



JOINT TASK FORCE CIVIL SUPPORT

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Rejected Sacrifices

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JTF-CS Team,

I was reading to my children from 1 Samuel 15 this weekend. As you recall, this is where God tells King Saul to “attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys” (1 Sam. 15:3). Nevertheless, after the battle ends, we see that Saul has spared the life of Agag, king of the Amalekites, and many of his finest cattle and sheep. When approached by the prophet Samuel to account for his disobedience toward God, Saul responds, “I went on the mission the Lord assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the Lord your God at Gilgal” (1 Sam. 15:20-21). Despite the irony of his assertion that he completely destroyed the Amalekites except for their king, many of us would say that Saul did a honorable thing by preserving the best cattle and sheep for sacrifice unto God. Yet God responds to this apparent gift not with thanksgiving and praise but by rejecting Saul as king. Although Saul believed that sparing the life of one Amalekite and a few cattle and sheep would be an acceptable transgression from the clear command of God, this was certainly not the case. In fact, God proclaims through Samuel, “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22).

Have you ever found yourself in a similar situation as Saul? You know what God wants from you, but instead you do what is right in your own eyes. We are so very good at devising our own plans and believing we can improve upon the will of God. But this is not the call of the faithful. Like Saul, we are simply exhorted to follow our Lord in humble obedience. Yet, far too often, we find ourselves going it alone and making haste toward our self-declared goals, which seem right and God-honoring to us. Unfortunately, in such situations, we are not lauded by God as faithful supplicants; rather, we are rejected by Him as disobedient fools.

The question I ask myself now, and I encourage each of us to ask ourselves today, is, “Am I King Saul?” Am I a king in my own eyes who makes his (or her) decisions based upon independent opinions of right and wrong or good and bad, or am I the Lord’s servant who makes his (or her) decisions based upon the revealed will of God? Though I strive to be the latter, I often find myself mired in the former. Yet, I do not have to rest in this unfortunate state. Indeed, through the power of God’s indwelling Spirit, I can find victory over my own sinfulness and arrogance. Submission to His will vice my own, however, is the key. This, of course, is the challenge of personal faith. Are you up for the challenge?

God bless.