**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**Rolla, Missouri**

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**Reactions to the Voice of God (Part 2)**

Last week on our program we asked the questions, “When God speaks, what should be man’s reaction? How should we respond to the voice of God?” Last week began talking about what it means to obey the voice of the Lord by looking at three men mentioned in the Bible who heard the voice of the Lord but reacted in different ways.

We first mentioned Pharaoh, king of Egypt. When God said to Pharaoh, “Let My people go,” Pharaoh’s response was “Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice…” That reaction to the voice of God is rebellion. And we mentioned there are terrible consequences for those who rebel against the voice of God. Pharaoh learned that the hard way when plague after plague after plague came upon him and his people. God gives us warning in His word today of grave consequences if we do not respect Him and His word. Paul, the apostle said that those who know not God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. (2 Thess. 1:8-9) May we never rebel against the voice of God.

The second man we talked about last week who responded to the voice of God was Saul, king of Israel. In 1 Samuel chapter 15 we read where God tells king Saul to go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have. But Saul spared Agag, the king of Amalek. He and the people also spared the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, but everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed. Samuel, a prophet of God, came to Saul and said, *“Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the LORD? And Saul said to Samuel, ‘But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. 21 But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal.’”* (verses 19-21) How did Saul react to the voice of the Lord? We might call it partial obedience. Saul may have thought since he did part of what God said that he was obedient to the voice of the Lord. But he had not obeyed the voice of the Lord, Samuel says. Partial obedience is not obedience.

Saul made two mistakes. First of all he listened to the people rather than to the voice of God. Look a verse 15, *“And Saul said, ‘They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.’”* Look at verse 21, *“But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal.”* Notice, the people, the people did this. Saul listened to the people. If I told you this morning that one of our great problems in religion today is that the preachers and church leaders are listening to the voice of the people rather than to the voice of God, would you think that is harsh? Isn’t that what is happening? This is what happened even in the first century. Look with me in 2 Timothy 4:3-4. Paul says to Timothy here after telling him to *“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”* He then says to Timothy, *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”* Who are the “they” in this passage? Are they not the people to whom Timothy would preach? Notice, “they will not endure sound doctrine.” They do not like the truth, and so “they will heap up for themselves teachers.” They will get teachers to teach what they want to hear. Where are these teachers going to come from? They are going to come from those who are listening to the voice of the people. They are the teachers who want to scratch the itching ears of people who will not endure sound doctrine. One of the problems in religion today is that many religious leaders are listening to the voice of the people and their teaching is just a reflection of what the people want to hear. They may claim they are listening to the voice of the Lord because part of what they teach is the truth, but in actuality they are reflecting the voice of the people. I read where a church went out into the community and asked the people what they wanted in a church service. The church began to implement what the people wanted and the people came and the church grew. Are we surprised? NO! When you give people who are not interested in the truth what THEY want, they will come. The church may claim that this growth was of God, that God was blessing their work. But in reality the people came because the church gave them what THEY wanted. The church was not a church of God or a church of Christ, but a church of the people.

One of the mistakes Saul made is that he listened to the people.

The second mistake Saul made is that he put his own thoughts ahead of God’s thoughts. Evidently Saul felt that if they spared the best of the sheep and oxen to sacrifice to God, that would be a good thing and God would be pleased. To have all these animals to sacrifice to God would be a wonderful tribute to God. But the LORD had a different view of this. It says in verse, 22, *“Then Samuel said: ‘Has the LORD as great 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.”* One thing we must understand, and that is, God does not think as man thinks. He does not do things as man does them. Isaiah said in Isaiah 55:8-9, *“‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.’”* We may think what we want is what God wants, what we like is what God likes. But the only want we are going to know what God wants and likes is by reading what He has said in His word. Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, *"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.”* (John 8:31) Jesus also said, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”* (Matt. 7:21)

King Saul did part of what God said, but partial obedience is not obedience. It is not obeying the voice of God.

The third man we want to talk about is another Saul, but this is Saul of Tarsus, who later became known as Paul, the apostle. Saul of Tarsus was a persecutor of Christians. He was on his way to Damascus for the purpose of binding Christians and bringing them back to Jerusalem when Jesus appeared to him. Look in Acts 9:3-6 it says, *“As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ And he said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ Then the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ So he, trembling and astonished, said, ‘Lord, what do You want me to do?’ Then the Lord said to him, ‘Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’”* When Saul learned who Jesus was, his response was, *“Lord, what do You want me to do?”* This is full submission.

Notice, Saul heard the voice of the Lord. A voice spoke to him and it was the Lord’s voice. Knowing that, Saul’s response is *“what do You want me to do?”* Jesus tells him to “*Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’”* He goes into the city of Damascus. A disciple, a devout man by the name of Ananias comes to Saul and says, *“The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. 'For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. 'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'”* (Acts 22:14-16). Saul obeys. Acts 9:18 says, *“and he arose and was baptized.”* Understanding that in order for his sins to be washed away he must be baptized, he did that – full submission. But the Lord also told him on the Damascus road to do some other things. Look in Acts 26:15-18*, “‘So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. 'I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, 'to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'”*

This voice then told Saul I am sending you to the Gentiles. He was sending Saul to the Gentiles to preach the good news of salvation in Christ. And Saul was obedient to that too. Look at verses 19 and 20 in Acts 26, *“Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.”* Why was Saul not disobedient to the heavenly vision? -- because he was fully submissive. Whatever the Lord said is what he would do.

And not only was he fully submissive to whatever the Lord commanded, but he was fully submissive to whatever lot in life the Lord allowed him to enter into. And I will tell you the lot in life into which he entered was not always a pleasant one. He describes some of the things he went through as a minister of Christ in 2 Corinthians chapter 11. Beginning with verse 23 he said, *“Are they ministers of Christ? --I speak as a fool--I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—”*  What does it mean to be fully submissive to the voice of the Lord? It means we will do whatever he commands and accept whatever lot if life that may come as a result.

The question is where do we fit in? Are we among those who are rebellious to the voice of the Lord – “Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice?” Or are we among those who only give partial obedience to the voice of the Lord thinking we are truly obeying him, when in actuality we are not? Or are we among those who will say, “Lord, what will you have me to do?” and be fully submissive to whatever He commands and to whatever lot in life that may bring us.

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