

## **Why the Spirit departed king Saul - “Disobedience”**

### **Code: 9/OT/9**

#### **Key verses:**

“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” (1 Samuel 15: 22, 23)

“The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and a distressing Spirit from the Lord troubled him” (1 Samuel 16: 14) “But the Lord said to Samuel, “do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16: 7)

#### **Lesson Outline:**

Two major reasons why the spirit departed King Saul:

1. He directly disobeyed God when he offered a burnt offering, instead of waiting for Samuel to come and offer it. (1 Samuel chapter 13) – this was the duty of a priest not even the king.
2. He directly disobeyed God a second time when he did not completely destroy the Amelekites. He spared king Agag along with the Amelekites’ best of the sheep, oxen, the fatlings, the lambs and all that was good. (1 Samuel chapter 15)

The main lesson we can learn from reading about King Saul is that obedience is Key in life. We have to think about how we can be obedient to God in our daily lives. There are 3 ways we can do this:

1. By obeying the word of God (Bible), this obviously involves reading the Bible.
2. By obeying our confession father, and heeding his advice without being stubborn.
3. By obeying our parents, because we obey God through them.

#### **Lesson activity:**

##### **Activity 1**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77kiT8p7iGU&feature=related>

Play the above you-tube sound file, and discuss with the class how it is that Saul had disobeyed God, and how it is that Saul tried to justify this disobedience to himself. Do we often fall in the same trap?

##### **Activity 2**

Set up a role play involving the Children and servants, which illustrates disobedience. For e.g. one of the children could role play with the servant a scenario where a son/daughter is being disobedient to her mother. After this ask the children to consider how many times they have been in a similar situation and disobeyed their parents. More importantly, get them to think about who it is they’re really disobeying, God or their parents or both?

### **Activity 3**

Create some hypothetical scenarios and talk through the sequence of events which would occur. Have other members of the class write on the board how they try and hide the fact they were disobedient from their parents and the consequence of being found out.

The consequence of King Saul's disobedience was that the spirit left him. What happens to us when we're disobedient? For e.g. when a child disobeys their parents, sin evolves and one sin leads to another sin and so on. This can happen until the sin is so large and burdensome that we can be afraid to confess it at all.

This can be a serious issue for children in this age group, which is why a discussion would be appropriate here to make sure the children understand the dire consequences of disobedience even to the point of fear.

### **Let us now go through the story of the disobedience of King Saul and see how he dealt with it.**

You may like to read all 1 Samuel 15 then go through the questions or take the chapter in segments and do the questions as you go. Remember to re-enforce and repeat important points as you do

### **How was Saul disobedient?**

1 Samuel 15:1-9

Samuel said to Saul:

*"The Lord sent me to anoint you king over His people. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the Lord"* (1 Samuel 15: 1)

It is as though Samuel is reconfirming to Saul that he was the one who anointed him a king by a divine command; therefore he ought to listen to his counsel, heed the voice of the words of the Lord, and not to live in rebellion. That was actually an ultimatum to Saul.

He instructed Saul to fight against Amalek, and to destroy every thing he has; as the conquest he gets is not his own, but is a gift from God, previously proclaimed by Him 400 years ago. *"The Lord has sworn: The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation"* (Exodus 17: 8 -- 16). God never forgets His promises, but realizes them in due time. God granted Saul that conquest, yet commanded him to destroy every thing Amalek has ... That condition may seem a kind of harsh on man, and a waste of resources; Yet Amalek was utterly corrupted; a congregation of savage thieves, who used to commit horrible crimes, and to practice abominations.

Saul demanded from the 'Kenites' -- a peaceful Midianite people -- to depart, and get down from among the Amalekites, lest they would be destroyed together with them. The Kenites have done a favor to Israel (Exodus 18; Numbers 10: 29 - 32); accompanied them to Jericho (Judges 1: 16); then dwelt in the land of the Amalekites south of Judah. Of the Kenites are Jethro, Moses' father-in-law (Judges 1: 16). As the word 'Kenites' means (Ironsmiths); so some believe them to be a congregation of nomadic ironsmiths in the region of minerals in

the valley of 'Araba'. After the departure of the Kenites, Saul attacked the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15: 7).

Saul conquered Amalek, yet he came back defeated by his 'ego', having not heeded the voice of the Lord. He killed everyone of the enemy, but spared 'Agag' [probably a title of the kings of Amalek, like 'Pharaoh' was for the kings of Egypt]; destroyed the worthless sheep, but kept the best of them. He might have spared Agag to satisfy his own arrogance, or he had compassion on him for being a king, albeit a king on a congregation of thieves; whose sword has made women childless (1 Samuel 15: 33). He spared the best of sheep, on pretence of offering sacrifices to the Lord, when his real motive was his personal benefit.

