

## 引言 INTRODUCTION

To a certain extent, life is like learning in school. Sometimes, we struggle with the lessons. We may not do well in small tests. But good teachers will not put their sole focus on students' grades. They are more eager to help the class understand the lessons. I remember that time when I took Biblical Greek in the seminary. A few people said to me: "You have a good language skill. You should not have any problem." They were wrong! I stumbled a lot soon after the semester began. I barely got a pass in the first test. My score was better in the second one. Then things started to click about halfway in my study. By God's grace, I did very well in the third test and the final. The professor gave me an A at the end. I talked to him the next time I saw him: "Sir, I did not deserve it." He replied: "But you worked hard." To me, it was all because of his kindness and God's mercy. God wants us to rely on Him and succeed in school and in life. King Saul did not pass God's tests because he was a self-centered person. Saul failed in his mid-term test back in chapter 13. He took matter in his own hands and sacrificed an offering even though he was not a priest. Samuel rebuked Saul and told him that his kingdom would not last long. A man after God's own heart would be appointed as a future king. As we come to chapter 15, God gave Saul a final exam to test his faithfulness. It turned out to be a decisive verdict for God to reject Saul as a king. His pursuit of short-term gain costed his throne. We should take heed of Saul's failure. God's final approval is well-worth our temporary loss.

## 解釋 EXPLANATION

### 1. 不容妥協的任務 Inarguable Mission

God gave Saul an inarguable mission. He had expected Saul to follow His directions fully. Let us read from [verse 1-3](#). The Amalekites were some nomadic people who lived to the south of Israel. God wanted to judge those enemies because they attacked the Israelites when they were passing through the wilderness. Exodus 17 records a battle between the two people groups. Aaron and Hur supported Moses' arms on both sides when he raised his staff on the mountain top to pray for the army. As a result, the Israelites won. Many years later, now God told Saul to completely eradicate the Amalekites. Many Christians are troubled by such a command. Non-believers criticize that God looks like a ruthless tyrant. We wrestled with the issue before. Let us review a few facts. First, God's command to exterminate a people group is not a norm. It happened mostly during the Canaan conquest. Second, from a military standpoint, any remaining enemy will leave room for a future revenge. Third, what God asked to destroy were pagan people who practiced evil religious rituals. Archaeological findings confirm that. Fourth, we should not lose sight of God's grace even in His judgment. If it is not because of God's mercy, no one can continue to exist. God has the full right to condemn the whole mankind if He plans to exercise His full justice. But He patiently waits for sinners to repent. God's explicit command to remove some sinners tells us the proper way

to deal with sins. Satan will keep tempting us if we leave a foothold to him. We should draw a line to the sources of temptation. Some people may need to turn their computers off so that they will stop buying things online or stop playing games, or uninstall some phone Apps that they spend too much time on or end some relationship if their friends keep luring them into ungodly behaviors. In response to God's command, Saul dispatched his troop. Verse 7-9 tell us the results. Saul did not finish the assignment. He picked and chose what he wanted to spare. The Hebrew word for "spare" has a nuance of showing pity. Saul's army got rid of all their enemies but they showed pity to Agag the Amalekite king. They slaughtered all the inferior animals but they showed pity to the better ones. In essence, Saul kept whatever he saw as valuable. In doing so, he made himself the boss while God should be his boss. Life is full of choices. Some decisions like clothes or food may be less important. In general, your preference reflects your value and your priority. Ultimately, God examines if we love Him or ourselves the most. Being Jesus' disciples means that we are taking on an inarguable mission. God's best very often may not be the world's best. The world measures success by the sizes of your paycheck, house and bank account. But God sees our obedience as a noble quality. Once I know a brother whose salary was way lower than his qualifications because the institution he worked for did not have a matching job for him. Sometime later, he got an offer from a renowned university. After praying with his wife, the brother decided to turn down the offer because he wanted to stay and serve in a student fellowship. Everyone thought he was crazy for letting go such a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. He could have reasoned that perhaps God intended to take him to another city for other ministries. In his mind, remaining in the same location was God's calling for him. He put God first in his decision. A few months later, he was promoted to a better position in the same school he worked for. Choosing to walk with God is not a popular choice. Non-believers may see us as old-fashioned, narrow-minded and dumb. Sometimes things may not be as clear as black versus white. But God promises to give us wisdom when we ask Him. We must always choose God's way instead of our ways.

