

Series: Great Questions – week 5

CDOBC – beginning on 10/18/09

Title: “What does God want from me?”

1 Samuel 15:14 ~ November 15, 2009

OBJECTIVE: To help us know that God calls us to complete obedience, not convenient obedience.

Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- Hymn Sing Renewal – today @ 3 p.m.
- RHOF 11/22
- Bake Sale today – proceeds used to purchase new Christmas Decorations for the church
- Advent Readers needed – first advent reading is Sunday, November 29th
- Alive and Active – pot-luck this Saturday 11/21 – other events listed on insert
- Thanksgiving Eve Service – 6:30 p.m. – pie fellowship after service

Opening Prayer

There is much confusion today – with those in the church – and with those who are outside of the church – much confusion regarding the Word of God – the Bible. Some Christians – like us here at CDOBC – see the Bible as God’s Holy, inspired and authoritative Word. We understand that in Scripture there are figures of speech, different genres of writing, cultural realities – all these things must be understood and considered when interpreting a passage of Scripture – but we believe in a literal interpretation. Others don’t view the Bible as God’s Holy, inspired and authoritative Word – but they see it as a book of collective wisdom, high moral teaching, but not as authoritative to their life. In fact, they will deny the Bible’s authority in certain areas claiming that the Bible is chauvinistic, outdated, and impractical for modern thought and modern living.

This produces many problems – and as I said, much confusion because the Bible is very clear in many of its assertions and commands – especially when speaking to the moral issues of our day. We believe we need to obey and apply what it says to our life

– some deny its authority and excuse themselves from any obligation to submit and obey to what it says.

One of the greatest questions we can ever ask is, **“What does God want from me?”** – and the Bible is where we find the answer.

But, if you take the Bible out of the equation – if you strip away its power and authority – then you can’t answer that question with any certainty.

The question before us today is **“What does God want from me?”** is an important one indeed – and the Bible answers it with great clarity.

Turn with me to 1 Sam. 15

God’s clear command vs. 1-3

There is no ambiguity to the words of God here – although they are difficult words to hear.

In vs. 1, Samuel reminds King Saul that God is the real King over Israel – and Samuel, the prophet, is 2nd in command – then the human King – King Saul – is next in line. These reminders were important because Saul needed to remember that as King, he was to serve God and the people of God.

Vs. 1b-2 – Samuel emphasized that Saul was to listen – hear – obey the words of the Lord! Notice Samuel uses the personal name of God – Yahweh (LORD – all caps) – “Almighty” – a reference to the power of God. This was important not only for helping Saul remember who he was to serve, but to give Saul courage and faith that God would be with him and the nation as they went to battle.

Vs. 3 – No matter how well I can explain this verse, we will struggle with the fact that God is commanding such a brutal attack – especially with reference to the children and infants.

Now what’s the deal with the Amalekites? Why was God judging them?

The Amalekites were descendants of Esau, and they followed Esau's level of spiritual wisdom – they had none.

The Amalekites great sin: They fought Israel as they were wandering during the Exodus. – *Exodus 17:8-16; Numbers 24:20; Deut. 25:17-19.*

Deut. 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 cut off all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God.”

Those who were lagging behind were most likely families with little children, pregnant women and nursing mothers, the elderly, and the disabled. These would naturally make slower progress than the rest, and these are the ones that the Amalekites attacked and killed. This was not their only sin – for centuries, God waited for them to repent. They were part of the Canaanite people, they worshiped demonic gods, sacrificed their children as part of their religious practices, but even when we understand the great sin of the Amalekites, the judgment of God still seems harsh to us. The English phrase in vs. 3 “totally destroy” is one word in the Hebrew – meaning “to ban” – i.e., “*Ban them from existence*”.

What we fail to realize is not the depth of their sin, but the holiness and righteousness of God. When we look at this passage, we want to think that God set aside His holiness in this instance. Nothing could be further from the truth! In fact, His command to “totally destroy” the Amalekites is because of God's holiness – it's a direct exercise of His holiness.

Let's read on – vs. 4-9

Saul's selective obedience vs. 4-9

Saul's first actions after receiving instructions from Samuel were good – he seems intent on obeying what God has told him.

His mercy toward the Kenites is commendable. Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, was a Kenite.

Vs. 7 – seems simple, but there was much pain and death here.

Vs. 8 – “He” – singular – it was Saul who took Agag – and the army (the people) joined with him in taking the sheep, cattle, etc. The significance of the singular “He” will be seen when we get to vs. 15.

Why did Saul not obey completely? Was he simply forgetful like the man in this picture? Was he not able to remember things – like the character Dory from the movie Little Nemo? No.

Vs. 9 is key: “These they were unwilling to destroy completely...” – disobedience is an issue of being unwilling, not unable.

