



**TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE**

# A STUDY ON

## 1 SAMUEL 13:8-14

<sup>8</sup> Then he [Saul] waited seven days, according to the time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

<sup>9</sup> So Saul said, "Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me." And he offered the burnt offering.

<sup>10</sup> Now it happened, as soon as he had finished presenting the burnt offering, that Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might greet him.

<sup>11</sup> And Samuel said, "What have you done?" Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at Michmash,

<sup>12</sup> then I said, 'The Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the LORD.' Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering."

<sup>13</sup> And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you.

For now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.

<sup>14</sup> But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

### COMMANDS GIVEN TO SAUL:

Wait until Samuel comes, so that he can make an offering on behalf of the Israelites.

### SAULS MISTAKES:

1. He did not wait for Samuel
2. He made an offering that only priests could make

### SAULS 3 EXCUSES:

1. The people were scattered from him
2. Samuel didn't come within the appointed time
3. The Philistines were gathered together ready to fight against Israel

### SAULS JUSTIFICATION:

The Philistines were coming to attack Israel and an offering hadn't yet been made to God, to engage Him on their side.

### SAMUELS REBUKE:

1. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you
2. Your kingdom shall not continue (forever)

### WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

#### IS NOT EVERYTHING IN HIS HAND?

If I learned nothing else from this passage it is that all of God's creation is in His hand. No army can attack His chosen people until He permits. Saul paints a beautiful picture of how quickly circumstances warp our confidence in our God. Saul stumbled around in fear looking to fix things before they got out of hand; out of *his* hands, but the circumstances were in God's hands all along. Saul's sacrifice is an example of how we, as humans, try to take control and bring God into a situation that He is not due to be at yet. Instead of waiting for Him to turn up, we think that He isn't coming and we try to take control for Him. Does He need our help? Absolutely not. We may think that we are doing something righteous, like Saul, but the truth is that we are either being disobedient, or lacking faith. We fear our circumstances because we doubt our God. It is easy to look at Saul and think that He should have known better, but how many times do we become afraid and try to step in and take control of a situation in which we know God is in control of? Do we know that He's in control? Do we allow Him to be in control even when things look grim? How much do we trust Him?

#### WHY THE RUSH?

I have discovered that impatience is a sign to us that we are still trying to be in control. It is also a sign that we have a vested interest in the thing that we are waiting for.

Saul must have forgotten that the Israelites were God's people not his. Saul was king, and he wanted to demonstrate that. Not only was his own life at stake but also that of his very own army; what was left of them that is. Had Saul purely been there to lead

God's people in His chosen way then he would not have been fearful. Fearful for the loss of his life perhaps; but not fearful of defeat. The fact that Saul could not wait for Samuel (God's Prophet) to arrive, showed that he was not as concerned with what God had to say, but with what needed to be done.

I look at my life and I can see a change in my perspective in life. I used to be concerned with my income, education and future, but now my concern is virtually gone. How soon things happen is no longer of concern to me. I only want to do what God wants me to do and be where He wants me to be. Am I not a chosen child of God? I no longer have a vested interest in what happens in my life or how soon it happens. That is how I can see that impatience is rooted in the self life.

### HOW WORTHY IS MY SACRIFICE TO GOD?

I look at Saul's sacrifice and the initial thought would be that Saul thought he was doing the right thing. Was he? Not according to Samuel. When you look more closely you can see that not only was Saul disobedient in obeying God's command to him, that he waits for Samuel to arrive, but he broke another command regarding the offering of sacrifices. Saul was not a priest, and thus had no jurisdiction in the area of sacrifices. Samuel was to be the one to make the sacrifice. God had laid down a certain order about things and Saul took a huge step outside that order. What his intentions were we really don't know but it is fairly obvious, according to Samuel's rebuke, that God is not concerned with his 'intentions' when it came to disobedience, He was concerned with obedience in following His commands. There is no justification for sin – using your 'good intention' as an excuse won't work with God.

Saul's sacrifice was an outward religious performance while neglecting the *weightier matter of the law* regarding sacrifices. He should have known that his sacrifice was not pleasing to God as God was the one who placed the laws regarding the making of sacrifices. We often find ourselves making sacrifices that God does not want from us, only to neglect the obedience that He commands of us. Our obedience is the sacrifice that is pleasing to God.

### THE CONSEQUENCES ARE BIGGER THAN WE EXPECT

God doesn't mess around with people who mess around with Him. Saul showed complete disregard for God's laws and commands because he wanted to be in control. I think we can forget how serious our life here on earth actually is. This isn't our home; heaven is our home. For those who are not going to Heaven, I can understand why they would want to be comfortable in this life, but for the Christian this is a battle. I think it is fairly safe to say that God's purposes have already been fulfilled in the future (which we can't see yet); He has everything where He wants it. That should be our comfort and confidence as Christians. We need not be worried about the outcome but rather concerned with our conduct.

Our disobedience, like Saul's, does nothing to alter the final outcome of life on earth but rather impacts more on us as individuals and how long it takes us to get where God wants us. In the end the Israelites did make it to the Promised Land, which was God's intention, however it took them 40 more years than it needed too. Not only did they take longer to get there, they suffered a huge number of trials that they could have avoided had they only obeyed God's commands.

The outcome is fixed; the journey is in our hands. We are dispensable; do not think that God will not rise up another to do what you were originally chosen to do. Your disobedience could cost you more than you would like to give.

### SAUL WAS THE KING BECAUSE THE PEOPLE WANTED HIM

The Israelites had God as their King but wanted a *real* king. What have we desired to have as king in our lives? Maybe it's our pastor? Maybe it's our husband? Maybe it's our finances? We tend to want God to give us something tangible that shows us that our life is in control. When we choose to place those things in the driver's seat of our life God allows us to do so, but there will come a time when that *king* in our lives will fail us. Maybe our pastor changes church, our husband has an affair or our money runs out; then what? If we are not used to being ruled by God, as our King, then when the tangible imitation is gone, or fails us, then how do we have control? That imitation *king* will do us more harm than good. Ultimately, God will remove the *king* in your life to establish Himself as King, and if He doesn't then there is reason to be concerned for your eternal future. God is our King and He wants to play the part of our King in our lives.

### LIFE IS ONE BIG TEST

I look at the pending battle in this chapter and it is easy to see it as just another battle in the life of the Israelites. However that, and the idea that God has all things in His hand, got me thinking. Life is just one big test...and one big purpose. There is no circumstance; it's all purposeful. Yes, we may have things in our life that are just part of living in this day and age, just as the Israelites did by living in constant battle, but there is not one thing that God doesn't see, and not one thing that God doesn't control. The problem is *the control*. Who is in control? Are we facing a battle that God has ordained, a battle that He has said He will fight, requesting only the sacrifice of obedience and loss of control to Him? The Old Testament is full of examples of Godly leaders who succeeded when obedient to God and fell when disobedient. Each one, although a legitimate battle in the life of the Israelites and the purposes of God, was also a test of loyalty, trust, and obedience. These OT examples expose the burning desire of God to lead, rule and protect His people; and He has not changed even unto today.