

Stubbornness

by Vance Havner

Stubbornness is a sin that leads to rebellion, witchcraft, iniquity, and idolatry, and we need to submit to God and be willing to be used by him to overcome it.

Duration: 25:57

Scripture: Psalm 51:17, Proverbs 15:33, Proverbs 29:1, Proverbs 29:25, Matthew 5:23-24, Matthew 7:7, James 4:6

Topics: "Stubbornness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on his own experiences and the importance of humility and submission before God. He emphasizes the need for grace and the willingness to be used by God. The preacher also discusses the consequences of stubbornness and the importance of listening to God's reproof. He concludes by highlighting the power of brokenness and surrender in the lives of biblical figures like Saul, Jacob, and Peter.

Transcript

Saul's procession included a lot of things God had told him to destroy. I wonder tonight what kind of procession you're leading. Are there any elements in it that God told you to have done with? The man who insists on lugging idols and affections and wedges of gold that God commanded him to eliminate will stand indicted by that very accursed thing in the day of judgment.

It was one of the great old saints of another generation who had trouble with some particular evil in his life. Nobody knows what it was except that once in a while in his diary you read, Today I hewed a egg in pieces before the Lord. Now, he was having trouble.

And maybe I speak to somebody here tonight who has spared in your life something that God told you a long time ago to part with and to exterminate utterly. And the worst of it is that it catches up with you. Saul did not really repent.

He said, I have sinned, but like several others in the Bible who said that. He did not bring forth fruits, meat for repentance. It is always a mark of the unyielded self to argue the case and to try to explain why you did what you did instead of coming clean with it.

You remember the word in Luke 10.29, But he willing to justify himself said, Now, the Bible doesn't say justify yourself. The Bible says judge yourself. The Bible says if we would judge ourselves we should not

be judged.

The trouble today is that altogether too many of God's people are still trying to justify things in their lives that ought to be judged. Saul explained or tried to that the sheep and the oxen had been spared to sacrifice unto the Lord in Gilgal. Now, that made a good story.

But the inn did not justify the means. Money made the wrong way is not justified by giving it in the tithe at church. A man could gamble on a horse race and win money in a card game, but he does not sanctify it by giving God a tip in the Sunday morning collection.

God will not accept the offering of the fruits of disobedience. And so Samuel comes up with this immortal answer that I read a moment ago, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Samuel said, Now, you say that you save this paraphernalia to offer it to God. Well, God is not interested in that so much as he is in obedience.

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of ran. You can give up worldly amusements. You can give God time and talent.

You can give your goods to feed the poor. And you can even become a missionary and never obey God in the giving of yourself. The Macedonians first gave themselves unto the Lord.

If any man come after me, let him deny himself. The Macedonians took the right course, self, service, substance. Now, God is not going to be paid off with substance if you have not started with self.

And it is not enough to give service, a lot of it, unless you first of all have started not with the money but with the Macedonians. The trouble with Saul was that he never gave up soul. Webb Peplow, a great preacher of another generation, said, When I am on trips, I usually buy presents for my wife, send her gifts.

He said, I am afraid that some of my choices are rather unfortunate, but she always accepts them in good graces, because she knows that before I ever gave her the gifts, I gave her my heart. Oh, there are wives today whose husbands give them gifts, and yet who are broken in heart because that man has never given his heart. And it is also true in reverse in many a case.

And my friend, God's heart is grieved as it was here, because we read in the very last verse of this chapter that God repented that he had ever made Saul king over Israel. Now, what is back of all this trouble? We still haven't arrived at the real trouble. Verse 23 tells us, and it's a sin that I never heard a sermon on in my life.

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. We don't usually classify rebellion and stubbornness in such bad company with iniquity and idolatry, but you will observe that God does. Have you ever given much thought to the sin of stubbornness? I couldn't escape from this tonight because I have a conviction deep down in my soul that things that we ascribe maybe to some other ailment in our lives may be traced to this.

