**July 11, 2021 1 Samuel 15:22-29**

***There is No Substitute for God***

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 15:22-29 NRSV

*(22)And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obedience to the voice of the LORD? Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. (23)For rebellion is no less a sin than divination, and stubbornness is like iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king." (24)Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. (25)Now therefore, I pray, pardon my sin, and return with me, so that I may worship the LORD." (26)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." (27)As Samuel turned to go away, Saul caught hold of the hem of his robe, and it tore. (28)And Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this very day, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. (29)Moreover the Glory of Israel will not recant or change his mind; for he is not a mortal, that he should change his mind."*

**Notes:**

1. GOD wants you to ***listen*** to him!
   1. Saul is told to attack the Amalekites, and ***spare*** ***nothing***.
   2. Saul ***attacks*** the Amalekites all the way to the eastern border of Egypt.
   3. Saul follows his own ***desires*** and decides what is best.
   4. Did Saul do what he was ***told***?
2. What pleases the LORD most is our ***obedience***?
   1. Don’t substitute talk for ***action***.
   2. Don’t substitute excuses for ***confession*** .
   3. Don’t substitute sacrifice for ***obedience***.
   4. Don’t substitute reputation for ***character***.
   5. Don’t substitute your will for ***God’s*** ***will***.
3. There is no ***substitution*** for God in our lives.
   1. ***Nothing*** will ever compare to the Lord being in our life.
   2. Our ***actions*** tell the world who we really are at the core of our being.
   3. Do not let ***pride*** hold you back.
   4. Do not allow your ***words*** and ***actions*** to ruin your character.
   5. Be completely ***obedient*** to what the Lord tells you.
   6. The ***abilities*** that God has given us are His ***gifts*** to be used for His ***glory***.

**Script:**

So the other week Shane borrowed a trailer from Dale to haul a tractor. On his way a tire blew out and Shane needed a spare. The spare tire that I had was a different size tire. Does anybody know what happens when you put two different sized tires on a vehicle; handling suffers, tires wear faster, its just not safe. So in the best interest of the trailer and Shane’s vehicle, as well as cargo; I had a set of spares and we changed them both.

Have you ever been in a pinch and made temporary repairs? Did you attempt to substitute the right parts with substitute parts. They call that rigging it up, and it never repairs the problem completely; in fact, it usually ends up with you being broken down on the side of the road, with the same need for the same initial repair and possible other repairs added to it.

Your life is no different. That is why many of us are glad that we serve a God of second chances’ that we serve a God of third, fourth and even many more chances. When we mess up and ask forgiveness, God forgives completely and we can begin again, fresh, like new. But that doesn’t mean that God will not discipline us. We suffer from our mistakes as part of our discipline. We suffer from our mistakes so we remember what we have done wrong. We suffer from our mistakes so that we will learn from Him, and grow stronger in our faith and obedience to His instruction.

As we follow the life of Saul through 1 Samuel we wonder, how could somebody stray so far from God’s leading. Everything was in Sauls favor, he had a divine call; and all he had to do was follow the instructions given to him by God through Samuel. Today in our passage, we see the actions that finally turned Saul away from God’s favor. Stand and share with me in the reading of our passage 1 Samuel 15:22-29

…(22)And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obedience to the voice of the LORD? Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. (23)For rebellion is no less a sin than divination, and stubbornness is like iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king." (24)Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. (25)Now therefore, I pray, pardon my sin, and return with me, so that I may worship the LORD." (26)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." (27)As Samuel turned to go away, Saul caught hold of the hem of his robe, and it tore. (28)And Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this very day, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. (29)Moreover the Glory of Israel will not recant or change his mind; for he is not a mortal, that he should change his mind." 1 Samuel 15:22-29

Did you hear correctly what Samuel is asking in verse 22? The message states it this way, “Do you think all GOD wants are sacrifices, empty rituals just for show? He wants you to listen to him! Plain listening is the thing, not staging a lavish religious production. To know why Samuel is asking Saul this question, we must go to the beginning of the chapter, and find the context of this question.

Samuel is delivering another message to Saul from the Lord. God wants to punish the Amalekites for the way they treated Saul’s ancestors. Saul is told to attack the Amalekites, and spare nothing. Kill all the men, all the women, all the children, and all of the babies. Kill all of their livestock; cattle, sheep, camels, and donkeys alike; kill it all.

So Saul began to do what the Lord had told him. He gathered 200,000 soldiers from Israel and another 10,000 from Judah, and they traveled to Amalek. While his men await outside the city, he offered the Kenites the ability to escape the wrath which was about to ensue; they took advantage of this offer, and they left the region.

Saul begins the attack upon the Amalekites. The battle wages all the way to Shur, the eastern border of Egypt. Saul and his men are striking down the Amalekites at will, he is being obedient to God’s instruction. But when his mission is almost complete, He detours from God’s instructions. Saul begins to follow his own desires and decides what is best. He spares the life of the Amalekite king, Agag; he spared the best livestock; he spared everything of value, but destroyed anything that was worthless.

So the Lord delivers another message to Samuel, "*I'm sorry I ever made Saul king*. *He's turned his back on me*. *He refuses to do what I tell him*." This caused Samuel to become angry. He prayed his anger and disappointment all through the night. Early the next morning Samuel headed off to see the king, but the king was not there. He had headed off to Carmel to establish a monument to his victory, and then he was heading to Gilgal

When Samuel finally catches up to Saul, he hears the noise from the livestock and Saul greets him, “May the LORD bless you. I've done what he directed me to do.” Now I want to ask you, did Saul do what he was told? Yes, he attacked the Amalekites; Yes, he killed many of the people; but there were many things he did not kill or destroy, No, Saul did not do what the Lord had instructed him

Samuel responds, “*Then why do I hear the baaing of sheep? Why do I hear the mooing of cattle?*” Saul begins with his explanations and excuses But I get the feeling every word coming from Saul’s mouth makes Samuel angrier.

