



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Lead with Godly Motivation (I Samuel 14:16—15:35)

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Ron J. Bigalke, PhD / PO Box 244, Rincon, GA 31326-0244 / www.capitolcom.org / ron.bigalke@capitolcom.org

Capitol Commission state directors are missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. These Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. The love and grace of God compels us to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with a heartfelt compassion for the Capitol community, to faithfully teach and apply the Word of God, and it is our desire to build meaningful relationships that bear fruit for an eternity to come.

With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the Capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God's great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and as a matter of first importance, to pray for their salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). Our desire is witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four major areas of making disciples: (1) *evangelize* those who have not experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.

Introduction

First Samuel 13—15 reveals three decisive actions and motivations that indicate failed leadership: (1) impatience; (2) impulsiveness; and, (3) hypocrisy. God will always “bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God” (1 Cor 4:5).

LEAD WITH COURAGE AND WISDOM

(14:16-23) The surprising victory by Jonathan resulted in “a trembling in the camp” (14:15). The earthquake confirmed that the “trembling” was caused by God. When Saul's scouts saw the unusual activity in the Philistine camp, the king assembled his troops, and discovered that Jonathan and his armor bearer were missing. Saul initially sought for the priest to bring the ark of God and to address the army (cf. Deut 20:2-4); however, “the commotion in the camp of the Philistines” caused Saul to stop the priest and to lead his small army into battle. Failed leadership is persistent in not seeking the wisdom of the Lord, and was a continual problem with

Saul's leadership. God's people must be courageous but must also seek God's wisdom in all things.

LEAD WITH COMPASSION

(14:24-52) First Samuel 13 demonstrated the impatience of Saul, as opposed to trusting God “under pressure.” Closely related to the events of chapter 13 is the incident of Saul's impulsiveness in chapter 14. Saul made an impulsive oath that none of the army were to eat food until nightfall (14:24). His son Jonathan did not hear the oath, and in his pursuit of the enemy, he disobeyed it unknowingly. Saul's response was to demand the death of his son (14:44). The people refused to allow Saul's demand, indicating that Jonathan's courage and faithfulness was primarily responsible for the victory (14:45).

The account indicates that Saul's impulsiveness was yet another character trait that can ultimately climax in failed leadership. Saul was irresponsible because he failed to evaluate the implications of his decision; consequently the outcome was disastrous. Moreover, he lacked compassion for those under his leadership and allowed his selfish pride to motivate him (cf. 14:24, 39, 44-45). His foolish and prideful motivation for revenge even threatened the life of his own son (14:44).

LEAD WITH SIMPLE OBEDIENCE

(15:1-35) The final indication of failed leadership is revealed as hypocrisy in chapter 15. Samuel received a message from the Lord God (15:1-2). The message indicated that the time to fulfill the prophecy uttered during the days of Moses was to be fulfilled (cf. Exod 17:14-16; Numb 24:20). Samuel commissioned Saul to the southern territory of the land to destroy the Amalekites and all their property. The Hebrew word, *charam* (חָרַם), translated “utterly destroyed” is derived from the root, *cherem* (חָרַם), which is translated “devoted” in verse 21. *Cherem* is a highly significant word because it indicated a specific type of warfare “practiced only against peoples who had come under the Lord's severest judgment.”¹

THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR OBEDIENCE.

Saul's obedience to the Lord was incomplete since he “spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good” (15:9). “Clearly it would be wrong to suppose that Saul had humanitarian motives for

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this—he did not hesitate to defeat the rest of the Amalekite people, though they were less guilty than Agag. One possible explanation is that Saul had his own ideas about the treatment that kings deserved.”² Perhaps it was self-centeredness of Saul that caused him to spare Agag (cf. 15:12). Selfish people often do not see their sinful actions. Saul may have thought Agag could be a spectacle at a victory celebration. Regardless of his reasons for sparing Agag, the act was forbidden in *cherem* war.

