

1 Samuel Chapter 15 v 10 - 30

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Let's come to the Lord in prayer. Let's seek His face together. We thank You, Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father, that You came into this world to rescue us sinners. You came, O Lord, though You are and always have been and always will be, the everlasting God, yet You took on the frailty and weakness of our humanity.

You became obedient, obedient, yes, to the Father's goodwill, that plan, that purpose of salvation which was fashioned and put together before the world was made. You came obediently to do Your Father's will, to be that servant of us, to serve us, O Lord, in that greatest work, that work of redemption, salvation. We thank You that You came and You came obedient, obedient, obedient to death, even death on a cross, that You are the life giver, the life sustainer, yet amazingly, wonderfully, awesomely, You submitted Yourself to the power of death and handed over Your life to death, that You might die that one death in our place, the death that we deserve, the death that is our due consequence for our sin, that You might suffer and pay the price, the penalty, all the debts that we owe. How else could we ever repay You, O God? How else could we ever be right with You? How else could we ever be forgiven from our sins? We're not good enough.

Far from not good enough, we're just so bad. Not all the good deeds in all the world, of all the people throughout all of time, could save one person or pay back the debt. One person knows.

How much less can we in our one lifetime repay the debt we owe to You, our God? The God who's given us everything, life and health and strength. The God who's lavished upon us His love again and again.

The God who's shown Himself to us to be a God of kindness and mercy and grace, of fatherly care. And yet we who rejected Your commands, we who've gone our own way, we who think we know better than You, how can we ever, ever, Lord, sort that mess out? We could never do it, but You've done it.

[2 : 19] You've done it wonderfully, Yourself in the person of Jesus. Wonderfully, You took upon Yourself our sin, our shame, our guilt, our debt. You paid with Your blood, with Your life, what we could never pay, but what we certainly owe. We thank You that even today, You offer freely, gladly, forgiveness, pardon, life, peace, reconciliation, redemption. You offer all these gifts and so much more to any who will simply receive You as Lord and Savior, any who will simply bow the knee to You, acknowledge You for who You really are. We know the day's coming when You will return, Lord Jesus, and every single person in heaven and earth who's ever lived and in hell will bow the knee and declare that You are Lord God. But for many people, the bowing of the knee on that day will be one of great, great consternation, great sorrow and grief and sadness that the fact that they've never bowed the knee before, they'll bow the knee as subjects chained for eternity in everlasting sorrow.

But Lord, we thank You that we can bow the knee now with joy and gladness and on that day bow the knee with delight as all the world recognizes and sees You for who You are. And all Lord, we thank You that to own You as our Master and our King and our Lord is the greatest freedom the world can ever know, the greatest freedom any individual can ever know. And so we come this morning worshiping and adore You, adore You as the one who died, the one who is risen, the one who is ascended and glorified, the one who is triumphant, the one who rules and reigns, the one who is coming again. But we thank You that today is a day of grace and mercy, that You have not come yet because Your heart's desire is to save and to rescue those that are lost. And so we pray, O Lord, that we might not let this day pass before we have made our peace with You, before we have met with You and bowed before You.

O Lord, we pray that indeed in this time together we may know Jesus walking amongst us, speaking to us by His Holy Spirit. And we pray, O Lord, that in all these things that we take part in now in this time together, that all the glory and honor may be Yours. For we ask these things, our God and Father, in the name of Your dear Son. Amen. Together in God's Word now, in our Bibles, and we're going to turn to 1 Samuel and chapter 15. And those who are regular with us will know that we've been looking at the life of Samuel in the past few weeks and months, and God's dealings with him and how the Lord worked through him. And we're going to pick up the story from verse 10 of 1 Samuel 15.

Saul has been made king, and people wanted a king. They didn't want just to be like, they didn't want to have God as their king only. They wanted a human king like the rest of the nations around about, wanted to join in with everybody else. And so eventually this man Saul was made king, and he saw some success, and God kept giving him commandments, and he fought in battles. And God sent him again, especially beginning of chapter 15, to the Amalekites, a wicked people, to destroy them.

