

**I Samuel 15:13-26**  
**PUTTING YOUR OWN SPIN ON SIN**

*Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD." But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" And Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed." Then Samuel said to Saul, "Be quiet! And I will tell you what the LORD said to me last night." And he said to him, "Speak on."*

*So Samuel said, "When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the LORD anoint you king over Israel? Now the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.' Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the LORD?"*

*And Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal."*

*So Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the Word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king. Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD." But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel."*

What does it mean when someone says, "I hear the talk about the judge's questionable actions, but I have a little different spin on that." The person means he is looking at the circumstances in a little different light which helps clarify things compared to what appears to be quite negative. Putting a spin on something sets matters in a little different direction—like a baseball pitcher throwing a fastball or a curve ball. Sometimes a different spin can be helpful, Sometimes it's an attempt to becloud and confuse the facts. Satan likes to put a different spin on Words from God. He did it in the Garden of Eden, "If you eat from the tree, you won't die. You will be wise like God, knowing good and evil." The sinful flesh likes to put a spin on God's will and commands. Putting your own spin on obeying the commands of God, leads one away from God. Trouble.

In our text we see King Saul doing that vey thing. The result is not good. Saul had been chosen by God to serve as Old Testament Israel's first king. The people had gotten "sick" of having a prophet leading them. They wanted a king like the other nations. Really, what could possibly be wrong with having God's own messenger lead the nation? Nothing! Except it's not what everyone else has. How many times do children plead with parents, "All the kids are doing it." My mother would say, "If the kids are all jumping off the cliff, are you going to, too?" Doing what the crowd does, the ungodly crowd, is not a wise choice for the child of God—whether involving words, clothes, entertainment, heroes, etc. It spells Trouble.

God allowed Israel to have a king. He picked Saul, a tall and handsome man from the tribe of Benjamin. Saul started out fine. He was humble. He was not vengeful against those who at first opposed him. He was brave and willing to push beyond expectations when he rescued the city of Jabesh Gilead from an attack. However, it didn't take long for Saul's deeper colors to show. He was interested in promoting himself, taking matters into his own hands rather than trusting the Lord. Once when he was to wait for Prophet Samuel to offer the sacrifice before battle, he became impatient and offered the sacrifice himself. God was not pleased and told him his family line would not continue as kings. Saul continued to drift from the Lord.

In today's text, Saul had been told by God through Prophet Samuel, to destroy totally the idol worshipping Amalekite people and all their goods. Earlier they had dared to attack the Israelites who were was traveling out of captivity in Egypt to the Land of Promise. Still ungodly, the Lord's patience had run out with them. . ----We don't always see this in life, but God's patience does run out. Certainly on Judgment Day He will cast the wicked into the pangs of hell!---- Back to Saul. Saul and his soldiers did devastate Amale. There were problems. Saul spared ruthless King Agag, and under Saul's good graces some of the livestock were spared by the soldiers.

When “called on the carpet” by Samuel, Saul began to put his own spin on things. He said he had destroyed all the Amalekites, except the king. The text doesn’t say what Saul was thinking, but perhaps: “Hey it’s just one, and an esteemed and honored fellow at that. What a prize to have a defeated king sitting around in my clutches.” Regarding the livestock that had been spared, the verses tell us his spin was: “Well, it was the soldiers’ idea.” Although an earlier verse says, “*But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to destroy them utterly (15:9).*” Plus, “It was the best of the animals.” Certainly, not the sick or crippled, which would not be a benefit. Like picking tomatoes or apples from a garden or orchard declared Off Limits and about to be bulldozed under. But it would seem to save some. However, once begun, when does it stop? Finally Saul said: “They kept them to offer a sacrifice to God.” How could God be upset about that? It’s for Him! But God was upset, because all of it was opposite of what He had instructed King Saul to do. Since when did Saul know more than God? Or know what was best for the hearts, lives, and faith of the people of Israel? He didn’t. He didn’t trust God above all things. He wanted to do what seemed good to Saul and to make self favorable to his men. It reminds me of the time when I was about 10, years old and asked my Mom what she wanted for her birthday. I wanted to get her something special. She said what she would like best would be a good and obedient son. “Aw, Mom,” I thought, “that’s no fun.” I really think I wanted to impress her with “me! Is your gift-giving done out of love and concern, or done to impress the receiver with how great you are?”

The Lord through Samuel set Saul straight in no uncertain terms: *Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.* No matter how hard one tries to put a spin on sins and excuse them, it doesn’t work in the Lord’s eyes. How often do you try to “rationalize” your sin—using warped human logic to make sin seem good? It’s easy to think, “Nobody got hurt. No harm, no foul. It was wrong, but I learned a lot. Why can’t I have a little fun?” I remember visiting with a man who had stepped out on his wife. His excuse ran something like this: Because God didn’t strike me down yet, what I’m doing must be ok” The foolishness of rationalizing.

What’s the only way to dealing with sin? It is Confession and Repentance before the Lord, holding to Christ for forgiveness. “Father, I’ve done wrong. I am nothing. For the sake of Your Son Whom You sent here to be punished for me, please forgive my wrongs.” Forget about coming up with a good story to cover up where you’ve been and what you’ve done. Forget about presenting things in the way that make you look as least guilty as possible. I remember working in a wood shop. I damaged a machine and felt obligated to explain my actions in the least convicting way possible, rather than just saying that I did a dumb and careless thing. Just forget about putting a spin on your lousy sin. Humbly approach the Lord, “God have mercy on me, the sinner.” For Jesus’ sake the Father lifts your guilt and tosses it away. *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us (Psalm 103:12).* Think about that! So much more valuable than spin.

Did Saul repent of his sin. He saw how useless his spin on things was and said to Samuel, “*I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words—because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD.*” Apparently, however, those were only surface words, not from the heart. Samuel responded, “*I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD,*” You have rejected! Any attempt to continue to spin sin so it doesn’t look like sin is actually a rejection of the Lord and a denial of your desperate need for the Savior. Thus, Samuel also told Saul, “*The LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel.*” Sin has consequences. Unrepented sin has consequences! At times in God’s wisdom, repented and forgiven sin has consequences too—for our good. Consider that David and Bathsheba’s baby died. Consider that Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised land. Sin leaves a detrimental mark. Perhaps it’s this: Sin becomes a learned behavior, a habit of life, and leads to more sins. Not good.

In the verses after our text, Saul continued to plead with Samuel to go with him, and Samuel did. Do you know what was one of Saul’s reason for having Samuel go along? “*I have sinned; yet honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD your God.*” (15:30-31). In “Saul style,” Saul wanted to look good before the elders and the people! He did worship the Lord. But whether that was genuine repentance in faith, we don’t know. It likely was short-lived. He committed suicide on the battlefield after being wounded. He had told his armor bearer he didn’t want the enemies to find him and mistreat him. Still a spin for sin. Still no trust in the Lord.

Stop putting your own spin on sin. Sin is forgiven in Jesus. In Jesus is real “standing” before God!

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---