

OUR PRIORITIES SHOULD MATCH GOD'S
OBEDIENCE & MERCY ARE ABOVE SACRIFICE

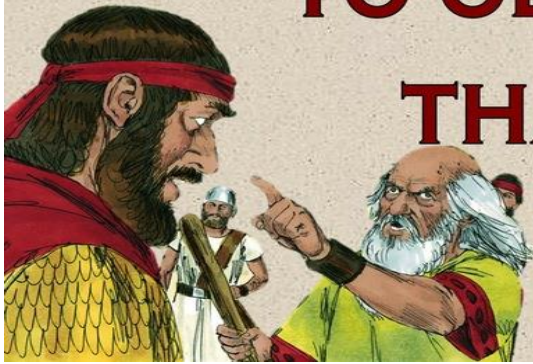
by **David Lee Burris**

Samuel said to Saul...

Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD ? BEHOLD.....

**TO OBEY IS BETTER
THAN SACRIFICE**

1 Samuel 15:22



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Hosea 6:6

*"For I desire
mercy,*

*not
sacrifice."*



Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

1st Samuel 15:10-23 Repentance in God is not a change of mind, as it is in us, but a change of method. The change was in Saul; He is turned back from following me. Hereby he made God his enemy. Samuel spent a whole night in pleading for Saul. The rejection of sinners is the grief of believers: God delights not in their death, nor should we. Saul boasts to Samuel of his obedience. Thus, sinners think, by justifying themselves, to escape being judged of the Lord. The noise the cattle made, like the rust of the silver, James 5:3, witnessed against him. Many boast of obedience to the command of God; but what means then their indulgence of the flesh, their love of the world, their angry and unkind spirit, and their neglect of holy duties, which witness against them? See of what evil covetousness is the root; and see what is the sinfulness of sin, and notice that in it which above anything else makes it evil in the sight of the Lord; it is disobedience: Thou didst not obey the voice of the Lord. Carnal, deceitful hearts, like Saul, think to excuse themselves from God's commandments by what pleases themselves. It is hard to convince the children of disobedience. But humble, sincere, and conscientious obedience to the will of God, is more pleasing and acceptable to him than all the burnt-offering and sacrifices. God's more glorified and self more denied, by obedience than by sacrifice. It is much easier to bring a bullock or lamb to be burned upon the altar, than to bring every thought into obedience to God, and to make our will subject to his will. Those are unfit and unworthy to rule over men, who are not willing that God should rule over them.

To Obey Is Better Than Sacrifice

Introduction

Samuel also said to Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel; now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord” (1 Sam. 15:1). This gave Samuel the right to instruct Saul as to what the Lord wanted from him. The prophet acted as a mouth for God. To hear one was to hear the other. When Samuel told Saul to hearken, that meant he was to do so with deep interest, understanding, humility and sincere submission.

I. The commandment was clear. “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 donkey” (v. 3). This was divine vengeance and justice being rendered. The Amalekites had occupied land on the frontiers of Egypt and Palestine. When Israel was finally being freed from many years of slavery the Amalekites treated an already suppressed and suffering people with cruelty as they fled Egypt. Amalek smote the hindmost of the people, those who were faint, weary and too weak to keep up with the rest. Israel was required to remember this treacherous treatment (Deut. 25:18f). They joined several other nations at times to fight against God’s people and are mentioned as oppressors of Israel (Jdg. 10:12). Let no one question the justice of God. The Judge of all the earth doeth right. The commandment was perfectly clear.

Saul and the people disobeyed God, destroying the vile and refuse but keeping the things of value. They also spared Agag, king of the Amalekites. Inspiration shows King Saul and the people were in this together (v. 9).

II. Men are self-deceived when they think their sacrifices equal obedience. Saul said, “I have performed the Lord’s commandment” (15:13), “Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way the Lord sent me” (verse 20). Untrue, and Saul knew it for he repeated the commandment back to Samuel (verse 21). However, he sought to justify it on the basis that the spoils they brought back were to be sacrificed to God.

How many times has human reason won out in the hearts of men over the teaching of God’s word? Religious people have added burgers and coke to the Lord’s Supper, instrumental music to the singing, man-made benevolent and evangelistic institutions to the work of the church, etc. Many of these have been “justified” on the basis that “the end justifies the means [rationalizing] God will be pleased with our sacrifices.”

III. Partial obedience is equal to no obedience at all. It can be said that Saul and the people did partially obey the command of God. They destroyed some of the Amalekites. They utterly destroyed all that was vile and was refuse (v. 9). But denial of disobedience does not make it so. Saul did not utterly destroy the people, for we read of the Amalekites several times after this event who were still “alive and well.” King David fought against them and an Amalekite claimed to have killed Saul when he died (2 Samuel 1:1-16).

IV. Disobedience is often caused by fear of men rather than fear of God. Saul said, "I have transgressed because I feared the people and obeyed their voice" (v. 24). This kept some Jewish rulers from accepting Christ (John 12:42,43).

