

1 Samuel 15:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD.

Analysis

Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD.

Saul's failure demonstrates that partial obedience is disobedience, and religious activity cannot substitute for heart surrender. His pattern of excuses, blame-shifting, and selective compliance while maintaining outward religious appearance warns against external religion without internal transformation. The pronouncement that 'to obey is better than sacrifice' establishes that God desires humble submission over impressive religious performance. Saul's rejection teaches that prolonged disobedience, even mixed with apparent faithfulness, eventually results in God's withdrawal of calling and blessing.

Historical Context

The establishment of monarchy around 1050-1010 BCE represented a dramatic political and theological shift for Israel. Unlike surrounding nations where kings were considered divine or semi-divine, Israel's kings were supposed to function under God's ultimate authority as laid out in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. The Benjamite tribe occupied strategic territory between Ephraim and Judah, making Saul's selection a politically astute choice to balance tribal rivalries.

Archaeological remains from this period show increased fortification and centralization of settlements, confirming the transition to state-level organization.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does this passage clarify the relationship between genuine faith and concrete obedience, and what does it teach about partial compliance?
2. Are there areas where you practice selective obedience, substituting religious activity for heart-level surrender to God's commands?
3. How does this passage connect to the larger biblical narrative of redemption and point toward Christ and the gospel?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	שְׁמוּאֵל	אֶל	שָׁא וּל	אֶת־י	שָׁלַח	יְהוָה:	לְמִשְׁחָךְ
also said	Samuel	H413	unto Saul	H853	sent	The LORD	me to anoint
H559	H8050		H7586		H7971	H3068	H4886
לְךָ לְמֶלֶךְ	עַל	עַמּוֹ	עַל	יִשְׂרָאֵל	וְעַתָּה		
thee to be king	H5921	over his people	H5921	over Israel	H6258		
H4428		H5971		H3478			
שָׁמָּע	לְךָ וּל	דְּבַר־י	יְהוָה:				
now therefore hearken	thou unto the voice	of the words	The LORD				
H8085	H6963	H1697	H3068				

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 9:16 (References Israel): To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me.

1 Samuel 12:14 (Kingdom): If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God:

1 Samuel 13:13 (Kingdom): And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.

1 Samuel 10:1 (References Lord): Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?

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