**Faithful Regardless**

The demise of Saul is apparent and sad. His bad decisions are becoming increasingly more consequential to his country.

At one point Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit and operating within the Will of God and in the Power of God.

But after he became King, he became more and more self-reliant, he began leaning upon his own understanding more and more, and God’s wisdom less and less.

**37**So Saul asked God, “Shall I go down and pursue the Philistines? Will you give them into Israel’s hand?” *But God did not answer him that day.*

*Saul’s last chance – The Amalekites*

It seems that God gives Saul another chance to prove himself, and perhaps redeem his kingship. He is given the task of, once and for all destroying the evil Amalekites who have been an ancient enemy of Israel; from the tine they left Egypt.

The Amalekites brutally attacked the Israelites when they were a weak homeless nation of ex-slaves in the desert after they left Egypt.

**Deuteronomy 25:17–19** “Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and attacked all who were lagging behind [typically women and children]: they had no fear of God. When the LORD your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land he is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!”

The Amalekites later joined with the Canaanites, the Moabites, and the Midianites to wage war on the Israelites. They were responsible for the repeated destruction of the Israelites’ land and food supply.

**1st Sam. 15 “**Samuel said to Saul, “I am the one the Lord sent to anoint you king over his people Israel; so listen now to the message from the Lord. **2**This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. **3**Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.’”

**4**So Saul summoned the men and mustered them at Telaim—two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand from Judah. **5**Saul went to the city of Amalek and set an ambush in the ravine. **6**Then he said to the Kenites, “Go away, leave the Amalekites so that I do not destroy you along with them; for you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt.” So the Kenites moved away from the Amalekites.

**7**Then Saul attacked the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, near the eastern border of Egypt. **8**He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword. **9**But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calvesand lambs—everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed.

**10**Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel: **11**“I regret that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions.” Samuel was angry, and he cried out to the Lord all that night.

**12**Early in the morning Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, “Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honor and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal.”

**13**When Samuel reached him, Saul said, “*The Lord bless you! I have carried out the Lord’s instructions.”*

**14**But Samuel said, “What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?”

*[Baaa…]*

**15**Saul answered, “The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the Lord your God, but we totally destroyed the rest.”

**16**“Enough!” Samuel said to Saul. “Let me tell you what the Lord said to me last night.”

“Tell me,” Saul replied.

**17**Samuel said, “Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The Lord anointed you king over Israel. **18**And he sent you on a mission, saying, ‘Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; wage war against them until you have wiped them out.’ **19**Why did you not obey the Lord? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the Lord?”

**20**“But I did obey the Lord,” Saul said. “I went on the mission the Lord assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. **21**The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the Lord your God at Gilgal.”

**22**But Samuel replied:

“Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices
    as much as in obeying the Lord?
*To obey is better than sacrifice,*
    and to heed is better than the fat of rams.
**23**For rebellion is like the sin of divination,
    and arrogance like the evil of idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of the Lord,
    he has rejected you as king.”

[Then he changes his story]

**24**Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned. I violated the Lord’s command and your instructions. I was afraid of the men and so I gave in to them. **25**Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I may worship the Lord.”

**26**But Samuel said to him, “I will not go back with you. You have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you as king over Israel!”

[Basically, he was fired and was begging for his job back again]

**27**As Samuel turned to leave, Saul caught hold of the hem of his robe, and it tore. **28**Samuel said to him, “The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbors—to one better than you. **29**He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a human being, that he should change his mind.”

**30**Saul replied, “I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me, so that I may worship the Lord your God.” **31**So Samuel went back with Saul, and Saul worshiped the Lord.

**32**Then Samuel said, “Bring me Agag king of the Amalekites.”

Agag came to him in chains. And he thought, “*Surely the bitterness of death is past.”*

**33**But Samuel said,

“As your sword has made women childless, so will your mother be childless among women.” And Samuel put Agag to death before the Lord at Gilgal.

*[ Very disturbing to read. Agag was celebrating the fact that he was still alive, and then Samuel thrust him through with a sword and killed him. This is hard for us to fathom in modern times, but apparently this was what needed to be done.*

*Remember God is just and right, but His ways are higher than ours and His thoughts wiser. Who knows, perhaps this generation of Amalekites would grow increasingly evil, and became even more horrific mas-murderers in the world in the coming ages.*

*ALSO, we need to remember that Jesus completely changed the way God deals with and relates to mankind. His cross was not an accessory to the Story of God and People, it is central. God’s dealings with sin and mankind are completely different because of Jesus. ]*

**34**Then Samuel left for Ramah, but Saul went up to his home in Gibeah of Saul. **35**Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him. And the Lord regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.”

