

3 Slippery Ways Your Worship Could Morph Into Witchcraft

Can Christians delude themselves into thinking that they are worshiping God, when in fact they are engaging in witchcraft?

Sound a little incredible?

And yet, there are three enemies of our soul that, if left unconquered, will not only lead us into great delusion and destruction, they will actually turn our worship into witchcraft.

While Saul was certainly not God's original plan for Israel; after the children of Israel insisted God give them a king, God chose Saul.

In today's vernacular, Saul was called.

But just like Saul, it is entirely possible for you to use your area of ministry for sin. Saul is a classic example of someone in ministry – no matter how legitimate – using that ministry to build their own kingdom, to exalt themselves and for their own sinful desires.

When we reach 1 Samuel 15 we see that Saul has fallen so deep into the trap of self-worship that it has turned into witchcraft.

To be sure, all worship that isn't sincere worship of God is witchcraft!

3 Ways Worship Turns to Witchcraft

1. When we fail to address our insecurity.

When Saul comes on the scene in 1 Samuel 9, he is insecure and self-deprecating. This is further witnessed in chapter 14,

when Jonathan had eaten honey during a time when Saul had placed his army under an oath of fasting.

Saul was more willing to put Jonathan to death for his transgression than to admit his own mistake in leadership.

In looking at the leadership of Saul, we clearly see what happens when a leader leads out of insecurity.

In chapter 14, we find an army reduced to one-fifth of its size, with limited weaponry, low morale and now weakened with hunger.

Furthermore, the people are not behind Saul; they are simply doing what they have to do with no passion or vision. In the end, they rise up against Saul and save Jonathan—who, while his father sat under a tree, chose to step out in faith and obedience to go against the Philistine army.

God rewarded his obedience by confusing the army into turning on itself!

Saul's insecurity led not only to his own personal disaster, but nearly destroyed his army and certainly alienated his people from him.

Insecurity is just another word for pride. An insecure person is a person who is preoccupied with themselves: how they look, how they appear to others, whether or not they are accepted by their peers.

Many times, insecurity is linked to perfectionism, which is yet another word for pride. Any time we are more focused on ourselves than on God and others, we have pride in our hearts.

Pride is nothing more than self-worship.

Pride is the elevation of self. Insecurity is the elevation of self, only often repackaged as false humility and self-deprecation. Perfectionism is the elevation of self, always

having to be the best, never able to allow others to be better

2. When we fail to address our fear.

In 1 Samuel 13, we find Saul and his army about to go to war against the Philistines. He is waiting on Samuel to offer the sacrifice, but Samuel is late. Scripture says that Saul waited 7 days for Samuel to come, but he still hadn't shown up.

In the meantime, the troops were getting restless and were deserting him.

Saul was feeling his authority slip away from him, and out of fear of losing his authority over his troops, he makes a fatal error.

He offers the sacrifice himself.

Out of fear, he assumes a level of authority God never intended him to have, and as a result, the generations following him would never rule over Israel.

Fear is a lack of trust in God's sovereignty and a refusal to live under His authority.

The problem is, when we refuse to be under God's divine authority and to accept the human authorities He has placed over us, we are living in rebellion.

This weakens any authority we may have.

In Matthew 8, we read the story of the centurion who comes to Jesus asking Him to heal his servant. When Jesus offers to go to his house, the centurion gives this curious answer, "For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this man, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it'" (Matt. 8:9).

He says, I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. He is both under authority and in authority.

And his authority is strengthened by the fact that he chooses to submit to someone higher than him. But this submission requires trust. You cannot submit to someone you don't trust.

Fear is a lack of trust; you can even say fear is a refusal to trust.

In fact, for the Christian, fear is a rebellion against God's command, because throughout Scripture, God commands us not to fear.

3. When we fail to address our disobedience.

Throughout these chapters in 1 Samuel, we see that Saul's fear and insecurity led him to disobey God in a multitude of ways.

But we come to the point in chapter 15 when God calls him out for his witchcraft. Indeed, even the Word says that Saul's so-called sacrifice to God was really only self-worship!

God had sent Saul and his army to attack Amalek.

In chapter 15, verse 3, God commands Saul to "utterly destroy" everything and everyone. He actually gives him a comprehensive list, so that there is no room for confusion or interpretation.

But in verse 9, we see that Saul spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, oxen, fatlings, lambs and "all that was good".

Then in verse 13, he says, "I have carried out the word of the Lord."

When Samuel confronts his disobedience, he defends himself by saying that the things they saved back were to sacrifice to the Lord. As if the Israelites didn't have their own sheep and oxen to use for sacrifice, they chose to use the sheep and

oxen that God had commanded them to destroy as worship to God.

This, in fact, wasn't worship of God at all.

In verse 12, we read these interesting words I had never read before, "...it was told Samuel, saying, "Saul went up went to Carmel and set himself up a monument ..."

While Saul was supposedly sacrificing to the Lord, in reality he was worshiping himself.

And his self-worship will soon be deflated when Samuel speaks these famous words:

Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Obedience is better than sacrifice,

a listening ear 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 has also rejected you from being king (1 Sam. 15:22-23).

Are we guilty of disobedience in our worship?

Have we brought the world into our worship?

Would we rather do what's popular, what's going to get us attention, what's going to heap praise for our abilities, what's going to bring in numbers?

Have we failed to utterly cut off the world so the purity of God's authority is witnessed in and through us?

If not, our worship has turned into

witchcraft.

Saul's life is a warning to the church of what happens when we think we can defeat the enemy outside of us without first having defeated the enemy inside of us.

His failure to defeat his insecurity, pride, and disobedience prevented him from leading his army into battle against the Philistines in chapter 14 and from utterly destroying the Amalekites in chapter 15.

If you fail to defeat the enemy in these three areas, you are worshiping yourself. And any worship that isn't worship of God is witchcraft!

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