This tendency has not disappeared over the last three thousand years. We see this kind of selective obedience routinely in our own society. The sad part is – and the most sinful part is that over the past few decades, selective obedience has been practiced in the church! Countless Christians have put themselves in the place of God – by critiquing God – and selecting which parts of Scripture applies to their life. The homosexual issue is probably the most prominent one, and entire denominations have simply chosen to ignore the plain truth of Scripture in order to give a license and permission to sinful living, to avoid criticism, and to appease groups of people. The percentage of Christian men and women living together without being married – has blurred any distinction between Christian and non-Christian behavior and attitudes. The love of money and bowing at the

idol of materialism is rampant throughout the Christian community. Making ethical / moral choices about entertainment or clothing is seen as ‘outdated’, ‘old-fashioned’, and ‘closed-minded’. For some Christians, personal pleasure and personal expression holds a higher ethic in their life than the principles in God’s Word. Selective obedience is alive and well today! In fact, we need to realize that to pick and choose the parts of God’s Word that you will obey – and to reject the parts that you don’t like and will disobey – is a blatant sin. It’s what the “wicked” and the enemies of God do!

Psalm 50:16-17

“But to the wicked, God says: "What right have you to recite my laws or take my covenant on your lips? You hate my instruction and cast my words behind you.”

Psalm 119:139

“My zeal wears me out, for my enemies ignore your words.”

Selective obedience is no obedience at all!

Saul justifies his disobedience vs. 10-21

Why did Saul disobey God? Why did he obey only part of what God said?

The first answer we can see is pride – a self-serving attitude.

The Carmel in vs. 12 is not the same Mt. Carmel as in the account of Elijah. This Carmel was further south – in Judah. Saul actually makes a monument to himself for this military victory! In contrast, when Moses defeated the Amalekites, he also erected a monument – but his was an altar to the LORD (**Ex. 17:15**).

Look with me at vs. 13 – “The LORD bless you! I have carried out the LORD’s instructions.”

What a statement! Not unlike many things we hear today from those who purposefully do things that oppose God's Word!

Samuel tries to show (in vs. 14) the obvious inconsistency in Saul's statement of obedience with the inconvenient fact of the livestock surrounding them!

Vs. 15 – Saul blames the presence of the sheep, cattle, etc., on the people (soldiers).

"...to sacrifice to the LORD your God" – same as *'I cheated on my taxes so I could give more to God!'*

"We totally destroyed the rest" – Saul tries to include himself with the obedient part

Saul takes no responsibility for his sin (until later when he has no other choice). Saul was fully aware of what God had commanded him to do – but he chose to disobey – and then he justified his lack of obedience to the point that he didn't even flinch when the prophet Samuel showed up on the scene!

The second answer to why Saul disobeyed God was to satisfy their physical lust / physical appetite – disguised as religious commitment.

We see this in vs. 19 – "pounce" – same word that is used in 14:32 when the famished soldiers ate the animals with the blood still in them. This Hebrew word only occurs 2x in the O.T. – both occurrences are in 1 Samuel. The significance of this word is that it describes the mentality and frame of mind of the soldiers. In chapter 14, they were physically famished – and they pounced / swooped down on the plunder with such barbarian passion that they ate the meat raw – with the blood still in it – a direct violation of God's Law. Here in chapter 15:19, the term shines the light of truth on Saul's claim that they chose the best animals so they could worship God and

sacrifice to Him. In reality, they were once again barbarian in their passions to fulfill their lust. When an animal was sacrificed, the meat was eaten by those who offered the sacrifice. Sacrificing to God was not their primary and initial intent – but their physical appetites were leading the way!

The third answer to why Saul disobeyed God was he wanted the praise of men more than the praise of God.

We're not going to cover this today, but you can read that in vs. 24.

Vs. 20, “But I did obey the LORD...” Did Saul really believe that he was obedient? It's hard to imagine how he could make that statement without his fingers crossed, but people do it all the time! Saul tries to justify his disobedience by putting a religious purpose on it. In today's world, people justify their sin by falling back on a warped understanding of love, tolerance, and acceptance. We must remind ourselves that God loves every person – humanity is the jewel of His creation even in its fallen state! However, that doesn't mean that God tolerates or accepts our sin. He will judge our sin – and to rescue us from that judgment He sent His Son – Jesus – to atone for our sin by dying on the cross.

God desires obedience, not ritual. v. 22

Vs. 22 – This is the clear answer to our question this morning: “What does God want from me?” He wants Obedience! In many ways, this is very simple – even though to obey God's commands are not always simple or easy. The difficulty – whether it's difficult due to our own sinfulness – or difficult due to the pressures upon us – does not excuse a lack of obedience to God's commands.

If you are selective about your obedience to God – and think that it's no big deal as long as you faithfully attend church,

serve in the church, and obey in other areas – you are greatly mistaken.

God demands total obedience – nothing less. This does not mean that you must be perfect. It's impossible to be perfect – to be sinless – that is where Christ and His sacrifice for our sins – and His imputed righteousness to us come into play – but we have no right to pick and choose which of God's commands we will accept. God delights in obedience – not religious rituals or actions that are devoid of an obedient heart.

Application

Listen and obey every Word of God.

God's Word is not always easy to obey. The Christian life is full of challenges as we overcome our sinful nature and by faith obey God's Word.

God desires obedience, not partial worship.

Rom. 12:1-2a

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

Obeying God is true worship. Worshiping God while selectively obeying His Word is neither obedience nor worship!

Examine your life for areas of compromise.

Close in prayer