So we're going to pick up what happened from verse 10. 1 Samuel 15, verse 10.

[6 : 04] Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel, I regret that I have made Saul king, because he's turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions. Samuel was angry, and he cried out to the Lord all that night. Early in the morning, Samuel got up and went to meet Saul. But he was told, Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honor, and has turned and gone down to Gilgal.

When Samuel reached him, Saul said, The Lord bless you. I have carried out the Lord's instructions. But Samuel said, What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle I hear?

Saul answered, The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites. They spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the Lord your God, but we totally destroyed the rest. Enough, Samuel said to Saul. Let me tell you what the Lord said to me last night. Tell me, Saul replied. Samuel said, Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel?

The Lord anointed you king over Israel, and he sent you on a mission saying, Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites. Wage war against them until you've wiped them out. Why did you not obey the Lord? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the Lord?

But I did obey the Lord, Saul said. I went on the mission the Lord assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back King Agag. The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the Lord your God at Gilgal.

[7 : 47] But Samuel replied, Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you've rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king. Then Saul said to Samuel, I have sinned. I violated the Lord's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the men, so I gave in to them. Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me so that I may worship the Lord. But Samuel said to him, I will not go back with you. You've rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you as king over Israel.

Samuel turned to leave. Saul caught hold of the hem of his robe, and it tore. Samuel said to him, The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to one of your neighbors, to one better than you. He who is the glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind, for he is not a human being, that he should change his mind. Saul replied, I have sinned. Please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel. Come back with me so that I may worship the Lord your God.

So Samuel went back with Saul, and Saul worshipped the Lord. Turn with me then, if you would, to 1 Samuel.

1 Samuel in chapter 15, and we're going to pick up those events as we read there just a little while ago.

Those of you who are married, or those of us who are married, I wonder if you can remember when you made your vows to one another before the minister or before the registrar, whoever it was.

[9 : 41] I wonder what you said. Did you just use the standard vows, or did you add extra vows yourself? That meant something special to you. But I wonder, most of all, did you include the word obey in your vows? And I'm not just talking to the husbands, because we know that that's implicit.

Did we use the word obey? And if we did use the word obey in our wedding vows, did we actually mean it? It would be almost impossible to find any modern-day wedding vows that do not omit the word obey.

Almost without number, that is not included. In fact, I would think that if you were even to suggest that you wanted to include the word obey in your wedding vows, you would receive a chorus of ridicule and perhaps even anger at suggesting such a thing. But it's not just in marriages and wedding vows that the word obey is unpopular. It is unpopular everywhere. If you listen to people talking, discussing, just everything, whether in the media, in conversations over the golf club, in conversations over anything whatsoever, you will rarely hear anybody speak of the word obey, apart from in a negative context. It is always something which is seen as being unmodern, unpopular, unacceptable. There's only one area in the sphere of life in the world where obedience is essential and is highly thought of, and that is in the armed forces. That's where a soldier, sailor and airman has to obey the orders of their senior officer. It's vital. Everywhere else, the word obey is a four-letter word.

Well, what do we think here when we come to 1 Samuel 15? What has this got to do with the unpopularity of the word obey? Well, it goes to show in 1 Samuel 15 that the word obey has always been unpopular. It has always been something that human nature fights against, hates, rejects, dislikes. Because throughout this passage that we've read, we see that the word obedience and the theme of obedience and disobedience is involved. Verse 11, he has not carried out my instruction. Verse 13, I have carried out the Lord's instructions. Verse 19, why did you not obey the Lord? Verse 20, I did obey the Lord. Verse 22, obeying the voice of the Lord. Verse 22, to obey is better. Verse 22, to heed is better. Verse 26, you've rejected the word of the Lord. So the whole theme of this passage is obedience. Yes, it's set in the context of this battle. It's set in the context of Saul being given this mission and command by God to destroy the evil and wicked and vile people who the Amalekites, all of the people, all of their livestock, everything to wipe them off the face of the earth. But it's all about Saul's attitude to

God's instruction. And the consequences of Saul's lack of obedience were very, very grave indeed. There in verse 26, Samuel said to him, you have rejected the word of the Lord and the Lord has rejected you. That's serious, isn't it? You've rejected the word of the Lord. But somebody might say, well, here we are in the 21st century. Here we are as New Testament Christians. And the Old Testament is all about law and obedience. Surely, it doesn't apply to us. As New Testament Christians, we are not under law, says Paul, we are under grace. So really, this has nothing to do with us.

