



FEED MY SHEEP

PUBLISHED BY JAMES W. BRUGGEMAN
STONE KINGDOM MINISTRIES
P. O. BOX 6388
ASHEVILLE, NC 28816 U.S.A.

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“Sauls” Are Rejected from Ruling

Our studies in the life of Saul, Israel’s first human king, provide believers instruction on how *not* to be an overcomer. The character traits of Saul portray the fleshly Christian and all Christians must wrestle in that battle. We are still early in the 40-year career of King Saul, but by this time he has already made several serious mistakes in his relationship with God. The first was related in 1 Samuel, chapter 13, where he did not wait for the time appointed by the prophet Samuel, but began to offer the sacrifice before Samuel arrived.

The second instance is recorded in chapter 14, where Saul made a rash and foolish vow which almost caused his valiant son, Prince Jonathan, to be executed. We discussed that incident in last month’s FMS. We now come to Saul’s third major mistake. This involved serious disobedience. It came about like this.

Some 400 years earlier when the children of Israel had just entered the wilderness, they were viciously ambushed and attacked by the children of Amalek. The Amalekites were descendants of Esau. They were a fierce and cruel people. At the end of the wilderness wanderings, in Deuteronomy 25:19, God told Moses that at some point after Israel was settled in the Promised Land that they would carry out His edict to exterminate the Amalekites. Through Samuel, God was now declaring that this time had arrived. Thus Samuel instructs the king.

1 Samuel 15:2 Thus saith YHWH of hosts, ... 3 Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

This is Saul’s major test! He is clearly commanded to exterminate them all. Does it offend us to realize that God ordered what is today called “ethnic cleansing?” That is in the natural, literal and historical realm. If we personalize this story, all Christians must pass through the Saul-Pentecost realm on our way to complete salvation. As (Saul) Christians, we are commanded to do battle with the devil (Amalekites). Like the Philistines, Canaanites and other enemies of Israel, the Amalekites represent the flesh, the carnal nature in general, which must be subdued. As we study the characteristics of the Amalekites, though, we can note more specifically how the Amalekites manifest in our spiritual struggles.

Many of us must fight against the Amalekite tendency in us to be cruel and unmerciful whether by actions or by our words. The “minor” sin of gossiping about our neighbor, telling stories which are mean and nasty, and done with the intent of harming another’s reputation is a manifestation of the Amalekite in us that must be overcome.

The Amalekites made an unprovoked attack upon Israel immediately after they came out of Egypt. They ambushed the “hindmost” of the people, those who perhaps could not keep up with the main body due to weakness, illness and old age. In similar manner, “the devil” especially revels in attacking Christians just after they have been converted and baptized (left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea). He attacks us where we cannot see it coming (in the hindmost) and he attacks us at our weakest point (our idols of food, drink, sex, money, power, etc.). These are examples of the Amalek in us which God

commands us to exterminate completely from our character.

In the historical account, King Saul gathered an army and did exterminate almost all the Amalekites. However, he spared Agag, their king, and the best of the sheep and oxen. (1 Samuel 15:7-9.) God was extremely upset over Saul's incomplete obedience, which was in essence a veto over God's will. Saul arrogantly assumed he knew better than the Almighty. God then told Samuel of His disappointment in Saul (verses 10, 11) and instructed Samuel to inform Saul that the monarchy was being removed from him. Samuel grieved for Saul and prayed God to not "close the door" on Saul just yet, to give him another chance. (In a sense, God did not close the door; He let Saul proceed to the "Endor," nevertheless, the die was cast.)¹ The next morning, Samuel confronted Saul. But Saul was in denial, claiming he had fulfilled God's command. (1 Samuel 15:12-15.)

Who does Saul think he is fooling? Up until this point, Saul's chief faults seem to have been his rashness and his self-will. Now he is adding impudence, pride, deceitfulness and hypocrisy. Here is an observable fact common even today: liars and deceivers are often blind to how utterly *transparent* their lies sometimes actually are. In Saul's case, the proof is right there in front of him, bellowing and bleating. Samuel confronts the pentecostal king's lie head on.

"Well, Saul, if you performed the commands of Yahweh, then how is it that I hear sheep bleating and oxen bellowing? Did you pick them up at a blue-light special at K-Mart over at the Gilgal mall?"