## 2. 不能原諒的錯誤 Inexcusable Mistake

Saul failed an inarguable mission given by God. He made an inexcusable mistake by disobeying God. Samuel went to see Saul after the battle. The king said in verse 13: ... **"Blessed be you to the Lord. I have performed the commandment of the Lord."** Saul could not wait but brag about his accomplishment. What follows is Samuel's accusation and Saul's defense. Samuel began by asking why he heard sounds of animals in the background. Saul explained in verse 15: ... **"They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice to the Lord your God, and the rest we have devoted to destruction."** Saul shifted the blame to the soldiers. We often use the same tactic when being caught doing something wrong. We inherit that from our ancestor Adam! When God asked Adam why he ate the forbidden fruit, he replied: "The woman you created for me asked me to taste it." Then God confronted Eve. She argued: "The snake deceived me, and so I bite it." Without a doubt, it takes a lot of humility and courage to admit one's fault. When prophet Nathan rebuked David for committing adultery and murder, the king held himself accountable and said: **"I have sinned against the Lord."** (2 Samuel 12:13) David

knew that sin ultimately violated God's holiness. Also, he willingly accepted God's punishment. God cherishes such a true repentance made from a sincere heart. When Saul was confronted a second time by Samuel, he made up a similar excuse in verse 21: **"But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal."** The soldiers disobeyed God's command because they wanted to save the best animals for God. Did God not want the best from Saul? The king actually slapped his own face by describing that those animals were "devoted to destruction." This Hebrew word appears eight times in this chapter. It describes things that are totally reserved for God. Therefore, God wanted everything that belonged to the Amalekites to be destroyed on the spot. It was quite evident that Saul wanted to spare those herds for himself but not for God. The Lord values our hearts more than our stuff. Still remember the two billion lottery jackpot a month ago? Even a lot of Christians were caught up in the frenzy. Some believers might think that they could spare part of the prize and donate it to their churches. But guess who will get the lion's share? God will not honor that kind of offering generated from greed. Saul was reluctant to admit his fault until Samuel confronted him a third time. Let us hear his apology in verse 24-25: **24 ... "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. 25 Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me that I may bow before the Lord."** Saul came up with yet another excuse that he listened to the soldiers out of fear. That was a complete nonsense! Who was afraid of whom when Saul asked his troop to make an oath not to eat anything before paying revenge to the Philistines? Saul was supposed to lead everyone to fear God. The whole Bible from cover to cover teaches us that we should fear God and not people. Many Christians throughout ages suffered for sharing the gospel. They are tortured, imprisoned, their properties confiscated and even their lives are taken away. We must be ready to pay the price for standing firm in our faith. The secular world will intimidate us and cancel us because truth exposes their sins. God only created two genders, marriage is only between a man and a woman and Jesus is the only way to salvation. We need to engage critics with patience and grace. May the Lord give us courage and confidence to be His faithful witnesses.

### 3. 不可分心的專注 Indivisible Mindset

Saul focused on his self-gain and so he did not follow God's clear order. God will not honor people who try to outsmart Him. Rather, He is looking for people who have an indivisible mindset fully devoted to Him. Listen to verse 22-23: **22 And 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 listen than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king."** Saul lied that he saved the best herds for God. He intended to pick a few animals as sacrifices and split the rest with his soldiers. Saul's best was not good enough for God. The Lord valued obedience much better than offerings. Obedience is expressed in our willingness to follow God's commands. We will serve God with joy when we obey Him. The money you drop into the offering box should come from a thankful heart. What matters is not about how much you give, but how much

you keep. The same principle also applies to our use of time and other resources. Serving the Lord after you have taken care of your day-job and family duties surely requires self-sacrifice. But God will definitely remember your effort if you do so out of love for Him and His people. In Samuel's rebuke, he equated disobedience with idolatry. Saul treated Jehovah like an idol. Saul thought his sacrifices could buy back God's heart for his sin. God will never take any bribe! All along, Saul was only interested in worshipping his own success. Someone told Samuel in verse 12 says after the battle: ... **"Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself and turned and passed on and went down to Gilgal."** Saul wanted people to remember his victory. Saul was only mindful of his face even when he finally made a confession. Look at verse 30: **Then he said, "I have sinned; yet honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may bow before the Lord your God."** Saul still held onto his five-minute fame, although God had declared His rejection. Saul would be willing to do whatever it took to make himself look good in public. He saw Jehovah as Samuel's God, not his Lord. Admitting his fault and presenting some offerings were good investments if he could maintain his reputation. Our confession is genuine if we care more about how God sees us rather than what people say about us. After all, people only see the surface, but God knows our hearts. To God, there is no such thing as a partial obedience. Either we obey Him or we do not. Saul's disobedience led to God's rejection. The passage tells us how God and Samuel felt about Saul's failure. God says in verse 11: **"I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments."** **And Samuel was angry, and he cried to the Lord all night.** What was Samuel angry about? He was upset that Saul could have been a good king but he had a poor finish. Saul was humble and brave at first but he became prideful and self-centered later. Then what about the description that God "regretted" to elect Saul as a king? God knew in advance that Saul would disobey Him. Therefore, God will not "regret" for making a bad decision like when we bought a product that does not meet our expectation. The word "regret" can be translated as "feeling sorry." God did not feel bad for Himself. He was sad about Saul. Some people, especially little kids, like to watch the same movie a few times. They know the plots and the conclusion like the back of their hands. But at certain critical moments, they still feel anxious when some characters are in trouble, or laugh at silly scenes or shed tears when their hearts are moved. Our whole life is a completed movie in God's eyes. He shows emotions as He watches our lives in real-time too. He is pleased when we obey Him and He grieves when we go astray.

