

Sin as Self-Deceit Tim Keller

[00:00:00.000] - Speaker 1

The teaching this morning is based on the passage printed in your bulletins, and you'll have to read with me and you'll have to turn the page because it's partly printed on the bottom of the page before the middle hymn and then it concluded on the page afterwards. I'm going to read from 1 Samuel 15, verses 12 to 23.

Early in the morning, Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument to his own honor and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal. When Samuel reached him, Saul said, "The Lord bless you. I have carried out the Lord's instructions." But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?" Saul answered, "The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites. They spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the Lord your God, but we totally destroyed the rest." "Stop", Samuel said to Saul. "Let me tell you what the Lord said to me last night." "Tell me", Saul replied, (but you'll have to turn to find out).

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And Samuel said, "Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The Lord anointed you king over Israel, and he sent you on a mission saying, Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites. Make war on them until you've wiped them out. Why did you not obey the Lord? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the Lord?" "But I did obey the Lord", Saul said. "I went on the mission the Lord assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites, and I brought back Agag, their king. The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God in order to sacrifice them to the Lord your God at Gilgal." But Samuel replied, "Does the Lord delight in burn offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is much better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance is like the evil of idolatry. Because you've rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king."

[00:02:23.780] - Speaker 1

This is God's word. Now, we've started a new series of messages on Sunday mornings, and what we're looking at every week is we're basically addressing the question, what's wrong with us? The human race, what's wrong with us? Why are we able and capable of doing the things to each other that we do? That is an extremely important question, and we really can't take what many people think are answers. For example, I mentioned last week, for example, why have there always been, and why are there at this very minute, incredible atrocities, genocidal ethnic cleansing? Why are we capable of that? And you know what some people say? Well, that's just the result of racism. But that doesn't answer the question. Why

are we capable of that racist atrocity? Or here's another thing. I mentioned last week briefly New York Times story last year about teenagers in the inner city who for just a few dollars will go to the take out a contract and kill somebody. Just a few dollars. What makes us capable of doing that? And see, what people will say is, "Well, it's poverty that makes people do that." And that doesn't answer it.

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Why do we respond to poverty like that and not in some other way? You see? What is there in us that makes us respond to poverty like that instead of some other way? That doesn't answer the question. The sociological answer is never the answer because you always have to say, "Well, why do we do that instead of that?" Sure, that's the occasion for the murder, but is it the cause? And the answer is that the Bible, all of our sociological and psychological problems are theological problems. And the only answer that possibly gets underneath all of these other semi answers, the real problem is sin. And that's what we're looking at each week. Each week, we're going to look at some of the aspects of what the Bible says about sin, because you're never going to answer these questions. You're never going to deal with your own personal problems or the world's problems unless we come to understand sin. If we don't diagnose the disease, how are we ever going to prescribe for the disease? And so, each week, we're going to look at a different aspect or function or dynamic of sin. And today, we look at one that I'm going to call our capacity for self-deception.

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It's an aspect of sin, and it's extremely important. What is the capacity for self-deception? It's the almost infinite ability of the human heart to hide the truth from itself when that truth is unpleasant enough. Self-deception is the almost infinite capacity, maybe it is an infinite capacity of the human heart to hide the truth from itself if that truth is too unpleasant or uncomfortable. One of the things that absolutely shocked me, I must admit, when I was doing the research for this talk, this sermon today, is that since 1960, at least, the journals of professional philosophy have spent a tremendous amount of time on the philosophical issue of self-deception. It's a hot issue. And I'm not just talking about religious people or Christian people. Oh, no, everybody's thinking about that. Books are coming out, articles are coming out. There's been a great deal, a very high level, scholarly discussion of this. And at first, I said, "Why in the world?" And I realized, as I read a few digs of the material, why it's so important. You see, what is it that kills you? Is it your addiction to alcohol so much as it's your denial of your addiction to alcohol that's what kills you?