[13 : 43] There is some truth in that understanding that as in the New Testament, we are under grace. But that misses out completely the fact that in the New Testament, the stress upon obedience is just as strong in God's word as it ever was in the Old Testament. And not just in Paul, not just in the epistles, but in the very words of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Here's Matthew 5, verse 19, him preaching the Sermon on the Mount. And he says this, speaking of all of God's commandments, anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. Whatever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Obedience from the words of Jesus is vitally important. But even more than that, the Lord Jesus Christ goes on to teach his disciples in John 14 and 15 that obedience is an indispensable part of having a relationship with Jesus Christ. It's an indispensable part of being a Christian.

Christian. Here's John 14 and I'm going to quote from very many different verses. First of all, verse 15, if you love me, keep my commands. Verse 21, whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. Verse 23, anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. Over into chapter 15 of John. Verse 10, if you keep my commands, if you keep my commands, you will remain in my love. Verse 14, you are my friends if you do what I command. Notice there the inseparable connection between obedience and love.

And similarly between disobedience and lack of love. Verse 24 of John 14, anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. A heart that loves Jesus Christ will produce a life that obeys Jesus Christ. There is no question of that. It's impossible for it to be any other way. If we say that we love Jesus, then our lives must show that we obey Jesus. And it's not just Jesus' words. We can go through the whole New Testament and find these things again and again. We can go back to John, this time his first letter, 1 John chapter 2, 3 and 4. We know that we have come to know God if we obey his commands.

Whoever says, I know him, but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. That's strong language, isn't it? It's not just sort of take it or leave it language. The unmistakable proof of knowing God, of being in a relationship with him, is obedience to him. So it's important.

It's vitally important for those of us here who are Christians. It's vitally important for those of us here who are not Christians to ask ourselves this serious question. Am I willing to obey God?

[16 : 56] And if I'm not, am I willing to bear the consequences of disobedience? Am I ready to, and prepared for what it means to disobey him and to live with what will happen?

Since obedience matters so much, we can be sure that disobedience is seriously significant. Just go all the way back to the Garden of Eden. Go back to Adam and Eve and ask them. You can't ask them. When you get to heaven, those of you who are going to heaven, when you get to heaven, ask Adam and Eve just how much the cost of disobedience is, how high a cost it is. So our chief concern, dear Christians, my chief concern, your chief concern must be this. How can I live a life of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ? Disobedience is so vitally important and disobedience is so bad. How can I live obediently? How can I avoid doing what Saul did here? We're going to look at the mistakes he made and the things he did wrong and learn from him. But how can I avoid that sin of disobedience? How can I avoid falling in that trap, as it were, which says, I think I know what is best, best, and therefore I'm going to reject what God has given me, which is best.

Obedience doesn't just operate on its own. It's not just a singular part. We are holistic people. Everything about our lives is connected. And therefore our obedience works out of not only our love for Christ, but also certain other characteristics, certain other aspects of the Christian character.

It's not independent. And what we see lacking in Saul is what we need God's help with, that we might also be obedient. And the one thing that we need, dear friends, and one thing that is, of course, the problem with obedience for all of us is that we need humility. We need humility. And obedience, sorry, obedience goes against our pride. Look at what happened with Saul. He definitely lacked humility, but he needed reminding of it. In verse 17, Samuel said, although you were once small in your own eyes, and indeed he was. When you go back to the story, Saul said, I can't be the king. I'm the least important person, the least important tribe in the whole of Israel. Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? Look at how he acts now, though, after the battle. What do we find? Verse 12, the second part. Samuel goes looking to meet Saul.

