do it the very best that you can.

Well, these people that we're talking about had a bad reputation among all the people. They were kind of like barbarians. And God had said, because of what they did, there will come a day and a time in which justice will be served.

And that time came. Time was come when divine justice required that they should be brought to that judgment bar of God and dealt with. Saul has given the assignment.

He wants you to do it. You're the one. He's sent by God to be the executioner, and he was commanded to do that job thoroughly.

I don't know if at the outset he had any thought in his mind that he wouldn't do exactly what God asked him to do. Sometimes when you get into a situation, if you're not careful, don't forget who told you to do what you're doing. Don't start taking liberties with what God has said.

Well, it won't matter. It won't matter. It won't matter.

I'm reminded it does matter with God. And certainly we have here before us an account of just how seriously the Lord really took this matter that Saul had undertaken. Take no prisoners would be the way that you could describe this.

Sometimes military people are given an assignment like that. I've heard a fellow say, we had an assignment and it was in a combat situation, and he said, we were told, don't take any prisoners. Didn't they kill everybody? He said, don't take any prisoners.

And that's what it meant, and that's what they were to carry out. Doesn't sound like a very pleasant situation, does it? Wouldn't want to be doing that. But there again, you are under authority.

We are under authority to God. He is the supreme judge. Saul has been chosen by God for an assignment.

He expects him to fulfill to the letter all that he asked him to do. Well, we know that Saul and the people, they spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fat ones, the lambs, all of this. That was just half obedience.

It didn't do what God asked them to do. Yet I'm persuaded in my own mind, because of the way this man responds, he didn't think it was very serious. It's not serious.

It doesn't really matter that much. Half obedience? Well, half obedience is whole rebellion. You're rebelling against an authority higher than you are, and one that can take whatever measures are necessary to

correct the mistake that you've made.

This word of the Lord that came unto Samuel saying, it repenteth me. You know, you've often said, does God repent of anything? Does he change his mind? Well, it says, it repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king. This appears to be a grave mistake.

This man is not all that I had judged him to be. He's not the man that I thought he was. Now, God is omniscient.

Don't you know he knew exactly what was in the heart of Saul? Don't you know he knew the character of this man, Saul? It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king, for he is turned back from following me. It comes down like a hammer. I don't like that.

That's what God is saying. I don't like that. I don't approve of that.

He's turned back from following me and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel. And I looked that up, and that word grieved before Samuel made him angry.

It made Samuel angry. There's no excuse for this. You knew exactly what to do.

God told you what to do. You didn't take it seriously. It made Samuel angry.

He cried to the Lord all night. And we're not told what he said. He cried out to the Lord all night.

Oh, God, this is a terrible thing that has happened. For a man to take so lightly what you've instructed him to do, and he's gone out, and in a half-hearted fashion, he's only carried out part of what you asked him to do. All night long, I can see him struggling and crying out.

This man is to be rejected because of his conduct. You know, I feel a sense of sadness for Saul. Man, you shouldn't have done that.

You're dealing with God, this kind of carelessness, indifference to what the Lord had instructed you to do. I think there's something that's said here. I don't know if you caught it when we read it, but Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord, I have performed the commandment of the Lord.

Do you think that for a moment that he really felt deep down in his soul, I've carried out the will and the plan of God in dealing with the Amalekites? I think something else was there. It sounds like he's almost... I did a good job. I did a good job.

Wiped out everything, except, well, you know, I looked at King. Hey, gang. I looked at him.

He'd be a good trophy to keep. You know, here again, a man is improving on what God had asked him to do. He's making some changes.

He's altering his instructions. And the people, you know, they began to look around. Look at these fine animals.

They would make good sacrifices unto the Lord. You know, human reasoning takes over, and now he's already sold himself on the idea, not too bad, the Lord won't say a word about it. In fact, I might even be rewarded for improving on what he had assigned me to do.

I have performed the commandment of the Lord. No, you haven't. No, you haven't.

God doesn't make any mistakes. God had a plan. God had purposes for what he asked you to do.