The fact that the sheep and oxen are still alive and have not yet been sacrificed is evidence of Saul's great pride being manifested. How so? In verse 12 it says that Saul "set him up a place." Unfortunately, the KJV obscures the meaning. The word *place* is literally a *hand*, which was often a figure of speech for saying that a monument had been erected. This means that Saul first set up a monument to honor *himself* and then he was going to offer sacrifice to God. What pride! "A monument to **me** and **my** great victory over the Amalekites." This like the Christian who thinks that *he* has conquered a particular sin within himself, instead of giving God *all* the credit.

Next, when Samuel challenges him about where

he obtained the animals, Saul's faulty character is on display again as he answers that "*the people* spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen..." This is called blame-shifting. It goes all the way back to Adam—"it was that woman you gave me, it was her fault." Saul wants to blame it all on the people, but verse 9 gives the lie to that because it says it was not merely the people, but "...Saul and the people..." spared Agag and the animals. Both are guilty and responsible. But Saul tries to deny any responsibility for his decision.

1 Samuel 15:20 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of YHWH, and have gone the way which YHWH sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto YHWH thy God in Gilgal.

The principle of reversal

In the verses above, we find evidence of yet another mark of Saul's flawed character. However, this one is quite subtle and therefore all the more evil and dangerous. It is seldom perceived by those who are followers of a Saul-type leader. This trait consists of the very skilled way in which a Saul is able to so *manipulate* the word of God that he turns it completely upside down, so that not only does he himself look like the *pious* and *righteous* one; but at the same time, a Saul's twisting of the word of God makes his opponent look like the *bad* guy.

Furthermore, it is not just God's word that the Saul is skilled at manipulating, but all manner of speech. The speech of interpersonal relationships, to be sure, is included; but also and especially political speech. This ability or character trait of a Saul individual is so clever and devious that the followers seldom realize that they are under the under a spell.

And I say, "under a spell" because very often the Saul-type leader has a very charismatic and magnetic personality. His speaking abilities draw people to him like moths are drawn to a flame. But it is Saul's charisma and showmanship abilities which mask what he really stands for. In other words, the people are so bedazzled by his oratorical skill that they are literally *unable* to pay close attention to what he is actually saying. They are mesmerized. They are hypnotized.

They are brainwashed. To put it simply, it is mind control in its most ancient form. But it has been used by countless leaders of church and state for millennia.

One can think of any number of churchmen and politicians who fit the bill here. Certainly, Adolph Hitler comes to mind. What charisma he had! But let us give equal time to Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt who were also very skilled in these areas. Recent history provides another outstanding example of a political Saul: former president Bill Clinton. These all had tremendously magnetic personalities.

Understand, though, that we are *not* criticizing or demeaning magnetic personalities in general, nor are we criticizing people with great charisma, or people who possess great oratorical skills. Those are marvelous gifts. After all, our Savior was the epitome in all these categories. Talk about a magnetic personality! Jesus was so magnetic that He said in John 12:32 that if He were lifted up from the earth that He would *draw* (literally, *drag*) all men to Himself! Now that is some magnetism!

But here we are referring to the negative side of these gifts...those who abuse these abilities to manipulate people for their own selfish purposes, or who use these abilities to make good appear evil and vice versa, just as King Saul is doing in his answer to Samuel. This is a trait of a non-overcomer and Christians who would so abuse such gifts face severe chastening from the Lord.

Since it is such a subtle attempt at mind control, look at verse 21 to detect the manipulation. Notice the innuendo, the insinuation and the insult against Samuel. When Samuel accuses Saul of not obeying God's command, Saul turns it upside down and makes it look like Samuel is the one with the problem.

1 Samuel 15:21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto Yahweh YOUR God in Gilgal.

Do you see it? Saul admits the animals should have been destroyed, but he is claiming that his (Saul's) idea to sacrifice them is a better idea. Moreover, Saul is very subtly implying that *he* is being unfairly blamed for what was done in honor of *Samuel's* God; as if the people and *Saul* are more righteous and zealous for Yahweh than Samuel was, because of

Saul's "better" idea!

A Saul's manipulation method is sometimes so subtle that when someone tries to explain to people how they have been deceived by such tactics, they sometimes give a blank stare, obviously having no clue. Then, months or even years later—I have seen this personally—they come back and say, "hey, do you remember when you tried to explain to me such and such? well, I see it now." Such individual progress is gratifying, but at the same time, it is sad and often frustrating when so many others do *not* see and are consequently deceived by Saul's smooth words. But then, when we remind ourselves that God puts the blinders on people, and that all of this is an essential part of God's plan, then we can let go of the frustration.