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You see, the reason it's so important is this, self-deception is not the worst thing we do, but it's the reason we can do the worst things. Self-deception is not the most terrible thing that we do at all. Self-swindling, lying to yourself, that's not the most terrible thing we do, but it's the reason we can do all other terrible things. And therefore, it's extremely important to understand. There's no better example in the whole Bible of the tragedy of self-deception and the dynamics of it than this tragic story of Saul, the first king of Israel.

Now, let me tell you how it goes. Let me show you here that this text tells us the fact of self-deception, the structure of self-deception, how it works, the fact of it, the structure of it. And it gives us, when you see Samuel do the intervention, we even see a prescription for the healing of it. The fact of it, the structure of it, and the healing of it. First of all, the fact. Now, to get the fact, I got to tell you a little bit about the story, and I won't take too long.

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There's plenty of issues that maybe arise around this story that afterwards in our question answer time, if you want to stay for that, I'll field those. But here's how it goes. It says in the very beginning, you see in verse 12, it says, Samuel got up very early. You know why? Because he hadn't slept. If you go back to verse 11, which isn't printed, he hadn't slept all night. Here's why. Samuel was a prophet, and he had anointed Saul as the first king of Israel. And he had mentored Saul, and he loved Saul. And you know, it was hard not to love Saul. If you read something of Saul, you'll know that he was an exuberant man, an emotionally expressive man. You can see it right here. We'll get to it in a second. He was an excitable man, you see. He was an enthusiastic man. And so, everybody loved him because of that. But there was a pattern that had come up in his life, and the pattern had continued, and this incident typified it and brought it to a head. And here's what happened. In the early part of the chapter, which we didn't print because it's just too long, God had come to Saul by prophecy and said to Saul, "Go to the Amalekites and wipe them out."

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Now that's mentioned here. And the Amalekites were a nation of people, a tribe of people who committed atrocities, who were an incredibly violent people. And God sent Saul and he said, I want you to engage them in battle and I want you to wipe them out. And when you have defeated them, I want you to take no prisoners and take none of their wealth. If you find treasure, throw it out. If you find their livestock, slaughter it. I will have you profit one cent from this battle. And here's the reason why. God had sent Saul to do an act of justice, not an act of imperialism. This battle was to be an act of justice and truth, not an act of imperialism. You see, when you have a group of people like the Amalekites who are marauding and they're doing all sorts of atrocities, the only thing to do to stop a group like that is to do an act of justice. But you see, what God had said to Saul is, "Make sure it's an act of justice and make sure that you don't do what they're doing." Because what are they doing?

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Why do nations go off to war then? Why do nations go off to war now? They always say it's in the name of truth and justice, but it's actually in the name of profit. They're there to fatten themselves up. They're there to get more wealth and more power because they've won. So, God says to Saul, I want you to go after those wicked people, but when you defeat them, take no prisoners for booty, take no plunder, take none of the livestock. You will profit not one cent because this is going to be an act of truth and justice, not an act of imperialism. And what does Saul do? When Saul defeats them, God helps them in the

battle. But then what Saul does is he brings home, he captures and he saves the life of Agag the king, and he brings home the majority of the best of their livestock, which is the best of their wealth. And so ironically, though he's going to tell us later on, thinks that I've done 99.9 % of what God asked me to do. I've done all but just a little teeny... I killed them all but Agag.

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I slaughtered everything but the best of the sheep. I did 99 %. Actually, he has done 0 %. Because what he has done, he has actually done, he has become the Amalekites. He has done the very thing that God said we have to punish the Amalekites for. Do you remember Henry the fifth? In Henry the fifth, at one point, there's this long discussion. This is before the Battle of the English and the French at Agincourt. There's this long discussion about that in battles, what would happen is, your regular soldier would get slaughtered, but the nobles, the kings, the officers, they would always be captured. Why? Because they're worth money. They could get ransomed. And so, they never died. There was no problem in their battles. So, the inequity of it, whenever wars are fought, it's always supposedly the name of truth and power. But really, people go off, nations go off to just accrue wealth and power. It's a power grab. And Saul has done the very thing that God hates. And he comes... Saul's been doing this all along. God speaks to Samuel that night, the night before, and he says, Samuel, I've had it.