If Saul had feared God more, he need have feared the people less. When we see that he was rejected from being king and the treatment Samuel gave to Agag, those who would disobey should greatly fear God much more than they fear men.

V. The disobedient often shift the blame. Saul blamed the people (v. 15,21). As King, Saul should have restrained them. There is no record that he even told the people what God commanded.

Today when brethren apostatize blame is often placed on those who exposed their error. It is said that good men were "pushed," "forced," or "driven" into apostasy. But no one apostatizes who does not want to. God did not accept Saul's explanation for his apostasy. There is no evidence he will accept such explanations now.

VI. Success in life often leads to disobedience. "And Samuel said, when thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel?" (v. 17) Being king of a great nation would be the ultimate in worldly status. Fame and prosperity accompany it. Saul raised a monument, a vainglorious trophy, to himself (not God) on Mt. Carmel. His pride was greater than his sense of duty. His sparing Agag was possibly to enjoy the glory of displaying him before others.

VII. The highest service we can render to God is complete obedience. “And Samuel said, Hath 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 hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou has rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king” (15:22,23). **A careful conformity to his word recommends us to God more than any invention of men. The humble, sincere and conscientious obedience to God’s will pleases him far more than any “improvement” or “enhancement” we may devise. Regardless of good intentions, God regards such disobedience as rebellion and stubbornness. Motive does not justify conduct.**

VIII. Failure to obey causes sorrow to faithful, God-fearing men. When God told Samuel of Saul’s disobedience, it is said, “And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the Lord all night” (v. 11). Perhaps more tears should be shed and more prayers prayed to God when brethren depart from the faith. Let us guard against the “I told you so” syndrome and come to a full recognition of this mournful situation.

IX. Rebuking sin should not be considered as a lack of love. “And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul” (v. 35a). It is possible that one may rebuke with an unloving heart, but to so accuse another may also be “justification” for continued disobedience. Even if I rebuke unlovingly, it does not justify the one whose error was rebuked. My sin is not your salvation. If Samuel could rebuke Saul yet still mourn for him, so can we.

Gill's Exposition of Entire Bible

Hosea 6:6 - For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice,.... That is, the one rather than the other, as the next clause explains it. Sacrifices were of early use, even before the law of Moses; they were of divine appointment, and were approved and accepted of by the Lord; they were types of Christ, and led to him, and were continued unto his death; but in comparison of moral duties, which respect love to God, and to our neighbor, the Lord did not will them, desire them, and delight in them; or he had more regard for the former than the latter; see [1 Samuel 15:22](#); nor did he will or accept at all of the sacrifices ordered to the calves at Dan and Bethel; nor others, when they were not such as the law required, or were not offered up in the faith of Christ, attended with repentance for sin, and in sincerity, and were brought as real expiatory sacrifices for sin, and especially as now abrogated by the sacrifice of Christ. And as these words are twice quoted by our Lord, at one time to justify his mercy, pity, and compassion, to the souls of poor sinners, by conversing with them, [Matthew 9:13](#); and at another time to justify the disciples in an act of mercy to their bodies when hungry, by plucking ears of corn on the sabbath day, [Matthew 12:7](#); "mercy" may here respect both acts of mercy shown by the Lord, and acts of mercy done by men; both which the Lord wills, desires, and delights in: he takes pleasure in showing mercy himself, as appears by his free open declarations of it; by the throne of grace and mercy he has set up; by the encouragement he gives to souls to hope in his mercy; by the objects of it, the chief of sinners; by the various ways he has taken to display it, in the covenant of grace, in the mission of Christ, in the pardon of sin by him, and in regeneration; and by his opposing it to everything else, in the affair of salvation. And he likewise has a very great regard to mercy as exercised by men; as this is one of the weightier matters of the law, and may be put for the whole of it, or however the second table of it, which is love to our neighbors, and takes in all kind offices done to them; and especially designs acts of liberality to necessitous persons; which are sacrifices God is well pleased with, even more than with the ceremonious ones; these being such in which men resemble him the merciful God, who is kind to the unthankful, and to the evil;

and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings; which were reckoned the greatest and most excellent sacrifices, the whole being the Lord's; but knowledge of God is preferred to them; by which is meant, not the knowledge of God, the light of nature, which men might have, and not him; nor by the law of Moses, as a lawgiver, judge, and consuming fire; but a knowledge of him in Christ, as the God and Father of Christ, as the God of all grace, gracious and merciful in him; as a covenant God and Father in him, which is through the Gospel by the Spirit, and is eternal life, [John 17:3](#); this includes in it faith and hope in God, love to him, fear of him and his goodness, and the whole worship of him, both internal and external. These words seem designed to expose and remove the false ground of trust and confidence in sacrifices the people of Israel were prone unto; as we find they were in the times of Isaiah, who was contemporary with Hoses; see [Isaiah 1:12](#). The Targum interprets them of those that exercise mercy, and do the law of the Lord.

