

Behold Your King - "The Danger of Disobedience"

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[0 : 0 0] Well, in the past decade, it seems that there are more and more stories of people leaving Christianity. There have been several well-known cases of this, like Joshua Harris, who wrote some helpful books on following Christ and even pastored a church that seemed to be growing and healthy on the East Coast.

And yet now, he says, I don't believe any of that anymore. I don't care about following Christ. And he actually helps people understand what it means to deconstruct or leave the faith. And I'm sure many of us at the same time have friends or family members who are just like him, who are believers, it seemed, for a time, but they drifted.

They fell away. They no longer proclaim that they believe anything about Christ. And sometimes people wonder in these situations, what happened? And I think there are several explanations along those lines.

But one of the big things to understand is that many times, there tends to be tied to this falling away, a growing disobedience and lack of care for God's word and God's commands that tends to grip them and slowly devolve until the point that they no longer want to follow God at all.

And this is something that we're going to see with King Saul in the next several weeks, something that we've seen already in past weeks and see especially today. In 1 Samuel, we've seen Saul's lack of faith in a few ways.

[1 : 2 9] But chapter 15 in 1 Samuel is now this decisive turning point as he willfully disobeys God's word and doesn't repent. And in this, we need to see the danger of disobedience so that we would not follow in his steps, but remain faithful to Christ in true obedience.

And so I invite you to turn to 1 Samuel chapter 15 today. This is page 280 in your pew Bible. 1 Samuel 15. We're going to read the whole chapter and get the text in front of us.

Hear the word of the Lord. And Samuel said to Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel. Now therefore, listen to the words of the Lord.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, I have noted what Amalek did to Israel in opposing them on the way when they came up out of Egypt. 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. So Saul summoned the people and numbered them in Taliim, 200,000 men on foot and 10,000 men of Judah.

[2 : 4 3] And Saul came to the city of Amalek and lay in wait in the valley. Then Saul said to the Canites, Go, depart. Go down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them. For you showed kindness to all the people of Israel when they came up out of Egypt.

So the Canites departed from among the Amalekites, and Saul defeated the Amalekites from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt. And he took Agag, the king of the Amalekites, alive, and devoted to destruction all the people with the edge of the sword.

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.

All that was despised and worthless, they devoted to destruction. The word of the Lord came to Samuel. I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me, and has not performed my commandments.

And Samuel was angry, and he cried to the Lord all night. And Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, and it was told Samuel, Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself, and turned, and passed on, and went down to Gilgal.

[3 : 57] And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, Blessed be you to the Lord. I have performed the commandment of the Lord. And Samuel said, What then is this bleeding of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen that I hear?

Saul said, They have brought them up from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, to sacrifice the Lord your God, and the rest be devoted to destruction.

Then Samuel said to Saul, Stop! I will tell you what the Lord said to me this night. And he said to him, Speak. And Samuel said, Though you are little in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel?

The Lord anointed you king over Israel, and the Lord sent you on a mission, and said, Go, devote to destruction the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.

Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord? Why did you pounce on the spoil, and do what was evil in the sight of the Lord? And Saul said to Samuel, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord.

[5 : 03] I have gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me. I have brought Agag, the king of Amalek, and I have devoted the Amalekites to destruction. But the people took up the spoil, sheep, and oxen, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal.

And Samuel said, 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.

For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king.

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. Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may bow before the Lord.

And 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. As Samuel turned to go away, Saul seized the skirt of his robe, and it tore.

[6 : 24] And Samuel said to him, The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. And also the glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man that he should have regret.

Then he said, I have sinned, yet honor me now before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and return with me, that I may bow before the Lord your God. So Samuel turned back after Saul, and Saul bowed before the Lord.

Then Samuel said, Bring here to me Agag, the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came to him cheerfully. Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. And Samuel said, As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women.

And Samuel hacked Agag to pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul.

And Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death. But Samuel grieved over Saul, and the Lord regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.

[7 : 39] This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Let's pray together. Father, we do ask that you would help us to see and to know your word.

We ask that you would help us to receive it as your word, as your very voice speaking to us, and to obey and follow, to turn from sin where we have sin, and to rest in Christ, who loved us and gave himself up for us.