Saul lied to Samuel with regard to his actions. The issue, however, was obedience to God. Saul rationalized that he spared the best of the spoil for the purpose of sacrifice. Rather than confess his selfish motivations, Saul cloaked his actions with piety, giving religious reasons for his actions. Samuel did not accept Saul’s excuses and rebuked him with an often-repeated poetic quotation. “Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *and* to heed than the fat of rams” (15:22).

Sacrifice and burnt offerings are never substitutes for obedience to the will of the Lord. There is no substitute for obedience. Samuel did not disparage the sacrificial and ritualistic worship; rather, he recognized that such worship should be integrated with obedience. Performing a sacrificial rite while living in disobedience to God is abominable. No matter how exacting the ritual may be, the Lord departs from an abominable house (1 Sam 4:21-22; cf. Ezek 10:4, 19; 11:22-23). God always rejects meaningless and vain worship. Worship is intended to promote obedience.

Saul’s actions have been entirely disobedient to the Lord’s command. The account of chapter 15 is Saul’s last act of disobedience as king. God removed the kingdom from Saul and gave it to someone else, who was better than him (15:28). Saul’s confession was superficial hypocrisy, which his latter actions will demonstrate.

YAHWEH WAR AND JIHAD

The more common and correct description for “holy war” in the Old Testament is “Yahweh war,” which is vastly different than “holy war” (*jihad*) in general. For instance, God (Yahweh) initiated the process, as necessitated by the nature of His relationship with Israel as an elect nation. Moreover, by initiating the process, God would empower His chosen people (or individuals, as in Elijah or Cyrus, for example; 1 Kgs 18:40; Isa 45:1) to accomplish the war, and the victory is guaranteed if all His conditions are satisfied. In the case of Elijah specifically, the wicked crimes of the Baal prophets demanded the death penalty (see Deut 13:13-15; 17:2-5). Genesis 3:15 indicates a higher order of conflict between God and the spiritual forces that strive against His holy will. Yahweh war

must first be understood as redemptive and gracious. As a consequence of the Fall of humanity, God decreed to elect a people through whom all nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12:1-3). However, it is not until their bondage in Egypt that God assumes the role of warrior on behalf of His covenant relationship with Israel (as Father to Son). What must not be confused in God’s warlike nature in redeeming Israel is that the conflict was not specifically between Yahweh and Pharaoh/Egypt, but between Yahweh and the Egyptian gods. In Yahweh war, the true and living God demonstrated His glory and power against spiritual darkness and wickedness, and against those realms that transcend the earthly and human (Gen 3:15; Exod 15:1, 4-5; Job 1:6-12; 2:2-6). It is because God is holy that His people must be holy, and therefore, one of the primary means to protect that holiness in the Old Testament was through Yahweh war. It must be stated immediately that Yahweh war was unique historically, and is not applied to the church age. Therefore, either Christian or any other “holy war” is unjustifiable by Scripture and must be condemned. Yahweh war will not be initiated again until the end of the age when God returns to earth in power and glory to establish His everlasting kingdom (and He will accomplish victory this time without any chosen people or individuals; Matt 25; Rev 19:15).

THE FIRST 100 DAYS

In 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt used his first three months in office to introduce massive reform as he established the foundations of his New Deal. Roosevelt urged Congress to enact legislative reforms that created new federal programs. Sometimes the new legislation was enacted in haste because he took office during the Great Depression. Since that time, the First 100 Days of every presidency have been regarded as the most significant. However, the enduring contributions of the majority of presidents have been enacted long after their First 100 Days. Presidents today are primarily judged and analyzed on the basis of how faithful they have been to their campaign promises during their First 100 Days. Although he enjoyed some military success, Saul has demonstrated failed leadership in his First 100 Days. From the beginning of his reign, Saul did not submit to the commands and wisdom of God. Scripture is unmistakable that God’s expectation and requirement for His people today to live holy lives is the same as it was for His people in the Old Testament (1 Pet 3:13-16). Our God will judge our lives based on our faithfulness to Him.

¹ Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel* (New American Commentary) (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996) 168.

² F. F. Bruce, *Israel & the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963; reprint, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997) 14.