

THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL

4. *It catches up with you* (1 Sam 31 & 2 Sam 1)

Be sure your sin will find you out. That's what I was brought up with. Un-repentant of sin catches you up. You can't disobey God and think you can get away with it. One of the great features of our modern society is that it doesn't matter what you do as long as you don't get caught. At the most trivial level, it means that we feel we can drive dangerously fast because we know that it said on BBC Norfolk this morning that speed cameras are on the A149 so we know that they're not going to be on the A47.

Sin catches people out. God is not like the Police. He doesn't operate only during working hours or on the A149. You can't escape His gaze. You can't escape the fact that He knows every thought and intent of our hearts.

Over the past few months we've looked into the way in which Israel changed from being a nation that was unusual and unique in having a single God who acted as their monarch, into a nation that desired to be like other nations. They wanted a king and they got the sort of king like every other king - Saul. Plenty of brawn but sadly not much brain.

At the start God blessed Saul and he was counted among the prophets. He scored victories. But he got above himself. He sacrificed to God even though he wasn't authorised to. He thought that he could modify what God had commanded him to do to suit himself. This culminated in his disobedience over the command to destroy the Amalekite nation. And in the story of Saul and David, that disobedience cost dear.

What we read tonight was the consequence of that sin. It was some time after the original sin and maybe Saul had thought he had got away with it. But his sin caught up with him.

Your disobedience always catches up with you

Saul disobeyed God as we read in chapter 15. He did try saying sorry but I think that his subsequent actions showed him to be a man who wasn't really repentant and was clearly angry that God was blessing David and not him. And because of his unrepentant sin, everything started to fall apart for Saul. The Philistines began to gain an upper hand. As Saul began to see things drift away from him, we see that he even resorted to witchcraft - something expressly forbidden by God - to ask for Samuel's help. His disobedience killed him - literally. And as we found out, as well as the Philistines picking over his body, so was an Amalekite! I think possibly that the Amalekite could well have been lying about killing Saul but thought he would curry David's favour by robbing Saul's body. Unfortunately for him his lying didn't help because what he probably didn't know that David had just been fighting Amalekites and besides he was claiming to have killed the Lord's anointed.

Sin destroys. We live in a nation where we think that we can get away with it. But we can't escape the presence of God. Saul never really repented of his sin with the Amalekites and he and the nation paid dear for that sin. We are called to repent - to turn around. Saul said his sorries but never repented. We are called to repent when we see sin undealt with. Yes, in Christ we are saved, we know that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus but continued sin in our lives causes

damage and we need to repent. The problem is that there are areas in our lives which somehow we don't want to surrender.

I think I've told you this illustration before. Accepting Christ is rather like inviting someone into your home. We are happy that He comes into our living room, but there are other rooms which are private. He transforms every room He is allowed to enter. But what about our bedroom, or our junk room, or the loft? It's like one of these TV home makeover shows. What's the point of doing one room if the rest is shabby. It will still be shabby. Our Father wants us to repent of every area in our lives so He can take away the shabbiness and make us shining lights for Him.

Your disobedience affects others

One of the saddest parts of the story is that Saul's disobedience affected others. His family were wiped out. But we know from this story too that David, the anointed one was also affected. Whilst he was at Ziklag, his family and those of his men were kidnapped by - Amalekites. OK it's true that David was not exactly obedient as we found out a few weeks ago. But Saul's sin had affected others. We see this in our own society. We know that crime has its victims. We know that the decisions of our political leaders results in the death of innocents - take Iraq for instance. Or what about AIDS. The promiscuity of the adults is visited in death on their children as we see so graphically portrayed in Africa. Sin is destructive.

We may think that areas of sin in our lives is acceptable. That it doesn't matter that we don't obey God. Maybe we think it doesn't matter that we hold grudges. We think that it does not matter that we bad mouth people. We think it's OK not to have a critical spirit. We think that's it's OK that we have no desire to see our family, friends and neighbours come to Christ. Our disobedience affects others. The consequence of churches not obeying Christ in mission is that people remain lost.

God can redeem situations

We live in a land where we understand only too well what the consequences of being fallen are all about. Sin blights lives, it blights churches, it blights families. Our churches are full of people that should be living victorious lives but are blighted by disobedience and all the problems that stem from it. And they think that is going to be as good as it gets. Yet we have a God who wants to pour out His Spirit on us to be people who change lives and transform communities as I said this morning. And that's all of us, not a select few.

The issue is here is that in Christ we find complete forgiveness and acceptance, which is full and free for all who repent, but we need to escape from its consequences too and sometimes it takes longer. Saul sinned and they lived for many years under its consequences and it never left them right up to his death because it was unrepented sin.

But out of the disaster that was Saul's kingship came the reign of David who took them from being a small defeated nation into a power that extended from Egypt to the Euphrates. Out of Saul's sin a king was anointed and from his seed came Jesus.

Rom 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Never see sin or the consequences of your sin as an obstacle to being a mature man or woman in Christ. In my previous church, the majority of people who came to Christ were in unmarried relationships with offspring from different relationships. The sins were forgiven but the consequences were there. They could deal with some of those consequences - they are not great testimonies to the benefits of Christian marriage.

Their children have come to Christ and are shining witness to the transforming power of God. Some have entered into Christian service.

Whatever the situation, God can redeem it for himself. Whatever the past, God can redeem the situation as well as the person to bring glory to Himself.

As I've gone through this story tonight, maybe you've realised there are areas of your life that you've never really surrendered to Jesus. There are areas where you are still in disobedience and maybe it blights your life and worse, blights others. God wants you to deal with it tonight.

Better still, He is the God who turns the negatives into positives for Himself. Why not turn your negatives into positives tonight?



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