

1 Samuel 15

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[0 : 00] We come to that very pivotal time in the life of Saul, really the defining moment that marks the days that follow. We have seen how Saul has rushed ahead and offered a sacrifice that he was not commissioned or really had any right to offer.

He took the place of Samuel when he was supposed to be waiting. And in doing that, he gave up his dynasty, if you will. So Samuel says the Lord would have established your family's rule eternally, but because of your disobedience, because of your getting ahead of God, now you won't have a dynasty.

But yeah, he still had his rule. He still had his reign, his current rule. And God is so gracious. God is so kind because he continues to use Saul.

He had called Saul for a purpose. He had commissioned Samuel to appoint Saul for a purpose. Though it may not have been what we consider the perfect plan and will of God, we know God was still working in these things.

He's still moving. When the nation of Israel got ahead of God and sinned by asking for a king, it does not mean that Saul is there. By accident, God still had a purpose. So God is still using Saul in his rule and his reign and in his grace and his mercy, even gives him further opportunities to be used by God.

[1 : 27] We find such opportunity in 1 Samuel 15. But in his first failure, Saul gives up the dynasty. In the failure we encounter tonight, Saul gives up his rule.

He has it taken away from him. And as we read 1 Samuel 15, we see the danger of partial obedience. So it will be the danger of partial obedience.

The text says, Then Samuel said to Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint you as king over his people, over Israel. Now therefore listen to the words of the Lord.

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he set himself against him on the way while he was coming up from Egypt.

Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him, but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.

[2 : 29] Then Saul summoned the people and numbered them at Telim, 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men of Judah. Saul came to the city of Amalek and set an ambush in the valley.

Saul said to the Kenites, Go, depart, go down from among the Amalekites, so that I do not destroy you with them. For you showed kindness to all the sons of Israel when they came up from Egypt.

So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. So Saul defeated the Amalekites from Havilah, as you go down to Shur, which is east of Egypt. And he captured Agag, the king of the Amalekites, alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were not willing to destroy them utterly, but everything despised and worthless that they utterly destroyed.

Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying, I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me, and he has not carried out my commands.

[3 : 32] And Samuel was distressed and cried out to the Lord all night. Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul, and it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself, then turned and proceeded to go down to Gilgal.

Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, Blessed are you of the Lord, I have carried out the command of the Lord. But Samuel said, What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen to sacrifice to the Lord your God, but the rest we have utterly destroyed.

Then Samuel said to Saul, Wait, and let me tell you what the Lord said to me last night. And he said to him, Speak. Samuel said, Samuel, Samuel, Samuel said, I have indeed transgressed the command of the Lord in your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice. Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me that I may worship the Lord. But 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.

[5 : 53] As Samuel turned to go, Saul seized the edge of his robe and it tore. So Samuel said to him, The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor who is better than you.

Also, the glory of Israel will not lie or change his mind, for he is not a man that he should change his mind. Then he said, I have sinned, but please honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel and go back with me that I may worship the Lord your God.

So Samuel went back following Saul and Saul worshiped the Lord. Then Samuel said, Bring me Agag, the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came to him cheerfully. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past.

But Samuel said, As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag to pieces before the Lord at Gilgal. Then Samuel went to Ramah, but Saul went to his house in Gebeah, and Saul, the Gebeah of Saul.

Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death. For Samuel grieved over Saul, and the Lord regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel. 1 Samuel 15.

[7 : 03] Very pleasant passage to read right after eating, right? No doubt, it's a very difficult passage. But in this passage, we understand the danger of partial obedience.

And we see it in particular as it pertains to Saul, but we also see it as it pertains to us. Because as we know, the Word of God transcends time. And while there are truths contained for that moment, and truths that pertain to the life of Saul, and Samuel, and the nation of Israel, these truths also transcend time, and have application to us as well.

So we don't only want to see what happens historically in the life of the nation of Israel, we want to see the application that it has to us. So there are a number of things that we can ask ourselves about this passage, really, who is God in this passage, what is he doing, what does he require man to do, and all these matter of things.