“*STOP! Let me tell you what the Lord said to me last night*. *There was a time when you didn't think you were important*. *But you became the leader of the tribes of Israel*. *The LORD anointed you to be king over Israel*. *He sent you to do something for him. He said, 'Go and set the Amalekites apart*. *Set those sinful people apart to me in a special way to be destroyed*. *Fight against them until you have wiped them out.*' *Why didn't you obey the LORD? Why did you grab what you had taken from your enemies? Why did you do what is evil in the sight of the LORD?*

Saul responds with more excuses; we brought Agag back that he could be sacrificed along with his livestock here. And that is where we find our passage today. What pleases the LORD more? Burnt offerings and sacrifices, or our obedience?

Saul’s punishment for disobeying the Lord was to be replaced. Replaced as the king of Israel, and replaced as the leader of the armies. Saul begs Samuel for forgiveness, but the Lord and Samuel refuse his pleas for another chance.

What can we learn from this passage today? Don’t substitute talk for action. Don’t say you are going to do something and not follow through. When you agree to a task do it to the best of your abilities. Don’t take shortcuts. So many times people say I feel God leading me to do this, and then when the task becomes a little to much for them, they bale out, they walk away or just stop working at the task. Saul was told to totally wipe out God’s enemies, the Amalekites; no Prisoners, no livestock, no plunder. Wipe it all out and destroy it all. But he spared the king, the best of the livestock, and the most valuable plunder. Saul was told to do this as a way to help restore him in God’s eyes. Saul only showed the Lord his true self, he could not be relied on to be obedient to the Lord. Saul claimed to be obedient when he was not. You cannot lie to God and get away with it. The only person you are fooling when you lie to God is yourself. You may fool those around you for a while, but eventually they will see through your words and see you for who you truly are.

Don’t substitute excuses for confession. Saul made all kinds of excuses for what he did and did not do. He claimed that the King and livestock would be sacrificed later, and blamed his own men for this disobedience. One sin leads to another, one little lie leads to a bigger lie and the lies continue to grow. Saul began humble, responsible, and obedient. The people respected that and God was blessing him; but the more Saul followed his own desires the greater his moral decline, God became grieved with him to the point of regretting ever appointing him king. Stop making excuse; confess your sins and shortcomings honestly to God. Then you may move forward in God’s blessing and good graces

Don’t substitute sacrifice for obedience. Lots of people go through the motions and are not sincere. Anyone can go through the motions, but the Lord can see through our act and many others can as well, it may take us longer, but God knows your heart better than you may know it yourself. God wants obedience, this how you are able to prove your heart is authentic

Don’t substitute reputation for character. Saul was only concerned about his reputation with the people. He wasn’t concerned about his true character or what God thought of him. He was only concerned with what the people thought about him. Twice he said, “I have sinned”. I know we can’t judge a man’s heart, only God can do that; but it sure seems that Saul wasn’t sorry for what he did. He was sorry that he got caught. Saul also insisted that Samuel go with him to make sacrifice. He wanted everybody to see him in the presence of Samuel. Doing what seemed to be the right thing to do, but it was only for show, Saul wanted everyone to see how holy he wanted them to think he was; maybe even to convince himself that he was doing the right thing. But when you have to convince yourself, most likely you are not doing the right thing .

Don’t substitute your will for God’s will. God had warned Saul about rebellion the day he was confirmed as king. Saul was told to fear the Lord and follow in His ways; if he did so everything would go well. When you fear the Lord, you don’t fear the enemy; but in chapter 14 Saul was afraid of the people. In chapter 17 Saul is afraid of Goliath, but David wasn’t afraid; because he trusted the Lord. In chapter 18 you will find Saul afraid of David; and in chapter 28 Saul is afraid of the great enemy army that is about to attack. When you fear the Lord, you don’t have to be afraid of anything else. A person of integrity is concerned only with serving God; only concerned with doing God’s will. Saul substituted his will for God’s will. Is it any wonder that God rejected him.

There is no Substitution for God in our lives. There are so many things that we place on a pedestal, but none of them will ever compare to the Lord being in control of your life. None of those things will ever be able to replace the blessings we receive from the Lord. There is nothing that you can substitute to take the place of God in your life. There is nothing you can do to take away the need for God in your life. Yet many of us put more value in those things than we do our relationship with the Living God of the universe

There are no Substitutions for God and no substitutions for your obedience. Your actions tell the story of what is truly important. Your actions tell the story of what is most important. Your actions tell the world who you really are at the core of your being. What do your actions say about you? Your confession of sin has the ability to give you a fresh start; providing you are sincere, but many times, our pride will hold us back, we do not want to be looked down upon as week or foolish. Do not let pride hold you back, humbly share with the Lord what you have done and seek a way to get back on the right track. Your character is representation of who you truly are and is a priceless possession. Seek the actions that the Lord desires of you, do the right things, for the right reasons. DO not allow your words and actions to ruin your character.

Listen to the Lord and be completely obedient to what He tells you. The opportunities we have to serve the Lord are invaluable. They are chances for us to show our character chances to grow and improve in our spiritual walk. Don’t waste a single chance to serve the Lord. The abilities that God has given you are His gifts to you, to be used for His glory; they are precious gems entrusted to you to bless others. Don’t abuse them.