

I and II Samuel

Overview of the Life of Saul: How to Crash and Burn

I Samuel 1

If you'll take your Bibles, we are going to turn to I Samuel 9:1-2. Hold your place and then go over to

1 Samuel 9:1-2

¹ There was a man of Benjamin whose name was ^fKish, the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of wealth. ² And he had a son whose name was Saul, ^ga handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. ^hFrom his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.

I Chronicles 10:13-14

¹³ So Saul died for his breach of faith. He broke faith with the LORD in that he did not keep the command of the LORD, and also consulted a medium, seeking guidance. ¹⁴ He did not seek guidance from the LORD. Therefore the LORD put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse.

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Let's pray again.

O Lord, we need your spirit to understand. You have given us this word, and we know that you have done so because you love us. You want to instruct us, but more importantly, you want us to rest in Jesus, the one who perfectly obeyed your command. We pray you'd teach us in his name. Amen.

Well, tonight we begin a ten-part series on the life of Saul. You're supposed to laugh. This is a new kind of sermon for me. I've preached, as Pastor Doriani said, for many years, but I have never done an overview study of the life of any one person in a sermon. I've done it in Sunday school classes, but never in a sermon. So I have to confess, I feel a lot like, Inigo Montoya trying to get Wesley up to speed after he is waking up from being mostly dead, where he says, let me explain. No, it's too much. Let me sum up. That's where we are right now. So we're going to sum up the life of Saul. It's really impossible for us to dig down deep. So what we're going to do is take a drone's eye view and go over some things drop down from time to time at significant portions, but we'll skip some things that some may think are important probably. but I would encourage you then to go back and read. Maybe some of you have read in preparation for this last week. Pastor Alexander did a great job setting this up. I'll be referring to that. And we look forward to what Dr Doriani, and what he will do as we begin to look at the

life of David. But before we go any further, there are few three to be precise, nagging questions about Saul that I think are important to address upfront because if we don't, they can kind of be a distraction to a more in-depth examination of Saul.

If we don't deal with them up front, they may be thinking the whole time, well, what about this? So I want to get these out of the way. There are three.

Number one was Saul a believer? Was he truly saved?

Number two, did God really regret making Saul king? That is, did he make a mistake?

And then thirdly, did the witch or medium of Endor summon the real Samuel to get those out of the way?

So let's take them in reverse order, which I think reflects their ascending importance in Saul's narrative, the least critical to the most. So we'll start with did the witch or medium of Endor summon the real Samuel, though commentators and scholars have offered three main possibilities. The first one is no, she didn't. It was a demon disguised as Samuel.

This is in first Samuel 28, where Saul went to seek the necromancer, the medium, or as the King James says, the witch of Endor, so she could summon up Samuel. So it was a demon disguised as Samuel. Second up option is. No, she didn't. It was just a magician's trick on her part. Like modern people who lead seances.

Just a magician's trick that made Saul think that he. In fact, it was Samuel. The third option is no. You'll see a pattern here. She didn't. But God himself sent Samuel using the instance to pronounce a final judgment on Saul himself. So I don't want to spend too much time on this more than it's necessary. So I'll offer that.

The immediate context I think of. First Samuel 28 indicates that the last one is what happened. God himself sent Samuel. It's not unusual. We see in Scripture where those who have gone on to be with the Lord have come back. The Mount of Transfiguration. We see Moses and Elijah. And so it's not strange that that would happen, that the Lord would send someone.

And the text says multiple times that it was Samuel speaking. It'll say, And Samuel said to Saul. And at one point he even Samuel recalls to Saul how the Lord had spoken by him to declare Saul's kingdom had been torn from him. He reminds him of a previous conversation that they had, and finally he prophesies that Saul will die the next day in battle.

One last message to him. So I believe the answer is pretty simple. We don't have to spend a lot of time on it. Yes, it was the real Samuel, but the medium didn't summon him up. In fact, she screams, probably indicating she didn't expect this to happen. Second, did God really regret making Saul king? Now, this one is a little bit more significant.