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But go you and learn what that means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Matthew 9:13

GO AND LEARN WHAT THIS MEANS,

**I DESIRE MERCY,
AND NOT SACRIFICE.**

FOR I CAME NOT TO CALL
THE RIGHTEOUS, BUT SINNERS.

MATTHEW 9:13

What Does God Want?

By Frank Jamerson
Of Dothan, Alabama

When Micah, for the nation of Judah, asked what God really wanted from them, God's reply was: "He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). This is simple enough that the youngest Christians can understand, and yet profound enough that the most mature Christian can never run past it. It's for every man of every age and it fits where we live daily.

Amos, the backwoods prophet, said: "But let justice run down like water, And righteousness run like a mighty stream , (Amos 5:24). The Prophet Micah said God "requires justice." Justice is fair-mindedness in action. It is the outward expression of honesty and sincerity. It is the very opposite of what the rich in Judah were doing to the poor (Micah 2:1,2), the rulers were doing to their subjects (3:1-4), and the prophets and priests were doing to those who trusted them (3:5,11,12).

Justice

God still requires that his people be "just" or fair in their dealings with their fellow man. Who likes to play with a cheater? If a person will cheat in "just a game," what would he do if there were really some advantage to be gained?

Jesus said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you" (Matt. 7:1,2). Yes, we must judge, for Jesus immediately said, "Do not cast your pearls before swine" (v. 6), and on another occasion said, "Judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). We cannot live in the world without making judgments, but we certainly could live better with more justice in judgment! We often jump to conclusions without knowing the facts, and then excuse our harshness as though no harm was done.

Mercy

God requires us to "love mercy." Mercy is kindness in action. W.E. Vine says: "Mercy assumes need on the part of him who receives it, and resources adequate to meet the need on the part of him who shows it." Jesus told a story about a man we all call "good," and the only thing we know about him is that he "showed mercy" (Luke 10:37). He told another story about a man who "lifted up his eyes being in torment," and the only thing we know about him is that he was rich but showed no mercy (Luke 16:19). **In the judgment parables, in Matthew 25, those on the left hand were not what we would classify as "vile sinners," but rather people who had showed no mercy. It has been said, "If heaven were opened to the unmerciful, they would turn it into hell."**

God is "rich in mercy" (Eph. 2:4), and commands us to have the same spirit. "But go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I didn't come to call righteous, but sinners, to repentance (Matt. 9:13). "But if you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, you wouldn't have condemned the guiltless" (Matthew 12:7). "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and of anise and of cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone" (Matthew 23-23).

Mercy does not mean that we do not rebuke error and condemn unrighteousness, but it does mean that we must have the right spirit. We must not only be merciful; we must "love mercy."

Humility

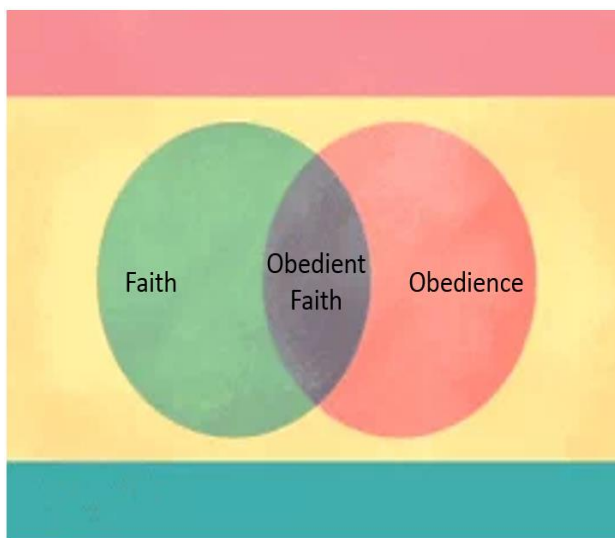
Humility literally means "low-lying." It refers to a spirit free from pride, arrogance, self-righteousness and stubbornness. To the Philippians, Paul wrote, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself" (Philippians 2:3).

No, God does not require thousands of rams offered in sacrifice, ten thousand rivers of oil, nor offering of our firstborn for the salvation of our souls, but he does require that we "do justly, love mercy and walk humbly" with him. - Guardian of Truth XXXIII: 14, p. 421

AT THE NEXUS OF GRACE & GLORY

Five Steps For Saving:

- HEARING:
- Romans 10: 17; Matthew 7: 24 - 27
- BELIEVING:
- Hebrews 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16
- REPENTING:
- Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Luke 13: 3
- CONFESSING:
- Matthew 10: 32, 33; Acts 8: 36, 37
- BAPTISM:
- Romans 6: 3 – 5; Acts 8: 36 – 38



O That Will Be Glory

2. *Who that will be glory for me, e grace,*

I an Glory for me, glory for me; ce,

When by His grace I shall look on His face, e

That will be glory, be glory for me. me.