And you have disobeyed. When he made that statement, Samuel, as you remember here in the 14th verse, he responded, says, What meaneth then this bleeding of the sheep and the lowering of the oxen which I hear? What is this noise I hear? If you carried out the will of God completely and according to his instructions, what is this I hear? And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites. They have brought them, for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God.

Thy God, not his God anymore, it's thy God. And the rest we have utterly destroyed. Isn't that so human that we begin to assign the cause for what has happened to somebody else? The people swayed me to do this.

I was of mind to carry it out to the letter, but the people, someone suggested to me that we can improve on what you've been asked to do. That's just a feeble excuse. It won't stand up before God.

When we read about it and we understand this, we say, You know, the man's being silly to even suggest something like that. Well, Samuel said to him, Sit down. That's what this amounts to.

Say, and I will tell thee what the Lord said to me this night. You know, I don't like this. Have a seat.

This may take a little time to get through to you. I'm going to give you some instruction that I think will help you to better understand just how serious it is, this thing that you have done. Saul says, Stay on.

And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, do you get that? Wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel? When you were one of those that would kind of stand back in the crowd, you didn't try to push yourself forward. You didn't see yourself of being any importance. But all of this importance that God has attached to you as being the king and the leader of the people of God, could it be that it's kind of gone to your head? Now you think you can reason things out and you have a better plan than God has.

That's what this amounts to. God said for you to go and utterly destroy the Amalekites, fight against them until they are totally consumed. And wherefore didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord? Answer me.

Give me an answer to that one. Tell me why. You won't hardly believe what he said.

So Saul said unto Sam, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord. I have obeyed the voice of the Lord. I have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and I have brought Agag, the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

Not quite. How in the world can he reason that way? He has been told to wipe them out, take no prisoners, don't leave anything. And he has the audacity, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord.

You see, he does not attach that importance to obeying to the letter what God has instructed him to do. He said the people took the spoils, the sheep, the oxen, the chief of things, which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord by God in Gilgal. There was a very, very sincere motive behind what they did.

They want to offer up sacrifices to the Lord. They want to do something to glorify God. And here you are taking me to task for all of this.

But Samuel said, hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings, and sacrifice as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Brother, that principle just sticks right in your mind. What does God want most from you and me? He wants us to obey him and do what he asks us to do. He wants us to be obedient to all that he provides in the way of instruction for you and for me.

To obey is better than any sacrifice you will ever make. You can't make a sacrifice that can please God any better than saying, Thy will be done, I obey your word. To obey is better than sacrificing, to hearken than the fat of rams.

I don't care what you had in your mind, what the people had in their mind regarding improving on what God had instructed you to do. You have disobeyed God, and that's a serious matter. That's rebellion.

That's what that is. That's rebellion. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.

And because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king. Wasn't that costly? I don't think he ever had it in his mind that it would come to this. He's been rejected by God because he refused to obey and take seriously what God asked him to do.

That's serious business. Nothing, as I read this and think about it, nothing can compensate for a want of obedience to the will of God. I can't do anything any better or better, more pleasing to God than to obey what he asked me to do.

Don't you know one day the full weight of God's wrath will come down upon a poor sinner that hasn't trusted Christ as his Savior? Think of all the people in the world today that think it should be done this way. I think you get saved by being a good person, and I am a good person. And they go on and on, and finally they have convinced themselves, I'll just tell them that I've done the very best I could.

It won't count because they have disobeyed the Lord. They are poor rebel sinners and they don't know it. And the Spirit of God has not convinced them yet that they are poor rebel sinners.

And they are going to pay a price for their disobedience to the will of God. They are going to suffer the hand of God in judgment upon their souls for all eternity. They don't know it.

Isn't that sad? A little wonder. You know, we ought to get out here and shout it up on the mountains. Go tell it on the mountains.

I mean, go tell people, please, man, look, you're on a broad road. It's going to take you down to destruction. Please listen to me.

Don't trifle with God's will and purposes. We're talking about a man that God put his hand upon and put in a position of authority over God's people. And his mind, he's gone astray, his thinking, everything about him is now characterized as being in opposition to the will of God.

