

“...FOR THE PEOPLE SPARED THE BEST”

By Keith Greer

Many remember the story of King Saul and the battle with the Amalekites. God commanded Saul to; " Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.'" {1 Samuel 15:2,3} The instructions could not have been more plain!

Do you recall what Saul did? When he came to Samuel, Saul said to him, "Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, Blessed are you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD." {1 Samuel 15:13} Yet, when Samuel heard the lowing of the oxen, and bleating of the sheep, the truth was known! Saul had disobeyed God!

What was his excuse for his actions? "And Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed. " {1 Samuel 15:15} So Saul blamed the people. Did he forget he was the king? Who had the place of authority to lead and command these people? Saul of course!

Saul compounds his sin. How? By telling Samuel the people were going to take these things and offer sacrifices unto God. "Then 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." {1 Samuel 15:22} God demands and expects obedience first! This Saul had failed in miserably.

What can we learn from this lesson of the past? Many people today in the religious world would do well to restudy this story. A simple fact of truth lies in Saul's sin. God will not tolerate disobedience, no matter how we rationalize our actions!

Today many are hoping God will accept what He would not receive from the hands of Saul. Men believe if it is for "a good cause", that will be enough. Will it? Surely to offer sacrifices was a worthy intention. Yet, can we disobey one of His commands, to do another? Heaven forbid it!!

Jesus Himself tells us , "If you love Me, keep my commandments." {John 14:15} Simply put, just do what I ask of you. No more, no less! By so doing, we display a proper attitude towards His word. Can anything be so easy to understand? If you look around in the world, it must be difficult to comprehend.

We are told to be "baptized". Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Yet, many sprinkle or dip. Remember Saul! We are told to have faith and works. James 2:14-26; Ephesians 2:8-10; Yet, many teach "faith only". Remember Saul! We are told to sing, Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Why use instruments in worship? Remember Saul!

Sadly, the religious world has been misled, along with accepting the false notion, that God will accept ANYTHING from our hands as long it's done with sincerity. Please take a good look around the religious landscape today. Modern religions are so involved in many secular endeavors that the spiritual work of the Lord's church now is an afterthought!

One of the things we often hear today is the ZEAL that others have for God. Yet, zeal can be misplaced. "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God." {Romans 10:2,3}

Yes, many people have good intentions, so did Saul. If God would not accept Saul's works, why would he accept ours? God has His reasons for us doing things "His way." Could it be we are not satisfied to allow God to lead us and we just need to humbly submit and follow? ***