
The Messenger



“... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!” Romans 10:15

A Weekly Publication of the Christians Meeting at
2291 Highway Z, Wentzville, Missouri
westlakechurchofchrist.org

Dedicated to the Proclamation of the Truth in the Spirit of Love (Ephesians 4:15)

Volume 13, Issue 35

Evangelist and Editor:
Dempsey Collins

Sept. 16, 2012

Listen to PROVE ALL THINGS on 730 AM WKRE, Sunday mornings from 8:15 to 8:30

I Feared the People

by Dennis Abernathy

When Israel became unhappy and demanded a king, Saul was appointed. He started out good, but his life was one of regression rather than growth. At first he was humble and honored and glorified God, but it was losing sight of the fact that he was to honor God and not himself that led to his ruin. This change in Saul, from the humble man he was when first appointed king to the self-willed man he became, occurred gradually over a period of time.

In I Samuel 15, Saul was instructed to totally destroy the Amalekites and all they possessed, period! Who were these people and why did God give such a command? The Amalekites were a nomadic people who dwelt in the Negeb, South of Israel. They were known for their vicious fighting ability. Their first contact with Israel was at Rephidim, in the wilderness of Sinai, where they made an unprovoked attack on the weak and struggling nation that had just escaped Egypt. Israel defeated them after a desperate conflict (see Exodus 17). This unprovoked encounter with the Amalekites would not be forgotten by the Lord (I Sam. 15:2; Ex. 17:14-16).

But, Saul listened to the people and took Agag the king and the best of the sheep and oxen. These they were “*unwilling to destroy completely*” (I Sam. 15:7-9). The Lord was grieved because Saul turned away from Him and did not carry out His instructions (vv. 10-11). But Saul boasted of having “*carried out the Lord’s instructions*” and even set up a monument to himself for his accomplishments (vv. 12-13). How easy it is for one to insist that he has obeyed the Lord when in reality he has only partially done so. How easy it is for one to insist that he has obeyed the Lord when in reality he has followed his own will.

Verse 17 pretty much tells the story and pinpoints Saul’s character flaw. Saul began by being little in his own eyes (I Sam. 9), but when he became king he self-inflated. Being king didn’t make him self-willed. His was a gradual moral change, and his kingship only revealed his true character and what was really in his heart.

In verses 15 and 21 Saul said the people took and spared the best of the plunder *“which should have been utterly destroyed.”* But, they had a good reason, he pleaded: they were for sacrifices to the Lord. My, my, isn't it easy to cover up rebellion and disobedience with sacrifice and devotion? Samuel's response was both swift and directed and straight to the heart of the problem. “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams” (v. 22).

Saul and Israel knew that God was not concerned with just offerings and sacrifices, but that He delighted in obedience (see Jer. 7:22-23). *If sacrifices are offered in apostasy, unbelief, and disobedience, they are worthless* (see. Jer. 6:13-20). God, through Hosea said: “For I desire mercy not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings” (Hos. 6:6).

Saul was guilty of rebellion in rejecting the word of the Lord (v. 23). His pride and arrogant heart led him to listen to the people that he might obtain their honor. His true heart condition is indicated in verse 24: “Then said Saul 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.’”

Thus Saul was influenced by the people rather than by the will of God. He was not the first or the last to do so. He sought honor and popularity through their approval. The desire to be popular and honored by people can have a tremendous influence on one. But the one who seeks honor and approval from people by keeping his ear to the ground and his finger in the air to see which way the prevailing winds of public opinion blows will not long listen to the will of God.

Saul was rejected by the Lord from being king, and he lost the respect and fellowship of Samuel (v. 35). The Lord had Saul pegged right, for in verse 30 Saul pleaded with Samuel: “I have sinned; yet honor me now, I pray thee, before the leaders of my people, and before Israel.” Saul let the cat out of the bag, didn't he? His appeal to Samuel was “Honor *me*”... before the people and before Israel. He had no interest in honoring God or in leading the people to do so. He even referred to God as Samuel's God. He was not concerned about his sin as much as being honored before the people. His sorrow was not in the fact that he had sinned, but that he had lost his place and position as king.

Let us learn that: (1) Disobedience cannot be excused or covered up even when draped in the mask of religious devotion, or by placing the blame for it on others. (2) Partial obedience is disobedience! (3) Transgressing the commandments of God is rebellion. (4) One who seeks, glory, honor, and praise from men and not from God has a spirit that is antagonistic to faith in God (John 5:44, 12:42-43; Gal. 1:10). Our attitude should be to obey God's will over our own or anyone else's (Luke 22:42; John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38).

News and Notes:

Remember to check the prayer list for those with ongoing spiritual weaknesses and physical illnesses.
“...Pray for one another...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” James 5:16