

Partial Obedience

By E. A. Johnston

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Ambassadors For Christ Intl-USA

1335 Terrell Mill Road
Bldg 1462, Suite 100
Marietta, GA 30067

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/9225

I want to take the time to lay out before you this morning some compelling reasons to obey God in these stark days in which we live. The word of God declares in 1 Samuel that “rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft in the eyes of God.” The trouble today is we don't look at things from God's perspective because we believe God thinks like we do and acts like we do but he does not. What we consider right in our own eyes is often rebellion in the eyes of God. God is a Sovereign King and he demands full obedience and loyalty to his Kingdom and to his character. God is holy; God hates sin. God hated sin so much, friend, that he sent his Son into the world to die for sinners on a bloody cross.

There is a reason why our society is in the shape it's in today, through a nation that is morally bankrupt and in anarchy against a holy God. Our society is filled with violence. There are people getting killed every day in our communities. Violence has increased in America at an alarming rate and the police force is unable to control it. It isn't safe to go outside anymore, to stand in line at a grocery store even. A madman could gun you down at any moment. We are a nation that is sunk in sensuality. Hollywood cannot produce enough filth fast enough to feed the hunger of a perverse society. Our youth are in trouble. Your average teen today is either a shoplifter, a drug user or a fornicator and they see nothing wrong with their behavior. Teachers that fill our school system are continually being fired for having sex with their students. It seems the entire nation is gripped with vice and violence and our entire nation is in anarchy against God and there is no end in sight as we sit and await a final judgment from the Almighty.

How did we get here? How did a once God-fearing nation which was at one time greatly favored by God through spiritual awakenings in the land and prospered by God and raised up in the eyes of other nations, how did we become such a godless, pagan society? I will address this dilemma this morning from the word of God as it is found in 1 Samuel 15. You may turn in your Bibles there now. Listen friends, we are in the shape we're in not because of the White House. We are in the shape we're in not because of the Court House. But we are in the sad shape we're in because of the church house. We must quit blaming politicians in Washington and be honest with ourselves and start pointing the blame at ourselves for the shape this nation is in. The people of God should be a light to the nation but when the people of God are away from God, away from the heart of God, then there is a great darkness in the land and sin and evil grow at alarming rates and nothing will stem the moral mudslide but a revival of religion.

I want us to look at 1 Samuel today in the life of King Saul and I want us to examine how a hand-picked man of God can end up in anarchy against the very God who appointed him to serve him and I want to use this passage today, friends, as a practical application in our own lives for any rebellion in our lives is anarchy against a Sovereign King and God will not tolerate rebels in his Kingdom for long without doing something about it. Do you believe that?

This may be one of the most serious messages I've ever preached so listen carefully as we proceed with our passage found in 1 Samuel 15, beginning in verse 1 and continuing to verse 24. Let me pray for us before we begin.

Great God, have mercy upon us. We've departed from thee as a nation. We have departed from thee as a people. It's only your long-suffering, Lord, and your mercy that thou has not destroyed us all. Grant us, I pray this morning, the grace to hear your voice. I pray that the people that do not just hear this poor preacher but that you attend the proclamation of your word in power and in majesty for your great glory and for your dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom you sent to this world to die as a sacrifice for sin, to reconcile sinners back to thee.

Lord, there may be some here this morning who are lost and who need you. Speak to their rebellious hearts, break up their false foundations on which they rest for without the new birth through a regenerated heart, they will die in their sins and be cast into hell and its fires.

Lord Jesus, there may be some here today who are your own but who are out of fellowship with thee through personal rebellion. Deal with them, Lord, tenderly I pray. Do not smite them but woe them back by your tender Spirit of conviction. Grip their hearts with the awful reality of your hot displeasure with anyone who is living in rebellion to the Most High God.

Meet with us today, I pray. Lord, I am poor and needy and I acknowledge that I can do nothing apart from thee. Touch me from on high with unction as I speak on your behalf. Make my lips a burning coal fresh from your altar that pierces the hard heart and warns the tender heart. These things I pray in the strong name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Here now is the word of God as taken from 1 Samuel 15.