For it's in him we pray. Amen. Well, I wish this could say that this is where the tragedy of Saul ends, but we're actually going to continue to see this decline of Saul for the next several weeks as well, even as David takes center stage next week.

But in this chapter, there is a decisive turning point. Already in chapter 13, Samuel said that Saul's kingdom and royal line wouldn't continue. We've already seen that. But now this is worse.

Now it's not just that the royal line won't continue, but God is rejecting Saul himself as king. And at the same time, as the chapter ends, we also see how Samuel the prophet is leaving him, so that no longer is Saul seen as the king with a prophet by his side, but instead he is entrenched in disobedience to God's word, and drifting away from God, being separated from God and his word.

[9 : 08] And for us today, as we see this text and understand this text, we need to see how this is a warning to us. Because we also can have this sort of Saul-like spirit in us, where we can treat God's commands lightly.

We can slip into disobedience. And so what we need to see as we look at Saul are three things that show us the danger of disobedience, so that we would follow Christ in true obedience.

Three things that show us the danger of disobedience. And then we'll end with a note on the call to true obedience. Notice first how we need to understand the grief of disobedience. The grief of disobedience.

The chapter opens with Samuel calling Saul to a particular task as the king of Israel. Samuel says, The Lord sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel.

Now therefore listen to the words of the Lord. And that's the emphasis of the chapter. Listen to God's word. That same word can be translated, Hear, obey, do what God says in his word.

[10 : 08] And Samuel gives the command to Saul in verse 2. Thus says the Lord of hosts, I have noted what Amalek did to Israel and opposing them on the way when they came up out of Egypt. 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. Now this immediately feels harsh and troubling.

And in one sense, that makes sense. God's judgment is harsh and troubling. But at the same time, it's important to know the background of this. 400 years before this took place, when Israel was freed from slavery in Egypt in Exodus 17, they were traveling through Amalekite territory to get to the land of Israel.

And on the way there, the Amalekites came out unprompted and fought against Israel and were even killing those who were weak and lagging behind.

And so after God defeated them in battle, he then announced this curse upon them. He announced a curse for their violence against God's people, that God would not let it go unpunished, but would wipe them out completely.

[11 : 16] And it's only now, and it's important to see this, it's only now, 400 years after that, 400 years of patience later, that God is finally carrying out his justice on the Amalekites, who were a very wicked people.

And we may at the same time still struggle with why God would include children in the destruction, but this is where we need to recognize that we aren't God, and we can't judge the hearts of men.

For human beings, it is always wrong to say that a culture or people group needs to be wiped out. Always. But God is not a human being.

And we read in Genesis 6, for example, in the days of Noah, how God brought the flood on the earth to wipe out humanity because he knew the wickedness in the hearts of man.

He knew when there needed to be decisive judgment. And it's the same way here. God is bringing judgment on the Amalekites because he knows their hearts, and he knows where they're at, and he knows that the time has come for complete destruction.

[12 : 20] And as Saul is the king, he gives the command to him to carry his justice out. That's the king's job. The king was called to know God's word, to hear God's word, and follow God's word, and enact his justice on the earth.

Of course, the problem with Saul is that he doesn't do it. He starts well in verse 4 to 7. He gathers troops together. He let the Kenites know that they were going to come, and the Kenites were actually innocent.

They were among the Amalekites, but they actually cared for God's people when they came into the land. And so Saul says, you may go. He shows kindness to them. And then in verse 7, he moves into Amalekite territory and defeats them.

But in verse 8 and 9, we're told that he devoted all the people to destruction, but spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites, and even worse, he spared the best of the sheep, and the oxen, and the fattened calves, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them.

Of course, he destroyed all that was despised and worthless. He devoted those things to destruction, but they kept back the best things. We'll see later how they said that they devoted them to the Lord for sacrifice, but that was really a cover for the fact that they wanted to be able to eat the best things.

[13 : 41] And so in verse 10, we see God's response, and we see how this grieves the Lord. He says to Samuel, I regret that I made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments.

Now, this doesn't mean that God wished that he didn't make Saul king. He's not thinking here, well, this didn't turn out the way that I planned. I thought it would be better than this, and now I regret that I made Saul king.

