

The Lure of Glory and Honour

1 Samuel 15:1-34

¹ Samuel said to Saul, “I am the one the LORD sent to anoint you king over his people Israel; so listen now to the message from the LORD. ² This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. ³ Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.’”

⁴ So Saul summoned the men and mustered them at Telaim—two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand from Judah. ⁵ Saul went to the city of Amalek and set an ambush in the ravine. ⁶ Then he said to the Kenites, “Go away, leave the Amalekites so that I do not destroy you along with them; for you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt.” So the Kenites moved away from the Amalekites.

⁷ Then Saul attacked the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, near the eastern border of Egypt. ⁸ He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword. ⁹ But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs—everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed.

¹⁰ Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel: ¹¹ “I regret that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions.” Samuel was angry, and he cried out to the LORD all that night.

¹² Early in the morning Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, “Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honor and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal.”

¹³ When Samuel reached him, Saul said, “The LORD bless you! I have carried out the LORD'S instructions.”

¹⁴ But Samuel said, “What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?”

¹⁵ Saul answered, “The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD your God, but we totally destroyed the rest.”

¹⁶ “Enough!” Samuel said to Saul. “Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night.” “Tell me,” Saul replied.

¹⁷ Samuel said, “Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel. ¹⁸ And he sent you on a mission, saying, ‘Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; wage war against them until you have wiped them out.’ ¹⁹ Why did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the LORD?”

²⁰ “But I did obey the LORD,” Saul said. “I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. ²¹ 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.”

²² But Samuel replied:

“Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD?

To obey is better than sacrifice,

and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

²³ *For rebellion is like the sin of divination,
and arrogance like the evil of idolatry.*

*Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
he has rejected you as king.”*

²⁴ *Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned. I violated the LORD’S command and your instructions. I was afraid of the men and so I gave in to them. ²⁵ Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD.”*

²⁶ *But Samuel said to him, “I will not go back with you. You have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you as king over Israel!”*

²⁷ *As Samuel turned to leave, Saul caught hold of the hem of his robe, and it tore. ²⁸ Samuel said to him, “The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbors—to one better than you. ²⁹ He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a human being, that he should change his mind.”*

³⁰ *Saul replied, “I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD your God.” ³¹ So Samuel went back with Saul, and Saul worshiped the LORD.*

³² *Then Samuel said, “Bring me Agag king of the Amalekites.”*

Agag came to him in chains. And he thought, “Surely the bitterness of death is past.”

³³ *But Samuel said,*

*“As your sword has made women childless,
so will your mother be childless among women.”*

And Samuel put Agag to death before the LORD at Gilgal.

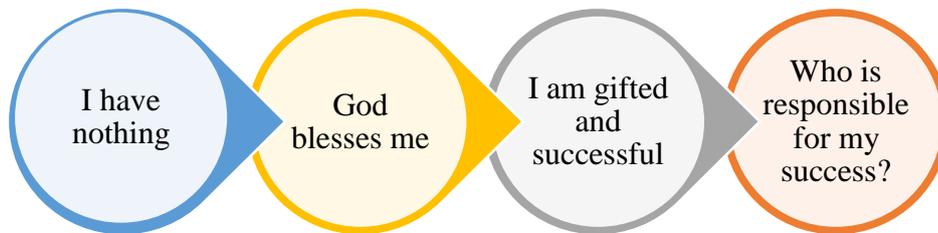
³⁴ *Then Samuel left for Ramah, but Saul went up to his home in Gibeah of Saul. ³⁵ Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him. And the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.*

The Problem of Pride

Deuteronomy 8:10-18

¹⁰ *When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. ¹¹ Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. ¹² Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, ¹³ and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, ¹⁴ then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ¹⁵ He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. ¹⁶ He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you. ¹⁷ You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.” ¹⁸ But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.*

1. In the above passage the Lord speaks to His people, instructing them not to forget His commandments. He warns them that once they have settled in Canaan and enjoy the blessings of the land, their hearts will become proud and they will forget all the Lord has done for them. Instead, they will say that they have achieved this by their own strength and power. Read the passage again and reflect why does the Lord say this to Israel.



