

3:13; 6:3. For their doom see Ex. 17:16; Num. 24:20; Deut. 25:17-19. *To sacrifice*; more hypocrisy, covering up disobedience with a religious profession. *Thy God*. Saul's sin made him ashamed to say "my" God. *Stay, and I will tell thee*. The poor excuses are swiftly swept aside. Saul is brought face to face with God; and there, with all his military skill and fine human qualities, he shrinks and fails.

Vs. 17-19. *When thou wast little*. (Compare ch. 9:21.) Saul is reminded that, as his elevation came entirely from God, his obedience is due to God. *The head of the tribes of Israel*; and therefore he should not have allowed them to control his actions. *And the Lord anointed thee king*. He should have used his royal authority to restrain the people. *The Lord sent thee*. Nothing could excuse disregard of a direct command from God. *Go and utterly destroy*. Saul was but an instrument in the carrying out of a divine purpose. *The sinners the Amalekites*. By their cruelty to God's people they had richly deserved punishment. *Obey the voice of the Lord*; words frequently found in the books of the law, Ex. 23:21; Deut. 30:20. *Didst fly upon the spoil*; expressive of eagerness, passionate craving.

II. A Poor Excuse, 20, 21.

Vs. 20, 21. *Yea, I have obeyed*. As proof, Saul points to the very evidences of his disobedience, (1) He has brought Agag with him; (2) The people had brought hither

the spoil for sacrifice, not for themselves. Either he was deceived himself, or thought he could deceive God or God's prophet. *The chief of the devoted things* (Rev. Ver.) "It might seem a praiseworthy act to reserve the spoil for sacrifice; but since it was 'devoted' it did not belong to the Israelites, but to God." Whatever was devoted to God, it was a sin even to touch, except to slay, Lev. 27:28, 29.

III. A Great Truth, 22, 23.

Vs. 22, 23. *And Samuel said*; rending asunder Saul's excuses in a "burst of prophetic inspiration." *To obey is better than sacrifice*; one of the great messages of all the true prophets, Ps. 51:7; Heb. 10:5-9. *Rebellion is as witchcraft*; because both rebellion and witchcraft (seeking the aid of evil spirits) amounted to a denial of God. A keener edge is given to this rebuke by the fact that Saul had abolished witchcraft (ch. 28:3), while he himself was guilty of a sin equally great. *Stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim* (images) Rev. Ver. We may clear away the outward signs of idolatry, but the real idolatry remains, if we set our will above the will of God. *He hath also rejected thee from being king*. "God rejects Saul from being king over Israel, because he had rejected God from being king over Saul."

Vs. 24-31 give the pathetic account of Saul's confession of sin, the confirmation of his rejection, his plea not to be dishonored before the people, and his worshipping of the Lord.

APPLICATION

I have performed the commandment of the Lord, v. 13. Falsehood and hypocrisy are most hateful in the sight of God. Heaven has always forgiveness for the worst sinner, when he humbly and frankly confesses his sin. But there is nothing save the sternest condemnation for those who cover up their sin with a profession of religious devotion, and hope to drown the voice of conscience by the loudness of their hallelujahs. The Saviour, who was all gentleness and compassion towards the publicans and sinners, glowed with righteous indignation when He spoke to the hypocrites of His day.

This bleating of the sheep.... and the lowing of

the oxen, v. 14. As the voice of the beasts testified against Saul, so every sin of ours will find a voice. It is told of a prisoner charged with murder, that one morning he asked the jailer to put him in another cell. At midnight, he said, the prisoners in the next cell tapped on the wall and whispered, "Thou art a murderer." There were no prisoners in the next cell; the whispers were the echoes of a guilty conscience. The one way of escape from these accusations is through the blood of Christ, which, with a thousand tongues pleads for mercy and pardon.

They have brought them, v. 15. It is unmanly to shirk the responsibility of our deeds. Only