What's happened to Saul? He's gone to Carmel. What's he doing at Carmel? There he set up a monument in his own honor. Can you believe the guy? I'm the king. I've won a battle. I've done great. I'm going to build a statue to myself. I was in the glorious, wonderful city of Hull last weekend, and there's a great monument there to William Wilberforce. But he didn't put it there himself.

[20 : 09] It was put up after his death. The man who abolished slavery almost single-handedly. Great monument to William Wilberforce. Here's Saul. He doesn't want to wait till he's dead for them to build a monument. He wants to build a monument now while he's alive, so everybody can think how great he is. How very different that is to God's people in ages before Saul. Think of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua. Yes, they all built monuments, but they were monuments to God after God had given them a victory or deliverance from their battle. No, Saul was full of himself, full of his own pride, full of his own accomplishments, pleased with what he had done. You see, if we desire to be obedient before God, we've got to begin by humbly acknowledging that we are disobedient. We've got to acknowledge that we're afraid. We've got to acknowledge that we are weak. We've got to knock on the jar of inadequacies, as our sins. We've got knowledge that we need someone to tell us the right thing to do because we don't know the right thing ourselves. That's the problem, isn't it? I know better than the highway code. I know better than the speed limit. I know better than the government. I know better than my boss, whoever it may be.

You see, when we look at the law of God, we look at the commandments of God, if he can look at them and say, yeah, I can do that. Remember the young man who came to Jesus, and he said, oh, Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Jesus said, keep the commandments.

Oh, I've done that. I've done that since I was a boy. That's easy peasy. Lemon squeezy. No, it's not. Anybody who can look at the law of God, the commandments of God, just the ten commandments themselves and say, I can do that, has completely misunderstood God's commandments, has completely misunderstood themselves. And what is it God requires? We've deceived ourselves if we think that we can just simply obey God's commandments and do the right thing. Look at what Samuel calls disobedience. He calls it there in verses 22.

Verse 23, rather. He says that Saul's disobedience is rebellion. Well, rebellion, of course, we know what that is. It's when somebody seeks to overthrow the government, overthrow the king, overthrow the authority. It's an act of rejecting the rightful king. That's what he's done. He's rejected God as the rightful king of his life.

That's what sin is. It's exactly that. I'm the king of my life. I'm the most important person. Secondly, he calls it the sin of divination. That's a strange word, isn't it? But divination is seeking after wisdom from an evil spirit. It's going to a medium or to a tarot card reader or something like that. But it's saying, I need to have understanding, but I'm not looking to God. I'm looking to something else or someone else. But God alone has wisdom. God alone has perfect understanding and wisdom for your life and mine. He knows exactly what is right and good. And when we reject his word, we are saying, we don't want the wise things of God. We want wisdom without God. But here's what James says about such wisdom in his letter. He says, such wisdom does not come down from heaven, but is earthly and spiritual demonic. He's seeking after that. And arrogance. Arrogance. What's arrogance? Yeah.

[23 : 35] I know best. I know what's right. I know what's wrong. I don't need anybody else's understanding. I don't even need God's understanding. I don't even need God to tell me what's right and wrong.

I know it myself. So he calls it the evil of idolatry. Idolatry is simply replacing God with someone, something else, usually ourselves. I take the place of God in my life. I'm the one who knows right and wrong. I'm the one who draws up the rules and the regulations and the commands of life.

John Flavel, who was a great preacher for many centuries ago, said this, they that know God will be humble and they that know themselves cannot be proud. They that know God will be proud. Humility. What's my attitude to God? What's my attitude to myself?

Is that one of the reasons I struggle with obedience? Because I think I know better and because I think I'm the center of the universe in my life. Is there any humility with me?

The second thing that we need, and that is absent in Samuel, but most necessary for us is this, we need to have faith in God alone. It works out from this humility. Pride is faith in myself, trust in myself. Humility is faith in God. Notice the arrogance by which Samuel greets, sorry, Saul greets Samuel in verse 13. The Lord bless you. I've carried out the Lord's instructions.