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This is the last time. This is what Saul has done. He's been continually doing it. He's been moving in this direction of being the very king, which is a stench in my nostrils. And now he's there. Go tell him tomorrow, I abandon him. I no longer honor him as king of my people. And we're told in verse 11, that Samuel was up all night crying and praying and had gone into tremendous grief because he loved Saul. And he goes to see Saul. And Saul comes out, and the translation brings it across. Saul comes out with an unusually, (the lady doth protest too much), an unusually enthusiastic and excited response. "The Lord bless you." You know what he's doing? He runs out and says, "Samuel, my father, what a day. The Lord is with us. The Lord has blessed us. The Lord has finally given us this victory. The first time I have been victorious, we've been victorious over another country. Oh, what a day this is going to be. I am preparing the greatest worship celebration you've ever seen. Everything is prepared. We've got the sacrifices all prepared. And I want you to preach the sermon."

[00:12:59.410] - Speaker 1

Here's the fact. What has Saul done? Saul is completely oblivious, and yet he's not. Here's the definition. Self-deception is the ability to know the truth, but not know the truth because you don't want to know the truth. To know it and yet not know it at the same time because you don't want to know it. That's something the human heart is able to do under sin, and it's amazing. In other words, self-deception is the ability to rationalize and justify things you know aren't true or wrong. This ability actually has these pieces to it. In self-deception, you always see a person sees the truth, but it's too painful to hold. It's too hot to hold. There's evidence that they know it's true, but they smother it with another technique, which we'll talk

about here in a second when we get under the second point. Do you see this? The first point I'm trying to make is, you can see this, the ability to do self-deception is to know a truth. But if the truth is painful, if there's psychedelic trauma, the implications of it are traumatic for you. The human heart has the ability, though the evidence is there that you really do believe it.

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You can see the evidence. There's the telltale evidence, you believe it, and yet you smother it with certain techniques. Now, we can do it from... And the examples are infinite, and they run from the trivial, almost comic, up to the most serious. Just give you a couple. For example, one that I'm going through right now with my wife, and that is that I have a lot of trouble believing there's ever anything wrong with my car. I probably shared this before, but we'll be driving along, and Kathy will say, "Do you hear that noise? We better take it in." Now, we only have one car, of course, which is more than many of you have. And it did not have a car, the money, the time, the effort... So, what do I say? There's evidence that I know there's something wrong, too. You know what the evidence is? I say, "Honey, you're so pessimistic. Cars always do this. I know more about cars. You've never worked on cars." And I turned that radio up way high. You see? I know there's something wrong. There's the evidence. I turn that radio up, but I don't want to know there's something wrong.

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So, I use a technique, which I'll get back to in a minute. Kathy, you don't understand. You're pessimistic. You're a glass half empty person. I'm a glass half full person. You don't know anything about cars. Okay, we can move on up, though. Can get more serious. Here's a man, here's a father, and he's got a son. And over the last two years, four different times in three different places and classrooms, other kids have accused his little Johnny of stealing money. And so, he comes on in every time and he blows in, he comes into the parents of the accusers or he comes in to the principal or the teacher and he says, "These kids are jealous, that's all. My Johnny is the best athlete in town. My Johnny is very... They're just jealous." The evidence is there. See, the truth is my son's a thief. It's too painful to hold. The evidence is there that he knows it. Why? Because he locks his own wallet up, but he smothers it with a technique. Let me go up one more step. Here's a lady and she's a talented musician and she was raised in a religious home and she moves to New York.