That's not the point. That one thing that we need to recognize in how Scripture talks about God is that oftentimes it does that in ways that we can understand, but we should never reduce him to human categories.

In fact, we read all over the Bible that God knows the end from the beginning. He plans the course of history, that he never changes his mind. And so he's not taken by surprise by Saul's disobedience or wishing that he did something different.

In fact, we see this partly in verse 29 later on. You may have recognized this. After announcing God's rejection of Saul, then Samuel says that the Lord will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man that he should have regret.

[14 : 55] And so in this very chapter, we see these two things. The Lord has regret, and the Lord does not have regret. Which one is it? And part of what we need to see is that it depends on how we talk about it.

God doesn't have regret the way man does. That's Samuel's point. Our decisions aren't perfect. We make plans without knowing all things, and so we regret when things don't go the way that we think they should go.

God's not like that. Things always go the way that he wants. He's not a man that he should have regret like us. But the Bible still describes it this way so that we would get something very important.

That although he's not like a man and has regret like us, he's not indifferent to our disobedience. He is not impersonal.

And so the Bible describes him in human categories so that we get the point, so that we understand his stance toward us when we disobey his word. There is this sense of regret, of grief.

[16 : 06] There is this sorrow over sin as one writer puts it. And we need to understand this. Because there are times when we think about God as a sort of machine or robot.

We can kind of think of him as impersonal or as though he is indifferent to our sin and disobedience. Like the man who was out of town at one point and away from his family and cheating on his wife.

And he was asked, what do you think God has to say about that? And his response was simply, God will forgive me. That's his job. And we can sort of treat God that way.

Like a sort of forgiveness jukebox. Go to God, put in a prayer, and he gives you forgiveness. But God's not like that.

He's our maker and father who delights in his people. We're told in scripture that he sings over his people, that he yearns for us to love him and follow him. And when we don't, it grieves him.

[17 : 10] Like a spouse that's grieved by infidelity. And at the same time, we also see in this text how disobedience grieves God's people.

We see this with Samuel in verse 12, as Samuel was angry and he cried to the Lord all night. And we're not told exactly why Samuel's angry. It's probably a mix of things. He's probably angry that Saul could be so selfish.

Angry that kingship is already falling apart. Angry at the consequences now for God's people. And this leads him to cry to the Lord all night.

All night. In fact, that word for cry to the Lord, crying out to him, is the same word for crying out in agony and mourning and grief or for help.

We see the same thing reiterated at the end of the chapter. When all this ends, how Samuel was grieved over Saul. Some of you may be in Samuel's position now and are experiencing that with people that you love, who have drifted into disobedience, who have fallen away from the Lord, and you're grieved at the effect of sin on your family, on your friends.

[18 : 29] You've cried out to God to do something. On the other hand, some of you may be the ones causing that grief. I've been in both situations.

Crying out to God because of loved ones and being the one that's causing the grief and causing God's people to cry out to God. And either way, we see the grief of disobedience.

I think sometimes in our disobedience, we can think that it's not a big deal. And so we need to see this. We need to see the reality of how disobedience does grieve the Lord and does grieve His people.

And we need to understand that. That's the first thing that we need to see. But on top of that, as we move on in the text, we also need to see God's rejection of partial obedience. That's the grief of disobedience, but we also need to see God's rejection of partial disobedience.

In verse 12 through 23, Samuel confronts Saul. And Saul is actually convinced that he has obeyed the Lord because he's mostly obeyed the Lord. He raises a monument for himself in verse 12, and then as he sees Samuel coming to him in verse 13, he says to him, Blessed be you to the Lord.

[19 : 44] I have performed the commandment of the Lord. He seems to genuinely think that he's done what he's supposed to do. But in one of the best lines of the book, Samuel asks, What then is this bleeding of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen that I hear?

He's saying, What about these animals that you're supposed to destroy? See, at this point, Samuel knows how Saul is being deceived by his partial obedience.

He's patting himself on the back for mostly obeying God, but ignoring the ways over here that he has disobeyed God. Even in the midst of this glaring evidence to the contrary.

And so Samuel goes to him and points it out. And we oftentimes need the same thing done to us because we can be just like Saul. We can think that we've obeyed God because of our partial obedience and sort of ignore or neglect the ways that we are disobeying him.