[25 : 12] The Lord, he's calling on God, he's imagining himself to be the instrument of blessing. I'm the instrument of blessing to you and I've carried out the Lord's instructions. Again, that monument that he erected shows that he believes it was through his own power. He set up a monument in his own honor, we're told. He believes that he'd conquered the Amalekites by the strength of his great military leadership and grasp of these things by his own troops and arm and power. Compare that to Samuel's attitude, which we looked at back in chapter 7 of 1 Samuel. After the terrible conflict with the Philistines. What does Samuel do there? Yes, he creates a monument. Listen to this.

Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shan. He named it Ebenezer saying, thus far the Lord has helped us. He was taking no glory for himself. He was taking no trust in himself.

He wasn't saying, well, because I'm Samuel, I'm such a great leader and a great judge, that's why we've done it, or because you're such great fighting men, that's why it's happened. No, the Lord's done it. Those dear friends, as soon as we seek to live the Christian life, as soon as we seek to obey God's commands, and we think that we can do it because of our own strength or our own godliness or our own faithfulness, then we'll fall flat on our faces. We can never keep God's commandments.

No one can. No one ever has, apart from the Lord Jesus. No one ever will, apart from the Lord Jesus. We can never keep God's commandments. If we could keep God's commandments, Jesus would never have to have been born into this world. Jesus would never have had to go to the cross and save us from the consequences of breaking God's commandments. If we could keep God's word and do the things he commanded perfectly, Jesus would never have had to die. We could have saved ourselves by our good deeds. Paul makes it very clear in Galatians chapter 2, by the works of the law, no one will be justified. No one will be made right with God. The law is not there for us to keep it so that we can save ourselves. The law is there to show us that we are a sinner and that we need God's salvation. It's a mirror to our souls. It holds up a mirror to us, and we look at it and we see ourselves, we see that every single one of the commandments of God we have failed to keep.

And so we're brought to that end of ourselves and we cry to God, save me, save me, save me. This is a problem for us as Christians as well. As Christians, we need to understand that we are not saved by our obedience to law. Obeying God's commandments does not keep us a Christian or keep us following Jesus. We are saved through faith in what Jesus has done for us. His obedience in keeping God's commandments and law, his sacrifice in suffering for us. So Paul opens in Romans chapter 5 with the assurance we have been justified through faith so that we now have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. A Christian is not saved by our works or kept saved by our works or in any way trusting in what we do, but because of Christ, because of what he's done for us, we have a determination to live our lives and obedience to God. Not in some vain attempt thinking, yes I can do it, but we do it because we are new creations. We do it because God has changed our hearts and put his Holy Spirit within our lives. We seek to fulfill God's law because we want to, not because we must, because we delight in his law, not because we are afraid of it. The Spirit of God within us does the work. Here's Paul writing in

[29 : 08] Romans 8. Those people who are controlled by the sinful nature, that's the old attitude, cannot please God. In other words, by ourselves and our own strength, which is sinful, we cannot please God. There is not one person who can ever please God by the things that they do. God is not pleased with anything. However, he says, you are controlled not by the sinful nature, but by the Spirit. The Spirit of God lives within our hearts. That's why it's so imperative that a Christian is someone who's born again of the Spirit. It's not someone who just keeps the rules, who goes to church, who ticks the boxes, who gets baptized, who takes communion. It's somebody who has known and been engaged with the Spirit of God working in their hearts, transforming and changing them. It's not the new creation. It's only when we have real humility to see ourselves as sinners before God that we'll have real faith in God to give us the strength, the desire and the will to obey him. Saul's problem was this. He thought it was easy to obey God. He went out in his own strength to the battle. He was careless and ultimately he failed.