It's pretty important. It's a knotty question. Okay, if not, why? Because it seems to suggest that God views choosing Saul as a mistake. When looking at first Samuel 15, verses ten and 35 in particular, where he states, it states specifically that God regretted making Saul king. I think the main reason we think this way that perhaps God thought he might have made a mistake, is because of the way we as human beings think about or understand regret.

When we say we regret a decision or action that we've made, what we almost always mean is, I wish I had known better than to have made the decision I have made. If I had had other information at my disposal, I wouldn't have made that decision. So I regret it. But there is absolutely no indication in the text, in the entire narrative about Saul, that God would have chosen anyone other than Saul as king.

In response to Israel's clamor for a king. If he had only had other information to go on, someone else could have been the guy. But that is not at all the case. What's more, Samuel's words to Saul in chapter 15, 28, and 29 make it clear that nothing God determines to do, in this case tearing the kingdom from Saul is ever subject to review or change.

Look at that. Verses 28 and 29, in verse 15. In chapter 15, the Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you, and has given it to a neighbor of yours who is better than you. And also the glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man that he should have regret. So I think it's pretty significant that this clear, unequivocal declaration about God in 15:29 rests between verses ten and 35.

So it can't be that the writer of first Samuel, who at this point is probably Samuel, he probably wrote most of it himself, meant to put two completely conflicting statements side by side. Now, with reference to God, this regret must mean something different than what it means with reference to man because of who God is. And that's why the word choice itself is important.

Here. Ralph Davis, in his commentary on this, points out that this verb Nahum with that, with God as the subject occurs some 29 times in the Old Testament. Although nuances may vary, it never seems to lose a certain emotional element, that is, sorrow, regret. One can clearly see that this is the case in the first occurrence in the Old Testament.

This is in Genesis chapter six. The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. Now if you look back in chapter 15, verse 35, we see that same connection between regret and grief. It says, And Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death. But Samuel grieved over Saul, and the Lord regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.

So we have that same pairing of grieving and regretting grieving on Samuel's part, regret on the Lord's part. But because the Lord is one who knows all things, all knowing, all wise, certainly it means more of the emotional. What's being communicated here is

not God wishing he had done something different, but God grieving. It's what we call anthropomorphic language.

Using human terms to describe divine feeling. We just need to make sure we don't carry the human baggage and attach it to God. What this really communicates to us is that God is never emotionally aloof from his sovereign actions. Now, I know the Westminster Confession says that God is without passions. I don't think that means he has no emotions.

I think it means he isn't prone to mood swings. He isn't reactionary to his emotions. But God loves clearly, and we grieve the Holy Spirit. And so, with regards to Saul's kingship and his disobedience and his rebellion, the Lord is grieved. So God, though unchanging, all knowing, all wise, chose Saul to be king, even though his rebellion would pain his heart ensue in choosing him in order to perfectly fulfill his promise to bring a Savior that is Jesus, into the world.

So finally, was Saul a believer? That is. Was he truly saved? Well, you remember I call these questions distractions. So you might think, well, that's a pretty important question. When was Saul a believer? In fact, I even got it before I even started preaching. I've heard it twice already this evening. Do you think that Saul was a believer? It's important, but I don't want to cause us to maybe think about it in a different way. I want to avoid that. The trip hazard, I like to call it that. We can. It said if we wrongly focus on answering this question. And that is ultimately thinking that Saul only did what he did and ended up as he did because he really wasn't converted.

Now, this may be, in fact, too simple an assessment, at least at the outset. Answers tend to follow one of two extreme lines of thought or responses to this. The first line is, well, if Saul was not truly a believer, that is, if he wasn't born again, that explains why crashed and burned. And therefore, since I am a believer, I'm safe and I don't need to worry about ending up like Saul.

The second line of thinking is this well, if Saul was a believer, then believers can fail royally. See what I did there? And the same type of fall could very conceivably happen to me. So I do need to worry about ending up like Saul. Well, that first line of thought may lead us to not really consider the life of Saul very seriously, or with appropriate and personal introspection.

