

# Matters of the Heart

## Introduction

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This week, our Senior Pastor, Dr. Joy Johnson-Green brought us into reflection on the scripture, 1 Samuel 15:13-23 in her message entitled, **The Path to Life, the Path to Death...Choose**. It was a word that spoke not only to obedience and submission to God, but also to our responsibility to make a conscious choice to get rid of the things in our lives that lead us away from relationship with Him. In 1 Samuel 15:1-3 Samuel the prophet gives Saul fresh instructions from God. Through Samuel, God instructs King Saul to "smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." Saul was willing to be obedient to a certain point. But then he kept back the best of the spoil along with Agag, the king (15:7-9).

How interesting that he chooses to spare the King. In the Journal of Myths and Symbols, the King is defined as a symbol of sovereignty, temporal power, the supreme ruler, and is equated with the creator God and the Sun. Amalek could never be destroyed as long as the king lived. Think on that. If we only deal with the symptoms of our sin rather than the root of the illness, nothing significant can change. This is how partial obedience works. It performs a part of the outward action but misses the heart and spirit of the instruction. Regardless of what we tell ourselves, partial obedience is full disobedience. And true obedience is a matter of the heart.

Saul's heart is further revealed as the story goes on. In 1 Sam 15:17 Samuel points out that Saul's perception of himself has changed. He has gone from being little in his own eyes to being too self-important to listen to God. When cornered, Saul blames the people for his disobedience (15:15). He attempts to justify and excuse his disobedience by planning a sacrificial feast to God. In other words, he did what we often do...anything that helped him avoid coming to terms with and acknowledge the sin in his life. When Samuel replies with the well-known response that "to obey is better than sacrifice" (15:22), Saul, unable to deny his sinful act, offers a formal repentance...but again we see there is a matter of the heart that is problematic. What King Saul says in 1 Sam 15:24-26, is that he sinned but it is because he was afraid of the people. Lastly, he reveals his heart in vs.30-31 when he essentially says, "Honour me before the people and don't let the Elders of Israel know how bad I messed up". We are lost when human opinion means more to us than God's opinion.



Saul missed out on his opportunity to repent. He was so rooted in public opinion, that he chose to look good to others rather than to get his relationship with God in order. Sin and pride took him down a path that eventually there was no turning back from. Deuteronomy 30:19 (ESV) reminds us "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore, choose life, that you and your offspring may live".

## Getting Started

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Read 1 Samuel 15:1-35 and Deuteronomy 25:17-19, 30:19 and answer the following questions:

1. Why did God want to utterly destroy Amalek in the first place? **Duet 25:17-19**
2. How does **1 Sam: 15** help us to better understand true obedience?
3. Why is it important how King Saul sees himself? **1 Sam: 15:17**
4. What is the significance of Saul's request in **1 Sam: 15:30-31**?

## Let's Get Personal

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1. Where in your life have you used sacrifice as a cover for a lack of complete obedience? Is this something you are experiencing now?
2. What authority or headship is God commanding you to step out of so you can truly experience His best for you?
3. "Obedience is better than sacrifice". How have you witnessed this in your past?

## Take The Next Step

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This week, your assignment is to write a letter to God. In it, make a list of everything that you are willing to surrender into His loving care. All of it. Take special notice of the Agag's (or symbolic rulers) who your flesh wants to spare. This will require prayer and time in God's presence.

Have a great week!