2. When God blesses us, it is easy to fall into the temptation to think that we are blessed because we are special. We believe that God has blessed us because of our attributes, and not His attributes. The focus and attention are on who we are and what we have accomplished rather than who God is and what He does for us. The desire to receive glory and honour for our success is motivated by our pride. The attention and honour bestowed on a successful person is intoxicating and addictive. The lure of glory and honour is something that can easily trap us. How can we keep ourselves from falling into this trap?
3. God's answer to us is to remember Him. During the Passover meal, Jesus tells His disciples to 'remember Him'. God's grace, mercy and selfless love is the reason behind all our blessing. It is because of what He has done that we are blessed. Worshipping God alone, giving Him all the glory and honour and living in a way that would glorify His name is the best cure to pride. Pride cannot satisfy us. The glory and honour we pursue for ourselves can only satisfy us momentarily. True satisfaction comes when we worship and honour God above all things.

Saul's Pride (vv. 7-9)

⁷ Then Saul attacked the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, near the eastern border of Egypt. ⁸ He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword. ⁹ But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs—everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed.

1. God was judging the Amalekites for their evil deeds. He instructs Saul to destroy them and everything that belongs to them. This is an act of judgment. Such acts are hard for us to understand, but God is Holy, Righteous, Merciful and Kind. All His attributes are displayed through His acts of deliverance and judgment. God being just will judge evil and deliver those who look to Him. Deliverance comes through the judgment of the wicked.

2. God was clear in His instructions. He is delivering the Amalekites into the hands of Israel to be judged. All the Amalekites and their possession are consecrated to God for destruction. The Hebrew term destroy (haram) refers to the irrevocable giving over of things or persons to the LORD, often by totally destroying them. Israel is not to spare anyone or take anything for themselves.
3. Saul spared all that was good to his eyes and whatever was despised, he gave to God. Saul also spared king Agag. Saul was no longer representing God and His attributes in this act of judgment. Saul made it more about himself and his attributes.

God's Regret and Saul's Pride (vv. 10-12)

¹⁰ Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel: ¹¹ "I regret that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions." Samuel was angry, and he cried out to the LORD all that night.

¹² Early in the morning Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, "Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honor and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal."

1. The Lord regretted making Saul a king. God does not change His mind and His purposes cannot be changed (1 Samuel 15:29 "He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a human being, that he should change his mind.>").
2. God reveals to us that He does care when the ones He has chosen and anointed turn against Him. God could not use Saul anymore because Saul has set his mind on pursuing glory and honour for himself by doing things that will please the people.
3. Samuel realizes the fact that even though God chose Saul and Samuel played an important part in making him king, God still had to bear with failure and rejection. (Think about Judas.) Samuel found this difficult to comprehend. Now even with a God-chosen king, Israel is in tatters. Samuel cried out to the Lord the whole night.

Obedience or Sacrifice (vv. 13-23)

¹³ When Samuel reached him, Saul said, "The LORD bless you! I have carried out the LORD'S instructions."

¹⁴ But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?"

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“Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD?

*To obey is better than sacrifice,
and to heed is better than the fat of rams.*

²³ *For rebellion is like the sin of divination,
and arrogance like the evil of idolatry.*

*Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
he has rejected you as king.”*

1. Saul made excuses for his disobedience. He tells Samuel that he had reserved the best as a sacrifice to the Lord, which was untrue. Later in verse 24, Saul would admit that he did this to please the men.
2. Verses 22-23 gives us a lot to reflect on. To God, faithfulness and loyalty is far more important than sacrifices.
3. Saul would offer animals to God, but he would not offer his will. Reflect on Jesus’s prayer at Gethsemane. The sacrifice was offered after the will was surrendered.