So when Paul speaks to the Philippians and encourages them to continue in obedience, he reminds them how that is possible. He tells them how it can be that as a Christian you can live a life that pleases God. Here's what he writes, Philippians 2. Therefore, my dear friends, as you've always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. In other words, continue to live that life of obedience before God, seeking to do his will, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. Why does a Christian want to do God's will? Because God's put it in our hearts to want to do God's will. And there's a battle. Of course there's a battle because there's a sinful nature saying, don't do God's will. Do what you want to do. Please yourself. But the Spirit of God within us keeps saying to us, no, God's will is best. Do God's will. Obey him.

That's where there's a struggle. That's why we still sin, because we listen too much to the old self or to the things of the world, the temptations around about us, rather than to the Spirit of God within us. But the Spirit of God within us not only says do it, the Spirit of God also enables us to do it. He doesn't just say, come on, do God's will. But he says, don't be afraid. You can do it with the strength I provide. That's why Paul was able to say that incredible boast. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. That's the key, isn't it? Through him who strengthens me.

So Saul lacked humility. He lacked faith. But thirdly, he lacked commitment to God. Total commitment to God. Wholehearted commitment to God. And this is, again, something that we struggle with, dear friends, every single one of us. But it is the only reasonable outcome of having faith in God. If we really believe that he is the God of God, that his word is true and that he wants what is best, we must have a full and wholehearted commitment to him. But the problem is we're always tempted just to do enough to get by in every sphere of life. Last time you went to the doctor, you had a flu or whatever it may be, or virus or something, and he gave you a course for antibiotics.

The temptation is he gives you a week's antibiotics. By day four, you feel better. And you think, well, I feel better now. I won't finish the course. I'll just stop there because I'm feeling much better now. And what happens? We stop taking all the tablets to the end, and it comes back again. We don't finish the course. I've taken enough. It's like a football team that goes to play against a team far inferior to itself, thinking that it can easily beat it.

[33 : 21] And so it doesn't play with full commitment. It doesn't play with all heart. This is going to be a walk in the park, and you're decimated and destroyed and out of the euros before you know it. Can't think who I'm talking about. It's the same in every area, isn't it? Just enough.

If I can just do enough. If I can just get through enough. If I can just stretch the law enough. I don't want to be fully wholeheartedly completely committed to carrying it through to the nth degree.

And that's exactly with Saul. In one sense, he's saying to God, and he's saying to Samuel, I've done enough to fulfill God's commandments. I've killed everybody except the king.

We've killed all the livestock apart from these sheep and these cows that we've kept. And then he says, adding on the end, of course, which we're going to offer to the Lord as a sacrifice, which was never his intention in the first place at all. I've passed the mark.

But it wasn't enough. It wasn't enough because it wasn't what God wanted. God wants wholehearted, 100% commitment to himself. And he demands it. And he requires it. And it's right. It's right and proper gift from us. There's a song that we sing. We're not going to sing it today.

[34 : 39] A hymn that many of you know with the chorus, I surrender all. I surrender all. I'm sure many of you older folk will know that chorus. I don't think we would ever sing it to these words.

But these are some words suggested by an American writer by the name of Tony Campolo in a sort of sarcastic way. This is the way we actually sing it, even though we don't sing it to these words.

Some to Jesus I surrender. Some to him I grudgingly give. I will occasionally love and trust him. In his presence I'll rarely live. I surrender a tenth. I surrender a half. Most to thee, my blessed Saviour, I've surrendered enough. That's true of us, isn't it? I have to say it's true of me.

There's that sense in which we do what God wants us to do, but we also want to do what we want to do. And it's because we just aren't fully, completely, wholeheartedly given over to him.

But that's what he deserves. That's what Jesus did for us. When we come to the table and when we come to communion, what are we celebrating? What are we remembering? We're remembering the hundred percent commitment of the Lord Jesus Christ to die for you and for me. We're seeing that when he was faced with the choice in the Garden of Gethsemane, not my will but yours be done, there was the opportunity for him to say, no, I'm not, I've done enough. I've gone to the eleventh hour. I've done everything you've wanted so far, but that's enough. But that would never have secured your salvation of mine.

