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Topic: "Obeyed Not" Not to obey the Lord is the greatest calamity which can come to anyone. Disobedience to Him is—

Introduction: Why Obedience is Better Than Sacrifice: 1 Samuel 15:22

In the midst of a scathing indictment against King Saul's presumption and arrogance, the prophet Samuel utters these famous words, To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

Saul's great, heroic idea

Saul had heard the word of the Lord, but thought he had a better idea. He was supposed to destroy the Amalekites completely, taking no plunder, but instead he spared the best of the sheep and cattle "to sacrifice to the Lord."

This might seem like a noble gesture on Saul's part, wanting to sacrifice to the Lord... so why does Samuel make such a big deal out of this? **Why is obedience so much better than sacrifice?**

Sacrifice means independence from God

Sacrifice in this sense is actually an attempt to gain independence from God. If we sacrifice for him, then we have put him in our debt. If we sacrifice for God, he owes us something (so we think). Sacrifice is a way of "buying" whatever we want to get from God (protection, deliverance, provision, favor), while at the same time remaining independent from him. "God, look at all I've done for you! You owe me this, it's only fair!" we say. We demand our goodies from God, but we retain our right to do what we want with our lives. We just need to make sure we throw a few sacrifices God's way every once in awhile to keep him at bay. This is the attitude of sacrifice that Saul personified.

Obedience is dependent trust in God

Obedience, however, is the response of someone who is in a relationship of trust with God. We trust God, we depend on him, we are interactive with him, but he takes the lead.

Obedience is better than sacrifice because we are letting God be God and staying in our proper place with him, the place of dependence and surrender to his goodness.

It's like a woman once said to Tim Keller, upon realizing the gospel for the first time, *I know why I want my morality to save me. If I'm saved by my good works, then like a taxpayer, I have rights. I've paid into the system and God owes me a good and decent life. And there is a limit to what the Father can ask of me. But if I'm saved by sheer grace, then my life belongs entirely to the Father, he owes me nothing and there is no limit to what he can ask of me.*"

It's a theme repeated over and over throughout Scripture, *For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings*" (Hosea 6:6).

"To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Mark 12:33).

"Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:7-8).

"Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God" (Luke 11:42).

Obedience is better than sacrifice

The life of sacrifice is a life of demanding my rights and living as I wish. The life of obedience, though, is a response to God's gracious invitation and is lived as an upward spiral of dependence and intimacy. This is why Jesus didn't say, "If you love me, sacrifice for me." Instead he said, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them." This kind of obedience (as a response to divine love) always leads to intimacy and dependence. **This is why obedience is better than sacrifice.**

However in contrast disobedience will bring about the following:

1. **Cause of Premature Death**, as seen in the children of Israel being "consumed" in the wilderness—Joshua 5:6.
2. **Cause of Defeat**, and being dominated by our enemies, and the cause of discomfort to ourselves—Judges 2:2.
3. **Cause of Loss**, impoverishment, and oppression, as is illustrated in Israel when Midian prevailed against them—Judges 6:10.
4. **Cause of Downfall**, as is seen in King Saul and his disobedience regarding Amalek—1 Sam. 15:20-23.
5. **Cause of Dishonor**, as is unfolded in the disobedience of the man of God out of Judah—1 Kings 13:1-32.
6. **Cause of Bondage**, as is manifest in Israel's being carried away into Assyria—2 Kings 18:11, 12; and of Judah into Babylon—Daniel 9:10-14.
7. **Cause of Shame and Misery**. See right through Jeremiah's prophecy, how many disasters came to those who "obeyed not the voice of the Lord" (Jer. 3:13, 25; 9:13; 11:8; 17:23; 40:3; 42:21; 43:4, 7; 44:23).