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# OBEDIENCE IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE

Contributed by Administrator  
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So 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 heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king."

The prophet Samuel delivers God's pronouncement against king Saul, I Samuel 15:22-23

"I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not savor your sacred assemblies. Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs, for I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments. But let justice run down like water, and righteousness as a mighty stream."

Amos 5:21-24

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and done many wonders in your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

Matthew 7:21-13

"Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves servants to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?"

Romans 6:16

Perhaps the best evidence of original sin in our lives is our obstinate refusal to obey God's word. From the earliest days when Israel wandered in the wilderness after murmuring against God's promise and seeking false gods, to the modern-day resistance against God's word in politics, education, business, and even in religion, we as individuals and nations continue to steadfastly refuse the will and purpose of God.

Most Christians would identify what have come to be called "sins of the flesh" as our biggest failure, but I think it clear that sins of the spirit have precedence. Consider the many fleshly, lustful sins of King David, and how God forgave him because of his penitent, contrite heart. When the heart and spirit are right, God can be remarkably tolerant and forgiving of these "lesser" sins. So I think it's sins of the spirit such as unbelief, disobedience, and idolatry that cause most problems for Christians.

When confronted with a choice whether to obey God or men, we almost invariably choose human wisdom and experience over God's word, thereby practicing an ultimate form of spiritual idolatry. It's part of our very natures to question God and to substitute our knowledge and faulty wisdom for His.

As an attempt to curry God's favor after refusing His word we, like Saul, fall back upon sacrifice and offering to atone for our sin. We delude ourselves into thinking that now we have done God's will. But we cannot fool God!

King Saul justified his failure to execute God's command concerning the destruction of the enemy Amalekites and all their possessions by claiming that he had set aside their king for special punishment, and had saved some of the valuable booty for sacrifice to the Lord. That's what motivated Samuel's outburst that the Lord desired obedience rather than sacrifice.

And how does this substitution of sacrifice for obedience appear in religious institutions today? It surfaces in many forms: the "feel-good" gospel, cheap grace, excessive emotionalism, modernism, humanism, New Age philosophy, political correctness, and many others. It's as if Satan works overtime to delude and trap modern Christians into substituting human wisdom for clear mandates of God.

This practice is dangerous for many reasons, but chief among them is that it angers God and results in a withdrawing of His favor from our lives and efforts. Look what happened to Saul: He was removed as king, and was eventually slain by one of the Amalekites he had refused to kill. In his deluded mind, Saul evidently thought he was serving the Lord by disobeying His clear instructions. But God was not mollified by his stratagem, and Saul lost God's blessing as well as his life.

Perhaps the clearest example of how our substitution of sacrifice for obedience works in modern churches is our refusal to honor God's word concerning financial stewardship. We pray unceasingly for God's help in meeting church financial obligations, while at the same time refusing to consider tithing as an expectation of membership. We plan great worship services, wondrous stewardship drives, fine music, weekly prayer and sacrament; yet we continue to wonder why we have difficulty paying our bills, not to mention expanding our ministries.

What really happens is that God does answer our prayers, but not in the way we seek. His answer is to allow us to stumble on in the strength of our own limited resources until we get the message that obedience is better than sacrifice. Until then, He blesses those efforts that do honor His word, and leaves us to our own devices in those in which we deny His will.

Is this good enough in these days of uncertainty and worldwide turmoil? I think not.

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