



April 2, 2023

# FLORENCE BOULEVARD CHURCH OF CHRIST

## To Obey Is Better Than Sacrifice

In 1 Samuel, the people wanted an earthly King even though they already had the best King, Jehovah God. God gives them Saul as King and everything seems good at first. In 1 Samuel 15, God gives the order for Saul to attack and “utterly destroy” the Amalekites including man, woman, infant, nursing child, ox, sheep, camel, and donkey. In Exodus 17:8-16, the Amalekites were the first people to attack Israel after their exodus from Egypt when they were at their weakest and Joshua defeated the Amalekites that day and God swore, he would “utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven”. Later on during their wilderness journey, God even told the children of Israel to remember what Amalek did to them as they were on their way out of Egypt in Deuteronomy 25:17-19. By 1 Samuel 15 it has been more than 400 years, but God has not forgotten what he promised to do. Time does not erase sin for God, only the blood of Jesus.

In 1 Samuel 15:7, Saul attacks the Amalekites and is obedient to the Lord’s command but was it a selective, incomplete obedience? Why did Saul take King Agag alive? Maybe he had pity for the king. Maybe he respected him as an adversary. Maybe he planned to use him to gloat and glory in his triumph. Not only do they keep King Agag alive but also the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good. Are we like this today? Do we keep around some favorite indulgence or sin that we believe is harmless even though we clearly know God has said to remove from our lives?

In 1 Samuel 15:11, God says “I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king”. This shows us a little of God’s heart. From the beginning He knows Saul’s heart, his ways, and his destiny. But even as all of this unfolds, God’s heart was not emotionless. I do not believe God just sat there in heaven with a clipboard “checking off boxes”, coldly saying “all according to plan.” Saul’s disobedience hurt God and it grieved Samuel. Samuel had God’s heart. It hurt God to reject Saul and it hurt God’s prophet to see him rejected. How do we know when we are close to God’s heart? Maybe when the things that grieve God, grieve us, and when the things that please God, please us.

In 1 Samuel 15:12, Saul sets up a monument for himself after the victory. He was not grieved over his sin, there is no shame or guilt, he is quite pleased with himself! So later God raises up David, a man after his own heart, who also disobeys God. What is the difference? David would feel the guilt and shame one should feel when they sin. Saul did not feel this because his conscience was dead to shame and his heart was dead to God. Saul even says “I have performed the commandment of the Lord” and is prideful in his behavior. Pride always leads us into self-deception. Samuel even says to Saul, “What then is the bleating of the sheep in my ears ...”. Saul even makes excuses and blames the people for sparing the best of the livestock and says to Samuel they did this “to sacrifice to the Lord your God”, he doesn’t say “my God”. When we don’t obey God completely, the left-over portion will surely come back and trouble us, if not kill us.

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