There's an awful lot of stubbornness even among God's people. I've been preaching for a long, long time, and I noticed that in some little simple things, like asking the folks sometimes of a night when the crowd is small, would you please move into the center section. Did you ever try that? And see some of these saints of the Lord marching to Zion, dig their heels in church carpets and said, no, I'm not moving.

I shall not be moved. Why I have been dumbfounded through these years at the utter, absolute, mewlish stubbornness of God's people to do the simplest things that would make a meeting better. It's a serious offense.

God says, I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near to you.

The Bible compares us to animals a great many times. And just between you and me, some of the comparisons are not very complimentary. The Bible says, don't be like a mule.

That's exactly what it says. Somebody said the mule is always backward about going forward. We have a great many people who are just exactly that mewlish when it comes to the things of God.

Stiff-necked, generous. Now you notice here in verse 24 that Saul excused his conduct by saying, I feared the people and obeyed their voice. Now you've heard the old Latin proverb all down through the ages or the old saying about the voice of the people is the voice of God.

The voice of the people is the voice of God. Now you have the voice of the people in verse 24 and you have the voice of God in verse 22. I feared the people and obeyed their voice.

But look up at verse 22, hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord. The voice of the people never has been the voice of God anyhow. And today we are so inclined to do the thing that's popular, that's the same thing, the voice of the people.

Saul pretended to be sorry, but he only wanted to keep the support of Samuel. He begged Samuel not to leave him, but the chapter ends with Saul rejected by God and by Samuel and hastening on to ruin. That weird and sinister chapter 28 where he meets with the witch of Endor.

Samuel is dead now and I read that Saul couldn't get in touch with God. Verses 5 and 6, so in verse 7 he turns back, notice it, to the very thing that he once outlawed. Now I read to you a moment ago that rebellion is as witchcraft.

Witchcraft was a thing that Saul had put out and now that God will not respond and Samuel's gone, Saul turns back to the very thing that once was put out of his life. The man who is always playing with forbidden things, age, sheep, oxen, witchcraft, will return to the very thing he renounced. The man who never quite gives it up and never quite obeys the voice of God.

Here's a man who feels that he ought to give up a certain evil habit, but he continues to play with that habit and never give himself to God and I'll guarantee you that nine times out of ten he'll go sneaking back to it if he never gives himself to the Lord. I'm not concerned now with the details of this episode at Endor. I do see this, a king who has missed his chance is trying to call back his lost opportunity because Samuel represented the lost opportunity that Saul had and didn't take advantage of.

Saul had his Samuel. Ahab had his Elijah. David had his Nathan.

Herod had his John the Baptist. Blessed is the man who listens to his prophet and who heeds his oracle. Most of us had a prophet somewhere in our lives.

You had a good pastor. You had a loyal friend. You had a faithful wife.

You had godly parents. Always you had the word of God. Now if you trifle with that voice, the day will come when Samuel will no longer warn you and you'll be left to your doom.

I thank God for our Samuels, but God pity the man who treats his Samuel like Saul did his. And how many miserable souls I have met all over this land in nearly 50 years of preaching, trying to call back their Samuels. The presence has departed and the voice is forever still.

Now what was the trouble with Saul outside of stubbornness, beyond that? Well, he never was broken to the will of God. Saul said the people kept the best to sacrifice to the Lord. Samuel said, verse 22, what God wants is another kind of sacrifice, the sacrifice of obedience.

Now doesn't that remind you of another king and another prophet? Doesn't that remind you of a king who was faced by a faithful prophet of God who told him a story and then made the application? And you know it's easy to tell a story, but it's a little hard to make the application if the application is sitting right out in front of you. And that's what happened here. And after Nathan told the story, he said, now you are the application.

This is you. Here's a man who had his oracle, but he did not like Saul because I read, Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it. Thou delightest not in burnt offering.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart. O God, thou wilt not despise. Now there's a man with a proper concept of what kind of an offering God wants.

Saul never offered God a broken heart. David listened to Nathan. Saul didn't listen to Samuel.

And stubbornness was Samuel's analysis, and it led to spiritism and suicide. Have you ever been broken because of the will of God completely in your life? God always uses broken things. It takes the broken soil to produce the grain.