[36 : 17] All the teaching of Jesus, all the miracles of Jesus, all the obedience of Jesus to his life would not have secured your forgiveness of mine unless he went a hundred percent to the cross and bore your sin. And dear friends, surely the very least that you and I can give to Jesus is a hundred percent. The least we can give him is a hundred percent. And the reality is this, as we see with Saul, if our attitude in coming to Christ is this, I'll give you what I can spare.

I'm not talking about money, I'm not talking about time, I'm not talking about any of those things, I'm talking about heart. We can say, Jesus, I'll give you a bit of my heart, I'll give you a bit of my life, I'll give you enough that'll hopefully get me the pass mark to get me to heaven. Then dear friends, you shall never ever get to heaven. Because you cannot possibly be saved. You cannot possibly come to Christ unless you say, here I am, take all of me, everything that I am, Lord, all my sin, all my failings, all my shortcomings, all my mistakes, everything, all of me.

Jesus has to be our saviour and our Lord. He has to be those things together. But dear friends, that's where grace comes in. Because the reality is that every single one of us have failed to do that. We know it. But that's why God is gracious with us. That's why he calls for repentance.

See, what's so sad here is Saul says, I've sinned. If I was to ask you, everybody put your hand, don't do it, everybody put your hand up if you've sinned, everybody put their hand up, they don't have a problem with that. Yes, we all know we're all sinners. Saul says, yes, I've sinned, but it's not from the heart. I'm just as bad as everybody else. Paul says, I'm the chief of sinners, the worst of sinners. I know my heart is desperately wicked. He doesn't care really too much, except that he doesn't lose face with other people. He says, come with me, Saul. Come to me, come with me and let the people see that you're still on my side, still that I'm your friend.

Please honour me before the elders of my people in Israel and come back with me. He isn't concerned to get right with God. He's just concerned, what do people think of me? What will they say about me if you don't come back, Samuel? They'll lose trust in me as a king. They'll think less of me.

[38 : 40] And that's always been his concern. That's always perhaps been your concern and mine. Why are we not committed 100% to Christ? It's because what will people think of me? You're a fanatic. You're a Bible basher. You're a fundamentalist. You're an evangelical. We just don't want people to think of us. But really, is it worth the cost to disobey Christ, to continue to live the way we are, to just do what we can, to hopefully scrape by, ultimately means that we are lost.

Ultimately means that we are lost. Samuel had to say to Saul, you've rejected the Lord's word. He's rejected you. Notice the order of that. The order is not, God has rejected you, therefore you reject him. Let me say this to you. The Lord Jesus Christ has made it perfectly clear, whoever comes to me, I will never turn away. You cannot say ever that God has rejected you, because he has not. The order is, you reject him, then he must reject you, because in one sense, your wishes come first.

But if you receive him, if you come to him, no matter what your sin, no matter who you are, no matter what the past, no matter what the history, no matter what burdens you may carry, no matter what barriers you may have, then he will forgive you, and he will receive you, and he will take you, and he will bless you, and he will use you, because that's his desire. It's always been his desire. It's always been his will.

We are under grace and not law. So there is forgiveness for me and for you, for those who are half-hearted, those who fall short, those who don't make it as much as we should do, the wholehearted desire of our lives. God's bigger than our failures. Where sin abounds, grace does much more abounds, says Paul in Romans. We can renew our commitment to him. We can make that desire our one goal, to do his will. 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 9, make it our goal to please him.

A few minutes we're going to come to the communion table. We're going to share in the bread and wine, remembering the cost, the commitment, the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. Now is the opportunity for you and I to take of the bread and the cup, for you and I to say, Lord Jesus, I want to be committed to you 100%. I want those areas of my life where compromise, rules and reigns to no longer have their place. And of course you're going to fail and of course we're still not going to be perfect and of course we're going to make mistakes. But is our heart's desire, Lord, to strengthen me and make me the man of God, the woman of God that you want me to be in this generation, to bear your will. So we're just going to take a few moments of silence and then I'm going to ask those who are going to serve are going to come to the front and then we're going to share in the Lord's table together.

[41 : 46] This is between you and God, nobody else. Just you and him. Amen.