Of course, Samuel was not fooled for a millisecond by Saul's subtle attempt to turn the tables and make Samuel feel guilty. He cuts right through Saul's deceit and rebukes him in the strongest terms yet.

22 And Samuel said, Hath YHWH as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of YHWH? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

True sacrifice and worship

We must not think that by this stern rebuke Samuel was disparaging the burnt offerings in any way. He was merely putting them in their proper priority. The external rituals were never the ultimate result that God is looking for in religious activity. *The sacrifices were always merely the outworking of a proper inner and spiritual attitude and relationship that the worshiper ought to have with God.* If the inner communion is not real; if the inner attitude, the heart attitude, is not sincere and true; then the external offerings of sacrifices are pure hypocrisy and they smell of dung in the nostrils of Yahweh. Obedience is the proof that the heart is in right relationship with the Father. Samuel then bores right to the root of Saul's character.

23a For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.

Saul is a *rebel* against God. Its root is *pride*. Saul has now become so enamored of himself and what he perceives as his *own* abilities and strength, that he has decided that he will overrule God whenever he thinks

it is appropriate...such as in saving Agag alive. In other words, Saul has decided that he will only serve God when it goes along with his own personal desires and agenda. In reality this means that Saul has declared himself no longer a servant and follower of Yahweh, but an independent agent whose free will decisions shall supersede the will of God.

Saul now sees himself as the absolute ruler. As such, *God serves him*. In other words, Saul will do God's will *only* if it coincides with his own free will. You see, *when we offer the sacrifice of obedience to God, we are sacrificing our will to God!*

How do we compare against Saul in this area? Do we serve God only as it fits our own desires? If so, we are very much in the footsteps of Saul. It is a path that leads to judgment. As the apostle Paul noted in Romans, chapter 7, for the overcomer candidate this battle is a continuous struggle which we must endure to the end. We struggle even while we know that it is God's Holy Spirit working within us. And we trust in God's sufficient grace for continuing to fight these spiritual Amalekites (character failings).

The sentence announced

In obedience to God, Samuel then pronounces the sentence of judgment on King Saul.

23b Because thou hast rejected the word of YHWH, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king.

God rejected Saul from being king?? ...We can discern that this sentence was not intended as an *immediate* judgment on Saul personally because the people, Samuel himself and David, all recognized Saul as the legitimate king for many more years to come. So then what does this sentence mean that God has rejected Saul from being king? The word "king" here is a figure of speech called metonymy where one noun is used to represent another. In this case, "king" is put for the idea of a dynasty.

God was rejecting Saul's family, his house, from establishing an hereditary monarchy. Though the execution of the sentence was delayed, this was nonetheless a benchmark event. This is a turning point in the manner in which God deals with Saul. From this point on, Saul is not merely left to his own devices, but God sends him some "help" from the evil spirits department to assure that Saul continues on the wrong path.²

In verse 24, Saul finally admits "I have sinned." Sounds like repentance, but is it really? Actually, it is insincere, shallow and self-serving. He has apparently given up trying to justify his disobedience. Samuel sees through him. So he starts into his confession and admission of sin, but it does not take long for his true motives to show through.

25 Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship YHWH.

30 Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship YHWH thy God.

There is his true motive. He wanted to continue to be seen as honored by God's prophet. David, the overcomer-type, also committed great sins and he repented also. So why was David's repentance pleasing to God, whereas Saul's was not? It is simply because David was repelled, horrified and disgusted with the sin itself and how it offended his Creator. Saul, on the other hand, was merely fearful of the punishment and more concerned about his reputation with the people than he was about pleasing God.

Thus we note that another character trait of a Saul-type person is false or insincere repentance. All these marks of wicked character, coupled with false repentance have now culminated in Saul's house being rejected for rulership. So it will be in the Kingdom for Saul-Christians. They, too, will be disqualified from rulership.³

ENDNOTES

1. See *Saul Comes to the "End Door,"* Parts 1 & 2. They are taped Bible studies #401 & 402. \$10 ppd.
2. We will have much more to say on evil spirits and witchcraft in future issues (or see tapes #401-404).
3. This monograph is condensed from our taped teaching *Saul "Chokes" on Agag,* Parts 1 & 2. They are tape numbers 387 & 388. \$10 ppd.

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