

“WHAT THEN IS THE BLEATING OF THE SHEEP...”

By Keith Greer

“...Blessed are you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD. But Samuel said, ‘What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?’ {1 Samuel 15:14} One of the greatest lies even told! God sent Saul to destroy the Amalekites. He was to eliminate everything that drew the breathe of life. Yet, the noise made by the animals indicated to Samuel that Saul had done differently. The noise of the animals meant:

Disobedience. “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 animal sounds that Samuel heard could mean only one thing – Saul had not obeyed God’s command! Sadly, men still believe they can come up with reasons for overriding the Lord’s commands. This was not the case in Saul’s time, and it never will be. Replacing divine instruction with human reasoning is always spiritually fatal!

A Lie. “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” {1 John 2:3,4} Saul’s words were empty and hollow; his actions betrayed their truth. When Saul told Samuel he had performed the commandment of the Lord, he lied! Actions speak louder than words.

Loss of Humility. “So Samuel said, ‘When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the LORD anoint you king over Israel?’” {1 Samuel 15:17} Saul had lost his humility. He was no longer willing to submit his will to God’s. Listen to Micah’s words as he instructs Israel regarding what God requires of them: “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” {Micah 6:8} Unfortunately, Saul did not walk humbly with his God.

Saul Feared the People Rather Than God. “Then Saul said to Samuel, ‘I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.’” {1 Samuel 15:24} Now Saul understood, but it was too late. Peter and John had to make a similar choice when they appeared before the religious leaders {Acts 5:29}. Fortunately, they chose wisely. Human authorities can take physical life, but we should not fear them more than we fear God. Why? God can destroy both body and soul {Matthew 10:28}.

Will Worship. “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} Saul determined to follow his own desires instead of God’s commands.

Effort to Shift Responsibility. “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} Truth be told, Saul was the king; he had the authority, and he knew what God had instructed. He had no one to blame but himself!

Does God hear these same types of noises as byproducts of our activity toward Him?
Could we be saying one thing to God but by our own actions be demonstrating to Him our hypocrisy?
