**To Obey Is Better**

*1 Samuel 15*

**Introduction**

1. **1 Samuel 15** records one of the acts of disobedience committed by Israel’s first king, Saul.
2. Also recorded is the Lord’s response through the prophet Samuel.
3. **This record displays an attitude in Saul that is present with many in the world today. Sadly, it is even present with some in the church today.**
4. **Also displayed is the true desire God has for us as His people – to do ALL He commands, EXACTLY as He commands.**
5. Let us consider the record of **1 Samuel 15**, and then make applications.
6. Saul’s Disobedience
7. Israel and Amalek
   1. **Cf. Exodus 17:8-16** – After being delivered out of Egyptian oppression, the Israelites were attacked by Amalek in Rephidim.
   2. **READ (vv. 14-16)** – God swore to blot out Amalek for their actions.
   3. **Deuteronomy 25:17-19** – Israel told to remember what Amalek had done, and what God swore He would do.
      1. The record elaborates on what Amalek did at that time.
      2. **They did not merely attack Israel, but they ambushed them and took to stragglers, tired and weary, from the rear.**
      3. Also, they were a sinful people – ***“he did not fear God” (v. 18) – “Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites” (1 Samuel 15:18).***
8. God’s Command
   1. **1 Samuel 15:1-3** – God commissioned Saul to carry out what He swore He would do to Amalek.
      1. NOTE: Not just defeat them, but ***“utterly destroy…and do not spare them” (v. 3).***
      2. The instructions were very specific.
   2. **God had been clear from the very beginning of Israel’s dealings with the Amalekites – He wanted them utterly destroyed.**
9. Saul’s Disobedience
   1. **1 Samuel 15:7-9** – Saul attacked Amalek, but spared king Agag, and all of the ***“good”*** things.
      1. Saul made a decision he did not have the authority to make.
      2. **God did not specify between the worthless things and the good things. He wanted it all destroyed. (IT WASN’T A MATTER OF WHAT WOULD BE USEFUL, AND WHAT WOULDN’T BE. IT WAS A MATTER OF WHAT GOD SAID!)**
   2. The Lord told Samuel about Saul’s disobedience, and Samuel went to Saul.
   3. **1 Samuel 15:13-19** – Saul suggested he obeyed, but Samuel showed him otherwise.
      1. Saul made an excuse for what he and the people had done.
      2. He spared the best to give to God, but Samuel showed that was not what God desired.
   4. **1 Samuel 15:20-21** – Saul elaborates on his excuse, that he spared the best with good intentions – to sacrifice to God.
      1. **NOTE: Saul obviously did not obey God’s command to the very detail, but he thought partial obedience was obedience.**
      2. **Saul thought he knew what God wanted, but it was not what God requested.**
10. Samuel’s Response
    1. **1 Samuel 15:22-23** – Samuel explained that, no matter what Saul and the people thought God would desire, God simply desired obedience.
    2. The crux of the matter:
       1. Saul reasoned with himself about God’s command to destroy the Amalekites, **and thought he knew what God really wanted**.
       2. **He thought he knew the ultimate desire of God, and that the details were unimportant.**
       3. He thought he obeyed **(v. 20),** *and that he had a bonus by providing the best to God for a sacrifice* **(v. 21).**
       4. **GOD DOES NOT WANT US TO REASON ABOUT WHAT HE WOULD MOST DESIRE. HE SIMPLY WANTS US TO DO AS HE SAYS!**
    3. ***“’For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).***

***Let us consider some areas where this same attitude is expressed by some today. 🡪***

1. To Obey Is Better…
2. Than Instrumental Music
   1. **The idea** – God is not concerned with the specifics of our singing. He simply wants our hearts to be filled with sincere praise. Instruments make the music sound better, and God will be pleased with it.
   2. **Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19** – God only specifies singing in the command, and all examples in the NT are of singing.
      1. ***“making melody”*** – melody – *psallō* – to twitch or twang.
      2. Twitch or twang what? – ***“in your heart”***
      3. **The appeal to *psallō* is simply a way to excuse doing what you want rather than what God commands.**
   3. **How can we know what God really wants in our music worship? Look to His word. What does it say?**
3. Than Missionary Societies
   1. A specific from of institutionalism that rests on the premise that the need for evangelism is greater than what the local church can fulfill. Therefore, societies are created where money is accumulated from local churches, and the society commissions men to preach the gospel, lending them financial support.
   2. **Implies the Divine institution of the church has failed in the area of evangelism. That God’s design is incapable of fulfilling its purpose.**
   3. **The idea** – God wants the truth to be spread. We can be more effective if we combine our money, create an institution devoted to evangelism, and cover more area in lesser time by doing so.
   4. **1 Timothy 3:15** – The church is the pillar and ground of the truth.
   5. **Acts 8:4** – The church is charged with evangelism.
   6. **Matthew 28:18-20** – Missionary Societies are not included in the great commission.
   7. **God has specifically given the responsibility of evangelism to the church.**
4. Than Fellowshipping the Sinful
   1. **The idea** – I don’t see how church discipline is helpful to those in sin. It is more likely that they will be persuaded if we maintain contact with them, even though they have not repented.
   2. **1 Corinthians 5:4-5** – When it reaches this point, God’s wisdom suggests that the best thing for them is to be withdrawn from.
   3. **2 Corinthians 2:9** – This was a test of the Corinthians’ obedience.
   4. **Are we really convinced that we know better than God? Let us trust in His wisdom, and obey His word on this matter.**
5. Than Purely Positive Preaching
   1. **The idea** – It is important that the gospel reaches more ears. God is pleased with an abundance of souls in the worship assembly, and a good way of filling the seats is a positive message.
   2. **2 Timothy 4:1-5** – God wants the word preached! This includes convincing, rebuking, and exhorting.
   3. **Jude 3** – If we are charged with the responsibility to contend for the faith, there will be conflict, and people will hear things they don’t like!
   4. **Purely positive preaching does not convict people of their sin! God wants the entire truth preached, because the entire truth saves!**

**Conclusion**

1. **Let us not suppose, as did Saul, that we know what God wants better than what He has commanded.**
2. The Lord wants us to obey Him. We should only do as His word states.