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And now she wants to break into rock music era, you see. And you know what? The truth is, and she knows down underneath that there is a God and there is a right and wrong and there are moral absolutes. But it's very painful for somebody who desperately wants to be accepted, to be seen as cool, to get the gig, she wants to hang out, to be accepted, and she certainly wants to keep the boyfriend she's got and he wants to sleep with her. So, there's evidence, plenty of evidence, that she does believe that there's a God. She talks as if racism is wrong. That shows you believe there's a God because you know there's moral absolute, just not for me. And she hides it with a technique. She says, Most of the Christians I know

are all hypocrites anyway. And besides that, lots of... And on we go. Let me get one more, just one more. It gets worse. You heard about the very famous incident where Eisenhower was liberating Germany at the end of World War II. And he was so tired of the fact he would come into towns and he would find these work camps and he would suppose that work camps and he'd go in and he'd find incredible atrocities, bodies stacked everywhere.

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And the people in the town and the officials in the town would say, "We knew nothing about it." And I think there was a place, I can't remember, I better not use the word, but there was a particular town in which Eisenhower got to the boiling point and he issued a very famous command. He says, at gunpoint, every man, woman and child in this town will march into that work camp and will bury the bodies themselves. And he did it. And afterwards they filed out and the mayor and his wife went home that night and hung themselves. They knew you wouldn't hang yourself unless you knew that you knew. But you didn't want to know. Because if it's really happening, you see, they saw the Jews being carted off, and you knew that something was going wrong. But my goodness, it's too painful to stand up because if I stand up for that, I might go myself, maybe taken myself. And I don't want to think of myself as a coward. So, what do you do? You use a technique. You say, Those Jews, they're really the problems we have anyway. We have an infinite capacity.

[00:18:30.560] - Speaker 1

The same thing I'm using on my wife and my car is the thing that the Mayor and his wife used. We have an infinite capacity. If a truth, we don't like it, we know, though there's evidence that we believe it, we know how to not know it. For example, here's the three techniques. How does Saul use techniques to smother what he knows? The first technique he says, look in verse 15, what then is the bleeding that I hear? In verse 15, what does he say? The soldiers brought them. Now, that's a great one. Okay? So I'll answer, The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites. Who was in charge here, saw? The soldiers brought them. Now, in other words, you blame somebody, you pick on somebody. And did you notice that's one of the most wonderful techniques for trying to smother something you know to be true about yourself that's just too unpleasant, is you blame somebody. So, for example, I can just say to Kathy, Kathy, you're a pessimist. That's a rather small blaming, but it's there. But then you can move right on up. What is the father doing? These kids are jealous. That's their problem.

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You see, you blame somebody, somebody else has done something wrong and that gets away. Or the rock singer says, I know about all those hypocrites. Well, of course, there's hypocrites who are Christians. My question is, there's a lot of quacks who are doctors. Does that mean that the very science of medicine is wrong? No, we don't think of that. We're using a technique. Those Jews, they're our problem. Hey, there's plenty of people. Have you noticed? This might be the case of you. Some of you do not want to get married because you're scared to death of committing yourself to an imperfect person. But you don't

want to think of yourself as a coward. So, every time it gets serious, you find something wrong with them. And you can look back on the 10 times that you've been engaged, and you broke off every one, and you say to yourself, I just had 10 times, I had real, real losers. There's something wrong with them. You see, the soldiers... But let's go on. There's a second technique. The second technique is, but I'm going to sacrifice to the Lord. And this is a real scary one because this is extremely common.

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Saul says, I did this wrong, but look at all the right I'm doing. You've heard this idea of two wrongs don't make a right? But you see, this technique is several rights atone for the wrong that I continue to do. Oh, really? See, here's what he says is, Yeah, you're right. I did bring the sheep, but you know what? I'm going to donate them. Do you realize how many of the greatest church buildings in this city have been built by men who made a lot of money trampling on people and even killing people? And then they said, Okay, maybe I wasn't obedient here and here and here, but I'm going to sacrifice. I'm going to build a building to the Lord. See? And this is how people do it. I'm good to my mother. I give to charity. Look at all these good things I do. Let's not look at this over here. That shows that I'm really a good person. And you don't think there aren't people right here? Listen, my dear friend, some of you are saying, "There's things I know I'm doing wrong, but I'm a Bible study leader, but I'm an officer, but I do these other things in the Church.