We do need to look at Saul's life, so we need to avoid. The second line of thought might lead us to live in fear of over introspection, and look at every single thing we do that might be out of line with the Scripture, or every sin as us. Inevitably set on the path for crashing and burning. So we need to avoid both of those extremes.

But, I'll address that at the end of the message. The main reason people conclude, by the way, that Saul was a believer is because of several times in the text it says, for example, in chapter ten, verse seven, the spirit rushed upon Saul and he was turned into another man. Or in verse nine that God gave him another heart.

But we also learn chapter 16, verse 14, that the spirit of the Lord departed Saul, chapter 18, verse 12, that Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, but had departed from Saul. So we have a situation in which the spirit obviously comes upon him, sometimes mightily and suddenly, like, like you did with Samson. And when he came upon Samson, Samson was clearly no paragon of virtue, was enabled to judge as the judge he had been called to me.

So I believe these passages teach that God gave Saul his spirit in order to accomplish his kingly work, not to convert him, because just as he gave him the spirit, he also removes the spirit of a sign of having rejected him as king. Ultimately, I personally don't believe that Psalm was truly a believer because he showed himself to be a covenant breaker who was guilty of profound breach of faith with God.

That's why we looked at First Chronicles ten. Hear it again, verse 13. Saul died for his breach of faith. He broke faith with the Lord, and in that he did not keep the command of the Lord, and also consulted a medium seeking guidance. He did not seek guidance from the Lord. Therefore the Lord put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David, the son of Jesse.

Now after the sermon, if you want to talk to me about whether or not you think I'm wrong, I'd be happy to talk to you, because I could be wrong. Ultimately, the Lord knows. But based upon what I see, I don't believe that Saul was truly converted. Now, there are complexities to the account of Saul. There's no question about that. but it really is true that his life can be outlined very simply and here's my attempt. Four points.

Number one, anointing and announcement. Chapters nine and ten and first Samuel.

Number two, War and warning. That's chapter 11.

Number three, rebellion and rejection, chapters 13 through 15.

And then finally, Degeneration and disgrace, verses six, chapter 16 through 31.

And each of these episodes, we see Saul's character flaws and faithless heart increasingly revealed, and it's excruciating to see.

First, we're going to look at anointing, an announcement we looked at, first Samuel chapter nine, verses one and two. There we meet Saul again, head and shoulders, handsome. one commentator said he would have been Mister Israel if there was a Mister Israel. He was. He was just that kind of guy. You know, back in the day, he would have been on the cover of some girly teen magazine. God providentially sent some donkeys into the desert where they get lost in Kish, and sent Saul and a servant after them. After several days of searching, the servant suggested they go see Samuel for direction. Now that's a pretty poor use of a prophet of God, isn't it? We lost some donkeys. Let's go see if he knows where they are. Of course, it was the servant who suggested that, which indicates. Again, Saul wasn't thinking very well, probably not very creatively at all. They find Samuel, who had been told by God the previous day that he

was going to send him a Benjamin to anoint his king. Samuel tells him his father's donkeys have been found, and after a dinner of honor with Samuel and a good night's rest the next day, he sends Saul and his servant off, sending the servant ahead of him so that he can privately tell Saul that he is the Lord's anointed. It says that Samuel took a flask of oil. Chapter ten, verse one, poured it on his head and kissed him and said, has not the Lord anointed you to be prince over his people? Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the Lord, and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies. That's something to go out looking for donkeys and to go home as a king.

Now this is where it gets interesting. Saul had his way, telling that a series of events will serve as signs to prove his announcements as from the Lord. And the last of these events is Saul's accosting a group of prophets prophesying. And again the Spirit of God rushes on him, and he begins to prophesy with them.

Now going back to what we said earlier about the spirits rushing on him, this was not to indicate he was born again, but a visible sign to indicate he had been called and set apart for the task that he had been anointed for. So it was a proof to Saul as much as anyone else. Now this had to have been completely overwhelming.

