



# ShalomAZ Ministries

*In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption*

## **“Almost Obedient: The Danger of Incomplete Surrender”**

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### **Devotion and Discussion Questions**

**Key Passages (TLV):** 1 Samuel 15; Ex. 17:14; Deut. 25:17-19; Prov 3:5; Is. 55:8-9; Rom. 8:6-8, 13; Jer. 17:9; Luke 18:18-23; 1 John 3:18; 1 Sam. 22:16-19

In 1 Samuel 15, we are brought face-to-face with a sobering truth: obedience to God is not optional, negotiable, or adjustable. Saul is given a clear command regarding Amalek—*“Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them”* (1 Sam. 15:3). The command was not vague. It was not symbolic. It was direct. This was connected to a long-standing word from Adonai, going back to *Exodus 17:14* and reiterated in *Deut. 25:17-19*: Amalek was to be blotted out.

Yet the real focus of the story is not Amalek—it is submission. It is surrender. It is the question of whether we will allow God to be God in our lives. Obedience is no small deal. The Creator of heaven and earth expects that we obey Him. And when something inside of us recoils at that idea—when we chafe at the thought of submission—that resistance reveals our flesh. As *Rom. 8:7-8* says, *“For the mindset of the flesh is hostile toward God, for it does not submit itself to the law of God—for it cannot.”* The battle of obedience is a battle of wills.

**Challenge:** Ask the Lord to reveal any area where you are resisting His authority. Where do you feel that inward recoil when obedience is mentioned?

#### **1. IT STARTS WITH A SURRENDERED WILL**

Obedience always begins inwardly. Before it ever shows up in actions, it begins with a surrendered will. Saul knew exactly what God had said. But when the moment came, he decided to make an “executive decision.” He spared Agag. He kept the best of the animals. Scripture says they were *“unwilling”* to destroy what was valuable (1 Sam. 15:9). The issue wasn’t misunderstanding—it was unwillingness.

At its root, disobedience is a refusal to let God rule. It is leaning on our own understanding instead of trusting Him. *Prov. 3:5* tells us, *“Trust in Adonai with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding.”* But Saul leaned on his own logic. He evaluated the command through human reasoning. Obedience requires us to trust that God’s ways are higher than ours (*Isa. 55:8-9*), even when they defy our understanding. It begins when we say, *“You are King. I am not.”*

**Challenge:** Identify one area where you are tempted to “adjust” God’s instruction to fit your reasoning. Surrender your will to Him in that area—fully.

#### **2. CLOSE ENOUGH IS NOT ENOUGH**

Partial obedience is not obedience at all—it is convenience. Saul destroyed what was weak and despised, but preserved what was profitable. He convinced himself he had obeyed. In fact, when Samuel approached him, Saul confidently declared, *“I have carried out the Lord’s instructions”* (1 Sam. 15:13). That is the subtle danger: we can deceive ourselves.

We are professionals at rationalization. We justify. We deflect. We reframe disobedience as devotion. Saul claimed the animals were spared *“to sacrifice to the Lord.”* It sounded spiritual. But it was rebellion dressed in religious language. Samuel’s response pierces through every excuse: *“To*

*obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams*" (1 Sam. 15:22). When God says "destroy it all," He means destroy it all. Close enough is not enough.

**Challenge:** Is there something in your life that God has clearly told you to let go of—but you've kept it because it seems valuable, useful, or harmless? Bring it before Him honestly today.

### **3. LOVE IS DEMONSTRATED BY OBEDIENCE**

Saul's justification sounded noble. He wanted to sacrifice the best to the Lord. But Samuel exposes the truth: outward worship without heart-deep obedience is meaningless. "*Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying?*" (1 Sam. 15:22). Worship divorced from obedience is empty.

Our love for the Lord is demonstrated by obedience. As *1 John 3:18* says, "*Children, let us not love with word or talk, but in deed and truth!*" Saul claimed devotion but loved himself first. His later slaughter of the priests at Nob (1 Sam. 22:16–19) reveals the condition of his heart. When it came to his own agenda, he demanded total compliance. That is the tragedy: we can say we love God while preserving our own rule. But true love says, "YOUR will be done."

**Challenge:** Ask yourself: does my obedience prove that God is my first love? Where do my actions contradict my words?

### **4. DON'T MEASURE OBEDIENCE BY APPLAUSE**

When Saul finally confessed, his concern was not brokenness—it was reputation. "*Please honor me before the elders of my people*" (1 Sam. 15:30). He feared men more than he feared God. He wanted to manage perception. This is the subtle temptation for all of us. We can begin to measure obedience by applause. If people affirm us, we assume we are faithful. If others think we are obedient, we believe the performance is reality. But obedience is not gauged by public approval. It is measured by who we are when only God is watching. The Lord does not take opinion polls to evaluate our faithfulness.

**Challenge:** Consider your private life. If the applause stopped and no one noticed your obedience, would you still walk it out?

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Where in your life do you sense a battle of the wills between you and God?
2. How have you seen "partial obedience" disguised as faithfulness in your own heart?
3. Why is it easier to offer religious activity than wholehearted obedience?
4. In what ways can the approval of others subtly shape our spiritual decisions?
5. What would absolute surrender look like in your life right now?

### **CLOSING PRAYER:**

*Avinu Malkeinu*, our Father, our King, You are the King, the Holy One, the Judge of all the earth. Forgive us for the times we have leaned on our own understanding and made "executive decisions" instead of submitting to You. Reveal to us the areas where we have been almost obedient—where we have spared what You told us to surrender. Search our hearts and expose every root of self-rule. Teach us to love You not merely with words, but in deed and truth. Deliver us from the fear of man and the need for applause. We place the canvas of our lives into Your hands—fully, completely, without reservation. Paint what You desire. We trust Your wisdom, Your goodness, and Your love.

*B'Shem Yeshua*, In Yeshua's Name, Amen