But really, in the end, what we see is the danger of partial obedience. That is, doing just enough to justify that we have obeyed, quote, unquote, and done what God has asked us to do.

God's requirement and God's command is for full obedience, full surrender, to absolutely obey and completely obey everything that he commands us to do.

[8 : 14] And we see this in particular with Saul. Sure, we never see anyone living a perfect life. The only one that lives that perfect life is Jesus Christ. We get that. Every individual we meet in Scripture, save Christ, falls at least at some point into partial obedience.

And there's always this, the consequences which follow that. But here in this one, with Saul in particular, we see the great danger that it has. The first thing we see in partial obedience is it is a disregard for the calling of God.

It is a disregard for the callings of God. We notice here, Samuel comes to Saul. But Samuel comes with this reminder.

The Lord sent me to anoint you as king over his people, over Israel. So before he gives the command, he reminds Saul of where he is and why he is there.

Samuel says, when you were looking for donkeys, God sent me to anoint you as king. Right? Saul wasn't seeking a kingdom. Saul was seeking lost donkeys. God was looking for a king and had the people were asking for a king.

[9 : 25] God had chosen a king. So God appointed Samuel to anoint the king who happened to be looking for donkeys. So when Samuel encounters Saul, Saul had no desire, no ambition, or no longing for the throne.

But it is God's gracious intervention that appoints him to the throne. He reminds him later, he says, though you were small in your own eyes, God made you the ruler over his people.

So what we understand is the position that Saul holds is directly connected to the calling upon his life by God. That is, he is king because God made him king.

He didn't earn it. He didn't get it. He didn't achieve it. He was anointed and appointed and confirmed to it because of God's gracious intervention. Now, that is important because the commands of God follow the calling of God.

God had called Saul for a purpose. And since he had called Saul, he has the right and responsibility, therefore, to command Saul.

[10:32] The commands are based, or standing upon the foundation of the calling. Since God had called Saul to the position, God reserves the right to command Saul what to do in that position.

Now, that makes sense. But we understand this, too. Paul reminds us in Acts chapter 17, when he's preaching on Mars Hill, he's actually walking around through Athens and he's talking to the people about the altar built to an unknown God and he wants to reveal the unknown God to them.

And then when he goes to Mars Hill, Paul makes this astounding statement. Paul says that God ordains and appoints where every man will live and even what time they live in.

That God is absolutely in control of where a man lives, when they live, and the days that they have to live. That God's calling upon the individual's life is in absolute control of where they are at positionally in history.

To put it in layman's terms, we are alive today because this is the time that God had called us to live in for his glory. This is the day that God had appointed before the foundations of the earth were laid that we would be alive to serve the purposes he has for us.

[11:43] We read elsewhere in the New Testament that the works he had prepared and planned before us before the foundation of the world, he has good works appointed for us before the foundations of the world were laid.

So when God calls you to himself for salvation, when he calls you to himself in redemption, because no man comes to the Father lest he be called by the Father, right?

So when you are called to the Father through Jesus Christ, he is calling you to use you for his purposes. Therefore, because of his calling upon you, he has a right to command you.

You understand that? The commands follow the calling. We are where we are. Guess what? I didn't beat the rain, so we get to keep going, right?

We are where we are because he has called us at this time. Therefore, he has every right to command what we should do during this time. Saul was king because God chose him to be king, and God has the right to dictate what he does as king.

[12:47] We are his children. We are forgiving. We are redeemed. But we are also appointed and anointed for his purposes and his glory at this time.

And he absolutely reserves the right to command how we should live as his children because he has called us. Calling supersedes commands.

And when we choose to walk in partial obedience, we disregard the calling of God. That is, because Saul didn't want to do everything God commanded him to do, Saul essentially was saying, Well, I am king.

I get to decide what I do. That's not true. The only reason Saul is king is because God called him to be king. Right? So what Saul was doing was disregarding the importance of that calling and was putting himself in the position of God saying, I have a right to determine what I do, when I do, and how I do.