We can say, for example, I know I don't treat my wife the best, but we're still together after 50 years and that counts for something. We can say, I know I lied to my boss today, but I'm still a good worker.

[21 : 06] We have these ways at times of neglecting the ways that we're disobeying God and focusing on the ways that we are obeying him. And sometimes we need somebody to say to us, look, you say you've been faithful, but what about this?

You say you're a good husband. Why do you talk to your wife that way? You say you're a good worker. You say you're honoring God.

Why do you act that way? This is what Samuel is doing to Saul. He's pointing out his blind spots that he can't see. But notice still how quickly Saul shifts the blame to the people and even justifies himself.

He goes on to say in verse 15, they have brought them, they have brought the animals from the Amalekites for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen. He's doing the same thing actually that Adam did in the garden.

He's pointing out the blame on the other people. He's putting it on them like Adam's saying to God, it's the woman that you gave to be with me. She gave me the fruit and I ate. And Samuel's saying it's the people.

[22 : 10] But on top of that, notice how he's also justifying his actions by spiritualizing them. He's saying yes, he allowed the people to spare the best of the animals and they did it.

But look, it was for a good purpose. It's to sacrifice to the Lord. And I think that this is a particular danger for Christians when we begin to slip into disobedience.

We can sort of invoke God's name and say it's for him. I know I shouldn't go to that party, but I'll be a witness for Jesus. I know I shouldn't date an unbeliever, but I'll win them to Christ.

We can disobey God, but think it's okay because we're doing it in his name. And in verse 16, Samuel says stop. He just says stop.

Sometimes that's all that can be said. Just stop. Stop pointing fingers at others. Stop justifying your actions. Stop invoking God's name. Just stop and hear what God has to say about this.

[23 : 20] And that's where Samuel goes in verse 17 to 23 where he points out how God rejects such partial obedience. Samuel says the Lord made him head of the tribes of Israel and anointed him as king and sent him on this mission to bring judgment on the Amalekites.

And he asks in verse 19, why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord? Why did you pounce on the spoil and do what was evil in the sight of the Lord? And that phrase pouncing on the spoil is a strong one.

It's a way of saying that they seized the spoil for themselves. They're saying that it was for the Lord, but Samuel's pointing out what actually was going on. They did it for themselves. The Lord said to destroy it all in judgment, but Saul let the people take it for themselves.

And Samuel says, you did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. And even after this, Saul digs his heels in. Notice this in verse 20. He's like a politician caught in a scandal and can't admit that he's wrong.

He says, I've obeyed the Lord and gone on the mission and brought Agag the king, but the people took the spoil to sacrifice to God. He is saying it now stronger and louder.

[24 : 35] I've obeyed. I've done what I should have. We just kept a little bit back. We're going to use it for sacrifice to worship the Lord. So what's the big deal? Get off my back.

That's the sense. And then Samuel tells him why it's a big deal in verse 22 and 23, which is the heart of this chapter. Samuel says, 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, for rebellion is as a sin of divination and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king. Saul thought that God should be satisfied with what he did.

But God rejected his obedience, his partial obedience. He rejected it because it was incomplete. He rejected it because it was religious obedience, but not faithful obedience to all that God said.

[25 : 46] And though we may not be rejected as the king, God does reject our obedience when it's only partial and not full, when it's mere religion, but not genuine, not wanting to follow his word in everything.

We can be satisfied with ways that we are mostly obeying God's word and we can even think that he should be pleased with us. We can go to church. We can give good money to the church.

We can serve, lead a small group, be involved in the pro-life cause. We can be active in telling people about Christ. But if we do those things while disobeying God's clear commands in the Bible, God's not pleased with our partial obedience.

God doesn't want us to go to church faithfully, but ignore his word when he says things like wait until marriage until you have sex. God doesn't want us to serve in the church but then ignore his calling to pay our taxes.

God doesn't want us to obey in ways that make sense to us while rejecting his word when it doesn't. And this is such a temptation for us as Christians.

[27 : 09] But notice that God even says that if we do these religious things while we don't obey his commands, it's just as bad as the sin of divination.