You say, he seemed to be so sincere, he seemed to be so zealous in carrying out what he did. No doubt he was. What does zeal have to do with it? A man is zealously going after what he can get out of this world and following, perhaps, a lot of things that are presented as being the way to be acceptable to God.

He's zealous in what he does. He's sincere in what he does. What difference does it make? He hasn't won the favor of God.

He's rejected the grace and the mercy and the love of God. Obedience. Obedience.

We all know what it is, don't we? Can you recall something you've done disobedient? While I was looking at this, I thought about some things I did. Brother, I paid for it. Disobedience, I paid for it.

And that authority over me at that time, it had a way of getting my attention. And I said, I ain't going to do that no more. That hurt.

I don't think you recover from what happened to this man to disobey what the Lord has said, to neglect, to take seriously that divine commandment that he was given. It condemned him. It condemned him.

Such a finality about being condemned. Man, I love that verse in chapter 8 of Romans, verse 1. There is now, therefore, no condemnation to them that have trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. No condemnation.

The wrath and the judgment of God will never fall upon my soul. Thank God this evening, as we gather in this place, you can say, and say with perfect assurance, I have trusted Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as my Savior. And I'm not under condemnation.

I will never experience the wrath and the judgment of God. I've obeyed what God asked me to do in this matter of salvation. Well, it goes beyond that.

You know that, and I know that. God expects a lot from you and me. His expectations are very high.

And sometimes we don't take that very seriously. In this case, he has something brought before him, Saul does. Witchcraft was something that was punishable by death.

Well, Saul is a man in authority. That was his job, to carry out what God had instructed him to do. Do you know, he had had perhaps many witches put to death? That had been his assignment.

He did it. He did it. Maybe it appealed to him.

Maybe he thought it was serious enough for it to be done. But we're reminded as we come to the close of this section, rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected thee from being king.

You know, when we disobey the Lord, when we fall into any kind of sin, we can recover. We can recover. I know there's a verse of scripture that, I think, God, it just comes on like a neon light in my mind, if I confess my sin, he is faithful and just to forgive me of my sin, cleanse me from all unrighteousness.

Isn't that wonderful? Get all cleaned up because I have confessed that I have sinned. This man's been rejected as king, and he will be rejected as king. His life will be a miserable life.

His life will be a horrible experience of one that did not take very seriously what God asked him to do. He's guilty of idolatry. It could be that he thought about himself as being the supreme authority over God's people, the supreme authority when it came to making decisions.

Not so. Not so. Every decision we make in life, it should be tested.

What saith the Lord? What does God say? Oh, this wisdom that I have, this very wise thought that has come into my mind, the things that I'm going to do, does God say it's okay? Does God approve of it? I'm not sure. Better not do it then, had we? If we do, we'll pay a price. Saul was rejected of God.

Another would be raised up, David by name. I think it's an experience in the word of God that we could do well to weigh it very carefully. Obeying God is so important.

And you know, just about any part of your life, if you take the time and examine it from the time you were a child, you were under obedience and authority to your parents. Later on in school, later on out in the world, when you had children, nothing delighted you more than to have your children do exactly what you asked them to do. My mother and my father told me to do this, and this is what I'm doing.

It's important. They know what they're talking about. Oh, God knows what he's talking about when he asks you and me to obey, to follow his holy instructions as to how we are to live our lives for his glory and honor.

Let's do it. Obedience is better than sacrifice. Our Heavenly Father, we thank thee tonight that we've been able to read this passage, and we pray that our thoughts about this poor, miserable character that appears in scripture, Saul, or one that was chosen and anointed to be over God's people, he went so far astray in understanding the holy character of the God who had chosen him.

Oh, we pray, Lord, tonight that we'll ever seek to draw nigh unto thee, to have our hearts in perfect tune with the will of God for our lives. And do it willingly and with rejoicing in our hearts that we have found a way to please our God, win his approval and his blessing upon our lives. It's in the precious and worthy name of the Lord Jesus that we ask this.

Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/7/SID7866.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/robert-f-adcock/1-samuel-15/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net