And that's absolutely not true. As followers of Jesus Christ who have been called by the Father to a saving relationship, when it comes to the commands of Christ, we cannot disregard that calling and act as if we got ourselves saved and we put ourselves in the position that we are and therefore we get to determine how we're going to live because of the position we have.

[14:11] Since he has called us, he has a right to command us. And our only response to that is full obedience because we are who we are because of who he is and what he's done.

The only reason we're redeemed is because he loves us enough to call us to himself. The only reason we can rejoice in salvation is because we have encountered the son that while we were yet sinners, he died for us.

We may not be kings. We may not be rulers. But we are co-heirs with Christ in all of glory. And we have commands to follow in this life that are directly result of the calling that he put upon us.

True obedience walks with regard. Partial obedience disregards the calling of God. The second thing we notice is that it doubts the character of God.

Partial obedience doubts the character of God. Without a doubt, when we read this passage, there are things that are hard. When God says, Go to Amalek and utterly destroy.

[15:22] You wish he didn't say that, right? But then you wish the text didn't get so specific. Men, women, children, infants, everybody. Utterly destroy it. In our mind, it's repulsive.

And it should be because killing and murder is repulsive. But this is not just killing and murder. We'll get to it in just a moment. And we push back against that. And we have this tendency to say, Well, surely he doesn't mean what I think he means.

Surely he's not saying to kill everybody. Surely that's not what he means. Be careful there because what we're doing is we're doubting the character of God. Partial obedience doubts the character of God.

And that is saying, We doubt that what God is commanding us to do is good. Now notice what the text says before that.

It gives a name of God. It says, The Lord of hosts. That's a name of God. The Lord of hosts commands you to do this.

[16:27] Now the Lord of hosts is a name that implies his militaristic rule over all powers and authorities and principalities. That he is the one who is the commander of all.

Amalek had opposed the people of God militaristically. And when he opposed the people of God, he really went to war with God.

The blessing of Abraham is those who oppose you, I will oppose. Those who bless you, I will bless. And when Amalek decided to go to war with God, he was asserting his authority over God.

But God is not just God. He is the Lord of hosts. He is the ruler of heaven's armies. And he started to battle. And we need to understand about God.

Okay, I know this is a difficult passage. But if we profess, and we should, that God is good, just, righteous, pure, holy, and perfect, and he is all those things, if we profess that is his character, then every command that proceeds from him must be in relation to who he is in character.

[17:46] That is, the command to utterly destroy must be pure, good, holy, perfect, righteous.

It must be according to the character of God. He does not break character. That is, he is not all these things. And then over here, he has this dark side. He doesn't have a dark side, right?

So it must be according to his character. So if he tells me to do this, and it is a clear command of God, then it must be the right thing to do, even if I can't understand it.

Now, I want you to stop right here. God's not going to command any of us to go utterly destroy any nations. Right? That's not a command. Great harm has been done throughout the ages.

When we start thinking about military campaigns in the name of God, and the crusades, and all those things, great harm was done. That's a different time, different epoch, different covenant.

[18:44] That's after the cross. Right? Different covenants. We're still operating according to the Abrahamic covenant here. Not the covenant of Christ. Not the blood covenant. So different covenants here.

But what we understand here as well is by doubting that this is right, what we are saying is that surely Amalek, the people of Amalek are better than the God who commands the destruction.

We are discounting the sin of the nation or the sin of that Amalek, the Amalekites. Because we say, surely he doesn't mean everyone. Well, the wages of sin is death.

And if we go a little bit further in that, we see in the text it says, they spared the king. And they kept all that was good.

They kept the best of the sheep, the best of the oxen, the best of the plunder. It says, but everything that was worthless, they utterly destroyed. Look at the irony of this.

[19:50] We don't mind giving up that which is bad. We just have a hard time surrendering that which is good. Let's bring the application to our side. If God calls us to utterly destroy a sin in our life, if the command is to go out and to defeat this sin, not this person, not this people group, not this sin, we have no problem with getting rid of the bad consequences of sin.

