

I Samuel

Lesson 26 - Chapter 15 and 16

This week we will finish up 1st Samuel 15 and get a little way into chapter 16.

It's important to keep in mind that at this point in our study of the book of 1st Samuel the Lord has announced that Saul is forthwith rejected as Israel's king and that God has chosen another to replace him. But to keep things in context, also recall that I have characterized King Sha'ul as the anti-king; the king of Israel who bears the opposite attributes and behavior and mindset that the Lord expects of the man who rules over God's people. We have spent a good deal of time on the subject of rebellion and obedience to the Lord and what obedience actually amounts to then and in our time. And what we find in the narrative about King Saul is that most disobedience by God's worshippers is couched within the kernel of **partial** obedience. We tend to do as King Saul did: pick and choose those commands that seem good to us, follow them to the degree that doesn't interfere with our own lives or plans or comfort, and then rely on God's mercy to accept our efforts as good enough. God's view on that human rationale is unequivocally demonstrated in this chapter, with the result that the Holy Spirit departed from King Saul never to return.

Thus beginning now and continuing through the remainder of the book of 1st Samuel we're about to see a vivid comparison and contrast between Kings Saul and David; between the anti-king and the righteous king. We're going to find ourselves running headlong into a few troublesome theological issues that have caused deep divisions within Christianity and Judaism; and the subject of evil and its source is among them. So we're going to connect several New Testament passages to the principles we're seeing played out with King Saul's life as a means of learning and warning.

Let's re-read the final few verses of 1st Samuel chapter 15.

RE-READ 1ST SAMUEL 15:24 – end

King Saul finally shifts away from his ridiculous assertion that **he was** acting in obedience to God (in allowing the people to keep some of the banned spoils and in permitting Agag to remain alive) and admits that he has actually disobeyed. But it's apparent from his response to Samuel that he doesn't seem to realize the precarious position he is in. It is a strange irony among God's people that those who at one time had contact with God but have lost it, tend not to notice and will usually vehemently deny their adverse spiritual condition no matter how obvious it may be to others.

It is equally ironic how much King Saul's admission of his culpability for the trespass against YHWH sounds like Pharaoh's back in the days of Moses.

CJB Exodus 10:16 Pharaoh hurried to summon Moshe and Aharon and said, "I have

sinned against ADONAI your God and against you.¹⁷ Now, therefore, please forgive my sin just this once; and intercede with ADONAI your God, so that he will at least take away from me this deadly plague!"

It's not that Pharaoh planned on becoming a worshipper of God; he just wanted the current cataclysmic circumstances to be changed. It was similar for King Saul; he was not so much interested in how he had offended God as he was in how to avert the consequences of his rebellion that might affect his personal authority over Israel.

What is so fascinating is that King Saul has in this entire section of 1st Samuel steadfastly referred to Yehoveh as Samuel's God (your God), just as Pharaoh referred to YHWH as Moses' God. What an indictment! So here's another one of those sticky and hard hitting questions that we must, as Believers, face: is knowing of and believing in God the same thing as trusting and obeying Him? Is knowing of and believing in Messiah Yeshua the same thing as trusting Him and daily following in His ways? Does tearfully walking an aisle in a Church building and declaring that you believe in God, and then leaving and living your life as though you didn't a saving declaration?

Jesus' brother seems to have been inspired to see the disconnect with such a distorted way of thinking and has recorded it for us.

CJB James 2:14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone claims to have faith but has no actions to prove it? Is such "faith" able to save him?¹⁵ Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food,¹⁶ and someone says to him, "Shalom! Keep warm and eat hearty!" without giving him what he needs, what good does it do?¹⁷ Thus, faith by itself, unaccompanied by actions, is dead.¹⁸ But someone will say that you have faith and I have actions. Show me this faith of yours without the actions, and I will show you my faith by my actions!¹⁹ You believe that "God is one"? Good for you! The demons believe it too- the thought makes them shudder with fear!²⁰ But, foolish fellow, do you want to be shown that such "faith" apart from actions is barren?

King Saul is a prime biblical example of possessing a barren faith, and what the results of such an attitude means for the Believer.

The Pharaoh of Egypt had no doubts as to the existence and power of Yehoveh (his entire kingdom was in ruins at the hands of this God and he sought pardon so the calamity would end). King Saul had no doubts as to the existence and power of Yehoveh (he was no atheist). He was well aware and accepting of his own Hebrew heritage, his Hebrew forefathers, all the Hebrew covenants with God and how it was that Israel arrived in this land. But he didn't seem to connect his personal identity and destiny with the God of Israel. In fact he openly identified Yehoveh as Samuel's God; it was Samuel's God that King Saul worshipped, not his own. And it appears that much of that was simply in deference to an Israelite cultural connection and done out of centuries of Hebrew custom and tradition.