“1 Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. 2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. 3 Now go and 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. 4 And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred

thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah. 5 And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley.

“6 And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye shewed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. 7 And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt. 8 And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. 9 But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

“10 Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying, 11 It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night. 12 And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal. 13 And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD. 14 And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? 15 And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed. 16 Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. 17 And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel? 18 And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. 19 Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD? 20 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. 21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal. 22 And Samuel said, 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. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

“24 And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.

There are several aspects I want to bring out today from this serious and grave passage of Scripture. Listen friends, 1. this should be a warning to us all on a personal level that we pursue a life of holiness unto God in obedience to him. I know I've stepped in my share of mud puddles in my time but God in his mercy has granted me the grace of repentance to re-enter a right relationship with him.

Listen friends, man has a depraved nature that is bent toward sin and serving ourselves. Man drinks iniquity like water. If you're listening to this message and you are not a saved individual, you live for yourself and you hug your sins. If you are listening to this message and you are a saved individual, you are well familiar with the struggle with the flesh, the world and the devil. It's easy to become careless and fall into rebellion against God so please listen carefully as we proceed.

When I think of King Saul, I see him multiplied throughout our congregations today. King Saul was a face man, a glamor boy, a football quarterback type of man who stood taller than others and looked more handsome than most. He was the kind of man who could easily fall prey to flattery and be a people-pleaser rather than stay obedient to God. Saul had become a self-reliant man. Pastors can easily fall into this trap of self-reliance today, especially if they have a big church backing them and plenty of manpower and money to run things but the problem which results from a self-reliant people of God is open rebellion to God in the name of religion. You see friends, King Saul wanted to serve God in his way but not in God's way. King Saul saw nothing wrong with preserving the best of the herd and sparing old King Agag.

Saul did not obey God fully for he had a partial obedience to God and that is the name of my message this morning: A Partial Obedience to God. This is the heart of my message today: often we serve God in a way that is right in our own eyes but in the eyes of God, it's disobedience. Saul wanted to serve God and please man at the same time for he was the kind of spiritual leader who needed the acceptance of men. There are many pastors like that in our day. They need the acceptance of men. They need to please their rich congregations to keep the bills paid. They need to attract a bigger crowd to expand their campus so they cheapen the gospel a little so as not to offend anyone and to be accepted and applauded by men but the only one we're supposed to please is God.

Listen friends, I didn't come here today to please you with my preaching. I came here today to warn you to repent and get right with the God of the Bible before your life ends in tragedy and wastefulness and uselessness to God. If you are a lost person sitting on a false foundation of carnal security, then I pray that the Spirit of God will awaken you to your lost condition and break up your foundation of self-righteousness and good works and bring conviction of sin in your life and show you mercy and grant you saving faith. I pray that you become a seeker of God and beg him for mercy.

If you are a believer who is out of step with God's will for your life, I pray mercy for you as well, friend, that God would be gracious towards you and grant you the necessary grace and repentance to realign yourself to him in full obedience to him. I pray that every one in the sound of my voice today will cease immediately to serve God with partial obedience.

King Saul served God partially. He didn't carry out God's complete command to destroy all the flocks and all the people. God ordered Saul to spare them not but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. But Saul didn't do it God's way. King Saul did it his way and God viewed his partial obedience as open rebellion and compared it to the sin of witchcraft.

Oh Brother Preacher, are you partially obeying God? Have you watered down your message so as not to offend man? Have you committed the sin of partial obedience in any area of your life? Our text reads in verse 24, "And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice." Brother Pastor, do you fear your deacons? Do you fear man more than God? You are the appointed shepherd over the sheep. Are you letting your people run all over you and making you commit partial obedience to God because you fear man more than the Almighty? Partial obedience to God is anarchy against God and he will have no part of it.

What is striking in this passage today is the fact that God requires full obedience and when a people of God are not living in full obedience to his commands, then society will begin to crumble all around them and enemy armies will come in and take them captive. The Jews were taken captive because they refused to leave their idols and return to God. Perhaps you friend, are presently taken captive by a sin because you have allowed your heart to be hardened. You have not maintained a tender heart towards Jesus and you took a few steps back from him and began to walk your own way. Oh, you still serve God at church and in your community by doing good for him; you are sure to keep up your sacrifices to him but you are not in complete obedience to him. The word of God declares, "And Samuel said, 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."