But when Saul returns home and mentions to his uncle that he had visited Samuel, he completely ignores the most important thing. Chapter ten, verse 16 Saul said to his uncle, he told us plainly that the donkeys had been found, but about the matter of the kingdom of which Samuel had spoken, he did not tell him anything. And was that humility on Saul's part?

Was it? Prudence was a deception by failing to tell the whole truth, was he trying to forget that it happened at all, and hope that it wasn't true? Because he really didn't ask for this? Whatever the case, it certainly puts a question over think over Saul's character, and even more shortly would be revealed when Samuel gathered Israel together at Mizpah and they cast lots going for you tribe, clan, family.

And then the lot falls to the son of Kish. Surprise! But the son of Kish is nowhere to be found. And this is, of course, the famous statement where tall Saul is hiding among the baggage. You know, a tall man hiding among the bags. What is he thinking? No one could find him until it's the Lord himself who says, presumably through Samuel, that he was there hiding.

So did he think that maybe this would all go away? He knew what was happening. Did he hope that it was just a dream? So Saul has brought forth Samuel, anoints him, writes all the rights and duties of the kingship in a book that is symbolically set before the Lord, where it served as a witness before God, of Saul's obligations as king.

And then everyone goes home. Israel has a king now. The next part is war and warning for Samuel 11. This second episode of Saul's life would probably have been viewed by Saul before his death, as his glory days, before the dark times and his rejection by the

Lord and the arrival of David. On the second reason why is because it was a time of triumph and victory, in which there was nothing very little said about him that would have been negative.

The word came to Saul that the ammonites had besieged Jacob Gilead, and threatened them with annihilation if they didn't submit to them. The spirit rushes on Saul again for this kingly task. He calls the men of Israel to action. Israel defeats the ammonites, and afterward all of Israel is again summoned by Samuel for a ceremony of kingdom renewal, where Saul's kingship is vindicated.

Affirmed a new and Saul and all the men of Israel rejoice greatly. But as we saw last week, Samuel took the event as the opportunity by the direction of the Lord to give his farewell address to Israel, and to warn them again not to be so impressed with his King and kingdom, if indeed they continue to disregard obeying his law.

If you didn't hear Pastor Alexander's sermon last week, I would urge you to go, listen to it, particularly that section of the sermon. It's profound. And the Lord thundered literally against Israel. But as far as we can tell, they were truly deaf, and it didn't take long for it all to begin to fall apart. Which leads us to the third episode, which is Rebellion and Rejection.

Chapters 13 through 15. They become sickeningly similar in everything that happens after defeating the ammonites, a guerrilla attack by Saul's son Jonathan on the Philistine garrison sent Israel into a panic as the Philistines mustered to retaliate. It was an especially distressing time, particularly because Saul was waiting at Gilgal for Samuel to arrive in order to offer sacrifices. He had said, wait seven days, and I will tell you what to do.

Chapter 13, verse eight. He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him. So Saul said, bring the burnt offering here to me and the peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering. As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came, and Saul said, when I saw, Samuel said, what have you done?

Saul went out to meet him and greet him. And Samuel said, what have you done? And Saul said, when I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered it, I said, now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the Lord.

So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering. I think this is where we begin to see the real Saul, the man who ultimately leaned on his own understanding. Instead of trusting the Lord with all of his heart, he looked at the situation and said, well, what would any sane person do? I'm a king. We have to seek the Lord.

Somebody has to do something. Now we don't know if it was the full seven days, if that seventh day had come to an end, or if it was within it. Either way, Saul didn't wait, and

he essentially blamed Samuel for putting him in the position of having to force himself to make the offering. This was really your fault.

If you had been here, I wouldn't have done this. What I saw is more deep character flaws is on display here, and that is his refusal to own his sin. And the worst part? He justifies it as necessary to disobey in order for him to honor God. Now, think about that. I think that's essentially the heart of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

It was necessary for me to disobey God in order for me to obey God. That's a hard heart. Someone who's more concerned about himself, certainly, than about the Lord, and certainly not about his people. Samuel says, you have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the Lord your God, which with which he commanded you. For then the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.

