

# 1 Samuel 15:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah.

## Analysis

**And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah.**

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 Benjaminite 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

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**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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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

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מְאַת יָמִין בְּטַלְאִים וְאַתָּה שָׁאוֹל יִשְׁעַט עָלָיו  
gathered And Saul the people and numbered them in Telaim two hundred  
H8085 H7586 H853 H5971 H6485 H2923 H3967

יְהוּדָה אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה נָתַת בְּנֵי אַלְפִים  
thousand footmen and ten thousand men of Judah  
H505 H7273 H6235 H505 H853 H376 H3063

## Additional Cross-References

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**Joshua 15:24** (Parallel theme): Ziph, and Telem, and Bealoth,