



Church of God Sunday School

SAUL'S DISOBEDIENCE

1 Samuel 12:1 — 15:35

Samuel had been a faithful and honest prophet to Israel, but when he was old, the people wanted a king to rule over them. God gave them what they wanted, and Saul became the first king of Israel. But this was against God's plan.

Samuel told the people because they had asked for a king, God would punish them for their great wickedness. It was wheat harvest, a time when it rarely rained. At Samuel's request, God sent thunder and rain that very day. The people were frightened! They said to Samuel, "Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not."

Samuel told the people that as long as they served the Lord with all of their heart, God would have mercy on them. Samuel also said that he would continue to pray for the people and teach them "the good and the right way." But if Israel should live wickedly, God would consume both them and their king.

In Saul's second year as king, he gathered three thousand men to be soldiers. Two thousand men stayed with Saul. One thousand men were under the command of Jonathan, Saul's son.

Jonathan took the one thousand soldiers and attacked a Philistine garrison (military camp). When the Philistines heard of this, they readied themselves to go to war. They gathered together so many chariots and horsemen and foot soldiers that they were like "the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude."

When the Israelite army saw that they were outnumbered, they ran to hide in caves, rocks, thickets, pits, and high places. Some men even crossed the Jordan River into the land of Gad.

Saul and most of the people were in Gilgal, waiting for Samuel to come and offer the sacrifice. Saul waited for seven days, the time in which Samuel had said he would return. The people were scared—the Philistines were coming—and many began to leave Saul.



When King Saul saw that the people were fleeing and the Prophet Samuel had not yet come, he did something that he never should have done. The offering was only to be offered by the priests (Samuel was a priest), but King Saul offered the burnt offering himself. And just as soon as he was finished, who should appear but Samuel!

Samuel asked Saul, "What hast thou done?" King Saul told Samuel that when the people were scattering and Samuel had not come and the Philistines were advancing, Saul thought, "I have not made supplication [prayer] unto the LORD." So, he told Samuel, "I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering."

Samuel told King Saul that he had "done foolishly" in disobeying God's commandment. Because of that disobedience, God would seek out "a man after his own heart [one who would keep His commandments]" to be king someday. God did not remove Saul from being king immediately. Samuel was warning Saul of what was going to happen in the future. Then Samuel left.

King Saul numbered his men, and found that he had only six hundred men with him. How could they fight the Philistines now? Through a brave deed of Jonathan and his armorbearer, with the help of God (through an earthquake), the Philistines began to fall upon each other and fight among themselves.

When Saul and his army chased after the Philistines, the Israelites who had deserted them to hide in Mount Ephraim (*EE-free-uhm*) returned to help fight the enemy. So Israel was saved that day.

At a later time, Samuel came to King Saul to tell him that God wanted him to fight the Amalekites (*uh-MAL-uh-kites*), because of how they had lain in wait for the Israelites when they came out of Egypt. (God had said then that, someday, He would do away with the Amalekites and the very memory of them; see Exodus 17:8-14.)

God wanted King Saul to completely destroy *all* the people and *all* the animals—nothing was to be left.

Saul set out to battle the Amalekites, and he did defeat them—but instead of killing *all* the people and *all* the animals, as God wanted him to do, he allowed the king to live and spared the best of the animals! Was that what God had told him to do? No! Once more, Saul had disobeyed God's Word!

After the battle, God told Samuel He was sorry that He had made Saul the king. Saul just would not obey His commandments! "And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night."

Early in the morning Samuel set out to meet Saul. He was told that Saul had erected a monument to himself in Carmel (this was evidence of pride that was in Saul's heart). Saul had gone on to Gilgal, so Samuel went there to meet him. When Samuel came up to Saul, Saul said, "Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD." Saul added lying to his other sins.

Samuel asked Saul outright, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" King Saul tried to blame the people. He said, "They have brought them . . . to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed."

Samuel was very disturbed by Saul's attitude. He said to Saul: "When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the . . . king over Israel? . . . Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst . . . evil in the sight of the LORD?"

King Saul's answer was unbelievable! He acted as though nothing was wrong. He had deceived himself, and he had grown proud. He said that he had obeyed God, but it was the people who saved the best of the "sheep and oxen" so they could "sacrifice unto the LORD." Did Saul really think Samuel would be pleased to hear that the *people wanted* to sacrifice the animals to God? Hadn't Samuel told King Saul that *God want-*

ed him to destroy everything?

Samuel answered: "Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Samuel told Saul that rebellion was "as the sin of witchcraft." Because Saul had "rejected the word of the LORD," again, Saul was told that he was going to lose his kingship.

King Saul finally said, "I have sinned," but he continued to blame his fear of the people for his sin. Saul only wanted Samuel to excuse his sin and to return and worship God before the people with him. In doing so, the people would not know of God's rejection of Saul.

But Samuel would not go with Saul. As he turned to leave, Saul grabbed hold of Samuel's mantle, to stop him from leaving, and the mantle tore. Then Samuel said, "The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou." God would not tolerate disobedience to His Word!

Saul, again, confessed that he had sinned. He still wanted Samuel to return with him to worship the Lord before the elders of Israel. Samuel then went back with Saul, to worship with him one last time, but he knew that Saul's heart was still not right toward the Lord.

After the worship service, Samuel had Agag (*AY-gag*), the Amalekite king, brought to him. Samuel killed Agag right there! Then Samuel left Saul and went to Ramah. He did not come to talk to Saul anymore. But Samuel still mourned for King Saul, because he had rejected God and God had rejected him.

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**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."* —1 Samuel 15:22  
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