



Berean Christian Fellowship

DEVOTIONAL 91.0

November 6
2015

Sacrifice vs. Obedience

“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” (1 Samuel 15:22b ESV).

We see King Saul here getting a pretty tough message from the Prophet Samuel. Rather than obey God’s Word exactly and follow His full judgments, Saul decided to allow the people to justify their rebellion by clothing it pretty convincingly as work for God.

God had spoken His Word through Samuel: *“Now go and strike Amalek and devote 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”* (1 Samuel 15:3). (It is important context that the Amalekites were intent on destroying Israel). *“But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fattened calves and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them”* (1 Samuel 15:9a). When confronted by Samuel as to why they had not destroyed the animals, *“Saul said, ‘They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice to the LORD your God, and the rest we have devoted to destruction’”* (1 Samuel 15:15).

Well, that seems pretty reasonable, doesn’t it? They simply ignored a small point of God’s Word in order to obey God’s “greater” command in His Law for personal sacrifice. Why wouldn’t God be pleased with their show of personal sacrifice? Because He had commanded them to sacrifice their fleshly appetites and desires to Him in the first place by commanding them to not take any livestock from the enemy. Mankind is an expert at covering

“small” sins with “great sacrifice,” but the truth is *“whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all”* (James 2:10). They disobey God in “small” ways in order to “obey” Him in “big” ways—justifying their actions as “spiritual.” After all, weren’t sacrifices a ministry of the people of Israel? Wasn’t it for God? Yes, but a thriving ministry or deep personal cost without an obedient heart that heeds God’s Word, doesn’t mean anything to Him. Sin is sin.

Today, in like manner, many Christians disobey the Word of God by ignoring parts of it, or contending they don’t really mean what they mean. They do this so that they get what they want and “compensate” for it by doing the “greater” good of sacrificing time, money, and energy to Him—justifying their “little” sins by “spiritual” labors. Remember the Pharisees? They had fulltime jobs doing “God’s work,” but they were satisfying their flesh, disobeying God’s Word (Matthew 23:13-28). They clothed their disobedience in public displays of “obedience” to *“outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly...full of hypocrisy and lawlessness”* (Matthew 23:28b). No matter how hard we labor for ministries, how tirelessly we pastor a church, or how inexhaustibly we make converts, none of it delights God if we’re not obedient in our hearts to His Word. If we conceal sin in our lives, He will not accept our sacrifice of time, energy, or good deeds. Rebellion is rebellion.

Do you justify sin in your life? “Oh, it wasn’t that bad!” Do you cover it with sacrifice for God? “He’s really blessed my ministry!” God cares about obedience to Him in our hearts, not the lengths we go to sacrifice to Him. He is not impressed with our efforts or our labors for Him—He does not need our sacrifice—He sacrificed Himself for all! May we obey His Word to us! Even so, Amen.