

**Faith over Fear,  
Obedience over Sacrifice**

(Sermon #1)

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Today we're going to look at the tragic story of King Saul who did not choose faith over fear nor did he choose obedience over sacrifice. Although he seemed to be doing what was the right thing to do as a leader of the Israelites, it turned out to be a stupendous fall from grace. If there is a how to guide on what not to do as a child of God, or even as a Christian of today, this story would be the forerunner of them all.

#### **READ I Samuel 13:1-14**

King Saul had seemed to have everything going for him. He was a tall good-looking man who was appointed by God to be the King of Israel, the one nation of all the nations that God Almighty, Creator of all things, had chosen to lead, and for them to be His people. Saul had a trusted prophet of God who he could depend on to hear from the Lord and speak the very Words of God, to which he could get God's advise in all matters concerning the kingdom of Israel. What could possibly go wrong? Saul even had a valiant and fearless son who would prove himself as such in battle. In the previous chapter, chapter 12, even though God was not pleased with Israel for wanting a king to rule over them, which in effect was them rejecting God as their ruler, and even though God gave them a warning of thunder and rain for their act of wickedness in crying for a king (which instilled fear in all the people of Israel), God gave Saul and the Israelites a promise of blessings. Although, it was a conditional promise of blessings.

#### **READ I Samuel 12:20-25**

What is the first thing that is mentioned that God said through the prophet Samuel, to His people? Do not fear. Even though they had acted wickedly, God spoke to them in His great mercy. God still wanted to be their God and their leader, their shepherd, their guide, their hope. God, who through the hardness of the hearts of the people, established judges to rule over them after the death of Moses and then Joshua, and even through the hardness of their hearts God allowed them to have a king to lead them, yet God was still wanting to be their God, their Lord, their King of Kings. God said "do not fear." Follow the Lord, do not chase after the things of this world. Follow ME. Serve ME. Fear ME. That alone could sound like a mean, angry tyrant of a God. Follow ME. Serve ME. Fear ME. Yet Samuel says this, "For consider what great things He has done for you." **[REPEAT]** He is God Almighty, there is but One...and He is...God. We must choose **FAITH OVER FEAR.**

So, then, as Saul was waiting for Samuel to show up to offer the burnt offerings and the peace offerings, Samuel had not shown up in the seven days that he said he would. The Israelites were fearful and began to abandon King Saul and Saul was getting nervous as the Philistines were getting near. Just as Saul had finished the

offerings of sacrifice Samuel shows up. When Saul said he felt compelled to do the sacrifices he was saying OUT OF FEAR I did the sacrifices. Another thing that was going on with Saul is in his disobedience. Samuel, who was a prophet of the Lord, whose words carried the weight the Bible itself, as being the authoritative Word of God, told Saul to wait until he got there. Then Samuel would do the sacrifices. Yet Saul disobeyed. While it is not specifically mentioned that Saul was also operating in pride or arrogance, he nevertheless was. He decided he didn't need to obey God and he would do things his way and God will just have to understand and get over it.

How similar are God's people of today to the Israelites of the time of King Saul. Worrying about the affairs of this world, fretting over what they will eat and wear. Have you looked into the eyes of people in the stores and noticed their frenetic pace of worry and strife?. Have you even had to fight off those same feelings even when you walked into the store in perfect peace? How will they still be able to live in their comfortable lifestyle when all we see is more taxes and more corruption and evil pressing in upon us more and more. Yet we are given the very Word of God to guide us. We are given the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, to comfort us, to help us to be the Body of Christ that He wants us to be. He still want to be our Shepherd who leads us into all His ways. Psalm 23 says, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." The beginning says, "The Lord is my Shepherd" and the ending says, "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." It is interesting to note that King David wrote that. He was the one who God would replace King Saul with as David was a man after God's own heart.

How quickly are we when things seem to be getting out of hand, as evil is surrounding us, as what we want is not coming to fruition like was with Saul that we take matters into our own hands. Other drivers in traffic need to be straightened out? I'll show them. **[Shake Fist]** Clerks at the store not being as friendly or as helpful as we expect? Well I can tell them a thing or two. **[Wag Finger]** Your co-workers aren't being as cooperative as we want? **[Defiant Arrogance]** People at church not being as spiritual as you? "I think I'll flood their Facebook timeline with spiritual posts, that's what they need!" **[Type, type, type]** "Why are people so, blah, blah, blah."

"What is with all the people who, blah, blah, blah!" "People, we need to blah, blah, blah."

Still, God's Word says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6) Are we trusting in the Lord with all of our heart or are we taking it upon ourselves to straighten things out? Are we leaning not on our own understanding or are we reacting to what annoys us? Are we acknowledging Him in all of our ways or are we just focusing on the problems?

King Saul had the very promise of God to not fear, that they were His people, that they just needed to follow Him, serve Him, and trust Him. He needed to only consider what great things God had already done for His people and trust Him. Instead Saul and the other Israelites gave into fear and chose to do things their way. They hadn't waited upon Samuel. In other words, they hadn't waited on the Lord God. As Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you." WE must choose **OBEDIENCE OVER SACRIFICE**

As Jesus said in John 14:15, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." Jesus also said "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Are we truly following the lead of our shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ? For He is our Great Shepherd, our Chief Shepherd, the Good Shepherd. What can appear to be doing the work of the Lord, such as was with Saul, leading the Israelites to battle against the bad Philistines, offering sacrifices as a supplication unto the Lord so it can be with us. In our self-righteous defiance, taking things into our own hands kind of way we ourselves can be disobeying and dishonoring God. What may appear as though we are standing against evil may be just the rebellion of Saul. If we were all being obedient to God would not the streets be filled with evangelists? Would we not see outreach events every weekend in our community. Would we not see other "churches" working together to do such outreach events? Would not the burden of lost souls be on all of our hearts and minds. Would not our conversations with other Christians be about what God is doing and about how we can reach the lost? Would we not see within our own churches the building up of the body, preparing them to operate as the member they were called and gifted to be? Would not we hear conversations about Jesus as we walk through the stores. Would we not consider the church of Ephesus who Jesus said had lost their first love (in the book of Revelation) who was at one time very outreach oriented. Would we not ourselves be telling others about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Yes, the gospel of Jesus Christ that says

that Jesus died on a cross for our sins and then conquered death so that we can have eternal life in Him, to all those who believe. Yet, if we will not follow Jesus, our Shepherd, if we will not obey His voice (Jesus said His sheep hear His voice) then are we not acting in disobedience just as Saul and the Israelites. In the final dialogue that Samuel had with Saul, God spoke through Samuel these words, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice."

As the story continues in the succeeding chapters in I Samuel, Israel was victorious that time against the Philistines and then against the Amalekites. But, that was not because of Saul repenting and God restoring Saul to a right relationship with Himself. In fact, God's Spirit ended up leaving Saul and Samuel the prophet ended up vowing to never see Saul again. God still allowed Israel to succeed because they were His people although as it was in times past and in future times God always eventually gives the Israelites over to the own desires which leads them into bondage and misery. Saul did not choose **obedience over sacrifice** nor **faith over fear**.

Jesus said, I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Yes, Jesus died for our sins that we can be forgiven of our sins against God and be reconciled unto a relationship with God but He also wants to be our Lord, our Shepherd, and our God. We must believe on Him not only for our salvation, for eternal life, but also to be the Way, our guide and to wait on the Lord and trust in Him no matter what the circumstances. King Saul was never transformed into a Paul as the apostle Paul was in the New Testament but he ended up living out his days in misery and strife. Let us then consider what great things He has done for us and choose for ourselves **obedience over sacrifice** and **faith over fear**.