Obedience or Sacrifice?

Zanesville, OH | November 3, 2019 | John Pollard | Sermon Notes

**Foundational Scripture:** 1 Sam. 15:22-23

**Intro**:

* It’s no secret that God requires those who are willing to come to Him to make sacrifices (Lk. 9:23). On the other hand, God also requires our loyalty to Him in our obedience and submission to Him (Jn. 3:36). So one might ask, which is it? Does God want obedience or does He want sacrifice? Is one more important than the other and are we to make a decision between one or the other? The lesson this morning seeks to answer these questions by studying a couple of passages that demonstrate what God really desires of His people.

1. **What does God want from His people?**
   1. **Saul and The Amalekites: 1 Sam. 15:1-23**
      1. Saul seeks to justify his actions by deflecting blame to the people for the failed mission and suggesting that it was their idea to keep the best animals and the king for sacrificial purposes (vv. 14-15, 21) even though he is explicitly involved (vv. 7-9, 24).
      2. Samuel rebukes Saul by declaring that God desires obedience over sacrifice. God is not someone who will overlook sin and wrongdoing if you pay Him up or bribe Him so to speak with sacrifices (vv. 23-24).
      3. This chapter presents a test to Saul’s kingship after having already falling short a couple times. The test is about whether or not he is willing to obey God’s voice in all He says (vv. 1, 10-11, 19-20, 26).
      4. To disobey God is described as committing sorcery/witchcraft. To fail to submit to Him is one and the same as committing idolatry. The point is that obedience is no small thing in the eyes of God.
      5. 1 Sam. 15 shows us that even though there may be good intentions, the ends will never be able to justify the means. God requires obedience over sacrifice!
   2. **The Rebellion of Judah: Isa. 1:1-20**
      1. In the days of Isaiah, the people of Judah are pictured by God in a state of moral decay. The people whom God raised up a parent raises their child have betrayed Him and spit on His face by rebelling against His word and His commands.
      2. They are described as abandoning God, the Holy One of Israel, being weighed down with sin and corruption. They are pictured in a state of severe spiritual deterioration being sick from the head down to the foot because of their failure to honor God by listening to His voice (vv. 4-9).
      3. Despite all this they haven’t lost a beat in terms of offering sacrifices to God. But God states that He will not accept their sacrifices because it’s not being done according to obedience and righteousness (vv. 10-15).
      4. This passage shows us that it is possible for us to make sacrifices yet still be wicked and evil in God’s sight. God desires true, loyal, righteous intent the likes no sacrifice will ever compensate for (vv. 16-20).
      5. Isaiah shows us that no matter how many sacrifices someone makes, if there is not a heart of obedience involved, it is a worthless waste of time that God wants absolutely nothing to do with.
   3. **The Lawsuit against the Israelites: Mic. 6:1-8**
      1. In the days of the prophet Micah, Israel is well established with the notion that sacrifices take precedence over obedience. The pattern that began with Saul has continued throughout Israel’s history and God is going to indict them for it (vv. 1-2).
      2. God rhetorically asks the people what He has done to them that they should repay Him with disobedience, disgrace and evil. Despite all the good, all the deliverance and all the blessings He richly poured out on them, they turn around and stab Him in the back (vv. 3-5).
      3. The people respond in a confused state asking what more could God want than what they have given Him. They ask if He wants an increase in number, quality and even if He wants their kids with respect to sacrifices (vv. 6-7).
      4. Micah’s response is that God only ever wanted their obedience and their loyalty of heart to His word and offering sacrifices without obedience will do nothing except lead to more harm (v. 8).
      5. Micah shows that when our lives becomes all about the sacrifices and not about the obedience, there is no telling what moral threshold we will cross in order to compensate for a lackluster, sinful lifestyle that’s all about self and not God.

**Conclusion:** Obedience to God will always lead to sacrifices. Conversely, making sacrifices doesn’t always mean that someone is being obedient to God. God wants His people and those who want to become a part of His kingdom to be obedient to Him and His word first and foremost. When we do this, we will learn over time what it means to make true, meaningful sacrifices. The most faithful bible characters are those who are pictured doing this very thing.

God knows that we are all sinners and He knows that we need saving from it. But God doesn’t ask us and He never will require us to make up for that by offering sacrifice upon sacrifice upon sacrifice. He knows that won’t do it and we would never be able to keep up with that. There was a one-time sacrifice for sin and that is Jesus (Heb. 10:10). Our job and our responsibility is to obey Him and submit to His commands by denying self and anything that comes in the way of our relationship with Him (Jn. 3:36; Mk. 16:15-16). Will you obey and put on Christ in baptism if you haven’t yet done so?