Dear friend, are you tithing and serving with your sacrifices to God but you are in partial obedience to him because you're not in his perfect will for your life? Are your lusts more important than God? How can you live without the presence of Christ in your life? Don't you miss the sweet fellowship of Jesus, the lover of your soul? God declares in Malachi, "Return to me and I will return to you." It is a promise, friend. Maybe your priorities have gotten all out of place and you're serving God with partial obedience rather than with all of your heart. Listen dear one, of Proverbs 3 which states, "Trust in the Lord with part of your heart." Is that what it says? No, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In some of your ways acknowledge him." Does it say that? No, "In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths."

Please listen to this next verse, friend, “Be not wise in thine own eyes. Fear the Lord and depart from evil.” If you are away from God as a believer and you have lost your fear of the Lord and you are sitting in a mud puddle of rebellion through willful sin, then beg God for mercy. Beg him for mercy right now to give you the grace to depart from that evil before it destroys you for God is no respecter of persons. You cannot stand on your past achievements with God, friend, but only stand in the power of the Holy Spirit in a close walk with God in obedience to him with all your heart.

There is a warning to preachers in our passage from 1 Samuel today: don't fear man but fear God. Live in full obedience to God, not partial obedience for partial obedience will make you useless for God. King Saul was a handsome man but he was a foolish man because he went from being little in his own eyes to self-reliance and partial obedience to God. When a spiritual leader refuses to return to a right relationship with God through full obedience then that person will lose their effectual ministry. They will be like Samson who left the tent, shook himself, not knowing that the Spirit of God had departed from him.

I fear we have many King Sauls in our pulpits today because the people of God like a good looking face man with a winning personality who speaks peace, peace when there is no peace, who scratches their itching ears with soothing messages that comfort them and soothe them rather than preach on sin and warn them to flee from the wrath of an angry God and when the people of God refuse to live for God with all their hearts and serve God partially and serve the world and the flesh, then there is a great proportion of the church serving God with partial obedience and they look and act just like the world. Society looks at the church in America today and laughs and mocks at its lack of power and influence and it lacks power and influence because of the sin of compromise. A nation will often fall into gross evil when the people of God are out of step with the heart of God. Only a heaven sent revival can save us in this tragic hour of sad spiritual declension.

But you friend, you can have a personal revival. Perhaps there is someone here today who has left their first love, Jesus. You have been discouraged and your present trial has worn you down and you have allowed your heart to get hardened through unbelief and sin. I remember a story about Mordecai Ham. Billy Graham was converted in a tent meeting under the preaching of Mordecai Ham. One day, Billy Graham visited Mordecai Ham to ask him for advice in ministry. Mordecai Ham looked Billy Graham squarely in the face and said, “Billy, don't ever lose your sweetheart love for Jesus.”

Let me ask you, friend: have you lost your sweetheart love for Jesus? Is your Bible a closed book? Are your eyes dry? Have other things taken the place of God in your life? Have you taken your eyes off of eternity? I implore you right now to turn back to God and fall back in love with Jesus with a sweetheart love, the kind of love where you can't wait to get in his presence. Perhaps it is time for you to rebuild your altar and remove your idols and ask God to rekindle the altar of your heart with his fire. Oh, that each one

of us would live for God in our full capacity for him, living on the full stretch for God through a life of full obedience to him.

Oh dear friends, we are fast running out of time and eternity is before us yet people are dropping into hell all around us. Some of them we know closely yet we have failed to share the gospel with them. We're too occupied with other things because of our partial obedience to God. When we are out of step with God, we are out of step with our fellow man in caring for his soul. Ask the Lord of Glory to burn a new fire in you for evangelism so that we can serve God faithfully by obeying the Great Commission of reaching our generation with the gospel of the Son of God. May God grant each of us grace to live our lives in light of eternity.

“Only one life, twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.”

Let me leave you with the word of God which declares in 2 Corinthians, “And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.” May the Lord of Glory seal his message to our hearts, I pray.