A very sad ending to this relationship.

Samuel mourned for Saul even though he would not see him.

It was clear that Saul would never become the leader that Israel needed as their King, and that God had already selected someone else who would take his place (we will meet him in the next chapter).

Saul felt that he could disregard God’s word and turn his back on the Lord’s commands, and just make up for it by offering sacrifices for it.

God showed him clearly that that was not acceptable.

*v. 22 “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices
    as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice,*

God is seeking for leaders to carry out His plans and purposes. Men and women whom He can trust to implement His will in the world.

He is looking for;

* Obedience, not Obstinance
* Humility not just Ability
* Integrity not Intelligence
* Submission not self-importance

Saul showed over and over again pride and arrogance. His own agenda and self-image were of way more importance to him than the will of God and the instructions that were clearly and specifically given to him.

Time and time again his disregarded the Word of the Lord and prioritized his own selfish pursuits.

He was comfortable operating outside of God’s will and leading other to do so,

UNTIL he got caught.

Then he groveled for mercy for his own self-preservation, not because he wanted to honor God and seek Him with his whole heart.

Saul was given another chance to honor God and perhaps be restored, but he blew it once again.

The judgement upon him from chapter 13 still stood, and he would be replaced by someone else.

**1st Samuel 13:14**“But now your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out *a man after his own heart* and appointed him ruler of his people, because you have not kept the Lord’s command.”

David was the “*man after God’s own heart*”.

***Heart – The part of our Soul (mind/emotions) that connects to our Spirit (God).***

David wholeheartedly sought the Lord.

His life was a vivid example of Pursuing God and being “Faithful Regardless”

Even when he failed and willfully entered into very serious sin, *which in my opinion was way worse than Saul,* he did not grovel for forgiveness for his own self-preservation and reputation.

His plea was to be restored into heart-fellowship with God.

**Psalm 51:4,10-11**

4Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done what is evil in Your sight,

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

11Cast me not away from Your presence; take not Your Holy Spirit from me.

We will see that David’s heart was deeply grieved because his heart was after God and he knew that his sin grieved God’s heart.

Saul only felt bad because he got caught and his position was being taken away. There is a big difference.

God deeply desires a *whole-hearted relationship* with us. He is not satisfied with those who simply go through the motions, or who hold positions of influence and have no care for Him, and don’t seek after his heart.

Jesus encountered many religious people who simply did not seek after God’s heart, but were those in charge of teaching about God and representing God.

I often come across religious leaders today that make me wonder if they truly seek God’s heart in their ministry and private lives, or are they just in a position of representing God through empty words, symbols and tokenism.

Sometimes they are even *contemporary worship and teaching pastors*, but I come away wondering if they truly *love the Lord with all their hearts*.

I don’t like to judge people’s hearts, just sometimes their love for God is not apparent.

It’s not just leaders, God is seeking men and women all over the earth that have a heart after him, so he can raise them up and empower them.

**2 Chron 16:9 “**For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.”

What does it mean to be a person after God’s own heart?

*(Chuck Swindoll)*

*“It means your life is in harmony with the Lord.*

*What is important to Him is important to you.*

*What burdens Him burdens you.*

*When He says, “Go to the right,” you go to the right. When He says, “Stop that in your life,” you stop it.*

*When He says, “This is wrong and I want you to change,” you come to terms with it because you have a heart for God.”*

Remember;

*v. 22 “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices
    as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice,*

(Keith Green had a very convicting song about his verse)

When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, He responded with scripture;

**Matt 22:37** “Jesus replied: “’Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’

This was not new, he was quoting Moses’ writing in Deuteronomy,

**Deut 6:5 “**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”

In fact, every week at synagogues around the world, these words are recited in a prayer that is called the “*V’Ahavta”,*

*V’ahavta et Adonai Elohecha B’chol l’vavcha,*

*(And you shall love The Lord your God With all your heart,)*

God wants us to love him with ALL OUR HEART.

God is seeking for leaders to carry out His plans and purposes. Men and women whom He can trust to implement His will in the world.

Remember He is looking for;

* Obedience, not Obstinance
* Humility not just Ability
* Integrity not Intelligence
* Submission not self-importance

He is really seeking those who obey Him, want to honor Him, want to serve Him and will LOVE Him with all their HEART.

**Let’s love Him, in all that we do, say and how we live.**

**Let it be said of us, that we are people after *God’s own heart.***