

8

King Saul: Doing Almost All of God's Will

1 Samuel 15:1-23

We have an amazing capacity for self-deception. The first step of every twelve-step program is to come out of denial and to recognize one is powerless over the addiction. Jesus spent much of his ministry attempting to show the religious leaders of his day their hypocrisy and pretense (Matthew 23).

GROUP DISCUSSION. Why do you think we often settle for doing only part of God's will?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. In what area(s) of your life do you struggle with denial or self-deception?

Perhaps one of the cleverest schemes of the enemy is to convince us that doing *most* of God's will is enough and that by doing it we will receive God's blessings. King Saul fell into such a temptation. Instructed by God to fight and destroy the Amalekites, he succumbed to the wishes of his fighting men and did only part of God's command. *Read 1 Samuel 15:1-23.*

1. What message from the Lord does Samuel deliver to Saul, and why (vv. 1-3)?

2. How does Saul begin to obey God but later change his mind (vv. 4-9)?

3. What factors probably contributed to Saul's unwillingness to carry out God's explicit command (v. 12)?

4. Why is it so difficult for Saul to realize the seriousness of his sin against God (vv. 20-21)?

5. How does Samuel describe Saul's disobedience (vv. 22-23)?

6. Why do you think God equates disobedience with idolatry?

7. How does this description differ from the way we view our sin when we do not do all of God's will?

8. What "burnt offerings" and "sacrifices" do we sometimes offer to compensate for our lack of obedience?

9. What do you learn about the character of God from this passage (vv. 10-11, 22-23)?

10. What difference should these things make in our conduct or attitude when we are tempted to carry out only part of God's command?

11. Identify one area where you have been content to do almost all of God's will. What steps should you take to complete your obedience to God?

Pray God would give you a humble heart to seek and to obey all of God's commands.

Now or Later

Reflect on the beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-10. How do they differ from the heart of Saul as seen in 1 Samuel 15?

Which beatitudes, in particular, do you need to ask God to work into your heart?