### **Who was the first to realize that Saul had been disobedient?**

1 Samuel 10-11

The Lord revealed to Samuel why He rejected Saul; saying:

*"I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following me, and has not performed My commandments"*

(1 Samuel 15: 11)

It grieved Samuel to see Saul failing to benefit from the divine opportunity that was offered to him. Deciding to reproach him,

*"He cried out to the Lord all night"*

(1 Samuel 15: 11)

How pure was Samuel's heart, spending the whole night praying, so as not to reproach Saul of his own accord; He was grieved and mourned for him, until the Lord said to him:

*"How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? "*

(1 Samuel 16: 1)

### **List the lies that Saul told Samuel when he was asked why he had not followed the orders given to him. What was Samuel's response? Do we do similar in our own lives- compare to the scenarios completed at the beginning of the lesson**

1 Samuel 15:13-23

- 1.** I have carried out the Lord's instructions.

He covered his rebellion with sweet words, that did not deceive the prophet Samuel, to whom the Lord has revealed every thing

- 2.** The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the Lord your God, but we totally destroyed the rest

Instead of admitting his transgression, he put the blame on the people: that they were the party responsible for sparing the best of the sheep. How easy it is for man to put the blame on others; as did Aaron when he made the golden calf (Exodus 32:21 -- 24); and Pilate as he justified his trial of the Lord Christ; Actually, as Aaron's heart went astray, and Pilate

feared for his post, so also Saul loved the spoil. Saul repeatedly accused the people for rebellion, but gave them an excuse, and described himself as obedient to the Lord. While saying:

*“the people took the plunder....”* (1 Samuel 15: 21), he adds, *“and the rest we have utterly destroyed”* (1 Samuel 15: 15); counting himself among those who obeyed the divine commandment (We have utterly destroyed). And more clearly, he says:

*“But I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites; But the people took of the plunder”*  
(1 Samuel 15: 20, 21)

do we often ‘pass the buck’ and blame someone else for our mistakes?

### 3. to sacrifice to the Lord your God

Look at the way he spoke to the prophet Samuel, justifying the sparing of the best of the sheep and oxen: *“to sacrifice to the Lord your God”* (1 Samuel 15: 15). He did not say: “to the Lord (our) God”, but said: “to the Lord (your) God”; as though he says, what we spared was not for ourselves, but for the Lord (your) God! Saul gave an excuse for the people’s rebellion: *“to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal”*, to which Samuel responded:

*“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”*  
(1 Samuel 15: 22, 23)

God prefers obedience and compassion over sacrifices and burnt offerings; The psalm says

*“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened; Burnt offering and sin offering, You did not require”*  
(Psalm 40: 6)

Saul is layering lie upon lie upon lie. He said he had carried out the Lord’s instructions. But he hadn’t. Saul said it was the soldiers who had done the wrong thing. Maybe, but they were doing so with Saul’s permission. It was his fault, not their sin. And then he has the gall to say, “We’re saving these animals to sacrifice them. They’re an offering to God, Samuel!” The animals weren’t taken as offerings to God; they were taken to expand the king’s wealth.

**Ask the class to recall times they had been disobedient to God’s word and then tried to justify it.**

- They don’t go into the church as they want to talk to their friends and so stay outside
- Do not see their confession father as they are going to make the mistake again anyway so there is no point

- They swear but feel that it is okay because it is not a 'big swear word' and their friends say worse anyway.
- People who try to win lotto and justify gambling by saying they will donate 10% to the church.

As important as it is to perform the ritual correctly, Samuel says, it would be better to not do it at all than do it with a rebellious heart. It is not externalism that pleases God; it's the internal attitude and inclination of the heart. It is possible to perform religious activities and still be in rebellion against God. This is why religion has always been appealing to people. We can hide the true nature of our hearts behind religious activities. But if Christianity is a relationship, the old rules no longer apply. God doesn't want what is ours; he wants us. Why? Because when God has us, he also has what is ours.

### **Was Saul's apology sincere in Verse 24-31? What makes you think it is/is not?**

Although Saul says: "*I have sinned*" (1 Samuel 15: 24), yet, at the same time he cast the blame on the people, saying: "*because I feared the people and obeyed their voice*". His repentance was not genuine, as he did not say that, out of fear of God, but to find favor in Samuel's sight, to return with him, to honor him before the elders of his people; saying:

*"I have sinned; yet honor me now before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the Lord your God"*  
(1 Samuel 15: 30)

In haughtiness, he refers the people to him: "*my people*", and not to the Lord.