Has it ever bothered you that as we read of Satan in the bible, of his fall and his plan and his final destruction, that such an amazingly powerful intelligent being (who at one time stood at

the very throne of God) could actually wager his eternal existence that he just might be able to overthrow God? I've asked myself time and again how of all creatures Lucifer could be so self-deceived into thinking that knowing all about the Lord, having intimate knowledge of the spirit world, personally meeting and knowing Messiah, and being present in every era as God's plan of redemption races inalterably forward that he could STILL rebel against the Lord to such an extreme. Just around the corner is the Anti-Christ; a man who will behave in the same way. The Anti-Christ is no more Super Atheist than is Satan. It's just that his wickedness will be so great that the way his mind operates will be utterly irrational. King Saul will, in the coming chapters, give us a pretty good picture of what such evil spiritual irrationality looks like.

Now in verse 26 are some of the most devastating words spoken in the Bible. Saul admits his sin and asks God's Prophet Samuel to pardon him for his sin, and to come back with him so that together they can worship Yehoveh. Samuel's answer to King Saul is: ***"I will NOT go back with you because you have rejected the word of Adonai, and Adonai has rejected you as king over Israel"***.

The man who was chosen by God was now permanently rejected by God because that man at some point began to raise his self-will above God's will. The spirit-being Lucifer, who was created by God and made the most beautiful of God's creatures and allowed closest to God's throne, at some point began to raise his self-will above God's will. At some point Saul's sinning turned to rebellion which turned to idolatry which crossed some cosmic line whereby God said, "enough, I don't know you anymore. You were mine, but no longer". If we go back to the selection of Saul we don't find a man who was actively seeking power or to be Israel's king. In fact we find that when Samuel was introducing Saul to Israel, Saul was so reluctant and insecure that he hid. We find no evidence of a phony, or someone who only pretended to be a Follower of the God of Israel. But somewhere along the line, after he was given the kingship over Israel, something went terribly wrong within Saul and the change within his soul and his mind was dramatic and blasphemous.

CJB Matthew 13:3 He (Yeshua) told them many things in parables: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he sowed, some seed fell alongside the path; and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Other seed fell on rocky patches where there was not much soil. It sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow; ⁶ but when the sun had risen, the young plants were scorched; and since their roots were not deep, they dried up. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸ But others fell into rich soil and produced grain, a hundred or sixty or thirty times as much as had been sown. ⁹ Those who have ears, let them hear!"

The seed that fell into King Saul fell into shallow and rocky soil. It sprouted quickly and grew. It was quite real. But in time because Saul's roots didn't go very deep, his faith and trust in God dried up and withered away virtually unnoticed by Saul.

CJB Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, only those who do what my Father in heaven wants. ²² On that Day, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord! Didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we expel demons in your name? Didn't we perform many miracles in your name?' ²³ Then I will tell them to

their faces, 'I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!'

King Saul regularly called upon the name of the God of Israel, but he didn't DO what the Father in heaven wanted. The result: "get away from me you worker of lawlessness".

I wish I knew exactly where the point of no return is in God's eyes, because if I did I'd tell you, my family, and everyone else that I loved. I wish I knew just how much I could partially obey God before I crossed some invisible line and God made a decision against me because my rebellious attitude disqualified me for any further relationship with Him. I don't know precisely where that line is but I know it exists because the Word of God says so; and I pray every day that I stay far from it. It is just as Yeshua said in the Lord's Prayer: "lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil". I'm in good company; the writer of the book of Hebrews also wondered where that line was and he greatly feared it.

CJB Hebrews 10:23 Let us continue holding fast to the hope we acknowledge, without wavering; for the One who made the promise is trustworthy.²⁴ And let us keep paying attention to one another, in order to spur each other on to love and good deeds,²⁵ not neglecting our own congregational meetings, as some have made a practice of doing, but, rather, encouraging each other. And let us do this all the more as you see the Day approaching.²⁶ For if we deliberately continue to sin after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,²⁷ but only the terrifying prospect of Judgment, of raging fire that will consume the enemies.

The author of the book of Hebrews was talking to Believers, not seekers. He was talking to worshippers of Messiah, not heathens. He was talking to REAL Believers, some of whom had a shallow faith and others a deep and abiding faith; but because he couldn't possibly see into the human heart he couldn't know for sure which was which among his listeners. He didn't know exactly when a Believer's continued sinning amounted to such blasphemy that God made a permanent decision against him or her. King Saul (a Believer in the God of Israel) didn't know either; but he dangerously kept testing the line apparently believing that as a King the mercy and grace that God had afforded him was limitless. Let me be clear, I'm not talking about breaking commandments per se; it's not that if we break 9 commandments we're OK but upon the 10th one, we're done for. The issue is about a spiritual attitude of rebellion. God's people did (and will) break commandments and commit trespasses; but for those who continue to trust God (even in our occasional sinful behavior) and do not exalt our self-will above God's, the Levitical system of animal sacrifice brought pardon in days of old, and today all who truly have accepted the sacrifice and Lordship of Yeshua have pardon available in Him.

