

## A Reading from the Book of Prophet Samuel (1 Sm 15:16-23)

*The Lord rejects Samuel as king*

Samuel said to Saul: “Stop! Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night.” Saul replied, “Speak!” Samuel then said: “Though little in your own esteem, are you not leader of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king of Israel and sent you on a mission, saying, ‘Go and put the sinful Amalekites under a ban of destruction. Fight against them until you have exterminated them.’ Why then have you disobeyed the LORD? You have pounced on the spoil, thus displeasing the LORD.”

Saul answered Samuel: “I did indeed obey the LORD and fulfil the mission on which the LORD sent me. I have brought back Agag, and I have destroyed Amalek under the ban. But from the spoil the men took sheep and oxen, the best of what had been banned, to sacrifice to the LORD their God in Gilgal.” But Samuel said: “Does the LORD so delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obedience to the command of the LORD? Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission than the fat of rams. For a sin like divination is rebellion, and presumption is the crime of idolatry. Because you have rejected the command of the LORD, He, too, has rejected you as ruler.” The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

### Reflection ~ What the Lord Wants Most is Obedience

*The execution of the Lord's justice.* Through Prophet Samuel, the Lord gave clear instructions to King Saul to completely exterminate the Amalekites and to totally destroy everything that belonged to them including their livestock. This was to punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. The Lord was exercising His divine justice and He had appointed Saul to execute it. However, when the attack on the Amalekites was over, Saul and his men spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites and took the best of the sheep and cattle. Saul's men were greedy and could not resist the temptation. Saul was afraid of them and cowardly gave in to them. As king and commander of his own army, Saul was not able to control his men despite the Lord's commands. He broke the Lord's commands without a further thought.

*Obedience is better than sacrifice.* Saul's excuse was that his men took the spoil – the best of the sheep and cattle – so as to offer them to God as a sacrifice. Replying to this, speaking through Samuel, God said that He prefers obedience to sacrifice. Furthermore, Samuel went on to say Saul's blatant disregard for God's commands was rebellion and presumption, which he likened to the sins of divination and idolatry! That was a very strong point from Prophet Samuel, the man of God. God obviously was not interested in the burnt offerings of the best sheep and cattle which they offered to God after the war. God took Saul's disobedience seriously. God was grieved. Samuel was troubled by Saul's disobedience and he cried out to the Lord all that night. Offering a sacrifice could never be able to substitute for a lack of obedience. God was not easily bribed! Samuel was rejected by God as king.

*Sacrifices which are acceptable to God.* "If you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering (cf Mt 5:23-24). The Lord wants us to make our offerings and sacrifices with a pure heart, a heart which is not defiled by sin of disobedience. *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise (Psalm 51:17).*

### Conversation with the Lord

Precious Lord, give me the wisdom to know what pleases You and help me to work towards it. All the great acts of sacrifice done without obedience to Your commandments are of little use and will not be acceptable to You. Lord, You are love itself and You ask me to live in Your love. To live in Your love is to be obedient to what You command me to do and to follow Your law, Your precepts and Your ways. It is to do Your holy will. Lord, help me to remember always that this is what You really require of me. Immaculate Heart of Mary, please strengthen my heart to follow in the footsteps of Christ. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.