It takes the broken grain to produce the harvest. It takes the broken clouds to produce the rain. It takes the broken bread to feed our bodies.

It takes the broken alabaster box to yield the precious perfume. The tumult and the shouting dies. The captains and the kings depart.

Still stands thine ancient sacrifice, a broken and a contrite heart. Jacob met God and limped away from that encounter, but had power with God and men. Peter went away weeping bitterly, but he returns to greater power than ever.

I hear it said today that what young people need is redirection. No, what everybody needs is crucifixion. Sin is having its own way.

We have turned everyone to his own way. God doesn't ask the sinner to give his heart to God. What would God do with such a vile, deceitful thing as that? God gives him a new heart and then says, Son, give me thy heart.

Our young people and all the rest of us, for that matter, don't need to be clobbered and corrected even so much as to be crucified. We're living in a generation of unbroken souls now. They grow up stubborn and disobedient to parents, and some never learn to say, I'm sorry.

They've never told any human being they're sorry. Oh, I mean, in many we have a habit of saying it as a matter of courtesy if we step on somebody's toe. But how many people ever know what it is to tell somebody else they're sorry? I don't think we're ever going to see much revival today until there is a recovery of old-fashioned reconciliation and restitution among God's people.

It takes a lot more grace to hunt up somebody and straighten out things and tell them you were mistaken and get right with them and with God. It takes a lot more grace to do that than to give \$100 to foreign missions. And I thank God for the gift of missions in which we've just had a part.

Is there anybody in this world that you ought to get right with? You haven't. I remember a meeting in Pennsylvania years ago. We had a miserably poor start.

For a couple of nights there was no response. I wondered why I ever came to the place. Talk about a dry meeting.

If we hadn't had a glass of water on the pulpit, I think the place would have dried up and blown away. On the third night, I gave a proposition for folks to confess their sins before God. I was desperate.

I said, Lord, do something, anything. Anything is better than nothing. Give us a revival or a riot or something, but give us something.

And I made this proposition. A fellow came down the aisle and faced the congregation and said, I want to confess the ungodly things I've said about our former pastor. And then I knew that God was at work, because old Adam doesn't walk down church aisles and say things like that.

It takes the grace of God. Will Moody, the son of D.L. Moody, said, I've forgotten my father's sermons, but I haven't forgotten some other things. He said, I remember one night when I was a little bit of a tyke and he told me to go to bed and I didn't go immediately.

And then he said, go in a way that I knew I'd better go. He thundered at me, ruffly. He said, I went to bed and lay there sniffing with a broken heart.

Presently the door opened and I saw the heavy-set figure of my father standing in the door. Then he came in and knelt beside me and said, Son, you should have gone to bed and I should have told you to go, but not the way I told you the second time. He said the tears coursed down the bearded face of my father and mixed with my tears.

Will Moody said, I've forgotten my father's sermons, but I haven't forgotten that. It takes a lot of grace to humble ourselves before God and with men today. If you bring your offering to the altar, my Lord said, let's put it in 20th century language, if you bring your duplex envelope to church next Sunday morning and remember that your brother is at odds with you, don't put it on the plate.

Hang on to it until you get right with your brother and then make your offering. Now that would wreck a lot of collections on Sunday morning over the country, but it's what God says to do. I wouldn't be surprised that even in a place like Finliffin, where everybody by now should be in victory and filled with the Spirit and walking in the light, I wonder if the trouble with some of us is not in some of these homely things that we scarcely think about, wrapped up in more eloquent phrases, chasing other experiences, when perhaps what some of us need most of all to do is just get right with God and with men.

As Dr. Torrey used to put on all his placards, get right with God in all his great campaigns over the night. Are you right with God, right with yourself and right with other folks? That's the essence of revival. So we need to tell God we're sorry.

That's one thing that Saul never could quite do from his heart because of his stubbornness. Stubbornness breaks more hearts and wrecks more homes and divides more churches and fills more suicide graves and more institutions for the insane than any other form of iniquity. For the root of most of our troubles is the unbroken self, lovers of pleasure, lovers of money, lovers of the world, and also lovers of our own selves.