After God's Prophet had essentially fired Israel's king he turned to leave; but King Saul instinctively reached out and grabbed the hem of Samuel's garment. The cloth gave way and it tore. Samuel used the torn hem as a metaphor for the Lord tearing Saul's kingship away from him. It may be hard for us to get the picture here, but understand that Samuel's hem hung around his ankles. Saul's grabbing of Samuel's hem wasn't because as they stood there talking face to face, as Samuel turned to leave Saul spontaneously reached out and accidentally grabbed the hem of Samuel's garment. Rather King Saul must have first fallen to

the ground in desperation in a last ditch effort to save his throne; I think it would not be too strong to say he was groveling for all he was worth.

In that era the hem of a garment was, in many circumstances, a symbol of a person's authority. Stooping down and grabbing another's hem said, "I submit to you". Saul certainly did not intend to tear or otherwise degrade Samuel's symbolic hem of authority. Rather he intended to demonstrate a recommitment to God's authority through Samuel (however insincere) but it was too late; God's decision was final. What a terrifying thought.

Next Samuel tells Saul that the Kingdom has already been handed over to another (a fellow countryman in fact); in other words, before Samuel ever began to tell Saul the bad news God had already made His selection for the next king of Israel. And that since God is not a man to change His mind, there is no point to debating the issue. It's done.

Ah, but King Sha'ul now shows where his real concern and loyalty lies; in verse 30 he no longer is interested in forgiveness, but rather in continuing the illusion of his kingship before the elders of Israel. Saul wanted Samuel to make a political appearance with him (a photo op) so that the people of Israel didn't suspect something was amiss. It would have been expected that after such a glorious and complete victory over Amalek that Israel would have gathered together at one of their holy sites, sacrificed to thank Yehoveh, and feasted to celebrate (with King Saul and the Prophet Samuel standing arm-in-arm as the united leadership of Israel). Samuel is a kindly old man now, and really has been heartbroken over how King Saul has conducted himself. Saul has made Samuel look like a fool, led Israel over a slippery slope, and behaved so rebelliously in his spirit that from a heavenly standpoint Israel currently has no king! So Samuel relents (in all of his humanness) and agrees to go with Sha'ul.

What we ought to take notice of is the final words of verse 30: "And Sha'ul worshipped Adonai". Here we have the deposed king of Israel who has lost all relationship with Yehoveh, hypocritically and mechanically going through with all the rituals and observances. I have no doubt that Saul deceived himself into believing that God didn't REALLY mean that He was totally through with him; if Saul just adjusted his behavior a little and did lots of sacrificing and tithing and pious actions then how could Yehoveh not relent and change His mind? After all, God is all-loving, merciful and kind, right? Believers, there is a warning here that I don't think I need to elaborate upon.

While Samuel was at Gilgal he demonstrated his continuing authority by ordering that Agag, king of the Amalekites, be brought to him so that he could remedy one of the terrible wrongs that King Saul had committed.

The statement of Agag in verse 32 varies greatly from Bible version to Bible version and we find that Bible translators have taken two entirely different views on what Agag meant. One is that he is merely expressing great dismay that he is about to be executed, and the other is that he isn't at all expecting Samuel to execute and in fact that he shall live.

While I think the context and the cultural realities of that era tend to lead to the latter explanation we can't entirely dismiss the former. So I think a translation of, "Surely the

bitterness of death is past” is probably best in order to indicate that he thought that (as an honored potentate) he was being protected and actually in some way honored by being presented to Samuel.

Verse 33 then opens up another theological debate; it says that Samuel then proceeded to hack Agag into pieces, **“Before the Lord”**. As we’ve discussed in earlier lesson, the expression “before the Lord” means that whatever took place it was done at a sanctuary for Yehoveh or perhaps in front of the Ark of the Covenant. They were in Gilgal and while there is no remaining archeological evidence of a sanctuary or is there a direct mention of a sanctuary at Gilgal in Holy Scripture, there are many indirect references and Gilgal was such an important holy site for Israel that it is nearly unimaginable that they hadn’t built some kind of shrine or sanctuary there.

In any case, the debate is that some theologians say that what Samuel did was to sacrifice Agag to God. Because cutting him into pieces before God was on par with what happened to sacrificial animals. I have to tell you honestly that I think that those theologians who have come to that conclusion have utterly no idea what they’re talking about and their opinions can be summarily dismissed. Not only was human sacrifice not asked for by Yehoveh it was also abhorrent to Him. It didn’t matter whether the human in question was Hebrew or gentile, human sacrifice was completely taboo.