[00:21:56.900] - Speaker 1

I do so many good things." You see? I'm this, I'm that. He was the king of Israel and it didn't help him. In fact, it made it worse. Elizabeth Elliott, the missionary writer, she tells a story when she was a young girl, her little brother Tommy, who grew up to be Tom Howard, by the way, little brother Tommy was told by his mother that he was allowed to play with all of the paper bags that were underneath the counter in the kitchen. He could spread them all out and play with them, but he had to put them back. He couldn't leave the kitchen and leave them out. One day he spread them all out and he left them out and he left. And he was in playing the piano because he played the piano. And the mother and the father came in and said, Tommy, what have you done? You get back in here, he says, Mommy and Daddy, I'm singing to Jesus. I'm singing hymns. And the father said, "There's no use singing songs to Jesus if you're being disobedient. To obey is better than sacrifice." Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and donations and helping the poor rather than obeying the voice of the Lord?

[00:23:12.270] - Speaker 1

And there's a third technique. So, the first technique is blame somebody else. The soldiers did it. Belittle somebody. It's their fault. They made me do it. Look at them. The second thing is look at the good things I'm doing. So that justifies me continuing to go on with the bad thing I'm doing. Does that make sense? But there we do it. And then the third thing, you don't see this in yourself? The third thing we do is we take what we have done wrong and say, but it's a little one. See in verse 20, he says, I did completely wipe them out, and I did this too. Now, what is he saying? He's saying, "Well, the thing I did wrong should not

diminish the fact that I completely did it.” We should not get... See, Samuel says God said completely. And Saul says, “Well, I did it completely. I mean, virtually completely. The only thing I did wrong was so little, it should not mean I can't use the word completely. I did completely. And...” See, he believes he added, he didn't subtract. Completely and. Now, this is what we all do. We say, “Well, what I have done is wrong, but at least it's not that big.”

[00:24:22.640] - Speaker 1

Don't you see? Right now, somebody here, you're justifying cheating in your business somehow. What are you saying to yourself? You're saying, Well, it's not like Michael Milkin stuff. I'm not making that much. And what did Michael Milkin say? He said, It's not like I'm killing anybody. It's not like I'm a mafia hit man. And what did the mafia hit man say? Well, it's not that I'm like Hitler. I only kill people that deserve it. And what did Hitler say? I don't know. But he said something and he said the very same thing you're saying. He said something. It's the same thing. Those are the techniques. You can smother... See, you can know something but not know it because you smother it with a technique. But underneath the technique, and we're not going to be able to heal it, can't get to the healing until we see Samuel presses that there's a dynamic going on under the techniques. Actually, let me put it to you this way. What is it that triggers self-deception? We don't deceive ourselves about all truths, only about painful ones. And here's the question, why are some truths psychically painful? Why can't the father admit that his son's a thief?

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Why can't you admit that you drink too much? Why can't you admit that you're a cheat in business? Why can't you admit that you're a coward? Why can't we admit these things? Why are they so psychically painful that we have to totally repress them? And Samuel sticks his finger on it. It's amazing. He says, it's up in verse 17, he says, Saul, you were once small in your own eyes, but the Lord made you great. Now, why are you trying to make yourself great? The key thing, I think, is in verse 12. In verse 12, Samuel, on the way, realizes that Saul has put up a monument in his honor. Actually, I can't go into this too long, but I can tell you this, it was at the day, if you defeated a king, you never destroyed a king. You kept the king because that made you a king of kings. It made you an emperor, not just a king. That's what the Assyrians did. They took the kings off. Look at all the kings. We're an empire. Saul desperately wanted to be included. He didn't want to just be a king of Israel.