Luke 22:42 *“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”*

4. Samuel likened rebellion to the sin of divination and arrogance to the sin of idolatry. The IVP Bible Background Commentary says the following about this comparison.

Divination assumed that there was knowledge to be gained about the activities and motives of the gods through the use of various indicators (such as the entrails of sacrificed animals). It professed to be able to identify what would please the deity without specific input from the deity. In the same way Saul was contending that he knew what would be pleasing to deity (despite Yahweh’s specific commands). His contentions claimed the same kind of information divination would offer—that he had an inside track on what would please God. The Hebrew word NIV translates “arrogance” is used when someone is trying to force a particular course of action. Samuel appropriately compares this to idolatry (specifically he refers to teraphim; see comment on Gen 31:19) in that the idols were typically used to manipulate and coerce the gods into particular courses of action (see comment on Deut 4:15–18). Food and gifts were presented to the gods so that the gods would be obliged to grant requests or bestow blessings. Samuel is suggesting that that is exactly the activity Saul intends to engage in as he plans to present all of these cattle to the Lord. Saul was attempting to manipulate with gifts in the same way that idol worshipers did.

5. Pride leads us to believe that God can be controlled and manipulated. The right sacrifice or ritual will keep God in check. A sacrifice is only appropriate and acceptable when it is done with the attributes of God in mind. God detests the sacrifices from people who will not honour Him in their ways.

Isaiah 1:11-17

¹¹ *“The multitude of your sacrifices— what are they to me?” says the LORD.*

*“I have more than enough of burnt offerings,
of rams and the fat of fattened animals;
I have no pleasure
in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats.*

¹² *When you come to appear before me,
who has asked this of you,
this trampling of my courts?*

¹³ *Stop bringing meaningless offerings!
Your incense is detestable to me.*

*New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—
I cannot bear your worthless assemblies.*

¹⁴ *Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals
I hate with all my being.*

*They have become a burden to me;
I am weary of bearing them.*

¹⁵ *When you spread out your hands in prayer,
I hide my eyes from you;
even when you offer many prayers,
I am not listening.*

Your hands are full of blood!

¹⁶ *Wash and make yourselves clean.
Take your evil deeds out of my sight;
stop doing wrong.*

¹⁷ *Learn to do right; seek justice.
Defend the oppressed.*

*Take up the cause of the fatherless;
plead the case of the widow.*

Pride: When Appearances is More Important Than What is True (vv. 27-31)

⁷ *As Samuel turned to leave, Saul caught hold of the hem of his robe, and it tore.* ²⁸ *Samuel said to him, “The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbors—to one better than you.* ²⁹ *He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a human being, that he should change his mind.”*

³⁰ *Saul replied, “I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD your God.”* ³¹ *So Samuel went back with Saul, and Saul worshiped the LORD.*

Saul realizes that he has sinned against God. He knows that God has taken the kingdom from him and had given it to another. Saul was sorry and yet the thing he was more concerned about was losing face in front of Israel.

Prayer

The Lure of Glory and Honour

- We will always take time to remember all the Lord has done for us
- To daily surrender our will to God
- To be mindful of who God is (His attributes)
- To give God all the Glory and Honour

Life Church

- Unity in Jesus Christ
- Online services: God will bless and nurture the church
- Prayer meeting: The Lord will bestow upon us Spirit of intercession
- The church will be an effective witness
- The Lord will lead us to care for the poor.
- Church Ministries: Life Explorer, Redeeming Roses, Destiny Kids & Teens, Sunday School, Lifeline, Worship, Life Seed, Cell
- Michelle & family

Healing

- Bro Harold (Connie & Mel's dad)
- Si Yun: chemotherapy;
Jayden: physiotherapy

Covid-19 Pandemic

- Healing & deliverance
- Protection
- Front-liners & resources
- Economy
- Sabah

Malaysia

- Leaders
- Churches
- Unity