Which is kind of like witchcraft. Or it's just as bad as worshiping false idols, he says. Because to reject God's commands is to reject God and put ourselves in his place.

to disobey his commands when they are clear but still offer worship to him as though he should accept that is the same thing he says as divination, as false worship, as witchcraft.

Because it's false. And at the end of the day, God didn't make us and Christ didn't save us to only serve him when it suits us but to know him and follow him with all that we are.

Christ said before he ascended to heaven that the calling of the church is to obey everything that he commanded. To present our bodies as living sacrifices.

[28 : 25] To know that we are not our own but have been bought at a price so we're called to glorify God in our bodies. But when we only obey when we want to and disobey him in other ways it grieves the Lord and he rejects our partial obedience.

And this leads to the final thing that we need to see in our text as well. We have seen the grief of disobedience and the rejection of partial obedience and now notice last the result of unrepentant disobedience.

whenever we're confronted with sin as Saul is in this passage it should humble us. It should move us to repentance.

And when we turn to God and repent there's always forgiveness and grace. Always. But for Saul while it seems at first that he is repenting one of the saddest things of this passage is how it proves to be superficial.

We see this first as he admits sin in verse 24 but still doesn't see the seriousness of it. He says I have sinned for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.

[29 : 41] That's good to admit that. But right after confessing that he sinned he then asks Samuel in verse 25 to pardon his sin and return with him to worship before the Lord.

And that's a problem. Because Saul is basically saying okay I've sinned that was wrong. Now please Samuel pardon my sin and let's get back to where we were.

But notice that Saul himself is not praying. He's not going to God. He's not confessing it to him. He doesn't see the gravity and seriousness of his sin and we see that with Samuel's response.

Samuel says to him 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. He's saying dude get the point.

See the seriousness of your sin. This is not a sort of slap on the wrist and move on type of situation. You rejected God's word and God has rejected you as king.

[30 : 38] I can't keep serving alongside you as the prophet. But Saul's not seeing the seriousness. And on top of that notice how Saul still is thinking more about his own honor than the Lord's honor.

Samuel leaves in verse 27 and Saul seizes his robe in desperation and it tears. And Samuel says that this is a sign of the kingdom being torn away from you and given to another who's better than you.

That actually sets the stage next week for David coming on the scene. But here it's supposed to get Saul's attention. God is tearing the kingdom from you.

And that's not going to change he says because God doesn't lie. He doesn't have regret over his plans and purposes. They are sure this is done Saul. And yet in response Saul simply says in verse 30 I have sinned yet honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel and return with me that I may bow before the Lord your God.

Samuel admits sin but he's not crying out to God he's not seeing the seriousness of his disobedience he's not asking God to forgive him and help him live for his glory and honor he's still thinking about himself.

[32 : 01] He's trying to avoid as one writer puts it a public relations disaster. And we especially don't see repentance because Saul at the end of this chapter simply doesn't change.

It's one of the signs that somebody's not repenting. Because when there is true repentance people not only confess their sin and cry out to God in humility but there's also this change of direction.

There's new obedience. And here Saul even has a prime opportunity for this. Because Agag the Amalekite king is still there and still alive.

And Saul could at this point follow through and do what God called him to. But Saul still does nothing.

In fact what we find instead in verse 32 is that Samuel does go back with Saul but not to honor him. Instead Samuel goes to Agag and did what Saul failed to do.

[33 : 07] He takes a sword and announces judgment upon the king of the Amalekites and executes him.

He does what Saul was called to do and still was not doing. Even after being confronted. Even after admitting wrong.

There's no change in direction in Saul. He remains in unrepentant disobedience. And of all the things in this chapter I think that this is something we particularly need to see.

Because even if you are here today as the most faithful believer in Jesus Christ there are going to be times when you fall into disobedience.

We have this problem of a Saul-like heart. And that will come out at times in our lives. But we must never remain there.

[34 : 12] We must never remain in unrepentant disobedience. We must never make peace with our sin and patterns of disobedience in our lives and just keep pressing on as though all is well and treat God like a forgiveness jukebox and then seek to just move on.

And so one question we need to ask today is whether or not in your own life you see the seriousness of your sin and confess your sin to God and whether there's real change in your life that's coming from it.