## 結論 CONCLUSION

God's final approval is well-worth our temporary loss. Saul's focus was on the plunder he could accumulate. He would rather lose God's favor than letting go of an opportunity to get rich. To God, there is no such things as a selective obedience. We either obey or we do not. God's instructions are as clear as black versus white in the Bible. We must be prepared to pay a price when we walk with Jesus as His disciples. What will you lose today for following God? Perhaps it is people's recognition, a short-term gain or your face. Nothing is too much compared to our Lord Jesus who sacrificed everything to save us. He deserves our total obedience.

## 引言 INTRODUCTION

在某程度上，人生就像在學校學習。有時，我們在學習中會有掙扎。我們可能在小考中表現不好。但是好的老師不會只關注學生的成績。他們會願意幫助學生們理解課程內容。我記得那時候我在神學院學習希臘文。有幾個人對我說：「你的語言能力那麼好。你應該沒有問題的。」他們錯了！學期開始後不久，我完全一頭霧水。我第一次考試勉強及格。之後第二考試的分數稍為好一點。然後忽然之間我開竅了。感謝神的恩典，我在第三次考試和期末考試的成績都很好。教授最終給了我一個甲等。下次見到他時，我對他說：「老師，我不該得到那個成績。」他回答說：「但是你很用功。」對我來說，這都是因為他和神的憐憫。神希望我們在學業和人生中都倚靠祂取得成功。掃羅王沒有通過神的考驗，因為他是一個自我中心的人。掃羅在第 13 章的期中考試中失敗了。他不是祭司，但他卻去獻祭。撒母耳斥責掃羅，並且說他的王位不會長久。一個合神心意的人會代替他成為未來的君王。當我們來到第 15 章時，神給了掃羅一個期末考試來測試他的忠誠。結果，神完全拒絕了掃羅。他追求短暫的利益，使他失去了王位。我們必須從掃羅的失敗中學習。神最終的嘉許是值得我們暫時的犧牲。

## 解釋 EXPLANATION

### 1. 不容妥協的任務 Inarguable Mission

神給了掃羅一個不容妥協的任務。他期望掃羅會完全聽從祂的指示。讓我們讀 **1-3 節**。亞瑪力人是一群生活在以色列南邊的游牧民族。神要審判那些仇敵，因為他們在以色列人經過曠野時襲擊他們。出埃及記 17 記載了兩個民族之間的戰爭。摩西在山頂舉起手杖為軍隊禱告時，亞倫和戶珥在兩邊扶住他的雙臂。結果，以色列人贏了。許多年後，現在神告訴掃羅要徹底消滅亞瑪力人。許多基督徒被這樣的命令所困擾。非信徒批評神看起來像個無情的暴君。我們之前曾經解答過這個聖經難題。讓我們回顧一些事實。首先，神命令滅絕一個民族不是常態，它主要發生在征服迦南的時期。其次，從軍事的角度來看，留下來的敵人會為未來的報復鋪路。第三，神要消滅的是一些進行邪惡宗教儀式的異教徒。考古發現證實了這一點。第四，我們不應該忽視神在審判中的恩典。如果不是因為神的憐憫，沒有人可以繼續存在。如果神要執行絕對的公義，全人類都會受到祂的審判。但祂耐心地等待罪人悔改。神命令要除去一些罪人，這