We want to utterly destroy everything that's bad about that sin. But the things that are appealing to the eye or the flesh, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, everything that appears to be good, those are the things we want to hold on to.

Well, I'm going to take the aspects of that sin that are good, and I'm going to bring it over here, and I'm going to put God's kind of stamp of approval on it, like I'm going to give it to God. And we're going to give up everything that's bad, all the bad stuff, all the wicked stuff, all the ugly stuff, but

we're just going to hold on to the good part of those things.

That's not the command of God. Because what we're saying is, God, we're willing to give up what is bad, but we want to hold on to those things that are good. God's command here, according to his character, is get rid of all of it.

Impartial obedience doubts the character of God. It takes the place and says, I know better than God. Surely he didn't mean for me to do this. Surely he doesn't want me to go that far.

[21 : 11] Surely he didn't mean I should go this extreme. I mean, he wouldn't ever want me to do anything that is just, you know, uncomfortable or maybe, you know, something that's out of the norm.

Maybe he doesn't want me to go that crazy. He just wants me to go, God's commands are clear, and they're according to his character. So we see it disregards the calling of God. It doubts the character of God. Number three, it defers to the crowd's approval.

Partial obedience is more concerned about popularity with men than obedience to God. It defers to the crowd's approval.

Samuel gets word from God. Samuel always gets a word from God. Samuel gets word from God. He says, I regret or I repent the fact that I have made him king. It doesn't mean that God changed his mind. God knew these things were going to happen.

It's just an expression of God in humanistic terms. It's trying to convey what we would express because God's ways are so much greater than our ways. We don't need to try to wrap our mind around it and make our brains smoke.

[22 : 08] So we just acknowledge by faith that God knew all these things were happening. But yet, in order to kind of give it application in our lives, say, well, I regret or I repent that I have made him king, for he is not faithful to me in all things.

So Samuel gets that word, and Samuel begins to mourn all night long. And all night long, his heart's breaking over this reality. Because remember, Saul took Samuel's place as leader of the nation. Right? So here's Samuel.

His heart's just breaking. And so he goes to meet him the next day, and he goes to Carmel. Well, Saul's already been through there. Saul stopped in Carmel and actually built a, you know, he built a statue to commemorate his own obedience.

He put up a monument to himself. Look how good I am. By the way, that's how we know that man gets on. When man starts erecting his own monuments, then we have problems. Okay? So he puts up a monument to his own glory, and he keeps going on down.

Well, Samuel finally catches up with him, and Saul walks out and says, Blessed are you of the Lord. I've done everything God's commanded me to do. I love this. Samuel says, Then what is this bleeding of the sheep and the loaning of the cattle? There's no way you've done everything.

[23 : 06] Right? There's no way you've done everything. But notice what the text says. The text tells us, But Saul and the people spared Agag and took the spoil. Right? That's what the text says. But Saul and the people.

When Samuel confronts Saul, what does Saul say? Saul said, Well, the people took some. They took. They saw it. They took it. And then we're going to give it, this, by the way, is one of them, red flags, that put up in Scripture.

We took some of this, or they took some of this, to offer a sacrifice to your God. We get in trouble when we're referring to God as anything else but ours. When he looks at Samuel and says, We're going to give this to your God.

Well, wait a minute. He is the God of Israel, not the God of Samuel. Saul does what every good man does. And by man, I mean mankind, not just men.

So women don't start looking at all the men and saying, We are good at that. Saul does what every mankind does. He begins to shift the blame. Well, they took it.

[24 : 05] I mean, they're over there with them, right? I'm over here with you, Samuel. I'm not standing beside the sheep and oxen. I'm not over here. They took it. Look at them. They're over there enjoying all that good stuff. When the text very clearly tells us that Saul and the people took, when Saul is confronted with it, he says they took.

That's a problem, by the way. It goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. God's looking for Adam and Eve and he finds them. God says, Adam, what have you done? He said, Oh, the woman gave it to me. He blamed his wife.