### **Do you know of other occasions Saul does not obey the Word of God ?**

□ Samuel had told Saul to wait for him for seven days before attacking the Philistines, but as Samuel did not arrive within the time and the Israelites became restless, Saul started preparing for battle by offering sacrifices; when Samuel does finally arrive he criticises Saul for not waiting and curses him to fall from God's favour. (1 Samuel 13:7-15)

□ In 1 Samuel 15:12 Saul built a monument for himself

### **What was the consequence of Saul's disobedience?**

Read 1 Samuel 15:35 and 1 Samuel 16:14

*"The Lord regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel"*  
(1 Samuel 15: 35)

The Book refers 'regret' to God; not that God changed His mind, but to speak to us by the language we understand ... With his rebellion against the Lord, Saul fell under the divine justice, became rejected; and was deprived of the gift that God granted him. St. Gregory the Bishop of Nyssa says: [The Holy Book often refers to God things that are fitting to our

minds, to understand]. Changes happen from our side, and not from that of God -- the unchangeable. God in His love wishes all to be saved; But if man persists on evil and does not repent, he would lose the promise of God who wants his salvation. So God longed to grant success to Saul, yet Saul persisted on rejecting God's love, and took himself away from the circle of divine mercy; he persisted on rebellion, to lose the divine promise; God appeared, as though to have regretted His promise to Saul; as He would never realize it to him compulsively. we hear about David:

*"The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward"*  
(1 Samuel 16: 13),

We hear about Saul:

*"The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him"*  
(1 Samuel 16: 14)

The Spirit of the Lord came upon David , the same way it *"hovered over the face of the waters"* (genesis 1: 2), to create from the void and formless earth, a beautiful world full of life. David therefore enjoyed the Spirit of the Lord, that granted him the grace of royalty -- the wise leadership of the people of God – so as not to work on his own, but in the Lord. In the New Testament, the Only begotten Son sent His Holy Spirit, to grant us sonhood to God the Father, and to renew our nature, sanctifying it, to become according to the image of the Son and like Him.

+ It is possible for man to partake of the divine nature, but only through the Spirit.  
(St. Cyril the Great)

We should not get confused by the phrase: *"A distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him"* (1 Samuel 16: 14); as that does not mean that the distressing spirit is coming from the Lord; or that what befell Saul was from the Lord; The apostle James says: *"God can not be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone"* (James 1: 13).

Saul rejecting the Spirit of the Lord, set himself a dwelling place, decorated and ready, with no hindrance, for the distressing spirit; so the Lord forsakes him to himself. He gave him his heart's wish. With the same meaning, the apostle Paul says: *"Therefore God gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves ..., For this reason God gave them up to vile passions ..., and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting"* (Romans 1: 24 -- 28).

When man persists on rejecting God, and on delivering himself to evil, God forsakes him, namely, gives him up to the lusts of his own will. Saul's servants counselled him, to seek out a man who is a skilful player on the harp, to let him refresh his soul; and they actually brought David, the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skilful in playing the harp,

*"a mighty man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a handsome person; and the Lord is with him"* (1 Samuel 16: 18)

What is that harp that makes man refreshed and well, and lets the distressing spirit depart from him (1 Samuel 16: 23), but the word of God in the New and Old Testaments; including the (strings) of law, prophecies, praises, gospels, and apostolic writings, etc. ... The scholar

Origen says: [The Holy Book is God's one, integrated, and harmonious instrument, that provides, through various tunes, the one voice of salvation, for those willing to learn; That harp which nullifies and resist the work of every distressing spirit; like when David calmed down the distressing spirit that was troubling Saul]. David appeared as a man of valor, fighting with no weapon to protect the sheep under his care; as a man of war; yet, although he never practiced that sort of life, yet his natural capabilities qualified him for it; as prudent in his speech and sweet in his psalms; and a handsome person. Yet his most prominent attribute was that "*the Lord was with him*"; that was the true secret of his power.

-Fr Tadros .Y. Malaty

**King David sinned- he was an adulterer and murderer (2Sam11) but the difference was, when the prophet Nathan confronted him with his sins, David didn't excuse himself as Saul had done but answered simply ' I have sinned against the Lord' (2 Sam 12:13)  
Discuss the consequences for disobedience in our lives..**