But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart. The Lord has commanded him to be prince over his people. Because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you. And it goes from bad to worse. First Samuel 15 Saul shows that he learned nothing. Samuel said, I saw the Lord sent me to anoint you king over the people of Israel.

Now before, therefore listen to the words of the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts, I have noted with what Amalek good to Israel, and opposing them on the way, when they came up out of Egypt, now go and strike Amalek, and devote the destruction to destruction. All that they have, do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.

Straightforward, simple instruction instead. Verse seven Saul defeated the Amalekites from have a lot as far as shore which is east of Egypt. And he took Agag, the king of Amalekites, alive, devoted to destruction, all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, of the fattened calves and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them all that was despised and worthless.

They devoted to destruction, again leaning on his own understanding. Well, this is this is valuable spoil. Surely it makes sense to save it. Saul does it again, this time greeting Samuel by insisting he has obeyed the Lord. Verse 13, I've done what you commanded me to do, even as he has to say it, over the bleeding of sheep in the background and the the humor there kind of dissipates pretty quickly as he goes on to justify his disobedience by saying they spared the best of the things devoted to destruction for sacrifice.

Really, Samuel, this is this is for the for the good of your job, of your work. This is really ultimately the best thing when you think about it. I'm doing you a favor. This is where I think we come to the heart of the entire matter, with Saul and with Israel, who had rejected the Lord as king, which is ultimately the matter of the heart.

What is it? He goes on to say, has 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 listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king.

Saul said to Samuel, I have sinned. I've transgressed the commandment of the Lord in your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may bow before the Lord. And Samuel said to Saul, I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel.

Samuel, turn to go away. Saul sees the scourge of his robe, and it tore. And Samuel said to him, the Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day, and has given it to a neighbor of yours who is better than you, and also the glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man that he should have regret.

What a dramatic thing to witness. And it was before his men, those who had followed him, how could it ever leave their minds? And from this point on, Saul enters the final episode of his life, which is degeneration and disgrace. Chapter 16 through 31. It's during this time David enters the scene and his interactions with David are marked by instability, paranoia, which is really often the case with wicked leaders.

Adolf Hitler was so crippled with anxiety and paranoia during his final days that he apparently would scratch his neck and his ears until they bled, and he demanded that every single gallon drop of water that came into his bunker, whether it was for his toilet or for his eggs to be boiled, would be checked and analyzed for poison.

So here's Saul deteriorating before his court. He loves David for the comfort he brings him when he plays music. Then he appears to not remember David after David got Goliath. Depending on how you interpret that interaction, he's jealous and even paranoid of David because the people are writing songs about him and not Saul. So he seeks to kill him repeatedly, personally, and by issuing a death sentence when he should be leading Israel.

He's obsessive. Obsessing about David pursues him in the desert, and his mental degeneration shows him to be essentially a madman, and his moral nadir is his ordering the slaughter of animals and the priests of Nob. In first Samuel 22, because they had innocently provided for David and his men. What does it come to the King of God, slaughtering priests of God?

Now he appears several times to repent after David spares his life when he could have killed him. But it's heartless, it's disingenuous, and David knows it. He realizes that ultimately Saul's intent is to kill him, so he finally bottoms out spiritually. And first Samuel 28 by turning to the necromancer, the medium, the Witch of Endor. And as we saw

earlier, God, since Samuel to prophesy his death by his own hand in the midst of battle with the Philistines, and his body is hung on the wall, headless at best.

What an end! So how do we sum up Saul? Well, it's amazing when you go online and say what? Well, what was Saul's character flaws? It just goes on and on. But I, looking at the text and looking at what other commentators said and look what other preachers have said. I love the sermon that Alister Begg preaches on Saul.

