

The Baptist Witch

Text: 1 Samuel 15:7-33

Introduction:

1. Saul's decline starts in chapter 13 where he assumes a role that was outside the position God had given him and offers the burnt offering.
2. In this chapter, Saul is given another opportunity to prove his loyalty to God by destroying the Amalekites in obedience to His command.
3. Amalek: Attacked Israel in a cowardly fashion after they departed from Egypt. God pronounced perpetual war against Amalek (Ex. 17:16) and commanded the children of Israel to wipe them out (Deut. 25:17-19)
4. God's command to Saul is crystal clear; he was to destroy everything and everyone (Vs. 1-3). There is no ambiguity in the command! But Saul's obedience is incomplete; it is partial obedience which God views as total disobedience and denounces as the sin of rebellion & stubbornness, a sin on the same level as witchcraft and idol worship.

I. The Committing of Partial Obedience (Vs. 7-9)

A. Modification of God's instructions (Vs. 8)

1. Saul felt that obeying in 'some' things rather than 'all' things would be sufficient
2. Note "spare them not" (Vs. 3) vs "But Saul and the people spared" (Vs. 9); "utterly destroy all that they have" (Vs. 3) vs "would not utterly destroy them"
3. Saul's disobedience was not a total rejection of all that God commanded but a partial fulfilment of it. This is a very dangerous form of disobedience.

B. Elevation of human wisdom (Vs. 9)

1. It is easy to obey God and eliminate that which is obviously in the category of "vile and refuse" but not so easy to obey Him when it goes so hard against the wisdom of the natural man.
2. Saul & the people 'spared' what they perceived as "the best" of the livestock.

II. The Coverup of Partial Obedience (Vs. 10-15)

A. Fake Claims (Vs. 13-14)

1. Saul's hurried words were a dead giveaway that he had something to hide! Sometimes spiritual talk is merely a cloak to try and hide secret sin. Be sure your sin will find you out! Actions speak far louder than words.
2. Matthew Henry: "Those that boast most of their religion may be suspected of partiality and hypocrisy in it...Many boast of their

obedience to the command of God; but what mean then their indulgence of the flesh, their love of the world, their passion and uncharitableness, and their neglect of holy duties which witness against them?"

B. Finger Pointing (Vs. 15a, 21a)

1. Vs. 9 made it clear that Saul had a part in the transgression
2. Blame shifting and buck passing are as old as Eden (Adam & Eve) and are ingrained into our sin nature
3. Contrast David's Psalm of repentance (51) – "against thee, thee only, have I sinned"

C. Flawed Rationalizations (Vs. 15b, 21-22)

1. Saul seeks to wrap his disobedience in spiritual clothes. He hopes that by claiming the polluted spoils will be used for worship, he will escape the penalty of disobedience.
2. How often we seek to make our disobedience seem plausible by making it appear spiritual.
3. Examples:
 - a. "I know the Bible commands me not to be among winebibbers but I am going to the work party to be a witness to my unsaved colleagues."
 - b. "I know God's Word teaches the principle of giving generously to His work but I need to be a good steward of my finances so I'll only tithe when I can afford it."
 - c. "I know the Bible commands me not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers but I think God has brought this unsaved guy into my life so I can reach him with the Gospel"
 - d. "I know the Bible says evil communications corrupt good manners and to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but I need Facebook so I can keep in touch with all my friends and post Bible verses to encourage them."
 - e. "I know the Bible says to avoid all appearance of evil and to set no wicked thing before mine eyes but I need to keep up to date with the latest movies and T.V. shows so I know what my generation is facing in the world."
 - f. "I know the Bible commands me not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together but family is a gift from God so I need to skip church to attend that function."
 - g. "I know I should be at prayer meeting to pray with God's people but for my testimony's sake at the sports club, I can't afford to miss practice."
 - h. "I know God's Word commands me to honour my parents but I read some great verses in Proverbs about finding a wife and I'm convinced this girl's God's will for me so I'll have to bear the sacrifice of going without their blessing."

4. Samuel responds by pointing out that obedience is more important to God than material things (See Isaiah 1:1-18). Do we really think God is like a corrupt official who can be paid off (bribed) to overlook a crime? This offering was polluted and God hates polluted offerings. *“Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the LORD thy God.”* (Deut. 23:18)

III. The Cause of Partial Obedience (Vs. 16-19, 24)

A. Pride (Vs. 17)

1. Saul’s original view of himself – *“And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?”* (1 Samuel 9:21)
2. Note: In reality, Saul was still a nobody. The “greatness” was a delusion, existing only in his mind. God alone is worthy to receive all glory.
3. Saul somehow felt that his position of honour entitled him to do God’s will his own way. I.E. “I’m the pastor”; “I’ve been a member of this church for 40 years!”
4. At the edge of pride lies a dangerous precipice of destruction – *“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.”* (Prov. 16:18)
5. Illustrations: Uzziah (2 Chr. 26:16) & Hezekiah (2 Chr. 32:35) – hearts lifted up to their own destruction

B. Profits (Vs. 19)

1. The “love of money” is often at the root of disobedience to God’s Word.
2. 1 Timothy 6:9-10 *“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”*
3. Like Esau of old, we sacrifice the spiritual on the altar of the temporal, the eternal on the altar of the immediate. Like Judas, we sell Christ for financial gain.

C. Popularity (Vs. 24)

1. Saul feared man more than God and fell into the snare – *“The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.”* (Prov. 29:25)
2. Obedience to God’s Word usually means putting yourself in opposition to the majority.

IV. The Character of Partial Obedience (Vs. 23)

A. It is Rebellion (Vs. 23a)

1. The dark & depraved reality of the sin is unmasked for what it really is. Samuel refers to Saul's act as 'evil' in Vs. 19.
2. This sin of partial obedience is put on the same level as evil witchcraft.
3. No wonder no revival when our churches are full of Christians committing a sin as evil as sorcery.
4. Note: Interesting that in the not too distant future, Saul will go to the witch of Endor to seek to get in contact with dead Samuel.

B. It is Resistance (Vs. 23b)

1. Rebellion and stubbornness are Siamese twins – they are connected together. If stubbornness is present in a life, rebellion is there too. If rebellion is in a life, stubbornness is there too.
2. Stubbornness placed on the same level as iniquity and idolatry.
3. Idolatry = the worship of idols. A person is stubborn because of the presence of an idol in his life (i.e. something or someone). An idol is anything or anyone that usurps the place of Christ in my life as Lord and Sovereign.

C. It is Rejection of God's Word (Vs. 23c)

1. We accept all or nothing when it comes to God's Word. We don't just pick the parts we are comfortable with and leave the rest. God sees this as rejection of His Word.
2. This passage teaches us that from the Divine perspective, the middle of the road, fence straddling position we often approve of is not recognised by God. You are on one side or the other.

V. The Consequences of Partial Obedience (Vs. 23-29)

A. The Loss of Privilege (Vs. 23-29)

B. The Loss of Power (16:14)

VI. The Cure for Partial Obedience (Vs. 30-33)

A. Repentance before God (Vs. 30-31)

1. Saul's repentance was superficial and insincere but if he had truly repented, how different things might have been. Contrast David, a man after God's own heart (Psalm 51)
2. Repentance precedes restoration. It is an unqualified confession of our guilt before God.

B. Removal of the Sin (Vs. 32-33)

Conclusion: Will we repent of this sin of partial obedience which is as evil as witchcraft?