

Our Bible reading for today –1 Samuel 15:1-22

“To Obey Is Better!”

A Bible reader novice is usually amazed at the many Old Testament sacrifices. Ancient Judaism has been described as “*a bloody religion*”. And, I suppose, it was. As the writer of Hebrews in the New Testament commented on it: **“Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”** (^{ESV} Hebrews 9:22) In that sacrificial system God gave an object lesson pointing to Christ’s ultimate sacrifice of Himself and His shed blood on the cross, as the only adequate and complete sacrifice for sin.

Knowing God’s laws of sacrifice, there are a couple of surprising statements in the Bible relating to that. As David was in repentance for his great sins he said, **“You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”** (^{NIV} Psalm 51:16-17) Clearly he was not advocating a rejection of animal sacrifices, but was recognizing a necessary heart attitude of faith and humility as pre-requisite to those sacrifices being acceptable to God.

The other statement I’m suggesting is in today’s Bible reading. King Saul and his army disobeyed God’s clear instructions with the excuse that they did it for God, out of a desire to bring sacrifices to Him. The Priest/Prophet Samuel rebuked him with these words: **“What is more pleasing to the LORD: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Obedience is far better than sacrifice. Listening to him is much better than offering the fat of rams.”** (^{NLT} 1 Samuel 15:22) Again, Samuel didn’t advocate a rejection of animal sacrifices, but was announcing that it’s better to obey than to repent after the fact.

There is joy in forgiveness. How often have we been glad for God’s forgiveness? We all bear witness that it is true as the Apostle John taught: **“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** (^{NIV} 1 John 1:8-9) So often as we take a moment to pray and prepare our hearts for the Lord’s Supper, the Holy Spirit will bring to mind some unconfessed sin(s). We confess it (or them), and then receive the elements in remembrance of our Savior, claiming His abundant grace. Praise God!!!

But there’s a greater joy in obedience. That’s the theme of the old hymn, “Trust and Obey”.

*When we walk with the Lord in the light of his word,
What a glory he sheds on our way!
While we do his good will, he abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.
Trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey. (John H. Sammis)*

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