It's wonderful if you go on and listen to it in truth, for life. Here's what I came up with. We can sum him up as someone who, number one, selectively obeyed God. He picked. He chose those parts of the commandments of God which suited Him and His purposes. He selectively told the truth, sometimes deceiving by not telling the whole truth.

He was jealous of others success very clearly, particularly David. That would mean he wasn't a team player by any means, and he certainly didn't exalt others because of their giftedness and ability. He deflected blame. Clearly he prioritized his own status. This would be an example of what Franklin Covey would call a low trust leader. He has all of the earmarks of a low trust leader perfectly, and then some.

So what's our lesson?

Well, it's important to recognize the sad episode of his life, I think not so much as a cautionary tale about the importance of living with righteousness and integrity and humility. Then it is a proclamation, ultimately, of the faithfulness of God and the undeserved mercy of his grace for his people. Now, don't hear what I'm not saying. It is a cautionary tale, and we must conclude that the primary.

But we don't need to conclude that the primary takeaway is simply don't be like Saul again. That's too easy. An assessment. We also have to recognize that we don't want to be like Israel as the church. We don't want to be like Israel, and that we recognize that we must take responsibility for ours, obeying God as well as a pastor, Alexander explains. last week, in his overview, Israel demanding a king was not rejecting Samuel, but God himself. And so we want to make sure that we're not found rejecting God for the things that we demand, whatever they may be. But just because Israel had rejected God as their king didn't mean that God still wasn't their king. And by giving them Saul, God pushed that very point. Saul, literally, Israel got what they wanted a king that was like all the nations all around them, a man who was ultimately someone who prioritizes possession and power over his people and their protection, and certainly not the honor of God. So the main truth here, I think, is that in spite of Israel's rejecting, God is King, and in spite of Saul's disastrous reign, God remained faithful.

He said, I have chosen a man after my own heart, Dr Doriani. He will speak about that. He allowed Israel to get what they wanted to demonstrate that he was still king, to show the disaster of trusting in themselves and leaning on their own understanding. They were not like the other nations. They were his people, and the kingship belonged to the Lord.

God remained faithful, and any Israelite whose heart was open to God's Spirit saw that their only hope, their only hope for the future that God had promised them, was to have a King who longed to obey the true king, the Lord, a king who knew that his reign was not about himself, or even about the people of Israel ultimately, but about God.

So, as Pastor Reeder would often say so well, the heart of the matter is the matter of the heart. Again. First Samuel 15:22 has 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 listen than the fat of rams. We hear that and we think, oh, that sounds like works.

But what is obedience? If it's true that to obey is better than sacrifice, then really the most important question that we can ask looking at Saul and even the whole scripture is this how can my heart be disposed away from seeing? Obedience is a list to check off, or even a work or an obligation, and toward learning to love.

Obedience is the primary way of loving God. The more we ask this question, I think the core of its answer is found in the gospel. And as we search the scriptures the last, we will see God's grace in Christ as a just a mere net that catches us when we fall, or a surge protector that keeps us from frying when we flame out.

Man, I'm glad I was plugged in to that and more is God offering his very self, pouring out his love into our hearts so we not only stand in all of the mercy that we have received, knowing that yes, we are capable of the kind of rebellion that Saul had even as believers, we don't stand in all just of that mercy, but we also run after him and want to be more and more like him, like the Lord Jesus.

So we look to Jesus, who is literally the one who personified for Samuel 15:22 by obeying perfectly Philippians 2. *Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* Saul grasped at his kingship.

Jesus emptied himself, refusing even to cling to his own deity. Saul excused himself at every turn. Jesus humbled himself. Saul would not obey. Jesus obeyed unto death. Now we look at I Samuel 15:22. It's not saying to obey is better than sacrifice. A sacrifice is bad. Opposing it. It's saying that sacrifice that is offered as a matter of course, and not out of the obedience of faith, is ultimately worthless.

Jesus said, if you love me, what? You will obey me, Jesus. Jesse Ryle said, obedience is the only reality. It is visible faith acting, faith in personified faith. Jesse while again, love is the grand secret of true obedience to God. When we feel towards him as children feel towards a dear father, we shall delight to do his will.