Are you different today than five years ago? Are you different today than ten years ago? Do you care more about God's word? Do you follow him and want to follow him more than you used to?

Are you walking in new obedience? There wasn't new obedience for Saul because ultimately there wasn't real repentance in Saul.

And so by the end of the chapter he remains in his disobedience. And that can happen with us too. Notice the result at the end of the chapter.

[35 : 30] In verse 34 we read that Samuel went to Ramah and Saul went up to his house and give you of Saul. And Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death.

But Samuel grieved over Saul and the Lord regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel. the chapter ends with Samuel the prophet leaving the king.

So that Saul is no longer going to hear God's word. And it ends also with no change in Saul's relationship with God. God is still grieved over his sin and disobedience and it stays there because he doesn't repent.

There's no change. And so Saul chooses to remain in his disobedience. To live for self.

And in the next several chapters we're going to see how he continues to make his way, his own path from here, away from the Lord, without his word. And he's going to spiral further and further into the darkness of his own sinful and selfish heart.

[36 : 41] And so as much as we need to be warned about the first few things, the grief of disobedience and God's rejection of partial obedience, we must especially heed this warning and see the result of unrepentant disobedience.

One pastor in a college town says that he's seen many college students leave the faith. And though there are many reasons for this, he said that one of the main ones is that they simply have a desire to sin and don't want to change.

And so rather than confess their sin, rather than repent, repent, they drift further from God until they eventually just say, I don't believe all that stuff anymore. And one reason this passage is here in God's word is to warn us of this.

As we read all over the New Testament, don't be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Don't harden your hearts as Israel did in the wilderness or as Saul is doing here. But see the danger.

See the danger of disobedience. obedience. And turn to God in genuine repentance. And true obedience. And the thing is, while we clearly see in this chapter how God doesn't want our partial obedience, and he rejects that, this chapter also at the same time does give us this call to true obedience.

[38 : 04] To the type of obedience that God does delight in. Back in verse 23, as he's calling out Saul for his disobedience, there is this positive declaration of how the Lord delights when his people do obey his voice.

That is what he wants from us. That's why it grieves him when we don't. God wants us to obey him. He delights in it when we follow him. Not because he wants us as robots just to do what he says, but because he wants us.

He wants a relationship with us in which we know him and love him as our God and know that we are his people and want to follow his voice. As Christ said, my sheep hear my voice and they follow me.

So obeying God's word isn't about obeying a list of rules. It's about following our God and Savior who wants us to follow him. So much so, in fact, that he sent his son to give his life for our disobedience.

So much so that Christ even came to take the debt that we've accumulated for our disobedience and go to the cross and nail it to the tree and rise up again to the right hand of the Father and pour out his spirit upon us so that he would be with us where we are and strengthen us and help us to walk in obedience to him.

[39 : 34] And he rejoices when we do. He delights when we walk in the truth and grow in him. And at the same time, Paul says that his spirit also grieves when we walk in disobedience.

But every time we repent, he is always ready to forgive us and change us and bless us until he comes back, rejoicing over every step of growing obedience as we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

Along these lines, I think the saddest thing about Saul is not simply a failure to obey or that he lost the kingdom, but that he grieved the Lord and didn't care and didn't turn to him.

And so he lost a relationship with the God of the universe. And as long as we can have this Saul-like heart within us, this is a call for us to follow a better path, to hear our Savior's voice, who loved us and gave himself up for us, to follow him, to follow him in true obedience for his glory and our good, and also for the good of his church around us.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Gracious Father, we recognize that there can be times when we hear your voice and we still go a different way.

[41 : 10] And so Lord, forgive us for ways that we do this, forgive us for ways that we walk in disobedience, and yet at the same time pour out your spirit upon us, that we would see our sin and not remain in unrepentance, but turn to you and ask for grace and forgiveness and change, and begin walking by the power of your spirit and newness of life.

Lord, we need your help in this, and we thank you for Christ, our perfect king who never disobeyed, and brings us to you by his grace and mercy and sacrifice.

And Father, we do pray that we would be a church that in every way when we see our sin, we go to him, and keeping our eyes upon our Savior, we begin to follow in his likeness. For we pray in Christ's name, amen.