I thank God there are two Sauls in the Bible. In the New Testament there was another man named Saul, and he was just as stubborn as the Old Testament Saul. But one day on a Damascus road God knocked him down and broke him up and made him over and named him Paul.

The Old Testament Saul started out with a crown and ended under a cross of his own making. The New Testament Saul submitted to a cross, I am crucified with Christ, and ended waiting for a crown. Both of them were headstrong young fellows.

One took the path of stubbornness that led to suicide, the other took the road of submission and became the greatest gospel preacher of all time. Let me ask you tonight before we go, are you traveling the Gilboa Road or the Damascus Road, the way of Saul or the way of Paul? Submit yourselves therefore to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Notice the order there.

You never are able effectively to say no to the devil until you first have said yes to God. This verse starts off right. Maybe you're having a time trying to say no to the devil and you're not getting anywhere, and the devil is winning the victory.

You cannot successfully resist the devil until you submit to God because the way to freedom is submission and victory begins with the surrender. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time. Saul refused and God demoted him.

Paul obeyed and God promoted him. And every sinner needs to remember that this whole business comes down to choosing your way. We've turned everyone to his own way.

My ways are not your ways. Let the wicked forsake his way. You are not saved until you submit to God and you are not usable to God's glory until you submit to him.

I've said it many times through the past that I used to pray God use me and I haven't prayed that prayer in 20 years. And I never expect to pray it again. You don't have to ask God to use you.

He's using you tonight all that he can. He'd use you more if he could. He's looking about for somebody whose heart is perfect totally.

The prayer that you need to pray is simply, Lord, make me usable. And if you're usable, he'll wear you out. He'll use you.

And you'll feel like saying, Lord, you're about to kill me. I didn't know you were going to use me this much. There was a time in my life, a long stretch of lean and barren years, when I had no message and no ministry and no blessings.

And nobody ever wrote a letter to me or came to me and said, Your message or your book or your article was a help to me. And there came a day when I asked God to put me in shape, make me usable. I'd ask him to use me.

He couldn't. And he wants to use you, but he can't until you come to this very same place of utter and absolute submission. There is one Bible verse that describes Saul better than any other that I know.

He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. Why, that's Saul's biography. He was often reprov'd, he hardened his neck, he was suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy.

That's the verse that brought my old-fashioned country father to the Lord. Down here in Catoba County. He heard a sermon from this text which has been in the mothballs too long, a blood-curdling, hair-raising sermon, and was practically scared into the kingdom of God.

But thank God that preacher was not lulling people into hell. And my father went up to that old country church that afternoon, that morning, went down into the woods and trusted Christ as his Savior and said, I never did know how I got back up to the church. I don't remember that the next thing I knew I was back up in the churchyard and I took off for home after the service.

And my old blind grandmother met me at the gate and nobody told her that I was coming and nobody had told her that I'd been saved, but she met me at the gate crying aloud. I knew it, I knew it. Some kind of a heavenly grapevine system, I suppose, in operation.

But she knew about it anyhow. And she said, I came back up to that church that night and stood out there at the old graveyard with the old-fashioned fence around it. Why a fence? I don't know.

He used to say, the crowd on the inside couldn't get out and the crowd outside didn't want in. But anyhow, that was the old graveyard with the fence. And Father said, I stood there and said I wouldn't be back where I was this morning for all the gold and silver that you can put in that fence and all the other fences the world around.

And what brought him to all of that blessedness, beloved, was a terrific sermon on he that being often reprov'd, hardened at his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remorse. I have an uneasy feeling that there may be some in that sad plight in this place. And not merely because you came here and had warning, because doubtless you've had much of it before.

Are you traveling the Gilboa Road or are you traveling the Damascus Road? God help you. Let us sing. We pray, O blessed Holy Spirit, that thou wilt make due and proper application of this message and especially this text to any souls in this congregation tonight so beset with the sin of stubbornness, listening to the voice of the people, as it were, the voice of this age, instead of the voice of God.

And bring them to that blessed point where they shall say like that other soul, Who art thou, Lord? What wilt thou have me to do? We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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