[00:26:55.950] - Speaker 1

He wanted to be a king that all the other kings saw. He wanted to be seen as one of the guys. He wanted to be a king of kings. He wanted empire. It was incredible. He had finally defeated a nation. How in the world could he let go this opportunity to become big and fat and wealthier? The ball was rolling. He says, I'm doing it for the Lord. And Samuel says, unmask yourself, Saul. Your problem is you think you're small. You think you're little. And you're trying to make yourself great. Don't you see that God in his grace, will make you great? Don't you see that God, in his grace, has made you great. He chose you and made you, though you were small, he made you king. And he anointed you. Now, your problem is this. You're going

to the world to get something that God can only give you. You've rejected the grace of God. You're making yourself big. And as a result, there's some things that you cannot abide to see. Now, dear friends, this is the whole problem. We're sinners. We know we're small. We're all small in our own eyes.

[00:28:07.390] - Speaker 1

We know deep in our guts we're small. And the reason we do self-deception is this very thing. We find ways to try to hide from ourselves that we are sinners, that we're small, that we're inadequate, that we're flawed. And if any truth comes along to reveal to us the sinners we are, we can't abide by that because we have no alternative than make ourselves big. The father cannot stand to know that Johnny is a thief because the father's image of himself as a good father is the only thing he's got to save himself. It's the only way he can say, I'm not small. I'm not a nothing. I'm a father. And he can't live without that. So, he must repress it. And the rock singer, you see, she's small in her own eyes. She feels the inadequacy. So, we all feel this way. So, we find a strategy to make ourselves big. And anything that will get in the way of that, we have to repress. Don't you see? And therefore, see what Samuel is coming along and saying is, do you realize that your rebellion is idolatry? Do you see the end? He says, you're saying to me, Saul, well, at least his interest...

[00:29:25.930] - Speaker 1

Remember I told you, the mafia man says at least I'm not Hitler, and Michael Milkin says at least I'm not a mafia man, and so on. You notice what does Samuel do at the end? He says, "Don't you know that rebellion, disobedience is the sin of divination. Arrogance is as the evil of idolatry." Here Saul's saying, "I'm Orthodox. I go to Church. It's not like I'm a witch. It's not like I'm into the occult. It's not like I'm an idol worshiper." And Samuel says, "Yes, you are, or you would not be in the situation you're in. You have gone to your idol. Worldly power." Father, you've gone to your idol, your image of yourself as a perfect father. Rock singer, you've gone to your idol, acceptance by the field and the peers that you respect. You have gone to your idol. And you said, Make me big. Because deep inside you're afraid you're small, and you will let nothing get in the way of that. But, "Saul, don't you see," says Samuel, "don't you see, God in his grace will give you this? You don't need that." Now, in a sense, we've answered the last point.

[00:30:33.270] - Speaker 1

How do you heal? Well, the first thing you should do is do what Samuel did. First of all, Samuel pointed out the bleating. Not a bleeding, bleating, like sheep. In other words, Samuel says there's evidence of self-deception. So let me just point, I'm going to do this very quickly. Number one, look for evidence. Now, I don't believe most self-deceit people are going to see this, but here's some evidence. He says, "What is the bleating I hear? What is the lowing I hear?" Here's some evidence. If you're the person that feels that you're a loaner, you've got problems, but you don't want to tell anybody about them. I can handle them myself. Some of you've got problems and you don't want to go to a small group, you don't want to go to a counselor, you don't want to talk to a Christian friend. You've got problems, you've got issues, but I'm going to do it. I can overcome it myself. You underestimate the power of self-deception, my dear friend.

Who the heck can see self-deception except someone who's not the self? You've got to go to somebody who's not you. If you're a loaner, if you don't want to share, if you don't want to become accountable, look out, sign of self-deception.

[00:31:38.760] - Speaker 1

If you always make exceptions for yourself, if you're always saying, "Well, I know I should forgive, but I was provoked. Or I know I should obey the Bible, but that one section that... A lot of people question whether the Bible really says that. If you make exceptions, that's what self-deceivers do. Look for these things. Look for these things. But secondly, first of all, look for the evidence. Secondly, remember this, the most traumatic truth of all. If you know you're prone to self-deception, that means you know that uncomfortable truths you don't want to see. And the mark of a self-deceiver is somebody who will not think out the implications. You see? In other words, you know something's true, but you don't want to really think about it. You smother it. You don't want to think out the implications. Well, at the heart of self-deception is a refusal to handle the most traumatic truth of all. If there is a God, He owns you utterly, and you must obey Him completely. And if there is no God, your life is totally meaningless, and nothing is right and wrong, and no one knows which end is up.

