

1 Samuel 15

November 18, 2020

Legal contracts often contain a clause about “no adequate remedy at law.” In simple English, this means if you break the contract there is no amount of money you can pay that will make it right. If, for example, you steal another company’s secrets you can’t just give them a pile of money and then publish the stolen information.

Verse 22 is God's version of "no adequate remedy." It says "To obey is better than sacrifice." What is wrong with sacrifice? After all, the first books of the Bible with the law of Moses has a complete system of sacrifices to be performed before the Lord. One is the guilt offering: "If anyone commits a breach of faith and sins unintentionally in any of the holy things of the Lord, he shall bring to the Lord as his compensation, a ram without blemish out of the flock ... for a guilt offering" (Lev. 5:15). I sinned; I pay. That seems to be Saul's attitude. He disobeys by keeping the best animals but then presents them for sacrifice.

But notice the word “unintentionally.” The guilt offering is a way for the inadvertent sinner to be reconciled to a gracious God. The problem is our human

nature. As soon as there is an “adequate remedy” for sin we are more likely to *intentionally* sin because we think we can make it good later. In Romans chapter 7 Paul gives a complicated but insightful look at how the law can fail to stop the flesh from disobedience and at times even encourage it.

With Jesus Christ as our Savior, we *cannot* pay for our sins. He has paid for them Himself. He is the adequate remedy at law. And he brings us through the Spirit into a new relationship of love and gratitude that gives more power – to obey, to resist sin – than any punishment for disobeying a law. “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot ... You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (Romans 8:7-10).

Notes

15:2 The Amalekites have not been identified by archaeology but lived in the Negev desert south of Israel.

Questions for study and discussion:

1. What had the Amalekites done to the people of Israel to deserve such destruction? (See Exodus 17)
2. In these verses we can read “destruction” as the irrevocable giving over to the Lord. What is wrong with destroying the worthless animals and sparing the best ones? How can this apply to us?
3. The same Hebrew word appears in verses 10, 29, and 35. The King James Version translates it as “repent” in all three places. What does it mean in each verse?

4. What are some examples in these verses of Saul being self centered?
5. What are Saul's sins as listed in verses 22 and 23?
6. Saul's confession in verse 24 does not change Samuel's course (or the mind of the Lord). What is wrong with his confession (and ours too, at times)?
7. Who is the "better neighbor" of verse 28?
8. Why does Saul make the request in verse 30? What does it say about Saul's relationship with the Lord?