

Thought for the Day 4th August 2020 from Hannah Lievesley

Bible reading: 1 Samuel 15:1-23

"I regret that I made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and not carried out my instructions."

If you want evidence of Lord Acton's, 'Power corrupts', a quick flick through 1 Samuel will do the job. The Israelites wanted an earthly King and God gave them what they wanted, but it wasn't long before the power went to Saul's head. Today's bible passage tells of the pivotal moment in this tragic hero's downfall.

Hundreds of years before, the Amalekites had attacked God's people in their weakest moment of exodus from Egypt (Exodus 17). God had promised to judge the Amalekites with a judgement fitting their sin: He would do to them as they had done to the Israelites. When God instructed Saul to go into battle against them, Saul was intended to be God's instrument of judgement. This battle was not about the worldly gain of goods and chattels. God specifically instructed Saul not to sully God's action by plundering property or livestock. But Saul ignored this part of the plan.

On return from battle, Saul brought with him all the best cattle and sheep and then set up a monument in his own honour, taking the credit for the victory himself. When the prophet Samuel finds out and calls him to account, we see him stumbling through a series of lies and excuses:

Saul: I have carried out the Lord's instructions!

Samuel: What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears?!"

Errr...Awkward!

Thankfully, God no longer asks us to fight His battles – at least not with the sword. When Jesus died on the cross he removed the need for God's judgement to level the scales. However, God still calls us to complete and wholehearted obedience. Not the selective, half-hearted, obedience practiced by Saul. How are you doing with that? Where in your life are you tempted to mis-hear or disregard God's instruction? How can you turn your ear and heart back to Him?

God also still calls us to humility, recognising that all power and authority come from him. How are you doing with that? In what areas of your life do you hold and enjoy power a little too much? (Your workplace? Your family? Your wallet?) Do you have a Samuel who could hold you to account?