And then God goes to the woman and says, What did you do? Oh, the serpent gave it to me. It's just blame shifting, right? It's just always constantly pointing to the next. And what's going on here, is Saul is really highlighting the problem.

Saul is the leader of the people, yet he let the people dictate his own obedience. Saul said, They saw, they wanted it, so I let them have it, you know, the good stuff we bring.

We're going to give it as a sacrifice. And later on he says, I sinned because, you know, I feared the people. I let them do it. What if Saul had lived in absolute obedience? Well, if Saul had absolutely obeyed, everybody would have went to war, fought a battle which they won, but nobody would have left with any spoils.

[25 : 15] Right? They probably would have been some upset men, because there's a lot of good things there, evidently, things that are appealing, things that look like they're worth taking, and they wouldn't have gotten any, because Saul's commitment to obedience would have cost the people the spoils and the plunder.

People would have had to pay because of Saul's obedience. By the way, anytime you absolutely, completely obey the Lord God, people around you are probably going to have to pay some of the consequences for your obedience, because obedience costs something.

It does. You're not going to be the same person you've ever been, you've always been, you're not going to behave the same way, you're not going to be able to hang out in the places you used to hang out, you're not going to be able to do the things you used to do, your life's going to look different, things are going to change, people are going to want you to do this, people are going to want to get some of the spoils or the plunder, and you're going to say, no, I gave that to God, we can't take that with us anymore, you're going to have to give up things that you used to not give up, you're going to have to take on things you used to not take on, your life's going to look absolutely different.

The moment we walk in full obedience, one of the questions we always have to ask ourselves when we approach the text is who has gotten his past, what has he commanded me to do, and what will other people's responses do when I do do what God commands me to do?

If Saul had walked in obedience, everybody would have came back tired, worn down, with no plunder, and probably upset. Everybody would have been upset at him, but as it was, they came back shouting and joyous and having a good time because they had been enriched by the battle and beat the enemies, and while everybody around him was happy, the Lord God that was judging him was upset.

[26 : 47] Partial obedience defers to the crowd's approval. Most of the time, I believe this with all my heart, most of the time, we fail to live in absolute obedience is because we are afraid of what it's going to cost ourselves and others.

If we really go that extreme, what are others going to think? And in doing that, we defer to the crowd's approval, and we count it more worthy than the Lord's acceptance.

We fear the approval of man more than we fear the approval of God. And that's a reality. This is why Jesus says that, you know, they're going to persecute you and they're going to, you know, they're going to come against you.

The world won't always get on, because when we live in obedience, we look different than the world, we act different than the world, we talk different than the world, and not everybody in the world is going to like that. And the reason we kind of shade away from it a little bit, the reason we kind of ease up just a touch, is because we want everybody's approval.

I mean, we can just say what it is. The reason the church in America is as weak as it is is because the church in America began to be more concerned about the approval of man than the approval of God. We didn't.

[28 : 18] And the reason the church is that way is because the church is the people and the people are that way and I'm part of the people. Right? And so we see that it defers to the crowd's approval.

Fourth and finally, when we live in partial obedience, the final danger we see from this passage of partial obedience is it diminishes our continuous, our continued usefulness.

It diminishes our continued usefulness. Saul had already given up his dynasty by offering a sacrifice when he should have waited.

God was gracious and gave him another opportunity. God had called him and appointed him for this purpose. He was given an opportunity to serve the purposes of God and to walk in obedience and he didn't.

And when he didn't, he says, well, I went and did and I went on my mission. I did what God told me to do. He said, you didn't do everything God told you to do. You did most of what God told you to do. Right? And most is not enough.

[29 : 25] He said, you did most of what God commanded you to do but you didn't do all of it and you came back and you decided, you picked and chose what you wanted to do. So, Samuel looks at him and says, so God has removed you from being ruler over his people.

The God who called you is also the God who removed you is what he's telling him. He says, well, I've sinned, just forgive me and he gives this kind of half-hearted, we don't even want to call it repentance. He acknowledges his failure but he doesn't do anything about it, right?