We shall not find his commandments grievous, and work for him like slaves under fear of the lash. We shall take pleasure in trying to keep his laws and mourn when we transgress them. None works so well as those who work out of love. The fear of

punishment, or the desire of reward, or principles of far less power. They do the will of God best, who do it from the heart.

So obedience is not something we do to earn God's favor. Of course, obedience is the response of those who have received God's favor in his mercy and his grace, and long to pour out their hearts, hands, and even their whole bodies in obedient love. Galatians five six Paul says in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith.

Working through love. That's obeying in the manner that first Samuel 15 is speaking about faith, working through love, believing that what God calls us to do, and trusting him is the most important thing. Because we're convinced that he really does love us. And so what he calls us to is ultimately not a burden. Not that it's often easy. Sometimes it isn't. But we judge obedience worth it because we obey him, because we love him, and we love him because he loves us. And we know his grace is sufficient for when we stumble. And he will not cast us out.

My mom and dad worked in the international student ministry before there was an international group at Clemson Presbyterian Church for several years, and they would have students in their house and they fixed their attention one year in particular on a master's student from India. His name was Amish and Amish was sort of a lost soul. And my mom found out literally a lost soul, but also just floundering in America. My mom found out he was living with 4 or 5 other Indian guys in an apartment, sleeping on a mattress on the floor, and she said, you can't do that. You're going to come and stay with us. Our mission was Hindu, and when he arrived at our house, I was already in Saint Louis going to seminary. He arrived at our house with his suitcase full of his idols.

My mom said, you can't put those up here. He says, where can I put them. She said, you can put them up outside. And he said, why? And he said, because of my Lord. Now he had heard the gospel through the ministry, and she shared why she believed that he couldn't do that. And so he put the idols away and to make a long story short, over a period of time he became a believer. He trusted in the Lord. His parents back in India were mortified, but he had an arranged marriage and he was going to go back to meet Manisha. What he didn't know is that during that time, after they had tried to talk him out of being a believer and he would not change his mind, they sent Manisha to catechism classes to learn how to act like a Christian, and her job was when he came to India to convince him that she was a Christian and then convince him to stay in India, and they could get him back into the Hindu faith. So they went to India. They got married. Amish, being satisfied that she had answered a lot of questions, began to see some things that were inconsistent in her behavior. And then finally she confessed. She said, I am not a Christian. I tricked you, and the plan was for you to stay in India so you can divorce me. He said, how could I do that? How can I dishonor the Lord by divorcing the one I pledged my life to on this earth? And she said, what? He said, I can't divorce you. God commands me to love you, and I must obey him. She said, how can you love me? I lied to you. He said, God will teach me. And they came back to the States. She was

miserable. She got involved at the church at his insistence, and over time the Lord worked on her heart and Manisha received the Lord. Now, just in a couple of months, I'm going to be doing their son's wedding in Chicago. A believer, marrying another believer. Very different situation. Amish is a ruling elder in a church. Manisha has worked in women's ministry and with, families that are disadvantaged.

It's amazing because our Amish loved the Lord and sought to obey him above all things else. It was hard. It was difficult. But he knew his Lord was worth obeying. I'm not saying every situation will turn out like that, but he is the same Lord with the same love, the same grace. And he has loved us with His Son in his life and death.

Oh, more love to thee, oh Christ, more love to thee.

Let's pray.

Oh Lord God, we can't look at Saul as anything but a tragedy. And even you grieved over it. Yet you knew that the dawn of David's arrival was near, not because he would be perfect, but because he would represent the one who was perfect, and establish himself as one who sought your heart, was a man chosen by your own heart, and ultimately would lead Israel to the greatest national revival they had ever known. At that point. But Jesus is the true King, and we thank you, Lord Jesus, for the mercy and grace you have given us. And we love you. And we ask that you pour your love into our hearts so that we would truly long to obey you out of love and to enter into that joy of our loving father.

We pray in his name.

Amen.