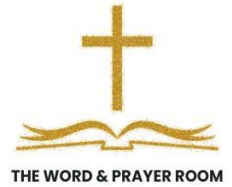


# Lay Down Your Crown



## Day 6: When Obedience Costs You Approval

### A Study of King Saul

Obedience will test your heart more than disobedience ever will.

**! Disclaimer:** This message might make you say “Amen” or “Ouch.”

But truth is truth and sometimes the truth that hurts, is the same truth that heals.

### Key Scripture: 1 Samuel 15 : 22 – 24 (NIV)

“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, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have 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 people and so I gave in to them.’”

### Recap from Day 5 – Are You a People Pleaser?

Yesterday, we exposed the People Pleaser Crown - the habit of saying yes to avoid conflict, even when God is whispering no. We looked at how faithfulness to people’s expectations can quietly replace faithfulness to God’s instructions, and how good intentions often become spiritual distractions.

Today, we look at the life of King Saul - a man chosen by God, equipped by God, and yet disqualified by his own need for approval. His story is not about rebellion in the traditional sense - it’s about the subtle compromises that start when we want to be liked more than we want to be led.



### Bible Study – King Saul: The Tragedy of Partial Obedience

#### 1 When God Chooses You for More Than You Believe About Yourself

Before Saul ever disobeyed, he doubted. When the prophet Samuel anointed him as king, Saul responded, “But am I not from the smallest tribe of Israel, and is not my clan the least of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin?” (1 Samuel 9 : 21). That question revealed a deep insecurity - the seed of his eventual downfall. Saul’s humility looked godly on the outside, but on the inside, it was insecurity disguised as modesty. He didn’t yet understand that when God calls you, He already accounts for your weakness. At first, Saul’s desire for Samuel’s counsel was obedience. God had appointed Samuel as His prophet, and it was right for Saul to

seek divine direction through him. But slowly, something shifted. Saul stopped seeking Samuel's God-given authority. What began as obedience became disobedience. Instead of following God's voice through the prophet, Saul began craving validation from the people. That's how subtle people-pleasing begins. It doesn't start in rebellion; it starts in reliance. You begin by honouring authority, but if insecurity isn't healed, that honour turns into neediness.

Saul couldn't separate godly submission from human affirmation. He was obedient to God's system, but emotionally bound to people's opinions. He started measuring his worth not by God's calling but by Israel's applause. And here's the tragedy: It's possible to wear a crown on your head while still bowing to people in your heart. Saul never truly believed he was chosen - and when you doubt your calling, you'll always depend on someone else to validate it.

## **2 When Insecurity Turns Into Image Management**

By the time we reach 1 Samuel 15, Saul has learned how to look obedient while secretly doing things his own way. In this story, God's command was clear: destroy the Amalekites completely - men, women, animals, and possessions - because they represented rebellion against God. But Saul compromised. In verse 9 of this chapter, we read, "Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle... they were unwilling to destroy them completely." The key word is unwilling. He had the authority to obey but the appetite to adjust. Then he disguised disobedience as devotion. Verse 21 says, "The soldiers took the best to sacrifice to the Lord."

This is the language of performance - the same rationalising we use when we want to sound spiritual while staying comfortable. Saul made it look like honouring God, but it was really honouring himself. He feared that destroying the best livestock would make him look foolish in the eyes of the people - that they'd question his judgment. When your identity is built on how people see you, obedience feels like a threat. And so, Saul began managing his image instead of demonstrating obedience to God.

## **3 When You Defend Disobedience with Spiritual Language**

When Samuel arrived, Saul's first words were: "The Lord bless you! I have carried out the Lord's instructions." (v. 13) He lied - and spiritualised the lie. It's remarkable how easily we can wrap disobedience in religious language. We can quote Scripture, justify motives, and even call it ministry.

Samuel's response was devastatingly simple: "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears?" (v. 14) In other words - If you obeyed, why can I still hear evidence that you didn't? That same question echoes through many pulpits, ministries, and hearts today. If we've truly obeyed God, why can the noise of compromise still be heard? You can't silence what you've refused to surrender.

#### **4 The Moment Fear Reveals the Heart**

Finally, Saul admits the truth: "I was afraid of the people, so I gave in to them." (v. 24). Fear of rejection, fear of losing approval, fear of being misunderstood - that was the real enemy Saul never conquered. He defeated armies, but he never defeated insecurity. It's the same fear that grips leaders today: Fear of confrontation: "They might leave the church." Fear of feedback: "They'll think I'm harsh." Fear of failure: "If I step down, people will think I'm weak." Saul obeyed when it was popular but disobeyed when it wasn't. And God's verdict was final: "Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has rejected you as king." (v. 23). Saul lost his crown long before David ever held it. He lost it in a moment of misplaced fear - when he chose approval over obedience.