Not only that but the issue that is being dealt with in this chapter is ban, not sacrifice, and ban is anything but sacrifice. All Samuel did was present the ban (Agag) to God, which is what King Saul should have done. Agag was to be destroyed not offered as some kind of atonement (as in a sacrifice).

Chapter 15 ends with Samuel and Saul each going their own ways never to meet again. Samuel didn’t do this in hatred of Saul; in fact we are told that he continued to grieve over him. Samuel was apparently more devastated than Saul over Saul’s loss of the kingdom.

But before we move on to chapter 16 let me point out that as of now, Saul has been permanently cut-off from God. Prophets were the means by which God gave His oracle to Israel’s kings. Thus by Samuel permanently separating himself from Saul, Saul was left stranded in the driest spiritual desert imaginable. The Living Water of God’s Word was no longer available to Sha’ul and the Holy Spirit of God that at one time rested upon him was now forever lifted. What happens to such a person who at one time knew God, and at some level was acceptable to God and even led by God, but now and forever more is not? That’s what we’re about to see unfold.

Open your Bibles to 1st Samuel chapter 16.

READ 1ST SAMUEL CHAPTER 16 all

In this chapter David, future king of Israel, is introduced. Chapter 16 is written with two distinct divisions or parts in mind. Part 1 consists of verses 1 – 13 and it is the story of Yehoveh’s selection of David as Israel’s king. Part 2 consists of verses 14 to 23 and it the story of King

Saul's selection of David to be part of his court. Because we have the recounting of this story before us, we know that the 2nd part is a result of the 1st part. That is to say that we can see how God's selection of David led to Saul's selection of David. But as the story unfolds we'll also see that while King Saul at first thought he was merely selecting a musician and a personal body guard, in time he realized that he had actually hired his own replacement!

The other thing that is apparent in this chapter is that we are witnesses to how the lives of these two inherently incompatible men are a reflection of their personal relationship (or lack thereof) with the God of Israel. David and Saul are in reality caught up in events that are beyond their control, not unlike the story of Job. They are participants in a cosmic plan of redemption that is so much larger than themselves. King Saul chooses to fight it all the way while David chooses to ride the crest of the divine wave with only the slightest hint as to where it is going.

This is another of those cases where it is unfortunate that a chapter change has been humanly instituted to divide the final words of chapter 15 from the first words of chapter 16 because they were meant to run together.

Let me read it to you as it was originally meant:

READ 1ST SAMUEL 15:34,25 AND 1ST SAMUEL 16:1

So now we see that no time has passed since the statement that Samuel was still grieving over Saul and God getting on his case for his continuing self-imposed pity party. God had earlier told Sh'mu'el that a new king had already been selected, so wasn't it about time for Samuel (as God's Prophet) to go and anoint this unknown person as *nagid* (king in waiting)?

So God says fill your horn with oil and go to Bethlehem and there the Lord will reveal his selection. This horn was NOT a *shofar*, it was a *keren*. A *keren* (in this case) was a flask of some sort; likely it was made from an animal horn but it didn't double as a device that one blew upon to sound an alarm. The oil was, of course, consecrated olive oil that would be used to consecrate the new king of Israel.

Samuel was told specifically to go to the family of Yishai (Jesse), and it would from among that family that God would reveal His choice. Here we see prophecy in action. Jesse was the grandson of Ruth and Boaz, through their son (Jesse's father) Perez. Jesse (as was Boaz) of the tribe of Judah.

Turn you Bibles to the book of Genesis chapter 49.

Here in this chapter is Jacob's (called Israel) deathbed blessing over his sons while they were still in Egypt. These blessings were very cryptic at the time they were made and as we studied Genesis it was hard to understand what they meant or how they would manifest. But as we continued through the Torah the destinies of these sons of Jacob (the tribes of Israel) began to play out and we could see the faint shadows of Genesis 49 begin to take a more distinct shape.

Let's read Judah's prophetic blessing.

READ GENESIS 49:8 - 12

Here we see that the prophetic blessing says that Judah is going to be acknowledged by his brothers. This is merely saying that the other 11 tribes will submit to Judah as Israel's tribe of leadership. But by definition it means that at some point a person from the tribe of Judah shall reign in authority over all 12 tribes. And the dynasty of that person shall reign forever. These verses say even more but we'll leave it there (you can go back to the lesson on Genesis 49 for a refresher).

Here in 1st Samuel 16 we find that this ancient prophecy for the tribe of Judah (and for a specific member of the tribe of Judah) to become ruler over Israel finally (after about 6 centuries) comes to pass; and it is in the person of David.

We'll begin the story of David in earnest next week.