[00:32:46.370] - Speaker 1

Either there is a God and you owe Him completely, total submission, not a part. Not saying, "Well, I'm going to do my thing over here, but then I'm going to go and put money in the offering plate, and completely or meaningfulness, and there's nothing in between. A self-deceiver is unwilling to think about the implication of the most traumatic. You have to realize that the most traumatic of all truth is the truth that there is a God and you owe Him everything. Nobody wants to see that. So, force that on yourself. Don't you see what Samuel is saying to Saul? Saul, God didn't want the cattle. He didn't want the sheep. He wanted you. You gave him the sheep, but you didn't give him you. You know why? Because you withheld the right. You reserved the right to decide when to obey and when not. Well, Saul says, I only disobeyed one time out of a million. It doesn't matter if you disobeyed a million out of a million or one out of a million. The point is the same. The point is you have reserved the right to decide when to obey and when not to obey.

[00:33:49.770] - Speaker 1

In other words, you have withheld yourself. He owns you. You never gave him yourself. To give him yourself is to say, unconditionally, I don't question, I obey. He didn't want the cattle. He didn't want the sheep. He wanted you. You gave him the cattle instead of you. So, the second thing you have to do is always force yourself to see the truth underneath all the other things that we most do not want to see the implications of. He owns us. But last of all, you've got to get grips with grace. You know what? Here's the thing. You have to come to grips with grace. Over the years, I've tried to help people with self-deception, and I've come to this conclusion, we all believe and know in our hearts we're sinners. We don't want to see it. We all know we're cowards. We all know we're little, and we don't want to see it. But if people do

not understand the grace of God, you can't get them out of their self-deception. It is inevitable. It is dangerous. You see, the grace of God is God will make you big. He will make you great by his sheer grace.

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Now, you know, Saul would have had the right to say, "How could that be? I don't believe it. I can't grasp that. How could that possibly be?" Because he didn't know what we know. In Hebrews 10, we read this, When Christ came into the world, he said, Sacrifices and burnt offerings cannot satisfy thee, but a body thou hast prepared for me. Lo, it is written of me in the book, I come to do thy will. And the Hebrews writer goes on and says, "By that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ." Do you see what's going on? You have to know this or you'll never get out of self-deception. Jesus was great in his eyes and became small so that we who were small might be made great. Why would God take me, a sinner, weak, coward? Why would He just simply anoint me as king, make us all kings and priests, the Bible says. Why would He do that? For Saul, maybe that was a difficult thing to grasp, but it shouldn't be for us. Because there is one who was great and became small.

[00:36:00.740] - Speaker 1

Those of us who are small don't have to make ourselves great. But you see, when Jesus Christ died, it was the perfect obedience and the perfect sacrifice. And it delighted God. God was delighted with him so that when you believe in him, he's delighted in you. If you grasp the grace of God, you can handle the fact that your son's a thief. You can handle the fact that you'll be rejected by the rock Illuminati. You can handle the fact that you're a coward. You can handle it. Finally, the grace of God will liberate you. You will know the truth and the truth will set you free. Does God delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? He has done it, so, God can be delighted in you. Let that liberate you. Let's pray. Give us, Father, the power to wipe off all of the masks, to break through the self-defenses, to see the ways in which we deceive ourselves. Oh, Lord. That's what we asked for this morning. But we realize in the end, it's not a matter of noticing the techniques. It's not a matter of accountability if we don't take the grace of God.

[00:37:16.320] - Speaker 1

Help us to not reject it. Help us to see that we don't have to make ourselves big anymore. For we have been anointed as kings and priests in Israel, just as Saul was. By your grace, he wasn't affected by it. Let us be. He wasn't liberated by it. Let us be. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.