#### **5 The Tragedy of Misplaced Repentance**

When Saul finally confessed, his repentance wasn't genuine - it was political. He said to Samuel: "I have sinned... but please honour me before the elders of my people." (v. 30). Even in his apology, he was managing perception. He didn't say, "Please forgive me, Lord." He said, "Please honour me before them." Saul cared more about looking restored than actually being restored. That's the danger of people-pleasing - it teaches us how to repent for reputation, not for transformation. True repentance doesn't just want to look right; it wants to be right.

#### **6 The Lingering Lesson - When God Moves On**

After Saul's disobedience, the Bible says something heartbreaking: "Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him." (v. 35). Samuel loved Saul. He saw his potential. But there comes a point when even grace must move on. The anointing shifted from Saul to David - a man after God's own heart. David wasn't perfect, but he was pliable. Saul was talented, but he was terrified. And that's the difference between a leader God keeps using and one God replaces. You can have skill and still lose the Spirit. You can have charisma and still lose the call. Because God doesn't anoint giftedness - He anoints obedience.



## So, What Did I Learn From This?

Saul's story mirrors the struggle many of us face: the tension between wanting to be approved by people and accepted by God. He teaches us that spiritual success cannot coexist with emotional insecurity. We can't carry both the crown of approval and the mantle of obedience. One will always slip. Saul reminds us that the most dangerous kind of disobedience is the one that looks holy. It's the kind that sings loudly, serves faithfully, and sacrifices visibly - but still says no to God quietly.



## Practical Application: Lay Down the People Pleaser Crown

Saul's leadership warns every believer that compromise doesn't come in one big decision, it comes in small, daily concessions. It's not usually rebellion that derails us; it's repeated hesitation to obey fully when obedience feels costly. So how do we protect alignment in our own lives and ministries?

1. **Redefine Success.** True success in God's Kingdom is simple: Did I obey God today? It's not about numbers, recognition, or being needed - it's about hearing and following His voice.
2. **Seek God Before Saying Yes.** Before committing to a ministry, role, or opportunity, pause and pray. Ask, "Lord, is this my assignment or just another expectation?" Saul moved because of pressure; David moved because of presence. Don't let people's urgency override God's timing.
3. **Be Willing to Say No.** Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can say is no. Saying no doesn't make you rebellious - it makes you responsible. If you know you're not called to a specific area of ministry, step aside so the right person can step in. It's better to serve in silence than to lead in misalignment.
4. **Invite Correction.** Correction doesn't crush calling; it strengthens it. Saul resisted Samuel's rebuke, but David embraced Nathan's. The difference wasn't perfection - it was posture. Correction protects what pride destroys.
5. **Choose Conviction Over Comfort.** Every obedience will cost you something - reputation, relationships, or recognition. But peace is always worth the price. Conviction anchors you when applause fades.

6. **Guard Your Heart from Fear.** Fear of people will always lead to failure before God. You can't walk in authority if you're ruled by approval. Let love perfect what fear has distorted.
7. **Surrender Daily.** Alignment isn't permanent; it's practised. Saul's downfall didn't happen overnight - it happened in small steps of disobedience that went uncorrected. Stay humble. Stay teachable. Stay listening.

## **Declarations**

- I will seek God before I say yes and have the courage to say no when I am not called.
- I choose obedience over popularity and purpose over pressure.
- I welcome correction because it strengthens my calling and guards my heart.
- I refuse to let fear or approval dictate my obedience to God.
- To obey is better than to impress — and alignment is my act of worship.

## **Prayer**

Lord, thank You for the lesson of Saul - a reminder that image without obedience leads to emptiness. Forgive me for the times I have chosen people's approval over Your instruction. Teach me to pause before I say yes, to seek You first, and to recognise when my heart is drifting toward performance instead of purpose. Give me courage to say no when I am not called, and faith to obey when the cost feels high. Help me to welcome correction, to walk in humility, and to trust that Your will is safer than my need for recognition. Today, I lay down every crown of pleasing people and lift up the banner of obedience. To obey You, Lord, is my highest honour and to please You is my greatest joy. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## **Key Takeaway**

Saul lost his crown not through rebellion, but through fear of rejection. God values obedience over appearance and alignment over activity. True promotion begins where people-pleasing ends and when pleasing God becomes enough.

 **Worship Song:** "[I Surrender](#)" — Hillsong Worship. "Here I am, down on my knees again, Surrendering all, surrendering all. Lord, have Your way in me."