就告訴我們對付罪的正確方法。如果我們給撒但留下立足點，他就會不斷引誘我們。我們應該與試探的來源劃清界線。有些人可能需要關掉他們的電腦，這樣他們才會停止在網上購物或玩遊戲，或者刪除一些手機上的應用程序，或者與一些有不良行為的朋友斷絕來往。掃羅回應神的命令，差派他的軍隊。**第 7-9 節**告訴我們結果。掃羅沒有完成任務。他留下他憐惜的東西。掃羅的軍隊消滅了所有的敵人，但他們憐惜亞瑪力王亞甲。他們殺了所有次等的動物，但憐惜上好的動物。就這樣，掃羅保留了他認為有價值的東西。在過程中，他自作主張，沒有把神當作老闆。我們在生活中要做許多選擇。穿什麼或吃什麼這些決定可能並不重要。一般來說，你的喜好反映出你的價值觀和優先次序。最終，神看我們到底愛祂還是更愛自己。成為耶穌的門徒意味著我們正在參與不容妥協的任務。神看為最好的往往不是世界認為是最好的。世界看你的薪水、房子和銀行戶頭來衡量成功。但神認為我們的順服是美好的品格。我曾經認識一位弟兄，他的工資遠低於他的學歷，因為他的機構沒有相配的職位。一段時間後，一所有名的大學給他工作機會。那個弟兄和太太經過禱告後，決定放棄那個機會，因為他想留下來在學生團契服事。每個人都認為他是個傻瓜。他可以說服自己，也許神打算帶他去另一個城市參與其他事工。在他看來，留下來是神對他的呼召。在他的決定中，他把神放在第一位。幾個月後，他在他工作的學校升到更好的職位。選擇與神同行並不是一個受歡迎的決定。非信徒可能會認為我們守舊、心胸狹窄和愚蠢。有時事情可能不一定是黑白分明。但神應許，當我們向祂求問時，祂就會賜給我們智慧。我們必須選擇神的方式而不是我們自己的方式。

## 2. 不能原諒的錯誤 Inexcusable Mistake

掃羅沒有完成神給他不容妥協的任務。他違背了神的命令，犯了不能原諒的錯誤。戰爭結束後，撒母耳去找掃羅。王在第 13 節說：...「願耶和華賜福與你，耶和華的命令我已遵守了。」掃羅迫不及待地吹牛。接下來的經文是撒母耳的指控和掃羅的辯護。撒母耳首先問掃羅他為什麼聽到動物的叫聲。掃羅在第 15 節中解釋說：...「這是百姓從亞瑪力人那裏帶來的；因為他們愛惜上好的牛羊，要獻與耶和華—你的神；其餘的，我們都滅盡了。」掃羅把責任推給士兵。當我們做錯事被抓到時，我們經常使用同樣的技倆。我們從祖宗亞當那裡遺傳了這個壞的基因！當神問亞當為什麼吃禁果時，他回答說：「是你為我創造的女人要我吃的。」然後神質問夏娃。她爭辯說：「蛇欺騙了我，所以我去吃。」毫無疑問，承認錯誤需要很多的謙卑和勇氣。當先知拿單斥責大衛犯下姦淫和謀殺罪時，王接受自己的責任並說：「我得罪耶和華了！」（撒母耳記下 12:13）大衛知道罪最終侵犯了神的聖潔。而且，他甘願接受神的懲罰。神珍惜這樣真誠的悔改。當掃羅第二次被撒母耳審問時，他在第 21 節編了一個類

似的藉口：「百姓卻在所當滅的物中，取了最好的牛羊，要在吉甲獻與耶和華—你的神。」士兵們違背了神的命令，因為他們希望把最好的動物留給神。難道神不想從掃羅得到最好的東西嗎？王形容那些動物為「當滅的物」，實在是自打嘴巴。這個希伯來用詞在這一章中出現了八次。它描述了完全為神保留的東西。因此，神要求將屬於亞瑪力人的一切當場毀滅。很明顯，掃羅想為自己而不是為神保留那些牛羊。主看重我們的心過於我們的東西。還記得一個月前的二十億彩票頭獎嗎？甚至很多基督徒也陷入了狂熱之中。有些信徒打算抽出一部分的獎金，捐給他們的教會。但你想誰會得到最大的部份？神不會接受那種因貪心而獲得的金錢。直到撒母耳第三次質問掃羅，掃羅才肯承認自己的錯誤。讓我們聽聽他在第 24-25 節中的道歉：24 ...「我有罪了，我因懼怕百姓，聽從他們的話，就違背了耶和華的命令和你的言語。25 現在求你赦免我的罪，同我回去，我好敬拜耶和華。」掃羅又想出另一個藉口，他因為害怕士兵而聽從他們的話。這完全是一派胡言！之前掃羅命令下屬發誓，在向非利士人報仇之前不能吃東西。到底誰怕誰？掃羅應該帶領所有人敬畏神。整本聖經從頭到尾都教導我們應該敬畏神而不是害怕人。自古以來，許多基督徒因為傳福音而受苦。他們遭受酷刑、被監禁、財產被沒收，甚至喪失生命。我們必須準備好為信仰付出代價。世界會恐嚇我們並不允許我們發言，因為真理揭露他們的罪。神只創造了兩種性別，婚姻是一男一女的結合，耶穌是唯一的救恩之路。我們需要有耐心和恩慈與非信徒交流。求主賜給我們勇氣和信心，作祂忠心的見證人。