He says, I have sinned, I have indeed transgressed the command of the Lord in your words because I feared the people and listened to their voice. Again, he's shifting the blame. He said, well, it was really their fault. He says, now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me that I may worship the Lord.

But Samuel said to him, 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. He could have continued to be used by God but when he failed to walk in full obedience, he diminished his continued usefulness for the sake of the kingdom.

And this point, purpose, or place in time, the kingdom is actually Israel. You know the picture so well that Samuel gets ready to leave and Saul reaches out and tears the fringe of his coat and says, so too has God torn the kingdom from you and given it to another.

[30 : 41] Now that another, your neighbor who's greater than you is David, right? The very next passage we start getting into the anointing of David, David fighting Goliath. We see all these confrontations going on.

From this moment on, the kingdom literally rests upon the shoulders of David. Though he's not in the position of king, he is anointed as king. He is filled with the spirit from that day on, covered with the spirit from that day forth.

The kingdom has literally been taken from Saul and given to David. Spiritually speaking, it will be a number of years before it is actually physically manifest.

So it is in heaven already given to David. He gave up his usefulness. Now, in Christ, we are eternally secure.

We don't want to ever impose old covenant standards into new covenant or New Testament application, right? So we don't want to say that God's going to remove us from the kingdom.

[31 : 41] That's not the case. In Christ, we are eternally secure. So that is the moment I believe in the eternal security of the saints. I really believe it. I believe it with all my heart, all my soul, all my aim, and all my ambition, right? So I believe those who are actually saved, I mean born again, saved by the lamp, they have been washed in the blood, their sins are forgiven, they're redeemed, they've been bought, they're in the hand of God based upon the work of Jesus Christ.

I believe in the eternal security that there is nothing that can take them outside of the hand of God the Father. There is neither powers nor principalities of the air, nor forces of darkness, nothing can take them out of the hand. But I also, as much as I believe in the eternal security of the saints, we'll get to it in 1 Corinthians when Paul says, I have handed such a one over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh and the preservation of his soul.

I believe that if we fail to walk in obedience, then we diminish our opportunity for continued usefulness. that if we as his people, secure people, eternally in heaven people, people that will reside in glory forever, do not walk in obedience in this time and space, then we will not be as used for the kingdom as we could have been.

Because we diminish that usefulness by partial obedience. Picking and choosing what we want to do. Now that's a hard thing. It really is.

It's hard for me as a preacher to preach. It's hard for me as a believer to accept. But it's a reality. See, God's calling upon our lives is so much more than just getting to heaven.

[33 : 19] If all it was about was getting to heaven, then he would have called us there the moment he saved us. His calling of our lives is to use us, is to leave us here to use us for his glory. And that glory is manifested through our obedience to his commands and our desire and our aim and our ambition each and every day ought to be able to walk in obedience to be useful for the sake of the kingdom and to maximize our usefulness rather than to diminish it.

And our response to what he commands us to do dictates that. That is that progressive sanctification. Right?

We are getting closer to what we should be. And more and more of my life is being set apart for his service. More and more of my life is being set apart for his glory. But here in our text, 1 Samuel 15, we see the danger of partial obedience.

Just doing enough to say we did what we were told to do but not doing everything we were told to do. Saul paid the price for that. Unfortunately, many, many, many, many, many believers still pay the price for that too.

I think one of the saddest realities that I will ever see and I just believe it is that I believe one day God will show me what he could have done with me in the kingdom that he was not able to do because of my partial obedience.

[34 : 46] And that's something at that moment that will be too late for me to go any further because by the time those things are revealed to me, my days on this earth will be done.

And I believe that will be a time of mourning, time of weeping and then I believe he will wipe that tear away from my eye. I'll be with him in glory and I'll rest in his loving assurance that I want to live this day to the best of my ability and full obedience to ensure my continued usefulness for the sake of the kingdom.

1 Samuel 15. Thank you, brothers. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[38 : 23] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.