### 3. 不可分心的專注 Indivisible Mindset

掃羅專注於自己的利益，因此他沒有遵行神明確的命令。神不會欣賞那些想要和祂鬥智的人。神要尋找那些專心委身予祂的人。請聽第 22-23 節：22 撒母耳說：「耶和華喜悅燔祭和平安祭，豈如喜悅人聽從他的話呢？聽命勝於獻祭；順服勝於公羊的脂油。23 悖逆的罪與行邪術的罪相等；頑梗的罪與拜虛神和偶像的罪相同。你既厭棄耶和華的命令，耶和華也厭棄你作王。」掃羅撒謊說他為神保存了最好的牛羊。他可能只打算挑幾隻牲畜作祭物，其餘的和士兵分攤。掃羅認為最好的東西對神來說還不夠好。主看重順服過於獻祭。順服表現在我們願意遵從神的命令。當我們順服神之時，我們便會樂意地事奉祂。你投入奉獻箱的錢應該出自一顆感恩的心。重點不是你放入多少，而是你保留多少。同樣的原則也適用於我們對時間和其他資源的運用。在下班後和完成家庭責任後服事主肯定需要犧牲。如果你是出於愛神和愛人去做的話，神肯定會記念你的付出。在撒母耳的責備中，他把不順服等同於拜偶像。掃羅彷彿把耶和華視為偶像。掃羅以為他的祭物可以買回神的心。神絕不會接受任何賄賂！一直以來，掃羅只崇拜自己的成功。在戰事之後有人第 12 節告訴撒母耳：...

「掃羅到了迦密，在那裏立了紀念碑，又轉身下到吉甲。」掃羅希望人們記念他的勝利。就算掃羅終於認錯了，他還是關心自己的面子。請看第 30 節：掃羅說：「我有罪了，雖然如此，求你在我百姓的長老和以色列人面前擡舉我，同我回去，我好敬拜耶和華—你的神。」掃羅仍然想要抓住機會表揚自己，縱然神已經拒絕了他。掃羅想盡辦法讓自己在公眾面前顯得好看。他視耶和華為撒母耳的神，而不是他的主。如果他能保持自己的聲譽，認錯並獻上一些祭物也是值得的。如果我們關心神如何看我們而不是人們如何評價我們，那麼我們的認罪就是真誠的。畢竟，人們只看到表面，但神了解我們的內心。對神來說，沒有部分的順服這回事。我們要不然順服祂，要不然違抗祂。掃羅的悖逆導致了神的棄絕。這段經文告訴我們神和撒母耳對掃羅的失敗有何感想。神在第 11 節說：「我立掃羅為王，我後悔了；因為他轉去不跟從我，不遵守我的命令。」撒母耳便甚憂愁，終夜哀求耶和華。撒母耳很難過，因為掃羅本可以成為一個好王，但他的結局卻很糟糕。掃羅起初謙虛勇敢，但後來變得驕傲自大。那麼神「後悔」選掃羅為王又是什麼意思呢？神當然知道掃羅會不順服祂。因此，神不會好像我們因為做錯決定而「後悔」，例如我們買錯東西。「後悔」這個字可以理解為「遺憾」。神不是為自己感到難過，祂是為掃羅覺得難過。有些人，尤其是小孩，喜歡看幾遍同一部電影。他們對情節和結局瞭如指掌。但在某些關鍵時刻，他們還是會為某些角色遇到麻煩而感到憂慮，或是在一些場面大笑或流淚。在神眼中，我們的人生就像已經完成的電影。當祂在看我們的經歷時，祂會表達情感。當我們順服神之時，祂會很高興；當我們偏行己路時，祂會感到悲傷。

## 結論 CONCLUSION

神最終的嘉許是值得我們暫時的犧牲。掃羅只關心自己可以積累的戰利品。他寧可失去神的接納，也不願放棄發財的機會。對神來說，沒有選擇性的順服這回事。我們要不然服從神，要不然不服從。神的指示在聖經中就像黑白分明一樣清晰。當我們作耶穌的門徒與祂同行時，我們必須準備好付代價。你今天跟隨神會失去什麼？也許是人們的認可，短暫的利益或是你的面子。與犧牲一切來拯救我們的主耶穌相比，我們失去的東西實在是微不足道。主值得我們完全的順服。